Against Stanza-Pairing: Another Look at Correspondences between Stanzas in Spenser's "Epithalamion"

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AGAINST STANZA-PAIRING:

ANOTHER LOOK AT CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN STANZAS

IN SPENGER'S EPITHALAMION

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ABSTRACT

The structure of Spenser's *Epithalamion* has been examined from many perspectives, demonstrating the variety of possibilities for response to the poem. However, two critics, A. Kent Hieatt and Max Wickert, have gone further in their interpretations of the poem's structure than can be supported by any careful reading of the poem. Each has proposed a system for stanza-pairing by arbitrarily citing correspondences between certain pairs of stanzas and by ignoring those correspondences which do not fit his theory. Hieatt's system, needed to support an aspect of his astronomical theory, splits the poem in half and matches the stanzaic series 1-12 to that of 13-24. The problem is that Hieatt's da capo repetition is based on the assumption that Spenser intentionally split the *Epithalamion* in half and matched the stanzas accordingly. Another problem is that for each of the correspondences between stanzas which Hieatt cites, other equally convincing ones can be found which do not fit his system. Max Wickert argues against Hieatt's system by proposing a mirror-inversion scheme (in which stanza 1 matches 24, 2 matches 23, and so forth) which ultimately proves as confining as Hieatt's scheme. His concentric view of the poem's structure, while reasonable in connection with groups of stanzas within the poem, is arbitrary and unconvincing when extended to the pairing of individual stanzas. In addition to the many correspondences between stanzas in *Epithalamion* which fit neither Hieatt's nor Wickert's theory, the motifs of light and darkness pervade the poem in such a way as to defy systems for paired stanzas. After examining these critics' schemes in light of the poem itself, it must be concluded that Spenser did not match stanzas within *Epithalamion* according to any pattern--much less a pattern arbitrarily imposed by critics who have predetermined which stanzas must match to support their theories.
AGAINST STANZA-PAIRING IN EPITHALAMION
Many critics have examined the Epithalamion in terms of structure. Their approaches have varied from analyzing Spenser's use of conventions to studying the poem's imagery or its hymn-like pattern; Epithalamion's structure has been viewed as architectural, concentric, repetitious, or composed of independent stanza-units. However, two critics, A. Kent Hieatt and Max Wickert, have gone so far as to pair individual stanzas within the poem to support their theories of the poem's structure. It is to these systems for pairing that I wish to respond, for I believe that such systems impose a schematic strait-jacket upon the poem which the poem itself does not reinforce. The correspondences which these critics have proposed are not sufficiently convincing because they ignore other equally strong relationships between stanzas, the overview of which admits of no pattern. By citing some of these relationships, I hope to show that the poem is even more complex than has been noted, and that its complexity seriously hampers our boxing individual stanzas into predetermined pairs.

A. Kent Hieatt proposes his system for stanza-pairing in Short Time's Endless Monument. Before examining his paired stanzas, however, we should familiarize ourselves with a separable but related issue, Hieatt's astronomical theory about Epithalamion, which forms the basis for his book. Hieatt begins by noting several "peculiarities" in
the poem whose presence suggests "a hitherto neglected symbolic pattern underlying the poem" (p. 8). First, the bride in *Epithalamion* is the only character in all of Spenser's works who is attended by the Hours. Secondly, the *Epithalamion* is the only poem of Spenser's whose stanzas are varied— in length, rhyme-scheme, and metrical structure. The third peculiarity is that there are 24 stanzas and night falls at line 300, or after approximately 16 1/4 stanzas; the fourth is that the poem contains 365 long lines, distributed as equally as possible through 23 stanzas, 16 or 15 per stanza, plus 6 in the envoy. Finally, Hieatt sees the stanzaic series 1-12 as matching the stanzaic series 13-24. Hieatt proceeds to account for these peculiarities in terms of numerical and astronomical symbolism. The 365 long lines symbolize the 365 days of the year; the fact that night falls in the poem after approximately 16 1/4 stanzas corresponds to the actual number of daylight hours, sixteen and a fraction, in southern Ireland at the summer solstice. Hieatt's explanation for the poem's 68 short lines is more complex: he sees their total as symbolizing the sum of the seasons, months, and weeks and their placement (with two exceptions, stanzas 15 and 23, there are three short lines per stanza) as representing quarter-hourly divisions.

The first four peculiarities Hieatt cites cannot be denied: the bride is indeed the only Spenserian character
to be attended by the Hours; *Epithalamion* is Spenser's only poem whose stanzas are varied; there are 24 stanzas and night does fall at line 300; there are 365 long lines, distributed as equally as possible through 23 stanzas, plus 6 in the envoy. But his fifth "peculiarity," that stanzas 1-12 match stanzas 13-24, should not be assumed as a "given" in the way that the other peculiarities are given.

Hieatt's system of matching stanzas 1-12 with 13-24 is related to his astronomical explanations for the distribution of long lines throughout the poem. He says that Spenser seems to place the movement of daily hours against the movement of the sun by limiting the number of long lines per stanza (with each stanza representing one "clock" hour) to 15 or 16:

Every 15 or 16 days the sun, retarded 1/365 of a circle daily as compared with the starry firmament, will pass over from the realm of one hour, across a dividing line called by modern astronomers an hour-circle, into the realm of another hour, which encompasses 15° or 1/24 of a circle. In the course of 365 days, the sun will have occupied, and risen and set in, the space of each of the hours in turn, returning finally to the one from which it started

(p. 36).

In other words, the "hours" (or stanzas) of the poem represent, for Hieatt, the sidereal hours of modern astronomy. His system of matching stanzas 1-12 with 13-24 is needed to support his interpretation of the Hours as sidereal.
Beginning with the concept of the Hours in the "Mutability Cantos," which are there said to be "Porters"

Of heavens gate (whence all the gods issued)
Which they did dayly watch, and nightly wake
By even turnes . . .
(FO 7.7.45),

Hieatt explains that these Hours are stationed "at equal distances from each other, from east to west, all the way around the heavenly sphere" (p. 33), and that we know Spenser imagined them thus because of a passage from his Hymne of Heavenly Love:

Ere flitting Time could wag his eyas wings
About that mightie bound, which doth embrace
The rolling spheres, and parts their hours by Space
(24-26).

Stationed in or on the sphere of fixed stars, the Hours revolve with the sphere of fixed stars and take turns in the execution of daily and nightly duties in accordance with "a peculiar feature of the relationship between the motion of the planet Sol and that of the fixed stars": when the starry sphere has completed a full revolution of 360° around the earth, the sun will have completed only about 359°; "it hangs back daily about one degree, and has changed its position slightly in relation to the fixed stars above it" (p. 35). As evidence that Spenser saw the sun's motion in the same way, Hieatt quotes the allusion to the sun's movement in Epithalamion:
This day the sunne is in his chiefe sthight,
With Barnaby the bright,
From whence declining daily by degrees,
He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,
When once the Crab behind his back he sees
(265-9).

Finally, Hieatt tells us that it is because "we know"
Spenser intentionally split his poem in half and paired
his stanzas in a certain way that the stanzas are to be regarded as symbolizing sidereal hours:

In addition to symbolizing the hours of day and night at the summer solstice by the device of positive and negative refrains, Spenser has done something else, as we know: he has paired each of his stanzas with another one twelve stanzas away from it (backwards or forwards), or, to put it another way, he has suggested some kind of equivalence between any one stanza and another stanza separated from it by half the length of the poem; and this feature is equivalent to the situation of the sidereal hours in one important respect: any one of these twenty-four hours is precisely opposite, in the celestial sphere, another hour which is twelve hours, or one hemisphere, away from it, and the first of these exchanges its position with the other, in regard to day and night, in precisely half a year. Furthermore, in matching his stanzas against each other, Spenser has chosen to end one series at the end of stanza 12 and the other at the end of stanza 24 . . . Splitting the poem thus, he has in effect given us a counterpart of the situation of the sidereal hours at the equinoxes of both spring and autumn . . .

(p. 39).

Thus, Hieatt's concept of the sidereal hours in *Epithalamion* is dependent on his view that the poem is split in half and that stanzas 1-12 match, correspondingly, stanzas 13-24. As to the sun's motion, there is no reason to
suppose that Spenser meant anything except what the poem says: "declining daily by degrees," an action whereby the sun appears lower and lower on the horizon as winter approaches, rather than the complicated precession, or "hanging back," which Hieatt reads into the line.

I now wish to examine the nature of Hieatt's correspondences and to show why I consider his system for pairing stanzas inadequate. At the conclusion to his book, Hieatt prints the stanzas side by side, according to his system, with stanza 1 facing 13, 2 facing 14, and so forth. This arrangement focuses our attention on correspondences which Hieatt has already decided are viable and, at the same time, hinders our detection of correspondences which might appear were the stanzas arranged in the order in which they were written. Hieatt's bases for matching involve either similarities between stanzas or contrasts between them. These similarities and contrasts are sometimes based on specific words, sometimes on imagery, sometimes on thematic motifs—whatever Hieatt needs to reinforce his case for correspondence.

An example of his matching-by-contrast is stanzas 5 and 17. Stanza 5's "Wake now my love, awake; for it is time,/ The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed" is contrasted with stanza 17's "Now night is come, now soone her disaray,/ And in her bed her lay." Similarly, stanza 5's allusion to the rising of Phoebus contrasts with stanza
17's "Now day is done, and night is nighing fast." Hieatt further links the two stanzas by virtue of their similarities: stanza 5's "Why do ye sleep thus long, / When meet'er were that ye should now awake" is seen as related to Jove's taking of Maia "'Twixt sleep and wake" in stanza 17; Hieatt cites the juxtaposition of "sleep" and "wake" in each stanza as evidence. His final correspondence is also based on a similarity between the two stanzas, this time a relatively far-fetched one: he says that stanza 5 is "like a medieval spring opening connoting May; the 'love-learned' singing of the birds, the morning, the sun." Stanza 17's Maia is the "goddess of spring and of May; her name is etymologically related to that of the month" (p. 95). This correspondence seems especially tenuous, as we have no evidence for supposing that the birds are warbling in May. The descriptions of the morning, the sun, and the birds' singing may sound like "a medieval spring opening connoting May," but they sound like Chaucer's April morning as well. And the month of the poem is June.

Hieatt uses no consistent criterion for matching his stanzas; as in the previous pairing, he cites contrasts and similarities within the same argument; yet, when certain contrasts or similarities appear which would link a stanza to one outside his system, he ignores them. His matching of stanzas 6 and 18 is based on this kind of "blind spot";
all correspondences noted are limited to similarities.

Stanza 6's "And her fayre eyes like stars that dimmed were/
With darksome cloud" is allegedly related to stanza 18's
"Spread thy broad wing over my love and me,/ That no man
may us see." In other words, just as the cloud makes the
bride's eyes "invisible," so too will night make the couple
invisible. Hieatt goes outside the poem to establish a
correspondence between the Hours in stanza 6 to "Majesty"
in stanza 18: he says that because Jove and Day are equa-
ted in Spenser's "Mutability Cantos," the Hours of
Epithalamion "probably appear to Spenser's syncretic imagi-
nation to be born of Jove (since in one of his aspects he
rules, or is Day) and of Night, in Jove's own sweet garuen.
In that case, one product of Jove (i.e., Day) and Night--
namely the Hours--in stanza 6, is being paralleled with
their offspring--Majesty--in stanza 18" (p. 27). Finally,
Hieatt pairs stanzas 6 and 18 by their motif of adornment:
in stanza 6, the Hours and Graces are to adorn the bride;
stanza 18's night is to wrap the bridal pair in her mantle
and cover them with her wing. I intend to show, later in
this paper, that these similarities, while perhaps valid,
match stanzas 6 and 18 only by ignoring elements in both
stanzas which would just as strongly relate them to other
stanzas.

The strongest case for matching, Hieatt feels, is be-
tween stanzas 12 and 24. His pairing here is based on
specific words which occur only in these two stanzas: "due" and "endless." Stanza 12's posts are to be adorned, the pillars are to be decked (207) to give due (208) honor to the bride; in stanza 24, "the bride should duly have been decked with many ornaments, for which this poem is a recompense" (p. 109). The sacred ceremonies making "endless" matrimony (215-222) correspond to the "endless monument made by this poem to short time." Hieatt then moves from his citing of specific words to a more general correspondence: he links the relation of mortals to the Almighty, expressed in terms of awe in stanza 12, to the relation between time and Eternity in stanza 24. Hieatt's case for matching here underscores the fact that he has no objective standard for determining the validity of his correspondences; by moving from the specific to the general, he opens the door for us to move to more general correspondences as well. When we apply this kind of criterion to these stanzas ourselves, we will discover equally valid correspondences between these stanzas and ones outside his system.

Hieatt's realization of the tenuous correspondences between stanzas 1 and 13 and stanzas 3 and 15 led him to expand the possibilities for their pairings in "The Daughters of Horus: Order in the Stanzas of Epithalamion." He repeats the correspondences he cited earlier in his book between stanzas 3 and 15: in stanza 3, the muses are
told to gather nymphs and to confer special duties upon them for the day; in stanza 15, the poet imposes other special duties for the day on the young men of the town; in stanza 15, we learn that this day is St. Barnabas' Day, on which the sole folk-activity in sixteenth-century England was flower-gathering; the repeated injunction to the young men in stanza 15 to "ring ye the bels to make it weare away" relates to the injunction to the muses in stanza 3, "doe ye this song unto her sing" because all of the stanzas (except the last) end with "ring" (pp. 116-117). In this article, Hieatt extends his correspondences by further reflection on the word "ring," saying that no other stanzas in the poem contain so many references to circular enclosures (this is not true; I shall later point out just as many references in other stanzas). He links the circular garlands of the nymphs in stanza 3 to the circular movement of stanza 15's dance around bonfires; he also reminds us that the sun's two apparent motions in stanza 15 are ring-like. Finally, Hieatt invites any other scholar to attempt a different scheme for matching which may prove more plausible than his own; he remains inside his own system.

Critical response to Hieatt's discoveries has been generally favorable, qualified by reservations concerning his system for stanza-pairing. Kathleen Williams says his book's "main hypothesis is clear and convincing; Mr. Hieatt's
original and surprising contribution adds a further dimension to our understanding of what, in the sixteenth century, poetic creation could be thought to involve. Enid Welsford's review maintains that "the correspondences of the 'matching stanzas' are not sufficiently striking to remain in the reader's memory and equally plausible pairings can be arranged." Alastair Fowler praises the book with one exception: "The only phase of the argument which is imperfectly worked out is that describing the system of paired images in the two halves of the poem. Some stanzas are matched convincingly, but with others the comparison seems far-fetched." Although the reviewers, as we have seen, note Hieatt's system of stanza-matching as a principal weakness of his book, their criticism remains general, not getting down to specifics as I intend to do.

It seems to me that we have several problems with Hieatt's system. First, we do not "know" that Spenser intentionally matched the stanzaic series 1-12 to that of 13-24. Further, I am unable to see the "split" between stanzas 12 and 13 which Hieatt so easily finds. If I were an advocate of stanza-pairing, I would suggest that more than enough correspondences could be cited in these stanzas to present a case for their matching: they are the only stanzas whose setting is the church interior; both contain beings (choristers and angels) who sing in praise of the bride; both describe the bride's humility (stanza 12's "With trembling steps and humble reverence/ She commeth
in"; stanza 13's "but her sad eyes still fastened on the ground,/ Are governed with goodly modesty"). My strongest criticism, however, is not of specific correspondences which Hieatt finds between particular stanzas (many of these, after all, do exist), but of what he makes out of the correspondences. It is his system of thought which is faulty and which produces his "proof" that the stanzaic series $^{1-12}$ matches that of 13-24. We remember that, after noting correspondences between certain pairs of stanzas, he lists Spenser's intentional stanza-matching as a fifth "peculiarity" of the poem, placing this assumption in the same class with factual "givens"; his argument for splitting the poem in half and matching the two halves of the poem is based on a premise he has already assumed as fact. His correspondences, as I intend to show when I propose my own correspondences, arbitrarily include or ignore many elements in stanzas; he uses only those similarities and contrasts which support his system.

Max Wickert, in his article, "Structure and Ceremony in Spenser's Epithalamion," provides a complex alternative to Hieatt's system which ultimately proves as confining as Hieatt's. Wickert proposes that the second half of the poem is a mirror-inversion of the first half, rather than Hieatt's da capo repetition. Beginning with the "obvious" idea that stanzas 12 and 13 "provide an emphatically and mathematically exact midpoint, and that the
two halves on either side of this midpoint invite some sort of matching" (p. 137), Wickert proceeds to find evidence to support his view. Before matching individual stanzas, Wickert breaks the poem down into groups of stanzas which seem to mirror each other; his approach is from the general to the specific. He sees the poem's movement as "a linear progression through concentric topography": at the center is the church, surrounded by societal elements, which are themselves surrounded by the world of nature, which is surrounded by the supernatural. Thus the topography of the poem is seen as strictly symmetrical and the quantitative distribution of the stanzas is seen as conforming to this symmetry. Wickert breaks the poem down into groups of stanzas which correspond to the poem's topographical areas: church, society, nature, and the supernatural. Leaving aside the first and last stanzas, as both are outside the actual marriage ode, Wickert discusses these groups of stanzas in terms of triads (groups of three stanzas), tetrads (groups of four stanzas), and the central dyad (two stanzas) of the poem. The pattern which emerges (3-4-3-2-3-4-3) places stanzas 2-4 in the first triad, stanzas 5-8 in the first tetrad, stanzas 9-11 in the second triad, stanzas 12 and 13 in the central dyad, stanzas 14-16 in the third triad, stanzas 17-20 in the second tetrad, and stanzas 21-23 in the final triad.

Wickert then looks at other elements in these groups of stanzas besides setting—point-of-view; peculiarities of
motif, rhyming words—to further establish boundaries between the groups. For example, he says that all of the stanzas in the first triad (2-4) are addressed to the same group of personages (muses and nymphs) and that the point-of-view in all three stanzas includes repeated recognitions of lurking natural evil, "precariously held in check": stanza 2's "nights vnchearefull dampe"; stanza 3's sharp stones; stanza 4's wolves. At the beginning of stanza 5, the narrator's point of view shifts "drastically" and he directly addresses the bride, taking on for the next four stanzas the perspective of the bride. Stanzas 9-11 take on the perspective of the street; stanzas 12 and 13, the church interior; stanzas 14-16 take place within a social context, which mirrors that of the street in stanzas 9-11. Stanzas 17-20 return to the chamber-setting (mirroring the point-of-view in stanzas 5-8) and finally, stanzas 21-23, containing a triad of prayers—to Cynthia, Juno, and the heavens—mirror the invocations to Hymen, the Muses, and the Nymphs in stanzas 2-4. Further, the risings of celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and evening star, occur at times in the poem which correspond to the structural divisions already indicated: sunrise occurs at the beginning of stanza 5; the evening star appears in stanza 16, or the last stanza of the third triad; the rising of the moon occurs in the first line of stanza 21, or at the beginning of the final triad.
In general, I have no argument with Wickert's concentric theory as he applies it to groups of stanzas; topographically, at least, the poem does seem to move outward from the central dyad of the church interior. But Wickert does not stop here. It is his conviction that "unless the relations we have observed on the level of stanza groups also obtain for individual pairs of stanzas, either our argument or the poem must be fundamentally flawed. But as shall become clear, these relations do obtain for individual stanzas" (p. 149), a conviction with which I disagree. Looking, then, at his "necessary" system of stanza-matching, we find that he, like Hieatt, uses either similarity or contrast as evidence of correspondence between stanzas. An example of his matching-by-similarity is stanzas 2 and 23; these stanzas contain the only appearances of torches in the poem, and both "torches" are seen as dispersing undesirable darkness. Stanza 2's "light gluing lampe" disperses "the nights vnchearefull dampe" while stanza 23's celestial light overcomes "dreadful darknesse."

An example of Wickert's matching-by-contrast is stanzas 8 and 17; the noise, music, and dancing of stanza 8 are seen as contrasting with stanza 17's "Now ceasse ye damsels your delights forepast" and with the change of refrain which occurs at the conclusion to stanza 17.

Another kind of correspondence Wickert cites is
affected by the power of suggestion—that is, similarities are not based on specific, identical imagery, but on words in one stanza which "suggest" words in another stanza. His matching of stanzas 3 and 22 involves this type of correspondence. The flowers in stanza 3 are seen as suggesting the fruits for which the poet prays in stanza 22; the nymphs of stanza 3 suggest the gods and goddesses of stanza 22. Wickert's matching of 4 and 21 is also based on this kind of correspondence: the plea (to the Nymphs) in stanza 4 to protect women from wolves suggests stanza 21's invocation (to Cynthia) to protect the bride from dangers implicit in "wemens labours."

We remember that Hieatt needed his system for stanza-pairing to support his interpretation of *Epithalamion*'s stanzas as representing sidereal hours. Wickert feels that he needs his mirror-inversion system for stanza-pairing to support his concentric view of the poem's structure. Wickert, unlike Hieatt, does not assume as a given that Spenser matched particular stanzas; he begins by looking at the poem from a very broad perspective before getting into details. As long as he refrains from confining individual stanzas into mirrored partnerships, his discoveries seem reasonable. Unfortunately, when he gets into specific stanza-matching, his standards are no more objective than Hieatt's. His pairs are proposed at the expense of ignoring whatever does not fit his system. While certain
correspondences do exist between stanzas matched in Wickert's system, what he makes out of them (that stanza 1 matches 24, 2 matches 23, 3 matches 22, and so forth) is not supported by any careful reading of the poem. I now wish to propose relationships between stanzas which seem viable to me, citing Hieatt's and Wickert's correspondences wherever their juxtaposition to mine seems helpful or germane.

We remember that Hieatt extends his correspondences between stanzas 3 and 15 by further reflection on the word "ring," saying that no other stanzas in the poem contain so many references to circular enclosures. Though Hieatt's exploration of the "ring" motif is intriguing, how would he account for stanza 14's similar use of circular imagery ("Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,/ And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine")? Also, stanza 13's angels who "Forget their service and about her fly" participate in a motion which is as circular as a dance around a bonfire (and it is "about," not "around," which is the preposition in both cases).

Hieatt pairs stanzas 6 and 18 by their motif of adornment: in stanza 6, the Hours and Graces are to adorn the bride; stanza 18's night is to wrap the bridal pair in her mantle and cover them with her wing. Yet this motif of adornment is much more pronounced in stanzas other
than stanza 18, so that if a match were to be made between stanza 6 and another on the basis of adornment, stanza 2 ("Bid her awake therefore and soone her dight"), stanza 4 ("Be also present heere,/ To helpe to decke her"), and stanza 14 (posts, walls, Bacchus, and Hymen are "adorned") seem more likely candidates. Similarly, as Hieatt uses contrast when he needs it, stanzas 6 and 18 could be matched with the "disaray," the undressing, in stanza 17.

We remember that Wickert matches stanzas 3 and 22 on the basis of stanza 3's "flowers" which allegedly suggest the "fruits" for which the poet prays in stanza 22. This correspondence ignores the more obvious one between stanzas 3 and 17. These stanzas contain the only extended flower imagery in the entire poem. In stanza 3, the bridegroom wishes the nymphs to bring "another gay girland/For my fayre loue of lillyes and of roses," to deck the bridal chamber with flowers, and to strew the bride's path with "fragrant flowers all along." The flowers play a similarly preparatory role in stanza 17, where the damsels are told to "Lay her in lillies and violets," a position likened to Maia's, "lying on the flowry gras."

Hieatt links stanzas 12 and 24 by their unique use of "due" and "endless," while Wickert links stanzas 1 and 24, calling them "brackets" outside the actual marriage ode. Both ignore the motif of compensation which appears not only in the first stanza and the envoy, but also in.
in stanzas 2, 6, and 18. Stanza 2's "wished day" is one "that shall for all the paynes and sorrowes past,/ Pay to her vsury of long delight" (32-3). The "fayre houres" of stanza 6 "al that euer in this world is fayre/ Doe make and still repayre" (101-102). The recompense of stanza 18 is effected by night:

Now welcome night, thou night so long expected,
That long daies labour doest at last defray,
And all my cares, which cruell loue collected,
Has sumd in one, and cancelled for aye
(315-18).

Both critics use supernatural beings to connect their stanzas: Hieatt connects stanza 8's Hymen to stanza 20's "sonnes of Venus"; Wickert matches stanza 3's nymphs to stanza 22's gods and goddesses. Yet how much more obvious it would be to trace the same supernatural being through the poem: Hymen, the god of marriage, is mentioned in four of the stanzas, 2, 8, 14, and 22. In the second stanza, Hymen's waking coincides with the bridegroom's request of sunlight to bid his bride awake; we are told that it is Hymen's "maske" which is ready to be enacted. In stanza 8, boys run up and down the street shouting "Hymen io Hymen," filling "all the firmament" with invocation. Stanza 14's Hymen, having responded to the invocation, enters the world of human festivities, participating with Bacchus in the revelry and being crowned with "wreathes of vine." The Hymen of stanza 22 follows
Juno, Genius, and Hebe as a source for providing "fruitful progeny" (403). Thus Hymen is adapted to the changing hours and moods of the day, participating in the experience of the social community as well as the seclusion of the bridal bower.

Hieatt pairs stanzas 7 and 19 because in stanza 7, the sun is asked to shine favorably and not to burn the bride's face and in stanza 19, night is asked to prevent misfortunes. Wickert relates stanzas 6 and 19 because the "darksome cloud" which dims the bride's eyes in stanza 6 corresponds to the hidden fears, misconceived doubts, and deluding dreams of stanza 19. In other words, both critics pair stanzas through the shared motif of danger and imminent harm. This would be fine, did not other stanzas share this motif as well. Flowers are to be strewn in stanza 3 along the path to prevent the bride's hurting her feet on stones; stanza 18 contains a list of frights which rivals stanza 19's catalogue: "feare of perrill and foule horror," "false treason," "dread disquiet," "tempestuous storms," and "sad afraie." In addition, if we accept Frank B. Young's interpretation of the Medusa image in stanza 11, viewing Medusa as a symbol as awesome and shocking as the experience of coming out of Plato's cave, then stanza 11 would correspond to the stanzas already cited.9

Another reasonable correspondence which Hieatt and Wickert ignore, as it fits neither system, is that of
winged imagery. Four stanzas contain winged imagery: 5, 13, 19, and 20. The cheerful matins and warbles of the lark, the thrush, the ouzel, and the robin in stanza 5 contrast strikingly with the fearsome catalogue of birds in stanza 19. The bride is to "hearken to the birds louelearned song" in stanza 5; of the noises of the screech owl, stork, night raven, and vulture in stanza 19, the poet says, "Let none of these theyr drery accents sing" (351). The wings which flutter in stanza 13 belong to angels, who fly about the bride's face, stunned by her beauty. Their depiction is similar to the "hundred little winged loues, / Like divers fethered doues" of stanza 20, which "fly and flutter" about the bridal bed.

Hieatt contrasts the noise of stanza 8 with stanza 20's "But let stil Silence trew night watches keepe" (353); Wickert contrasts stanza 8's noise with stanza 17's "Now ceasse ye damsels your delights forepast" (296). In a sense, they have done my work for me here, in that both contrasts are equally plausible. Yet again, they ignore other stanzas which contain activities of music, noise, and merry-making. Do not the "roring Organs" of stanza 12 contrast as strongly with silence as do timbrels or shouting? Stanza 14's revelry is full of "ioyance," "iollity," feasting, singing, and dancing; is this not a contrast to "Now ceasse ye damsels your delights forepast?" The same might be said of stanza 15's bell-ringing. Further, the
stanzas chosen by these critics to represent silence and a laying aside of activity ignore stanza 18's "Nor any dread disquiet once annoy/ The safety of our joy;/ But let the night be calme and quietsome" (324-26) and stanza 19's call for silence: "Let no lamenting cryes, nor doleful teares/ Be heard all night within nor yet without" (334-35).

Hieatt matches stanza 9 to stanza 21, comparing the bride's moon-like procession to Cynthia's. Wickert pairs stanzas 9 and 16, saying that the procession of the bride in stanza 9 parallels the procession of the hours in stanza 16. Though both critics use mythological backgrounds or go outside the poem to establish correspondences between their chosen pairs whenever needed, both ignore the biblical background for stanza 9--Psalm 45--a source cited as early as Van Winkle. By ignoring this source, they simultaneously disregard the correspondence between stanzas 9, 10, and 19: all share the Bible as source; both the catalogue of beauty, from the Song of Solomon, and the catalogue of unclean birds, from Deuteronomy, serve to underscore, with stanza 9, the quality of holiness, of divine participation, which the bridegroom continuously asserts for his wedding day.

Finally, there are two motifs which I see as pervading the entire Epithalamion: light and darkness. Because light and darkness are related to the hours of the day and night, it seems to me that Spenser's manipulation of light and darkness is especially significant for our understanding
of the poem. For we have, after all, a poem with 24 stanzas whose movement seems patterned on the 24 hours of the day and night. But does this mean that we must slice the poem the way one might divide a clock's face, compartmentalizing stanzas into sidereal hours or mirrored marriage partners? While the stanzas may certainly represent hours, I suggest that Spenser's use of light and darkness in the poem serves to remind us that human experience is much more complex than the hours of daylight at the summer solstice and that the implications of light or darkness are more far-reaching than our empirical apprehensions of them.

Some variant of light is mentioned in eleven of the twenty-four stanzas: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15, 16, 19, 21, and 23. Four stanzas, 2, 5, 7, and 15, contain references to sunlight. "The Worlds light giuing lampe" disperses "nights vnchearefull dampe" in stanza 2; "Phoebus gins to shew his glorious hed" in stanza 5; "Faire Sun" is invoked in stanza 7 to "shew forth thy fauourable ray" (117), with the admonition not to burn the bride's face; we are given the summer solstice in stanza 15 with "This day the sunne is in his chiefest hight" (265). Stanza 4's light is the reflected light of a lake, a "christall bright" mirror (64). Fire imagery provides light in stanzas 2, 15, 19, and 23. Hymen's torch "flames with many a flake" in stanza 2; bonfires burn in stanza 15; "housefyres" and lightning are part of the catalogue of harmful phenomena in stanza 19; "a thousand
torches flaming bright" burn through the gods' temple in stanza 23. Stanzas 16 and 21 contain night lights, the "bright euening star" whose "twinkling light" acts as lovers' guide and the moon that "shines so bright" through the lovers' window. Three stanzas, 6, 7, and 9, use light as an aspect of the bride. Her waking eyes "shew theyr goodly beames/ More bright than Hesperus" (94-5); her face, in stanza 7, is "sunshyny" (119); in stanza 9, her processional is likened to Phoebe's; her hair is "lyke golden wyre" (154), and arranges itself "lyke a golden mantle" (156). The spacing of light imagery throughout the poem is such that we sense its diffusion through all the hours and moods of these twenty-four hours. Light is so malleable a substance in the poet's hands that it emerges through fire or water, human or supernatural faces, benign or malevolent forces. It becomes a lamp for illuminating any objective or subjective experience in the poem--whether the beauty of the bride, the bridegroom's hope for fruitful progeny, or the fear of "sudden sad affrights."

Aspects of darkness are similarly scattered throughout the poem, their uses as variable as those of light. Though we might expect that references to night would correspond to the changing hours of the day--that is, growing more positive as the time for consummation approaches, such is not the case. In the midst of the bedroom chamber setting is the catalogue of nighttime frights; rather than being confined to an empirical time-structure, the poet's references
to night seem drawn from a total human experience, an experience which is wide enough to recognize and incorporate emotions of hope and anxiety inside one motif.

The poem's first reference to night is in terms of the "nights vnchearefull dampe" which is dispersed by sunlight. In stanza 6, the bride awakes after a night during which her eyes "dimmed were/ With darksome cloud." Also in this stanza is the poem's paradigm for time, "But first come ye fayre houres which were begot/ In Ioves sweet paradice, of Day and Night," where night has connotations of neither good nor evil. Stanza 16 praises the evening star's appearance, as guide through the "nights dread" (290). Stanza 17 officially announces the arrival of night: "Now night is come." The welcome to night in stanza 18 invokes night as protector of the bridal couple from the dangers which, paradoxically, night itself brings. Stanza 19 contains the already discussed catalogue of nighttime frights, which are both perceptible, through the senses, and imagined, through "deluding dreames." Stanza 20 appoints Silence as a night watchman; under his control, night is seen as concealer, as setting for "sweet snatches of delight,/ Conceald through couert night" (362-3). Stanzas 21, 22, and 23 develop night as a time for fulfillment, for the "planting" of progeny, both earthly and eternal. Yet even in the midst of such positive aspects, we have the apprehension of "dreadful darknesse" in which "wretched earthly clods" fumble
about, dependent on "desired light" from heavenly beings.

Though the poem's literal night begins with stanza 17 and lasts through the remainder of the poem, Spenser's night is not limited to temporal confines. Spenser's night, because its territory is in the mind as well as in the actual universe, is as wide as total human experience, including the psychical experience where screech owls and goblins compete with benevolent deities for control of the events in a man's life. The irrational elements of accidental "helplesse harms" exist in the poet's consciousness alongside the rational hope for the marriage's fruition. Inside Spenser's night breathe joy, hope, peace, fear, a dread, and doubt, just as inside the total experience of Epithalamion dwell nymphs, angels, gods, human beings, wolves, larks, screech owls, ghosts, noise, silence, order, confusion, expectation, restlessness, real time, and the extra-temporal. As we have seen, these elements do not seem compartmentalized into matching pairs of stanzas, but occur throughout the poem in a way that defies such confining patterns.

In conclusion, I ask again whether stanza-pairings are acceptable as a viable means of viewing Spenser's intentions. I feel they are not; they are neither necessary for the purpose of examining the poem's structure nor have they been shown to be accurate (in that they too often ignore other equally valid correspondences). If I have made correspondences between stanzas in Epithalamion appear to be random,
their seemingly random occurrences do not suggest that Spenser randomly placed them. On the contrary, they imply that Spenser, the master craftsman of shaping time, numbers, and words to his purposes, was conscious of the other kind of time which functions through the memory of "paynes and sorrowes past," through fears of "sudden sad affrights," and through hopes for "fruitfull progeny" both on earth and in heaven. Just as memories, hopes, and fears do not punch a time clock when entering the consciousness, Spenser's stanzas do not conform to the chopping block which has been prepared for them by critics who feel stanzas must be paired to support astronomical theories or to prove concentric structure.
Footnotes

1. For examples of early criticism, I refer the reader to Appendix VIII of the Variorum Edition of Spenser's Minor Poems (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1947), Vol. II. All quotations from Epithalamion are from this edition.

2. Following is a selective bibliography of criticism since 1957 which has examined, to varying degrees, the poem's structure:


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