

*Masculinity and the Hunt: Wyatt to Spenser.* Catherine Bates.  
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Catherine Bates's *Masculinity and the Hunt: Wyatt to Spenser* centers on predatory pursuits in Tudor forests as they intersect with the treacherous terrain of sixteenth-century lyric and romance. In seven chapters, she offers fascinating accounts of early modern hunt practices, from blood sports to aristocratic tilting; revisionary arguments about the period's renderings of male subjectivity and desire; sophisticated conceptualizations of narrative voice and lyric utterance; and, above all, brilliant readings of works by Wyatt, Gascoigne, Turberville, Sidney, Greville, and Spenser. Capacious in its ambit, this incisive volume is a major contribution to Renaissance literary and cultural criticism as well as to theories of subjectivity and gender and sexuality studies.

Dauntingly erudite, Bates's first chapter guides readers through classical epic and the thickets of the anthropological subfield known as "hunter-gatherer studies" to show how the hunt has long functioned as a symbolic and status-differentiating activity, one in which cultural ideals of manly heroic pursuit are always haunted by visions of a Bad (i.e., improper, imperiled, or incompetent) Huntsman. Drawing on Lacanian models, she also shows why the hunt metaphor is perfectly suited to suggest the workings of lack, insatiable desire, and fractured subjectivity. This theoretical framework sets the stage for a superb survey of sixteenth-century literature in which she explains how poets turn to hunting motifs to enact masculine failure and bottomless want. Writing against the usual scholarly emphasis on the rhetorical tactics of mastery, she uncovers numerous texts filled with images of hunters who miss their targets, are perpetually thwarted, or — more arrestingly — transformed into prey. Above all she demonstrates how these texts pose a profound challenge to prevailing ideals of masculine self-sufficiency, depicting as they do unappeasable, internally riven subjects who exemplify abject or otherwise failed models of masculinity.

Chapter 2, perhaps the book's most dazzling section, considers the strangely masochistic dynamics of Wyatt's verse as evidenced, for example, in his fleeting encounters with wild animals. Focusing on Wyatt as translator and imitator of Petrarch — a poet who, in giving voice to Actaeon, the hunter beset by his hounds, invented a lyric that "deconstruct[s] its own voice" (39) — she identifies Wyatt's similar preoccupation with preyed-upon hunters and subjects victimized by desire. While Bates expertly illuminates the complexities of forest law and game legislation (not to mention the brutalities of a king who styled himself as a noble huntsman), what this chapter showcases are stunning insights into poetic form and language. In subsequent chapters, Bates takes up shooting, hawking, snaring, and tilting as she considers the vicissitudes of desire in terms of a common motif: what in Gascoigne's "Woodmanship" is termed "shooting awry." Accordingly, chapters 3 and 4 focus on the violent erotics of Gascoigne and Turberville — both of whom, remarkably enough, authored a guide for would-be hunters. As she explores their queer lyrics, she

deftly examines plaintive words from soon-to-be slaughtered animals and female falcons figured as uncontrollable phallic weapons. Chapter 5 offers nuanced readings of the sonnets of Sidney and Greville in which the archer Cupid is understood to be a conflicted projection of the speaker's desire: each rendering of the boy and his wounding arrow, she suggests, conflates the potent huntsman with the preyed-upon victim. In the book's last two chapters, Bates turns from lyric to the era's canonical romance narratives. In chapter six she discusses Philisides and the other highborn but decidedly inept archers, tilters, and hunters of the *Old* and *New Aracdia*, elucidating how Sidney's experiments with narrative recall the self-divisions of Wyatt's desiring subjects. Concluding her survey, Bates's final chapter provides a meticulously argued account of the self-reflexivity of the hunt motif in Spenser's poetry. If most of this volume calls attention to frustrated huntsmen who speak or otherwise inhabit the text, here she reflects eloquently on audience, characterizing *The Faerie Queene* as a hunt that leads its readers endlessly astray.

While *Masculinity and the Hunt* is fundamentally about language and the desiring subject, it surely merits reading by scholars interested in Renaissance animal studies. As is apparent from the wide array of topics Bates so wonderfully elucidates — everything from puns on the notion of animal "kind" to customs such as stitching shut the eyelids of falcons and barbecuing the testicles of slain deer — the animal is never merely a figure in Bates's reading, but more a material agent: one that impinges on and thereby helps to constitute what we take to be human. In short, Bates not only richly complicates our sense of the period's literature, she also paves the way for future inquiry into questions, both ethical and literary, about the nature and biopolitics of the human-animal encounter.

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