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SHAKESPEARE AND SPENSER

Shakespeare & Spenser

BY W. B. C. WATKINS

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PREFACE

SPENSER AND SHAKESPEARE embody two great poetic traditions, narrative and dramatic, two primary ways of using language, direct and oblique. They complement as well as supplement each other. No other two taken together so well demonstrate the achievement and potentiality of English poetry. And the technical triumph of the Elizabethan age, its wealth of poetic language, cannot be illustrated by Shakespeare alone, or by Shakespeare in combination with any other poet than Spenser.

Each held his own through all permutations of taste until the turn of this century, and Shakespeare continues supreme. But Spenser is now abandoned to schoolrooms, where his poetic vitality is seldom rekindled by lip-service to the past. We have finally opened our ears to Dryden, but not to Dryden's master in verse satire;* brought up on apology for Spenser rather than criticism, we are not encouraged to expect from him satire and humor. Hazlitt wants to throw overboard all intellectual ballast so that Spenser may sail the breeze with frail Coleridgean fantasy. Even Yeats, who learns from him, exorcizes with priest-like fervor all that is priest- or prophet-like in Spenser, all that disturbs the sensuous and beautiful; his verdict, as unsatisfactory as that of Legouis, is a pagan poet in Puritan chains. Much of Spenser like Ben Jonson requires historical orientation; some is unrecoverable. Yet those who read with open minds and only a general knowledge of his period find him still one of the half dozen major experiences in English poetry.

Spenser, when he wants, as quickly as Chaucer drops meditation and description for a swift-paced story. He writes the best poetic dialogue, equally admirable as poetry and speech, before

* For instance, Mr. Oscar Campbell, reviewing Elizabethan satire historically in his *Comical! Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida,"* 1938, ignores Spenser entirely.

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Shakespeare's maturity. And he is capable of considerable drama; if Spenser had not been exiled from London and thus from any contact with the theater, if he had continued throughout the eighties the vein of the nine comedies lost to us, among Shakespeare's masters might have been a poetic dramatist superior to Kyd and Lyly, less intensely and powerfully imaginative than Marlowe, but of greater breadth, understanding, and humor. Yet the very fact that Shakespeare wrote drama, Spenser narrative, makes comparison especially rewarding, since these two kinds of poetry have long fertilized each other, like the later cross-pollination of biography and the novel. Kinship to Shakespeare, like a flintstone, sparks Spenser's vitality, and new facets in Shakespeare shine in the light of Elizabethan non-dramatic verse.

While I focus on each singly and on both together, I am not concerned with "influences" but with poetic qualities and spiritual values. Unless you restrict yourself to technique alone, which I do not, Spenser and Shakespeare lead inevitably to such general questions as the nature of the tragic impulse, moral and aesthetic values, simultaneous presentation of the universal and the particular, and the ways in which all of these modify technique. Instead of chapters, I chose the more flexible scheme of eight autonomous yet closely interwoven essays, whose unity is not formal but depends on development and variation of dominant themes. These essays are in a sequence calculated to heighten their meaning; though each can be read separately, each presupposes those that have gone before and gains by being read in its context. With some disadvantages, this scheme allows more compression, more freedom, and lessens the danger of forced parallels.

I quote lavishly, because quotations are the evidence; the poetry itself is always the thing. At times quotations are used structurally. Often they are deliberately repeated in different contexts for different purposes, a minor one being the advantage of establishing familiarity, especially with Spenser. More important, some truths about poetry can be conveyed only in terms of other poetry. While the critic's method is primarily analysis followed by synthesis, in dealing with poetry he borrows a few of the poet's devices: when logic is limited he uses metaphorical bridges, repetition of themes, sharp juxtapositions, in an attempt to make

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distinctions of quality impossible to rationalize. The result is occasional dramatization of the text.

Since these essays, therefore, do not proceed in purely logical order, a brief indication of continuity may help.

The first essay, Shakespeare's *Banquet of Sense*, begins with *Venus and Adonis* and its relation to other Elizabethan Ovidian poems (especially Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, and Ovidian passages in Spenser); then traces the impact of this particular literary tradition on Shakespeare and his modification over a period of years (*Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*) until he finally assimilates it in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Only incidentally a study in growth, this attempt to isolate the individual Shakespearean quality of "spiritualized sensuality," in contrast with Marlowe and Ovid and in comparison with Spenser and Chapman, introduces one of the main themes of the book—the interdependence of physical and spiritual. This theme recurs in the second essay, the fifth, and in the sixth, *Marriage Song*, is almost counterpointed with the first.

This varying relation of physical to spiritual carries over into the second essay, *Against Time's Ruin*, because it is a key not only to Spenser but also to his *Faerie Queene* world. For cumulative effect, more likenesses and differences in Shakespeare and Spenser are introduced than can be fully dealt with in brief space; consequently, many of the conclusions of this transitional and least independent essay are found later. The theme which rises to gradual dominance toward the end of the essay is melancholy due to the transience of time, the instability of human life. Shakespeare's imaginative conception of time is related to Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*. The chief difference—Spenser's positive commitment to Christianity—is deferred in order to pursue in the third essay, "*King Lear*" in the Context of Shakespeare, Shakespeare's development of the dualities: individual and universal, transient and eternal—primarily in *Richard II* and *King Lear*. These two tragedies, together with intervening plays, show the evolution over a decade not only of Shakespeare's mixed technique of psychological realism and symbolical stylization, but of his greatest themes. For assaying the quality of the tragedy in *King Lear*, I use *Richard II* and *Everyman* as two chief points of

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reference; for ethical implications, Senecan stoicism and Christianity.

Thus the third essay shuttles between technique and content, which are best considered together since they are only theoretically separable. But Spenser's method is less familiar, more complicated, and narrative is diffuse; consequently the fourth essay, *The Painted Dragon: Allegory and Characterization*, after considering the nature of allegory, tries to show how it actually works in the *Faerie Queene*, relating it to the two techniques in Shakespeare. And the fifth essay, *The Red Cross and the Heavenly Maid*, explores the elaborate maze of the first two interlocked books, which I consider the heart of the poem and Spenser's grandest achievement. In this way the fourth and fifth essays attempt to accomplish for Spenser what the third does for Shakespeare, and all three grow out of the second.

The sixth essay, *Marriage Song*, I call a Coda, since it is concerned with married love, the secondary theme of the *Faerie Queene*. Marriage preoccupies Spenser from the beginning; it dominates the Third and Fourth Books of the *Faerie Queene*, is prominent in the Fifth and Sixth, and culminates in the wedding and betrothal songs. Marriage is important to Shakespeare, too; *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, already touched on in the first essay, reappear along with marriages from other plays in comparison with Spenser's conception of married love, his finest poetic symbol and most successful harmony of physical and spiritual.

The seventh essay, *Spenser's Palace of Art*, without entirely neglecting Shakespeare, is devoted mainly to Spenser, the greatest English pictorial poet, who best shows the virtues and faults of *ut pictura poesis*. His color sense, except for effects of vibrant light, is predominantly medieval; whereas his sense of design and his emotional quality are largely Renaissance, though he knew little great painting at first hand. But it is not my purpose merely to examine a poetic theory which fascinated the Renaissance, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or to illustrate a word painter. I try to show how the pictorial lies in the very nature of words as a medium, and how at his best Spenser uses visual imagery not just for decoration but to embody his central meaning.

The last essay, *The Kingdom of Our Language*, restores to

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Spenser a share in that kindgom second only to Shakespeare's, exploring agreement as well as divergence in their use of language. Like Shakespeare's, Spenser's craftsmanship is permanently relevant and his kind of poetry still valid.

In a book as compact as I could make it, some emphases will seem arbitrary, some omissions surprising. But to anyone writing over a considerable period of time, with evolution of opinion which time brings (necessitating hundreds of readjustments in cross reference and interplay of thought), the moment comes when he must cut off his work in its imperfections. If the scholar too often is hobbled by outmoded conventions, the imaginative lay critic, wearing blinders against facts of the author's time and circumstances in which he worked, in an exciting heat may run off the course. Yet in this attempt to harness scholarship and criticism, whenever one gets too much in the way of the other, I unhitch scholarship.

This is a tacit collaboration not only with the past but with innumerable former colleagues and students in the daily exchange of ideas; the full list of my creditors would be a directory. In a no less heartfelt because general acknowledgment, I name (and absolve of all responsibility) two to whom I owe most for insight, candor, forbearance: Mr. C. G. Osgood and Mr. D. A. Stauffer.

I wish to thank the editors of the *Southern Review* for permission to include here in revised form Shakespeare's *Banquet of Sense*, which appeared in the final issue, Spring 1942; and the editor of the *Review of English Studies*, London, who published in January 1942 a condensation of "King Lear" in the *Context of Shakespeare as The Two Techniques in "King Lear"*

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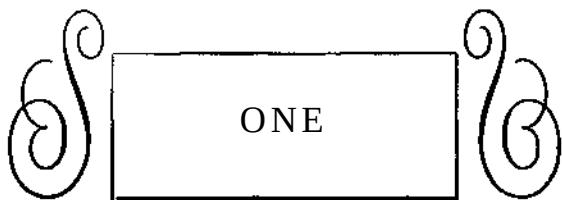
W. B. C. WATKINS

Laurel, Mississippi
January, 1948

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SHAKESPEARE AND SPENSER



SHAKESPEARE'S BANQUET OF SENSE

Alas! why lent not heaven the soul a tongue?
Nor language, nor peculiar dialect,
To make her high conceits as highly sung?
But that a fleshly engine must unfold
A spiritual notion.
O, nature! how dost thou defame in this
Our human honours, yoking men with beasts,
And noblest minds with slaves; thus beauty's bliss,
Love and all virtues that quick spirit feasts
Surfeit on flesh; and thou that banquet'st minds,
Most bounteous mistress, of thy dull-tongued guests
Reap'st not due thanks.

—Chapman, OVID'S BANQUET OF SENSE.

"SELF-SCHOOLED, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure," Arnold calls Shakespeare. These epithets have poetic validity, though we no longer, like critics of the seventeenth century, consider Shakespeare a literary changeling, owing parentage and schooling only to Nature and Fancy. But in establishing his real parentage and the probable extent of his schooling, in the whole process of humanizing him, historical scholars sometimes unintentionally give the impression that Shakespeare's real aim in writing was obligingly to illustrate all the literary and social conventions of his day. Ever since Theobald they have been invaluable in revealing sources and analogies, usually less convincing in determining the metamorphosis of those sources in Shakespeare's own work. And this second task, though it can be accomplished with only relative success, is more important. The

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citation of a source or analogy is but the starting point for literary criticism.

At least we know now that Shakespeare was not a genius operating in a literary vacuum, and not so untaught as Ben Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek" implies. No University Wit himself, Shakespeare knew many of that select circle; however difficult to demonstrate satisfactorily, he must have been deeply affected by personal and professional association with them. The safest evidence is in his own writing, and the most illuminating is that which shows the impact of a current literary mode on Shakespeare's individual poetic temperament, so far as we can deduce that temperament from the constant study of the whole body of his work. Evidence of this kind is the player's speech about Hecuba in Hamlet:

But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen
Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flame
With bisson rheum, a clout about that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;—
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd. . . ,¹

This speech, significantly based on the Aeneid,² reduces the player to tears and draws an extraordinary panegyric from Hamlet:

For the play, I remember, pleas'd not the million; 'twas caviare to the general; but it was—as I receiv'd it, and others, whose judgement in such matters cried in the top of mine—an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning.

Such commendation of an extravagant, bombastic vein by the most intellectual of Shakespeare's characters has bewildered thoughtful students of the play; the tone of the praise is so personal that it seems to be Shakespeare himself speaking. Bradley analyzes in some detail many suggested interpretations.⁸ More recently, Grierson maintains that the speech represents "Shakespeare's conception of classical tragedy, something that moved on loftier buskins than would suit a play at the Globe Theatre or his own taste for life and reality."⁴ That Shakespeare had a

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taste for life and reality does not preclude an interest in more formalized "literary" modes, or the implication that he may really have wanted to write in this vein; in fact, the genuineness of his desire is attested by his two early, self-consciously literary poems, *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece*, and it can readily be proved that his interest in current literary modes never left him, though the modes are more perfectly assimilated in his mature work.

In *Venus and Adonis* Venus is so shocked to discover Adonis wounded that she sees double:

"My tongue cannot express my grief for one,
And yet," quoth she, "behold two Adons dead!
My sighs are blown away, my salt tears gone,
Mine eyes are turn'd to fire, my heart to lead:
Heavy heart's lead, melt at mine eyes' red fire!
So shall I die by drops of hot desire."

This anticipates the highly wrought Hecuba vein, and such a line as

Variable passions throng her constant woe

is exactly the sort of rhetoric deplored in eighteenth century poetry by the Romantic critics who have a neat way of blaming un-Shakespearean passages in Shakespeare on other men—"This is not Shakespeare; let the chips fall where they may."

We find in *Venus and Adonis* this elaborate yet beautiful image:

Or, as the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain,
And there, all smothered up, in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to creep forth again;

followed by a couplet which is dubious:

So, at his bloody view, her eyes are fled
Into the deep-dark cabins of her head.

To explain precisely why I find the first four lines successful poetry and the final couplet dubious would require an elaborate analysis out of place here; for, while it is an essential critical technique, intellectual analysis, unless it is constantly and some-

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what tediously tested against the poem, is liable to become skillful rationalization, self-indulgence of the intellect at the expense of the poem. A few suggestions will suffice.

Venus instinctively recoils from the realization of her anticipated dread, Adonis' death, shutting her eyes at the sight of his wounds.* The snail image, though a daring conceit, shows both emotional and imaginative correspondence with Venus' recoil; if there is any emotion at all in the following couplet, it is melodramatic violence inconsistent (despite the equivalence suggested by so) with the preceding emotion, while the imagistic correspondence is literal and rationalistic. We are led away from Venus' closing eyes by the snail image, so delicate and elaborate that it draws attention to itself; even so, the tenderness and timorous shrinking from pain fuse both images, the snail and Venus' eyes, and the incidental correspondence between shell and skull we absorb without visualization. In his attempt in the couplet to bring us back to Venus, Shakespeare makes unfortunately explicit and visual what the snail image had subtly suggested; we see too clearly the eye-sockets of her skull—"the deep-dark cabins of her head"—into which her personified eyes are fleeing. However ingenious the conception may be, it is frigid; and the elaboration through two more stanzas anticipates Cowley's cold-blooded, protracted autopsy of a conceit.

The fault in this couplet is not the conceit, which is successful in the snail image; nor is it the highly wrought language. All his life Shakespeare indulged in rhetoric from time to time, either for its own sake or to indicate a certain quality of emotion; but the rhetoric in Venus and Adonis is disconcerting because it does not seem to be always intentional or under full control. Much of the poem fails where Hero and Leander succeeds, yet the partial failure of Venus and Adonis is illuminating.

Shakespeare at this period is immature and overambitious. He is straining for effect and consequently ill at ease. One suspects that his head is in the poem but not his heart. He seems carried out of his own element by his admiration for Ovid and for Marlowe's recapture of the Ovidian spirit in Hero and Leander. Marlowe's Ovidianism, like classic drama, is as much caviar to Shakespeare as to the general, though I think he would have been

* "His bloody view/" besides being unprofitably ambiguous, is even more inept than "passions throng her constant woe."

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reluctant to admit it, just as some ten years later the Hamlet passage suggests reluctance to give up entirely a drama moving "on loftier buskins than would suit a play at the Globe Theatre."

Ovid unquestionably affected Shakespeare profoundly. "The whole character of Shakespeare's mythology⁷ according to Mr. Root, "is essentially Ovidian."⁵ But in *Venus and Adonis* he is at once too close to Ovid and Marlowe and too far removed from them. He could not accept the Ovidian spirit either pure or in Marlowe's Italianate version, and he had not yet learned to transmute it. Marlowe seems to be the immediate cause of the difficulty. Despite Shakespeare's immense debt to him, the minds of the two poets, their imaginations, their emotional quality, their interests, are on the whole fundamentally different. Both are passionate and intense, but in different ways and about different aspects of life. Marlowe is more intellectual; his mind is more single in focus and narrow in range. Literary allusion and imagery have for him, for Spenser, and for Milton deeper imaginative meaning than they ever have for Shakespeare, who is more emotional than intellectual, more interested in people than in books. The Ovidian tradition is essentially literary. Marlowe is completely at home in it; Shakespeare is not, though he tries to be in *Venus and Adonis*.

It has often been remarked that what vitality the poem has* is due to the nature imagery drawn from firsthand observation of fields and woods. Shakespeare is inferior to Marlowe in intellectualized, artificial imagery; Marlowe is incapable of the Shakespearean type, such as the snail image, the hare, the hounds, the horses, the divedapper, the caterpillar, the blue-veined violets, and especially this:

Lo, here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty.

* Coleridge's famous passage purportedly on *Venus and Adonis* and the Rape of Lucrece (*Biographia Literaria*, 15), except for commendation of the shooting-star image, which Shakespeare borrowed, defeats expectation. If Coleridge blankets the poems with approval, Swinburne is too severe, though more cogent, in his Introduction to the Works of Chapman (1875): "With all its overcrowding beauties of detail, Shakespeare's first poem is on the whole a model of what a young man of genius should not write on such a subject; Marlowe's a model of what he should."

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The artifice of "moist cabinet" is in keeping with the poem; yet it is interesting to find the more characteristically Shakespearean expression of the same image not long after in Sonnet 29:

. . . the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate,

and many years later, in *Cymbeline*, the final transmutation:

Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chalic'd flowers that lies.

Quite apart from growth in poetic maturity, this last passage shows perfect assimilation of a literary image with one of natural observation, an assimilation conspicuously absent in most of *Venus and Adonis*. In attempting to combine a conservatory atmosphere and the out-of-doors, an ornate style and simplicity of observation, Shakespeare may have had in mind something more than merely another Ovidian poem, or something different, but he fails to bring it off.

The limitations of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* are the limitations of its genre, the full imaginative, sensuous, and humorous possibilities of which he exploits; the poem embodies, as Mr. Bush says, the best qualities of the Italianate Ovidian tradition, along with its vices.⁶ This tradition derives as much from the *Amores* as from the *Metamorphoses*, as much from the sensualist as from the excellent storyteller. *Venus and Adonis*, for instance, combines two fables from the *Metamorphoses*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Salmacis and Hermaphrodite*, while its motto is from the *Amores*.⁷ In *Hero and Leander* Marlowe sacrifices characterization and flow of narrative to sensuous elaboration for its own sake and to contemplative sensuality. He does not care about consistency. Leander is sexually innocent part of the time merely for the piquancy of the situation; otherwise he speaks with the authority of the "Professor of Love." Both lovers, in fact, are hardly presented in individual terms at all; they are primarily instruments for subtle sensuous and sensual impressions. And for this reason Marlowe, unlike Ovid, removes all prosaic traces, so that the sensual is presented as unadulterated beauty. Miss Ellis-Fermor says: "The poet of *Hero and Leander*

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does not 'look before and after,' much less does he 'pine for what is not/ . . . Beauty is enough, and the love of beauty is neither an instinct in conflict with moral preoccupations and dark, obscure fears, nor a poignant devotion to a threatened and possibly doomed cause."⁸

Curiously enough, of the other Elizabethans Spenser rather than Shakespeare comes closest to catching this spirit, only of course in moments when he is morally off-guard, as in a few stanzas of the Bower of Bliss and the Gardens of Adonis, or in his description of Leda and the Swan in the House of Busyrane:

Then was he turnd into a snowy Swan,
To win faire Leda to his lovely trade:
O wondrous skill, and sweet wit of the man,
That her in daffadillies sleeping made,
From scorching heat her daintie limbes to shade:
Whiles the proud Bird ruffing his fethers wyde,
And brushing his faire brest, did her invade;
She slept, yet twixt her eyelids closely spyde,
How towards her he rusht, and smiled at his pryde.⁹

Even in these unguarded moments Spenser sometimes shows, if not explicitly, at least in the tone of his verse, an unconscious repulsion in the fascination—a repulsion totally absent from Hero and Leander. This portrait of Cymochles is the true Spenserian sensualist:

He, like an Adder, lurking in the weeds,
His wandring thought in deepe desire does steepe,
And his fraile eye with spoyle of beautie fcedes;
Sometimes he falsely faines himsclfe to sleepe,
Whiles through their lids his wanton eies do peepe,
To steale a snatch of amorous conceipt,
Whereby close fire into his heart does creape:
So, them deceives, deceived in his deceit,
Made drunke with drugs of deare voluptuous receipt.¹⁰

We have only to compare Cymochles with Leda to see the difference; his sensuality is more mental than physical. The sense of moral danger and the emotional connotations of adder are not found in Spenser's Leda or in Ovid or in Marlowe. They are not present in Spenser's account of Venus and Adonis in a tap-

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estry of the Castle Joyous in the first canto of the Third Book of the Faerie Queene:

And whilst he slept, she over him would spread
Her mantle, coloured like the starry skyes,
And her soft arme lay underneath his hed,
And with ambrosiall kisses bathe his eyes;
And whilst he bath'd, with her two crafty spyes,
She secretly would search each daintie lim,
And throw into the well sweet Rosemaryes,
And fragrant violets, and Pances trim,
And ever with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him.

So did she steale his heedelesse hart away,
And joyd his love in secret unespyde.

Though this is as non-moral as the Leda passage, it has a peculiar innocence lacking in Leda. Later, in the sixth canto, Venus and Adonis become philosophical symbolism in a poetic account of creation, for Spenser's allegory is protean. In the actual telling of the story Shakespeare owes him nothing, and the influence of Spenser's Ovidianism is impossible to estimate. Shakespeare knew Spenser's poetry. He is closer in spirit to Spenser than to Marlowe. But, while his debt to Marlowe is abundantly evident, his relationship to Spenser is less susceptible to textual proof.

Miss Ellis-Fermor, tacitly assuming that progression in time is inevitably progression in quality, considers Hero and Leander the final and perfect fruit of Marlowe's genius; she is troubled because she finds it "beautiful and seductive, but not passionate or profound," and insists that we do not know what he would have done with the poem if he had finished it himself.¹¹ One thing is certain: he could hardly have made the continuation more serious and profound without destroying the delicate balance of sensuality and humor which gives the fragment that we have its miraculous tone.

This blend of pagan delight in sensuality, kept in bounds by the polished restraint of verse, and urbane humor is rare in English poetry. It is achieved by Chaucer and Marvell and attempted by Byron in *Don Juan*. Byron's sophistication, however amusing and witty, seems immature when compared to that of his elders. Consider this passage from Hero and Leander:

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To Venus, answered shee, and as shee spake,
Forth from those two translucent cesternes brake
A streame of liquid pearle, which downe her face
Made milk-white paths, whereon the gods might trace
To Joves high court.

Translucent cisterns for eyes and *liquid pearl* for tears are certainly artificial; yet they are effective in Marlowe's poem, where all the imagery is artificial, highly wrought, as if by Yeats' Grecian goldsmith. This aureate style is difficult to sustain without risking the absurd. The tone established must be under complete control; it must be complex—serious delight in extravagance together with humorous awareness of that extravagance. The hyperbolical description of Hero's buskins, with their chirruping water-filled sparrows, strains credulity; but when we come shortly after to these lines describing Lcander:

His dangling tresses that were never shorne,
Had they beene cut, and unto Colchos borne,
Would have allur'd the vent'rous youth of Greece
To hazard more than for the golden Fleece,

we begin to suspect latent humor, and our suspicions are confirmed by such couplets as this:

And many seeing great princes were denied,
Pyn'd as they went, and thinking on her died.

Any lingering doubt is banished by the deft ironic touches, which Byron should have envied:

Still vowd he love, she wanting no excuse
To feed him with delaies, as women use,
Or thirsting after immortalitie—
All women are ambitious naturallie—
Impos'd upon her lover such a taske,
As he ought not performe, nor she to aske.

.
Albeit Leander rude in love, and raw,
Long dallying with Hero, nothing saw
That might delight him more, yet he suspected
Some amorous rites or other were neglected.
.

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Where seeing a naked man, she scrieht for feare,
Such sights as this to tender maids are rare,
And ran into the darke herselfe to hide.
Rich *jewels in the darke* are soonest spide.
Unto her was he led, or rather drawne,
By those white limmes, which sparckled through the lawne.
The neerer that he came, the more she fled,
And *seeking refuge, slipt into* her bed.

Shakespeare in Venus and Adonis is no more elaborate than Marlowe. Superficially considered, he seems to be trying for the same effect:

Her two blue windows faintly she upheaveth,
and

Once more the ruby-colour'd portal open'd,
Which to his speech did honey passage yield;
Like a red morn, that ever yet betoken'd
Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field.

Something may be said for the first image, despite the conceit; the second is both more frigid and more cloying than Marlowe's extravagances. As in Marlowe, there is often humorous awareness in the exaggeration. Desire lends Venus strength

Courageously to pluck him from his horse,
and there is even Byronic colloquialism and bathos:

"Sweet boy/" she says, "this night I'll waste in sorrow,
For my sick heart commands mine eyes to watch.
Tell me, Love's master, shall we meet to-morrow?
Say, shall we? shall we? Wilt thou make the match?"
He tells her, no; to-morrow he intends
To hunt the boar with certain of his friends.

Marlowe surpasses Byron in this sort of effect; Shakespeare only equals him. But the important point is that the humor in Venus and Adonis is sporadic and incidental rather than interfused throughout. Shakespeare wavers between taking himself too seriously and not seriously enough.

This wavering is symptomatic of his lack of perfect control; whether we attribute this to ignorance of exactly what he was after or to failure in achievement makes no real difference. The

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same wavering is apparent in his handling of the two characters in the story. If the embryonic playwright intended to dramatize two conflicting points of view, as he does frequently in his plays with complete success, the result is fumbling; and we are profitably concerned only with the result.

Mr. Wilson Knight, preoccupied with what he calls "in-feeling," finds that "Adonis's blood-life is felt through his physique; he is, as it were, a body lighted from within, and you get more of a real physical existence than in Marlowe's description of Leander's nakedness."¹² He is right to the extent that Shakespeare does not limit himself to the beautiful but recognizes other aspects of physical relationship, though his recognition is not completely Ovidian. The most that can be said for the "real existence" of Adonis, physical or otherwise, is that he is an incomplete sketch of what might in a less confusing poem have been a characterization. Leander has no personality. Shakespeare seems to have begun, like Marlowe, with the idea of frankly exploiting all the possibilities of the innocent young man in a sexual situation. Then, like Leander, Adonis suddenly and unexpectedly becomes a mouthpiece for wise aphorisms on love; we are not made to feel that these sentiments motivate his aversion from the beginning. The sacrifice of characterization in Marlowe we accept because we recognize a purpose; in Shakespeare the imperfect characterization remains confusing to the end, for the stated purpose appears accidental—one of several improvisations—and we are left wondering whether at certain critical points the poet is not using Adonis as a mask for his own conflicting emotions. I do not think that Mr. Knight clarifies the issue by calling the consciousness of Venus and Adonis healthy "in the sense that Lawrence is, or tried to be, healthy"; and I completely disagree with his belief that "in Venus and Adonis and Lucrece Shakespeare gets his main sexual, and general, poles of reference clear."¹³ Clarity of pole or reference is precisely what is lacking.

Venus is reminiscent of the sixth elegy of the Third Book of the *Amores* when she protests:

"Fie, lifeless picture, cold and senseless stone,
Well-painted idol, image dull and dead,

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Statue contenting but the eye alone,
Thing like a man, but of no woman bred!"

She is right to an extent that Shakespeare can hardly have intended; throughout most of the poem Adonis is a "well-painted idol, image dull and dead/" and the fact that the conditions of the story impose unresponsiveness on him is not sufficient explanation.

Mr. Knight points out that the poem "is written from the woman's view and the sensuous attractiveness is masculine"¹⁴ He suggests a relation to the "heterosexual" sonnets, an explanation like Mr. Wyndham Lewis' that Shakespeare's "sex organization, his sentimentality was directed towards other men and not towards women."¹⁵ Applied to Venus and Adonis, this generalization is facile, not taking sufficiently into account either the conditions of the story or the nature of the imagination. The "sensuous attractiveness" of Venus is by no means overlooked, though repugnance is stressed occasionally in a manner not fully explicable by a dramatic conception of Adonis' predicament. The modern tendency to go beyond a work of art to the "sex organization" of the artist should be judged with considerable skepticism when it is so blandly confident as in Mr. Lewis. In his book on the sonnets Mr. Young combats the psychoanalysts in their own terms;¹⁶ whether he or anyone can settle so delicate a matter with complete success is debatable. Mr. Hubler considers the question with admirable common sense.¹⁷ It is not my purpose to enter the controversy beyond pointing out that, though as a man of the Renaissance Shakespeare was cognizant of homosexuality, there is nothing in Venus and Adonis comparable to the Neptunc-Leander passage in Marlowe's poem, and nothing in Richard II so frank and sympathetic in treatment as the Piers Gaveston portrait in Marlowe's Edward II.*

The possibility of revulsion from the physical fact of sex is more germane to the issue, and is a plausible explanation of the confused emotional quality of Venus and Adonis, though not wholly convincing, since soon after Shakespeare writes with extraordinary frankness *Sonnet* 151 to the dark lady:

* Mr. Knight's and Mr. Lewis' statements, for instance, would be more applicable to Faustus' speech to Helen, quoted below, p. 127; Marlowe's focus seems to be primarily on Jupiter rather than on Semele and Arethusa.

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Love is too young to know what conscience is;
Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:
For, thou betraying me, I do betray
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
My soul doth tell my body that he may
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason,
But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her "love" for whose dear love I rise and fall.

And much of the beauty of Juliet's speech on her wedding night comes from her frank recognition of the physical:

Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love grow bold,
Think true love acted, simple modesty.¹⁸

The answer seems to be not so much refusal to accept the physical facts of love as inability to accept them entirely in Ovid's or in Marlowe's terms.

Shakespeare, who was to become the supreme master of emotional intensity, expresses Venus' passion thus:

By this the love-sick queen began to sweat,

Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil.

Adonis has a "sweating palm"; his breath is a "steam" on which Venus feeds "as on a prey." She denies that she lacks juice, and her heaving bosom is an earthquake. This suggests pantomimic portrayal of passion in the silent movie and is equally unconvincing. There is nothing wrong with sweat in a love scene; it adds to rather than detracts from Britomart as Spenser portrays her after her fight with Artegall, her helmet off and her hair

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loose. And it is not enough to say that Shakespeare, in moving the Ovidian poem outdoors, is seeking greater realism in showing the effect of a beating sun. He must have been aware of the humor of his exaggerations; but it is nervous, adolescent humor, not fully controlled. Partly he seems to be horsing in order to conceal his inability to preserve detachment. The whole tone of these passages suggests neither intensity of passion nor mock-heroic, but the satire of Donne's

Ranke sweaty froth thy Mistresse's brow defiles,¹⁹

or Aldous Huxley's humorous repulsion:

Two lovers quietly sweating palm to palm.²⁰

It is difficult to accept Venus and Adonis as conscious, sustained satire on the Ovidian tradition, and occasional satire is probably an accidental result of the strained tone of the poem. There is an opposite view. "Study of this poem alone, therefore, reveals the psychological centre of Shakespeare's work," according to Mr. Knight: "a love rather than a lust; a vital identification rather than a confined sense-relation whether of eye or touch, as in Marlowe's Leander; and this not limited to the beautiful, and thence by a rebound to the satirically ugly as in Marlowe, but dispassionately universal."²¹ Though love considered as a vital identification rather than a confined sense-relation is characteristic of the later Shakespeare, it is not of Venus and Adonis, taken as a whole; and the rebound from the beautiful to the satirically ugly is consistently more characteristic of Shakespeare (especially in Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Othello) than of Marlowe. A further comment of Mr. Knight's on Shakespeare—that his "physical descriptions work outside sin-consciousness"—is not in the least applicable to Venus and Adonis, but fits perfectly Hero and Leander.

Physical contact, real or contemplated, which forms so much of the substance of the Amores and which Marlowe exploits to the full, Shakespeare either makes frenetic or shies from. Take this passage from the Amores (1.4):

And don't allow him to place his arms about your neck, don't let your yielding head be on his rigid breast; and don't let your

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hidden charms submit to his touch; and, more than all, don't let him kiss you—not once. . . . Bring not thigh near thigh, nor press with the limb, nor touch rough feet with tender ones.

The closest parallel is not Venus' athletic exertions but other passages of Shakespeare's quite different in import, such as Hamlet's speech to Gertrude:

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,²²

and Iago's account to Othello of Cassio's supposed dream:

And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
Cry, "O sweet creature!" then kiss me hard,
As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots
That grew upon my lips; then lay his leg
Over my thigh, and sigh, and kiss; and then
Cry, "Cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor!"²⁸

The passage from Ovid portrays eminently natural sexual jealousy, together with a slightly perverse pleasure in that jealousy; the Shakespearean passages are an extreme combination of attraction and repulsion—the repulsion not latent, as in Spenser's description of Cymochles, but savagely dominant in imagery and emotional tone. In *Hamlet* and *Othello* the tone is clarified by the context; it is close to that of some parts of Venus and Adonis where, not completely clarified by context, it indicates a partially repressed or not fully recognized emotional current.

This current emerges in the most astonishing moment in any Ovidian poem, when Adonis with a passion and eloquence suddenly acquired turns finally on Venus:

"Call it not love, for Love to heaven is fled,
Since sweating Lust on earth usurp'd his name;
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame;
Which the hot tyrant stains and soon bereaves,
As caterpillars do the tender leaves.

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"Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But Lust's effect is tempest after sun;
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done;
Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies;
Love is all truth, Lust full of forged lies."

This is the tune of moral Spenser or of Milton in *Comus*, not of Ovid or Marlowe; and the quality of the poetry shows the depth of feeling behind this speech. Yet the speech does not have the inevitability that it would have had in Milton, who knew from the beginning exactly what he was doing in *Comus*. It is hard to believe that the full dramatic surprise of this outburst is an effect calculated by the poet, or that Venus is meant to typify lust only.

2.

In the *Rape of Lucrece*, his second poem, Shakespeare is concerned with lust, but in *Venus and Adonis* Venus is not consistently lust; she is fitfully an Ovidian, non-moral embodiment of sexual love, to which he is yet unable to add an indefinable purity. Shakespeare in his dilemma is responding to the current of his age; of all the poets of the Elizabethan Ovidian school, Marlowe alone accepts and embodies the Italianate Ovidian tradition. The clearest example of the northern humanist's divided loyalty to the classics and to morality is Golding's refuge in allegorical interpretation, the medieval solution. In the address to the reader prefixed to his translation of the *Metamorphoses*, which Shakespeare knew well, he cautions:

By Bacchus all the meaner trades and handycraftes are meant:
By Venus such as of the fleshe to filthie lust are bent.

Unlike Shakespeare, Golding was a Puritan. Still, if we judge from other poems in this tradition, the temper of the age was against taking Ovid straight. The first of the group, Thomas Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589), a tepid pastoral, has little suggestion of Ovidian voluptuousness, first introduced boldly by Marlowe. Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* (1595), while showing familiarity with both Venus and Adonis and Hero and Leander, gives Ovidianism a Spenserian turn. According to Mr. Rebel, Drayton "introduces a conception of love different from both the

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courtly idealism of the sonnet and the voluptuous materialism of the mythological poem; he presents in concrete story the 'way of love' of traditional Platonism."²⁴ The most individual twist is given by George Chapman, who in Ovid's Banquet of Sense (1595) intellectualizes sensuality. With remarkable suavity Chapman weaves on a warp of philosophic idealism a woof of delicate but purely sensuous gratification.

Shakespeare in refusing to accept unmodified the Ovidian tradition is more typical than Marlowe of their age. We should make due allowance for historical considerations, but if we regard this ambitious early poem in the light of his subsequent work we shall find in Shakespeare's own poetic temperament an important explanation of these waverings and inconsistencies. He manifestly tries, yet cannot assimilate either the aureate style or the spirit of Ovid beyond a certain point. After Venus emerges from all the sweat and steam as a momentary apotheosis of Lust, she becomes in desertion a more sympathetic figure, though the poem still shifts disconcertingly from frigid conceits to moving pathos. For instance, she is guilty of this extravagance (an admiring imitation on Shakespeare's part):

" 'Tis true, 'tis true; thus was Adonis slain;
He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear,
Who did not whet his teeth at him again,
But by a kiss thought to persuade him there;
And nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine
Sheath'd unaware the tusk in his soft groin. . . ."

But she can be more moving:

"Tor he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
And, beauty dead, black chaos comes again."

Black chaos comes again is not Ovid's or Marlowe's phrase; it suggests another Shakespearean context which accomplishes with immediate success what these lines try to do:

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

In this speech of Othello's Shakespeare has found himself. Love has become the principle of cosmos, a conception first dominant

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in Spenser.* Extreme physical passion, which fails of expression in Venus' Ovidian-styled speeches, is supreme here:

O thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee. . . ,²⁵

And seldom has intensity of the senses been so perfectly expressed as by Troilus, who is not Ovid's or Marlowe's but Shakespeare's sensualist:

I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.
The imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense; what will it be,
When that the watery palates taste indeed
Love's thrice repured nectar? Death, I fear me,
Swooning destruction, or some joy too fine,
Too subtle, potent, tun'd too sharp in sweetness
For the capacity of my ruder powers.²⁶

Shakespeare is no longer trying to master voluptuousness intellectually and present it in a style alien to him, as he was in Venus *and Adonis*; he is writing with perfect control in his own idiom about a kind of sensuality, less philosophically perceived than in Ovid's *Banquet of Sense*, but perhaps closer to Chapman than to Spenser, and certainly closer to both than to Marlowe or Ovid. Not only the expression but the spirit is transmuted. Troilus describes in anticipation an imaginary sensual gratification, which has, therefore, the mental contemplation characteristic of Ovid and Marlowe and Spenser's *Cymochles*. The effect is subtly different.

In Ovid there is basic cynicism, fear of satiety and tedium; desire again and again must be whetted by obstacles, even if those obstacles have to be created:

If you feel no need of guarding your love for yourself, O fool, see that you guard her for me, that I may desire her more! What one may not do pricks more keenly on. . . . What care I for the fortune that never troubles to deceive? May nothing be

* This Platonic conception of love as the principle of cosmos is not only more dominant in Spenser; it is the basis of his idea of married love, which is considered in *Marriage Song*, pp. 207-8.

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mine that never wounds! ... I give you warning now in time: unless you begin to watch your lady, she will begin to cease being mine.²⁷

All the husbands, guarding eunuchs, barred doors, gnawing jealousies are cultivated, for they are essential to what has become an elaborate game. And the obstacles are physical or mental, not moral, though morality enters in a curious way as part of the general awareness. However disarming in its frankness and humor, there is theatrical pose in such Rousseau-like confidences as this:

I would not venture to defend my faulty morals or to take up the armour of lies to shield my failings. I confess—if owning my shortcomings aught avails; and now, having owned them, I madly assail my sins. I hate what I am, and yet, for all my desiring I cannot but be what I hate; ah, how hard to bear the burden you long to lay aside!

For I lack the strength and will to rule myself; I am swept along like a ship tossed on the rushing flood. . . .²⁸

Shakespeare attains a sophisticated fusion of wit, semi-seriousness, and mockery in *Twelfth Night* and other romantic comedies; he is temperamentally too intense and serious for Ovidian urbanity or a complex semi-serious tone where sensuality itself is concerned. In *Troilus* the mental and imaginative refinement of sensuality—"love's thrice repured nectar"—depends not even partially on artificial stimulation; it is a natural, irresistible force.

Mr. Stoll says that Shakespeare did not follow the tradition of Ovid that love is a game or chase, "the young man pursuing and the young woman fleeing—piteous or enticing when neglected, merry and scornful when wooed"; that "Shakespeare's lovers are faithful and constant, and despite some proverbial sayings in his text, the women are not fickle." He finds them free from Platonism and the love-philosophy of Dante, engaged in no subtilizing; he places them in the tradition "partly dramatic, as represented by Robert Greene and in some measure John Lyly, his predecessors, partly literary, as represented by Spenser in *Una*, *Florimel*, and *Britomart*, by Ariosto and the English and French chivalric and pastoral romances in prose and verse"²⁹ There is truth in this, especially since Mr. Stoll is primarily concerned with the

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lovers of the romantic comedies and tragi-comedies, though what he says is distorted by his protesting much too much against any taint of psychology.³⁰

The comedies and tragi-comedies are not relevant to my purpose, since for the most part they do not stress the physical relation of love; still, it is significant that instinctive chivalry and faithfulness, emphasized by Mr. Stoll, are characteristic of middle-aged Othello as well as of youthful Troilus. Their nobility and idealism are just as instinctive as their sensuality. Both give an impression, if not of naivete, at least of basic simplicity and of candor different from the artful candor of Ovid. That the characterization of Troilus is partly modified by the ironic outcome in preparation for him intensifies this typical Shakespearean blend of chivalric idealism and physical passion:

O that I thought it could be in a woman—
As, if it can, I will presume in you—
To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love,
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
Outliving beauties outward, with a mind
That doth renew swifter than blood decays!
Or that persuasion could but thus convince me
That my integrity and truth to you
Might be affronted with the match and weight
Of such a winnow'd purity in love,
How were I then uplifted! But, alas!
I am as true as truth's simplicity,
And simpler than the infancy of truth.³¹

This is far removed from Adonis—that mixture of Leander and prig and passionate protest.

Troilus, though no actual development of Adonis, resolves many of the tentative formulations and discordant emotions which were probably Shakespeare's when he sat down to rival Marlowe's Ovidian strain.* In Adonis, even apart from the conditions of the story, desire seems inhibited; in Troilus it burns with intense yet pure fire. Equally instinctive is his constancy, with no touch of Adonis' prudery. Cressida, understandably a

* Adonis is potentially a serio-comic but sympathetic study in adolescence, like the early Romeo.

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little piqued at reiterated demands for a pledge of faithfulness, turns on her lover: "My lord, will you be true?" He answers:

Who? I? Alas, it is my vice, my fault.

Fear not my truth. The moral of my wit

Is "plain and true"; there's all the reach of it.³²

Troilus is no green youth; he knows the ways of the world, the temptations that Cressida will meet in the Greek camp; he is in his complexity, as Mr. Knight says, something of a "metaphysical lover/³³ But this sophistication he can apply only to others, not to himself, and it does not alter his instinctive idealism, a characteristic element of the Shakespearean sensualist, a beautiful and moving trait not without danger. Despite Shakespeare's care that we sympathize little with Cressida, human nature being what it is, such extreme intensity and seriousness in love almost asks, from all except an equally unusual woman, for the treatment which Troilus receives from Cressida. "Cressid, I love thee in so *strain'd* a purity" is an invitation to disaster.

Mr. Oscar Campbell dismisses brusquely what he calls the "pseudo profundities" of "contemporary searchers for the absolute in Shakespeare's works"; he is himself close to another kind of absolutism when he remarks that Shakespeare "has composed a chapter in a new *Ars Amatoria*" and that "a more realistic observer" would pronounce Troilus' speech in anticipation of the fruition of his passion simply " 'the agony of unsatisfied desire/' "³⁴ While Mr. Campbell speaks with more confidence about this and the reaction of the Elizabethan audience than one would expect from a historical critic, his study of the play is valuable, and his insistence on the weakness in Troilus' peculiar sensuality is in some measure justified. It is impossible to determine exactly how far Shakespeare himself was conscious of this weakness. Troilus is set off by the satirical tone of the play as Romeo is set off by the indecency of Mercutio and the Nurse; but in a complex drama Troilus' love is only one element. Its shipwreck is mainly due to circumstances beyond his control and to Cressida's nature; he does not share responsibility for the catastrophe to the degree that Romeo shares in the ruin of his love.

Othello, whom I consider to be another Shakespearean sen-

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sualist, so far as one is justified in isolating the type,* does show Shakespeare's awareness of the inherent weakness of "strain'd purity" yoked with physical passion. Mr. Stoll begs the question when he insists that jealousy in Shakespeare's lovers, specifically Othello, is the result of "no inner maladjustment or misunderstanding" but "injected into them."³⁵ It is profitless to imply that a lover like Othello might remain innocent in an environment as carefully controlled as the Garden of Eden before the Fall. That jealousy finds such rich soil in Othello's pure and idealistic mind is just as significant as that it took Iago to plant it there. The whole play shows Shakespeare's recognition of the danger as well as the beauty of this precarious balance of physical and spiritual.

3.

The culmination of Shakespeare's concern with this particular manifestation of love is Antony and Cleopatra, in which for the first time since *Venus and Adonis* we find characters and situations closely approximating the Amores of Ovid, since the love of Troilus and Cressida, while similar in many respects, is incidental to the main theme of the play and qualified by satire. Unlike Troilus and Othello, Antony is well-versed in love and in the ways of women before he meets Cleopatra, who makes Cressida a novice. Cleopatra and Antony reveal a wider range of emotion and more complex personalities than any pair of lovers in Shakespeare. Analysis of all these complications is not my purpose; I wish merely to indicate a few important similarities and differences which illuminate the most mature development of the Shakespearean sensualist.

I have already remarked that in one respect Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis* is closer than Marlowe to Ovid; Shakespeare does not exclude the prosaic, the physically gross from his portrayal of sensual beauty, though he fails to maintain Ovid's sense of proportion. At his best, Ovid shows the intimate and serene

* Those who regard Falstaff as a type must consider him an exception here. Though a great sensualist, Falstaff is not even remotely Ovidian; sex is less important to him than drink and food. And he is impervious to all but one idealization. As for Othello, he differs from Troilus and Antony in being a married lover; as such he is considered in *Marriage Song*, pp. 193 ff.

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acceptance of the physical to be found in a Degas portrait of a woman paring her nails. In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare corrects his balance, for when he wrote this play he had matured emotionally and perfected his poetic and dramatic technique to include disparate effects without sacrifice of central unity.

The physical aspects of love are presented with complete frankness, often in animal imagery reminiscent of the jennet and courser incident so lovingly and self-consciously detailed in *Venus and Adonis*:

CLEOPATRA. Or does he walk? or is he on his horse?
O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!³⁶

.

ENOBARBUS. If we should serve with horse and mares together,
The horse were merely lost; the mares would bear
A soldier and his horse.³⁷

To old Scarus the great queen of Egypt is a "ribaudred nag/" and Antony pursuing her in flight from Actium a "doting mallard" in mating season. Not only is the play from beginning to end filled with fertility imagery—breeding animals and birds, ploughing and sowing rich earth; Cleopatra's women as well as the men indulge in undisguised sexual word-play, which is not used, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, for a foil to the lovers' purity, nor is it a brutal running comment, like Thersites' speeches in *Troilus and Cressida*. The two lovers show the same frank, worldly recognition. Cleopatra remarks to Mardian the eunuch:

I take no pleasure
In aught an eunuch has.³⁸

The humor latent in any sex situation is interfused throughout, and hostile views of the two lovers are not only admitted but deliberately dramatized.* In the opening speech of the play Philo calls Antony uncompromisingly:

* One side of Antony (call it the moral Roman) endorses Philo against himself. Recognizing, when it is too late, his own fatuity at Actium, Antony momentarily sees Cleopatra as "triple-turned whore!" which, among other things, she is; and even echoes Philo's terms for her:

O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,—
Whose eye beck'd forth my wars, and call'd them home;
Whose bosom was my crownnet, my chief end,—
LſJce a right gypsy, hath, at fast and loose,
Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. [4.12.25-29.]

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the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust.

Later Octavius resents, mainly because he does not understand, and perhaps secretly envies, Antony's candid acceptance of life:

. . . . Let's grant it is not
Amiss to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy;
To give a kingdom for a mirth; to sit
And keep the turn of tippling with a slave;
To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet
With knaves that smell of sweat. . . ,³⁹

Lust and sweat are integral to the picture; they do not distort it as in Venus and Adonis.

The fundamental thing about the romantic love between Antony and Cleopatra is that it reaches heights of spiritual intensity by including rather than excluding even the grossly physical. The basis of their love is persistently, pointedly, uncompromisingly sexual, and yet the closer Shakespeare comes to Ovid the more he differs from him. He has not made Antony more worldly, more essentially human than Troilus and Othello at the complete sacrifice of spiritual quality. If their faith is more exalted than Antony's, his greater emotional flexibility is capable of withstanding repeated shocks of disillusion without permanent loss of faith, whereas both Troilus and Othello in different ways go to pieces.

Sexual jealousy and outraged idealism carry Othello to extremes which seriously alienate us. Chaos literally comes; he temporarily disintegrates and is as helpless as Angelo torn from his moral moorings by the temptation of Isabella. Troilus' reaction to disillusion, however understandable, is almost as violent. Chaos comes for him, too, as he witnesses Cressida's perfidy:

This she? no, this is Diomed's Cressida.
If beauty have a soul, this is not she,
If souls guide vows, if vows are sanctimony,
If sanctimony be the gods' delight,
If there be rule in unity itself,
This is not she.⁴⁰

He feels that the only way to preserve unity (by which he means his own integration) is to deny the fact of Cressida's untruth;

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ultimately he accepts that fact, rebuilding his life around betrayal, bitterness, and revenge. This price for integration is too steep, as the careers of Troilus and Othello show. I do not impugn the greatness of *Othello* and Troilus and Cressida; the limitations are of character not characterization, and not, as in Venus and Adonis, of the writer's insight.

Antony, too, shows disillusion, despair, moods of brutal sarcasm. He is most extreme when he finds Caesar's messenger kissing Cleopatra's hand and turns on her:

You were half blasted ere I knew you; ha!
Have I my pillow left unpress'd in Rome,
Forborne the getting of a lawful race,
And by a gem of women, to be abus'd
By one that looks on feeders?

.
You have been a boggier ever;
And when we in our viciousness grow hard—
O misery on't!—the wise gods seal our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear *judgements*; make us
Adore our errors; laugh afs, while we strut
To our *confusion*

.
1 found you as a morsel cold upon
Dead Caesar's trencher; nay, you were a fragment
Of Cneius Pompey's; besides what hotter hours,
Unregistered in vulgar fame, you have
Luxuriously pick'd out; for, I am sure,
Though you can guess what temperance *should* be,
You know not what it is.⁴¹

Antony's immediate impulse—hurt pride and jealousy—should not obscure his moral sense, however fitful its operation; he knows well that he has dishonored himself in dishonoring Octavia, that his fortunes have "corrupted honest men." And this self-Judgment, not the disapproval of Rome, is central to Shakespeare's meaning; before too glibly endorsing a world well lost for love we should consider that Antony also loses his integrity.

The Roman values (empire, duty, loyalty, temperance) are both satirized and glorified. In Octavius the Roman conception

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of duty is rationalized, emotionally deficient, dangerously expedient; in Octavia it is pure, lacking in passion but not cold, except to Cleopatra and Enobarbus. Octavia is lost to sight in a greater tragedy; yet she is not only gentle and moving, she also appeals to an essential part of Antony's nature—"a gem of women/" Just as he is at fault for chasing after Cleopatra at Actium, not Cleopatra for fleeing, so he is to blame for marrying Octavia when it is too late for him to reconcile the Roman and Egyptian worlds.

Too sure of himself, Othello assures Iago:

I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof, there is no more but this,—
Away at once with love or jealousy!

But Antony can no more disentangle love and jealousy than Troilus love and truth. And Othello's proud claim:

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No! to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolv'd,⁴²

could have little meaning to a man who had his proof and doubt before he began his love affair, the whole course of which appears to be dictated by the "changes of the moon" though actually as steady as the sun.

Behind Antony's savage outburst is his haunting fear, revealed later in the scene:

Cold-hearted toward me?

In his devotion he is as unswerving as Troilus; nothing could be further from Antony's jealousy than the cultivated jealousy of the Ovidian lover. When first the enormity of his conduct at Actium comes home to him; when, his self-esteem at lowest ebb, he has dismissed his followers in despair; when he has finished accusing himself and Cleopatra, he accepts the truth as simply as Troilus the promise of truth:

Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost.⁴³

All his shifts of emotion are subsumed to this basic fact. The pull

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of his moods is as great as Troilus' or Othello's without, as in their case, destroying elasticity.

This metamorphosis of motivation and emotional quality is equally true of Cleopatra, who is closer than Antony to the Ovidian sensualist. She is mistress of all the rules in the game of love, speaking Ovid's language:

Give me some music; music, moody food
Of us that trade in love.

See where he is, who's with him, what he does.
I did not send you. If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick. Quick, and return.

To Charmian's protest that Antony should not be crossed, she has an experienced answer:

Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose him.⁴⁴

Her art is so consummate that, like Enobarbus, we cannot dismiss her winds and waters as sighs and tears—"This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove/" But it is not alone by this sublimation of the game that Shakespeare surpasses Ovid; the game, learned in Cleopatra's "green and salad days," is no longer, as in Ovid, an end in itself, but means to an end; her "infinite variety" is no mere bag of tricks, nor does Shakespeare allow the brilliance of the game to obscure a fundamental seriousness and sincerity in love as marked as Antony's. This he makes clear as early as the third scene of the First Act, the scene on which interpretation of the play hinges.

The game may have become so habitual as to be instinctive, but in a crisis Cleopatra sheds it like a cast garment. She responds to Fulvia's death with more emotion than Antony, who sees the practical problem of his return to Rome as an opportunity to solidify his power while ending his enslavement, and who is too much preoccupied with what he thinks Cleopatra is to discern her true nature. She goes to the heart of the matter:

Though age from folly could not give me freedom,
It does from childishness.

While she feels no moral scruple and would certainly resent any

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love for Fulvia, she is disturbed by his callousness toward the death of his wife. Perhaps a little perversely, her imagination sees implications in that callousness: she sees herself dismissed like Fulvia; more disturbing, she is chilled by the shadow of death cast from Rome across her warm Nile. The world outside their own love, outside the present, breaks in. For once she is so uneasy as to be inarticulate:

Courteous lord, one word.
Sir, you and I must part, but that's not it;
Sir, you and I have lov'd, but there's not it.
That you know well. Something it is I would,—
O, my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotten.

She represents transiency as well as eternity, and she knows it. "Oblivion" is premonition not just of immediate and temporary but of permanent loss. The rules of the game do not provide for such a moment; the best she can do in the face of Antony's suspicion that she is again playacting* is to forswear the rules altogether:

Tis sweating labour
To bear such idleness so near the heart
As Cleopatra this. But, sir, forgive me,
Since my becoming *kill me* when they do not
Eye well to you.

Later, after Actium, Cleopatra, the imperious, the hot-tempered, quietly brushes aside Antony's galling insults:

Not know me yet?⁴⁵

* Many critics share Antony's suspicion here; to them Cleopatra is either (i) merely a marvelous actress throughout the play, or (2) a not entirely coherent characterization sublimated in the last act for purely dramatic effect. Holders of the second view play down characterization, deplore "naturalism/" and play up pure action, dramatic situation, symbolism.

This play is certainly not pure "naturalism"; neither is it pure symbolism. Shakespeare mixes the two (as I try to demonstrate in the third essay). Though Cleopatra is in part a symbol, I find her characterization, with its human inconsistencies, remarkably coherent from beginning to end, not only because this scene foreshadows her basic sincerity and potential greatness, but because in the midst of her greatness in the last act the same human weaknesses and fears of the earlier part of the play are repeated, as we shall see.

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In this play Shakespeare transcends the Ovid of the *Amores* and the *Heroides*, achieving the utmost in spiritualizing sensuality. The drama of pagan love has never been more magnificently portrayed. The play is an elaborate hyperbole, the most sustained use of that favorite Elizabethan device to express intensity of emotion beyond the reach of ordinary language. In the smaller compass of the lyric Donne secures a comparable effect in poems like "The Sunne Rising."⁴⁶

So brilliant is Shakespeare's accomplishment that Antony and *Cleopatra* is liable to exaltation at the expense of its tragic implications; romantic drama is overromanticized. When Dryden treats the same story in *All for Love* we know precisely—perhaps too precisely—where he stands; but is Shakespeare portraying the tragedy or the triumph of love? That question probably did not bother him in the slightest, since the moral values in his plays are usually more instinctive than conscious, more implicit than explicit; but they are there, and no estimate can afford to ignore them completely.

Some admirers of the play are inclined to forget that the illicit nature of the love is stressed in all of Antony's moments of revulsion, that Antony betrays his country, his army, his wife, his children, himself, in order to indulge this beautiful infatuation. They take Antony's moving reconciliation with *Cleopatra*:

Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost,

as full vindication of his love and of his conduct; and so miss the reverberations of this speech in its context—disgrace at Actium, desertion of his troops, demoralization of his friends, pitiless awareness of a fundamental shabbiness in himself and in *Cleopatra*; and only then the realization, as terrible as it is beautiful, that to him one tear is worth all he has won and lost. Unlike *Troilus* and *Othello*, Antony does not always wear blinders. Even when he returns to Rome, recoups his fortunes by brilliantly dominating Pompey and Caesar and by marrying Octavia, he immediately recognizes that if his head is in Rome his heart is still in Egypt.

That *Cleopatra* is equivocal throughout most of the play partly explains Antony's infatuation; if he had once solved her

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enigma he either might have left her as casually as any former mistress, or relegated her to a proportionate place in his life, though proportion in a man of such passion is negated when he first meets Cleopatra, who makes ordinary standards of proportion meaningless. "Not know me yet?" Only in crises does she shed ambiguity, and not altogether then. At the last, only after she has fully tested Octavius can we be really sure that she has given up hope of escape, though we never suspect her (as Antony does) of saving herself at Antony's expense; for one thing, she knows it would not work. True to her nature, she has immediate intuition of death—"O Charmion, I will never go from hence"—when she is too terrified to admit dying Antony by the door of her monument; she calls "resolution and the briefest end" her only friend:

We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble,
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make Death proud to take us;⁴⁷

still, resolution is not her strong point unless her own pleasure is involved, and her attempts to outwit Octavius are too rich in drama and in further revelation of Cleopatra as person and symbol to dismiss as merely stage scaffold connecting a prematurely ended play with its second and greater catastrophe. She grows in stature without outgrowing her former self; her characteristic tantrum when Seleucis betrays to Octavius her lies about her treasure recalls the earlier scene in which she hales the messenger from Rome up and down by the hair. And the magic expression of her wrath at Seleucis (and at the magnetism of Octavius' new power):

. . . I shall show the cinders of my spirit
Through the ashes of my chance,

fortunately does not conceal the fishwife in her make-up or the fact that almost her last words gloat over Octavius. Minus these saving faults, Cleopatra would be the goddess some of her admirers prefer, rather than one of Shakespeare's three greatest human creations. Only after Dolabella has absolutely convinced her of Octavius' guile, which she suspects intuitively from the first but does not want to believe, does she begin to work herself and her maids up to the sticking point, as Antony had done

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before her, by dwelling on the horrors of a Roman triumph. She and Antony are too much in love with life to want, like Wagnerian creatures, to die; both squirm and evade—it is human that they should—before surrendering. If Cleopatra has to be trapped into magnificence, she is equal to the occasion:

I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life.

Her approach to death, her "immortal longings," is close to apotheosis; Shakespeare as a craftsman makes a situation which he did not invent superb "theater." Yet earth and water, Cleopatra's "other elements," linger throughout her greatest moment, when what I call spiritualized sensuality reaches its high-water mark; if we take her at her word for fire and air only, the rest of the scene cannot be explained. Instead of being antithetic, the spiritual here is given meaning by its roots in the physical. Death itself Cleopatra perceives with sensual intensity:

If thou and nature can so gently part,
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,
Which hurts, and is desir'd.

And this bold yet delicate simile of natural amorous masochism, prolonged in her fancy that Iras by first dying may claim Antony's kiss first, continues in metaphor as she applies the second asp to her breast:

With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
Be angry and dispatch.

Such poetic grandeur, though totally different in significance, is equal to Lear's; and as in Lear's final scene, each shift of emotion and image is psychologically motivated. Cleopatra savors half indolently her victory, like one drowsily surrendering to the pleasure of sleep, when she confides to the asp:

O couldst thou speak,
That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass
Unpoliced!

Then her imagination brings the asp symbolism to final fruition: the lover becomes his child; the sensual pleasure of the lover's pinch, of the teeth at her breast fuses with spiritual meaning:

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Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?

Cleopatra's death Shakespeare expresses paradoxically in the fulfillment of woman's life. And for this reason, I think, her death, though remarkably parallel in imagery and motivation,⁴⁸ is not tragic like Antony's but triumphant; thus the play is neither pure tragedy nor triumph of love, but a mixture of the two. To say that Cleopatra and Egypt symbolize life, and all things Roman (Roman, as always with Shakespeare, is half English) death⁴⁹ ignores much of the play; yet Cleopatra is most of all in her death a positive assertion of the primacy of the physical, which can raise passion to spirituality of a kind, though not in Cleopatra the highest kind. Without passion the spiritual is cold, merely intellectual, sterile.

Shakespeare does not utterly condemn Rome and exalt Egypt. Cleopatra's triumph over Octavia turns to ashes because it ruins Antony. If Cleopatra kindles, she also quenches. It is Antony, torn between two sets of values which he cannot reconcile, who embodies the tragic meaning of the play; Cleopatra is tragic only to the extent that she is involved with him. To Antony also she owes in part her spiritual grandeur. None of her previous Roman lovers had disturbed her self-sufficiency or succumbed entirely to her spell, for none save Antony is both Roman and Egyptian. He alone by matching her passionate extravagance brings to full flower in her the beauty of romantic love. He even kindles her to half-skeptical, half-serious Roman emulation; hence her wish to die "after the high Roman fashion." Yet the symbolical death image natural to Roman-bred Antony:

I will be
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
As to a lover's bed,t

* Also Cleopatra by dying really defeats Octavius (Actium was not her battle); whereas Antony has been so thoroughly defeated in his sphere at Actium and thereafter, that his mere cheating Octavius of his living body is at most Pyrrhic.

t This favorite bridegroom image Shakespeare uses less effectively in *King Lear* and *CorioJanus*; Antony's parallels the most brilliant use. In

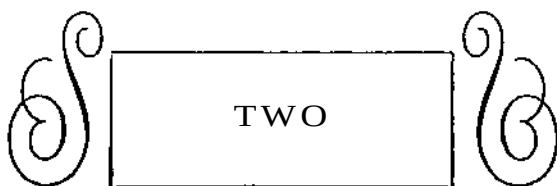
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has been too literally interpreted in Cleopatra's matching "Husband, I come/' a daring poetic touch (or merely a Roman emulation), not a justification. Marriage has no real meaning to Cleopatra, nor does it fit her basic symbolism. She is no more a wife than she is the milkmaid to whom she likens herself.

There is much in the love affair besides splendor of sensuality; underlying constancy, spirituality, even a certain idealism; these qualities do not depend on any specific moral sanction. But before we are swept off our feet by the superlative poetry and the wholesome insistence on the physical basis of love, it is worth observing that the love of Antony and Cleopatra recognizes no law of God or man; it is an exclusive passion sacrificing all to itself—"Let Rome in Tiber melt"; "Melt Egypt into Nile." Antony's flight from Actium shows that nothing has meaning for him any longer except Cleopatra. Their love has become obsessive disease, for love like theirs can exist only by denying this world and creating a romantic paradise "where souls do couch on flowers," eternally consuming each other rather than consummating something of greater importance than either.

Measure for Measure Claudio, unconsciously dwelling on Juliet as he faces death in prison, remarks:

If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride,
And hug it in mine arms.



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LIVING in a world that, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, is "bursting with sin and sorrow/" have we time for daydream poetry? Spenser anticipates the question:

Right well I wote most mighty Sovereaine,
That all this famous antique history,
Of some th'aboundance of an idle braine
Will judged be, and painted forgery,
Rather then matter of just memory,
Sith none, that breatheth living aire, does know,
Where is that happy land of Faery,
Which I so much do vaunt, yet no where show,
But vouch antiquities, which no body can know.

Peru and the Amazon and Virginia were in existence long before they were discovered:

Why then should witlesse man so much misweene
That nothing is, but that which he hath secne?
What if within the Moones faire shining speare?
What if in every other starre unseene
Of other worldes he happily should heare?
He wonder would much more: yet such to some appeare.

Of Faerie lond yet if he more inquire,
By certaine signes here set in sundry place
He may it find; ne let him then admire,
But yield his sence to be too blunt and bace,
That no'te without an hound fine footing trace.
And thou, O fairest Princesse under sky,
In this faire mirrhour maist behold thy face,
And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery,
And in this antique Image thy great auncestry.¹

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We notice at once a conspicuous difference from Shakespeare: Spenser talks about his goem³ about hirusel[^]abqut life, with the candor of Montaigne. This defense is characteristic in wonder and speculation, in blending neo-Platonism with the imaginative possibilities of exploration and the new science, in questioning the nature of reality, and, not least, in a half-mocking tone unexpected of "sage and serious Spenser/" showing a more complex self-consciousness than he is usually credited with.

Though created in space and deeply affected by time, the world of the Faerie Oueene is unconfined by geography, unchanged by the seasons. Lovely ladies, usually in distress, dash by with blond braids flying and vanish into the nothing from which they came; satyrs leer at us from the underbrush; branches bleed and groan when plucked; we surprise the Graces dancing on the green. All of this we accept without question, fascinated by phantasmagoria which has the intense reality of unexplained happenings in our dreams. Spenser's own delight in the world of his creation is infectious; we, too, come to believe in it for a reason partly explained by Coleridge, whose purpose in *Lyrical Ballads* is in some ways similar to Spenser's: ". . . it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human *interest and a* semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of *imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment*, which constitutes poetic *faith*."² Like Coleridge, Spenser makes the supernatural and dream-like i[^]S[^]tivelyjeal by selective use of natural imagery.

Sfrange as many of its components are,, the world of the *Faerie QueeneTs*" fashioned to a surprising extent from everyday life. Some natural images which seem so apt that Spenser must have seen them himself turn out to be adapted, yet when he borrows from Theocritus, Virgil, Marot, Ariosto—all masters of concrete detail—he shows delicate discrimination. Noj[^]petjhas more successfully fused myth, literary allusion, and personal observation. He draws on his own experience most conspicuously* for similes, many of them elaborated into dramatic incidents, as when he compares Hedcross, encumbered with the crawling Dragon's

* Mr. de Selincourt has collected in his Introduction to the Oxford Spenser examples of the innumerable vignettes of the Irish countryside which Spenser draws in passing.

brood, to a shepherd at evening—not of Arcadia but of Ireland—pestered by gnats.

In the poem are two landscapes, idealized and naturalistic, which Spenser separates at will, but which usually coalesce to form a third. It would be neat if we could divide these into foreground, middle distance, background, and assign to each a particular plane of reality. That we cannot is due partly to Spenser's conception of reality and illusion, as we shall see later, partly to the hybrid nature of his allegorical method.* For the moment it is enough that within a Fairyland whose laws are its own, primarily through similes he builds up in imagination a realistic countryside with watermills, bull-baitings, roping and breaking steers to the yoke, hawking, ploughing, and the ordinary chores of country life. Spenser's eyes and ears were not shut during that long sojourn in Ireland, spent in running his farms as well as in writing the *Faerie Queene*.

Though a master of landscape, Spenser seldom shows a perception of natural beauty comparable to Shakespeare's "Violets dim, but sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes," or "the azured harebell, like thy veins,"³ Spenser's imagery, when not deliberately artificial, is more Wordsworthian—without of course Wordsworth's scientific accuracy (hardly to be expected of the sixteenth century), but with more style and often more life. His fund of observation, comparable to Shakespeare's storehouse from country days at Stratford, shows a surprisingly practical knowledge of the land and a rural candor. We find Diana and her maidens after the chase:

Sitting beside a fountaine in a rew,
Some of them washing with the liquid dew
From off their dainty limbes the dustie sweat,
And soyle which did deforme their lively hew;
Others lay shaded from the scorching heat. . . .⁴

This combination of a "poeticism" like liquid dew with dustie sweat and soyle is fundamentally characteristic of Spenser's view of life as well as of his poetic method. The juxtaposition is not insensitivity or ignorance of decorum (a doctrine already imported by Sidney and familiar to Spenser), but scorn of nicety.

* Spenser allegory is considered in *The Painted Dragon*, pp. 111 ff.

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Like Shakespeare, he does not hesitate to use the homeliest images in sophisticated or heroic contexts; but where Shakespeare usually touches the image with enough magic of phrase to skirt the grotesque, Spenser is as downright as Chaucer. Diana's outrage when she surprises Faunus playing Peeping Tom is that of a busy housewife whose dairy and creaming-pans have been upset.⁵ At the sudden appearance of the Titaness Mutability before Jove, gods and goddesses

Stood all astonied, like a sort of Steeres;
Mongst whom, some beast of strange and forraine race,
Unwares is chaunc't, far straying from his peeres. . . .⁶

This Chaucerian half-humorous matter-of-factness leads Spenser to close his first installment of the *Faerie Queene* in a manner inconceivable of Milton:

But now my teme begins to faint and fayle,
All woxen weary of their journall toyle:
Therefore I will their sweatie yokes assoyle
At this same furrowes end, till a new day.⁷

To consider the *Faerie Queene* merely a dream world of romantic escape is like dismissing Hamlet as melodrama. Figures from classical and Biblical stories, from English and Irish legend, from Italian romance move on the same level of reality as contemporary friends and foes; Parnassus or Mount Acidale take on the features of Arlo Hill, and Arlo Hill becomes a scat of the Muses. In his romantic comedies and tragi-comedies and in his Roman plays Shakespeare similarly mingles the antique and exotic with Elizabethan crowds and customs, though his conception of the antique is less complex and self-conscious.

If to some the *Faerie Queen* is melange adultère *de tout*, to Spenser not only the everyday enters without awkward intrusion into this strange world; the strange world itself is both mask and actuality He attaches much deeper meaning than Coleridge to "sfiadows of imagination/" for the human interest and semblance of truth which he wishes to "transfer from our inward nature" are more profound than anything which Coleridge achieves in poetry. Beneath the evanescent dreams and surface entertainment is a lifetime of obersavation; we soon realize that these ladies in distress^ these knights and ogres, delightful in themselves, are

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symbols; we are slower to appreciate the great complexity of human experience which they shadow forth. For Spenser is no ineffectual dreamer, but a staunch believer in action and a man of the world; no sheltered idealist, but a wise and acute observer of what is base as well as noble in human nature; no rigid, self-righteous Puritan, but a poet seeking to reconcile with high moral principles a strong instinct for all that is sensuous and passionate and beautiful,

Wordsworth's lines in the third book of his *Prelude*:

Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven

With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,

are a fine tribute but a partial portrait too often taken for complete likeness. Undoubtedly sweetness and gentleness are marked in Spenser as in Shakespeare, who is to Milton "sweetest Shakespeare fancies childe" and to Jonson, Heminge and Condell "gentle" and "most gentle." These epithets, having different connotations in present usage, are liable to misunderstanding. "Gentle," Mr. R. W. Chambers points out, to Shakespeare himself "is a word of very high praise not consistent with any want of spirit."⁸ Gentle Shakespeare and Spenser have moments of savagery; both flay with satire. A measure of savagery, active or latent, is often the complement of gentleness. The most conspicuous instance in Shakespeare is the brutality of Hamlet to his mother and Ophelia when the raw nerve is so exacerbated that innate gentleness recoils to its opposite. This recoil is found in his creator and in Spenser.

Yet we cannot estimate Spenser's and Shakespeare's Poetry without understanding their preoccupation with the gentler virtues. Both hate" cruelty and intolerance, and love charity and mercy. Spenser's tenderness and compassion at times seem excessive because his emotions are uninhibited; they are much more apparent than in Shakespeare because Spenser writes in a form which, unlike drama, encourages him to express them directly as well as through his characters. His tenderness is especially touched women and children, as in this casual comparison:

The loving mother, that nine monethes did beare,
In the deare closet of her painefull side,

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Her tender babe, it seeing safe appeare,
Doth not so much rejoyce, as she rejoyced theare,⁹

and in this detail when the populace has poured out to celebrate deliverance from the Dragon, marveling at its hideous size:

One mother, when as her foolehardie chyld
Did come too neare, and with his talants play,
Halfe dead through feare, her litle babe revyld,
And to her gossips gan in counsell say;
How can I tell, but that his talants may
Yet scratch my sonne, or rend his tender hand?¹⁰

When Sir Calepine, having rescued a baby from a wild beast, comes providentially across the childless Matilda and gives it to her, Spenser portrays with equal sympathy the humorous relief of the knight, who, like Wordsworth's Michael, had done him "female service/" and the pathos and joy of Matilda, who, "having over it a litle wept," keeps it forever as her own.¹¹

Spenser melts for Florimell, so luckless, so cruelly besieged, and finds his pity for Amoret so stirred that he often wishes he had never begun her story. Such emotion is spontaneous, naive, occasionally sentimental, though its cause (when we understand the various levels of his allegory) is usually commensurate with effect. His chivalry is more instinct than code: it is the wellspring of his being. And this, so far as we can read him, is equally true of Shakespeare, who never satirizes false chivalry more bitterly than Spenser does.*

The tenderness with which Shakespeare portrays Desdemona maligned and struck by Othello and Hermione wrongly persecuted by Leontes is close to Spenser's feeling for Una, as is Shakespeare's understanding of Virgilia's femininity in Coriolanus, with her horror of bloodshed, her passionate devotion to son and husband. And, just as Pericles' reunion with Marina, his long-lost daughter,¹² kindles to momentary beauty one of the mediocre plays in which Shakespeare had a hand; so the charming but conventional story of Pastorella comes to life when she is reunited with her mother:

* Spenser develops the story of Braggadochio as a satire on false chivalry, with touches of burlesque. See Note i.

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Then her embracing twixt her armes twaine,
She long so held, and softly weeping sayd;
And livest thou my daughter now againe?
And art thou yet alive, whom dead I long did faine?¹³

Both poets have insight into woman's psychology, (despite several modern critics, they are psychologists as well as poets), and see her point of view. To realize how much this broadens and enriches their poetry we need only contrast them with Marlowe and Milton. Marlowe's Helen of Troy, like his earlier Zenocrate, is but man's dream of woman; his Abigail and Isabel are shadows. To Milton woman is beautiful and seductive but essentially cause for resentment, an irrational torment in man's flesh, a Delilah. Only in the Eve of the Ninth Book of *Paradise Lost* does he show imaginative comprehension of woman as an individual, an entity separate from man, and even to her he grudges while granting independence. Spenser and Shakespeare belong with Chaucer; all three not only understand woman but respect her individuality. Spenser's gallery of women approaches Shakespeare's in variety and truth. Many of them, like Marlowe's, are stylized dreams of beauty. But Spenser can be grim as well as sweet; his dreams can be nightmare as well as delight. Like other artists with a rare sense of beauty, he has a keen sense of ugliness, beauty's complement. And the Faerie Queene as often mirrors the world he woke to—that grim and splendid world of Elizabeth—as the one he dreamed of.

For Spenser Renaissance and Reformation are not always easy cabin mates. Sensuousness slips readily into sensuality. Shakespeare in *Othello*, *Troilus*, and *Antony* shows that sensuality is consistent with spirituality. In the poet they are virtually interdependent, for no artist has ever expressed great spiritual power unless he has a strain of sensuality* as well as sensuousness. Conflict between sensual and spiritual and Spenser's attempts at resolution give to his writing the dramatic intensity often denied it. Concealed by the leisurely progress of narrative, this intensity is cumulative; it is not at once perceived and is hard to isolate except in crises of the story or in short lyrical passages.

* By sensuality I do not mean only sexuality; gluttony, for example, is equally sensual.

Fra Angelico and Wordsworth are exceptions.

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When we probe more deeply than these inescapable likenesses, the difference between narrative and drama makes gonigarisoil of Spenser and Shakespeare difficult. To carry intact in one's mind whole plays of Shakespeare is hard, harder still to carry large segments of the Faerie Queene. We must take into account the compression of drama, the diffusion of narrative; also the cumulative effect of much evidence which in detail may seem accidental. Yet limited comparative studies by Greenlaw and others,¹⁴ while they establish certain close relationships, barely suggest the extent of the kinship between the two poets in temperament, in permeating spirit, in poetic preoccupations, even in technique. I am not concerned with the "influence" of Spenser on Shakespeare (tKe^Tiave, for instance, a common debt to Sidney's Arcadia), but with this kinship, often tenuous, not alwaysTsiiscptible to documentary proof though there is more evidence than at first appears.

To Upton's observation that Spenser's "mixture of the dreadful and the comic, the serious and the ridiculous, is much after the manner of Shakespeare, whose genius seems in many respects to resemble Spenser's" Padelford takes exception: "Spenser and Shakespeare were so fundamēntally different that any attempt to compare them in dramatic power or technique is beside the point."¹⁵ Upton is right, though Padelford's warning should brake loose analogy. We hardly expect from a narrative poet equality in dramatic power or identity in technique. But as early as October of the Shepleiardes Calender Spenser shows jnterest in drama. He is master of two border forms, the masque and the pageant-Tie wroteTnine comedies now lost; and if he had not gone to' Ireland in 1580, he might have been caught up like another predominantly non-dramatic poet, Daniel, by the groundswell of Elizabethan drama. He died before Shakespeare wrote his greatest plays; we cannot even be sure that he knew Shakespeare's poetry. Nevertheless, Spenser has a highly developed sense of the dramatic—his mastery of dialogue alone proves that;

Thou kenst not Percic howc the ryme should rage.
O if my temples were distaind with wine,
And girt in girlonds of wild Yvie twine,
How I could rcare the Muse on stately stage,
And teache her tread aloft in buskin fine,
With queint Bellona in her equipage. [1579]

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and his technique, in several respects parallel to Shakespeare's, would suit the stage. I shall postpone closer analysis of these likenesses and differences,* which would complicate examination of a general kinship difficult but important to assess. My concern at the moment is affinities in spirit and in thematic development, differentiated but not obscured by one poet's writing leisurely narrative, the other compact drama.

"The first half of Shakespeare's work," Mr. Wilson Knight concludes after close study of Shakespeare's imagery, "concentrates on two primary emotional positives: (i) the normal romance interest of human love, and (ii) the king-ideal, with especial reference to martial action."¹⁶ Inevitably one thinks of Spenser:

Fierce warrres and faithful loves shall morlize my song.

The coupling of these two themes, it may fairly be objected, is traditional and unavoidable in romantic poetry. Furthermore, Shalcspeare does not so explicitly moralize his song. None the less, the similarity in their development of these two themes is worth looking into.

Shakespeare's "king-ideal" corresponds to Spenser's "queen-ideal." In the relief and hope inspired by the union in the House of Tudor of the white and red roses, Tudor writers early busied themselves reinterpreting England's history. Memory of the late blood-letting was enough in itself to keep in high repute the Falls of Princes and to produce a competitor in the Mirror for Magistrates, while More's Utopia and Elyot's Boke named the Governour gave philosophical depth to political and social ideals. Spenser's Faerie Queene was the first attempt on a grand scale to embody the new political-historical conception of England, and it was later paralleled by Shakespeare's gradual evolution of a sequence of historical plays, culminating in the person of Henry V, his paragon as Eliza was Spenser's, † Alone of the Eliza-

* See especially The Painted Dragon and "King Lear" in the Context of Shakespeare, below. For an example of Spenser's dramatic dialogue, see pp. 140-41.

† Like Spenser, Shakespeare draws on Holinshed and Camden; besides the old chronicle plays, he has Marlowe's Edward II to guide him, and possibly the early historical romances of Drayton and the first part of Daniel's Civil Wars (1595).

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Elizabethan poets, Spenser and Shakespeare use English history for a profound and extensive exploration of political ideals. Their treatment is not the same, nor are their conceptions identical. Spenser accepts and builds on the union of York and Lancaster in the House of Tudor; Shakespeare works out almost in Greek fashion the curse on the House of Lancaster. Shakespeare uses past history (extended to Rome) to veil his concern with current problems; Spenser uses allegory to glorify the past and point the way to future greatness. Yet they have much in common, especially their belief in authority and order, and the historical-political significance of the *Faerie Queene*, which interests us least, deeply impressed Shakespeare.

Poets treating at length of love inevitably develop subsidiary themes like friendship and jealousy; and, turning to broader social considerations, they soon come up against questions of justice and mercy, even of courtesy and manners. Indeed, the industry of modern scholarship has unearthed so many parallels, so much plagiarism in an age when plagiarism had no meaning, that the professionally skeptical are quick to dismiss any recognizable sentiment as a commonplace. Certainly Spenser and Shakespeare are not alone in their concern with these themes; they are alone and alike in recurrence, in emphasis, in manner of development. For instance, many Elizabethan satirists and dramatists are occupied with justice, mercy, slander; but no others relate them as do Spenser and Shakespeare, and no others place such personal emphasis on slander and reputation.

Mr. Knight's conclusion covers the first half of Shakespeare's career. Greenlaw has indicated the relationship between the Sixth Book of the *Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare's pastoral plays and tragi-comedies. I find the recurrent themes of the bitter comedies and the tragedies even closer to the *Faerie Queene*, and most significant of all the conception of time underlying all their work. Spenser and Shakespeare are obsessed by time, the worm in the bud. Each triumphs over time; yet to each all that he accomplishes seems fragmentary.

2.

"Fierce warres and faithful loves" are indivisible in Spenser because all his heroes are warriors. What later becomes the theme

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of Antony and Cleopatra is already before 1596 Spenser's repeated warning to knighthood:

Nought under heaven so strongly doth allure
The sence of man, and all his minde possesse,
As beauties lovely baite, that doth procure
Great warriours oft their rigour to repressse,
And mighty hands forget their manlinesse;
Drawne with the powre of an heart-robbing eye,
And wrapt in fetters of a golden tresse,
That can with melting pleasaunce mollifye
Their hardned hearts, enur'd to bloud and crueltye.¹⁷

In the next stanza he cites Samson, Hercules, and Antony as examples, along with his own Artegall. Woman is in herself of paramount importance to Spenser; she also symbolizes man's greatest inspiration and greatest snare. Thus love is to a peculiar extent a chief focus in Spenser and we must bear in mind his more persistent symbolism in comparing his poetry to Shakespeare's tragedies and bitter comedies. Associated with love, partly growing out of it, the themes of justice, mercy, reputation appear in both.

That the Faerie Queene is epic-romance does not mean that Spenser treats love only in the fashion of Shakespeare's romantic plays. Lovers like Calidore and Pastorella, Marinell and Florimell are comparable to Ferdinand and Miranda, Lysander and Hermia, Florizel and Perdita, but the love of Redcross and Una, of Scudamour and Amoret, of Timias and Belpheobe, above all, of Artegall and Britomart, is much more than romantic convention. Spenser has no characterization comparable to Cleopatra (for that matter, Shakespeare has no Acrasia); but he has Cressidas and Juliets.

Shakespeare heightens the purity of Romeo's and Juliet's passion by deliberately contrasting it with different attitudes toward love: the tolerance of the worldly-wise friar, the matter-of-factness of the Capulets, the good-natured obscenity of Mercutio, the Nurse, the servants. Spenser likewise sets off the purity of his idealistic lovers by contrasting all shadings of love from excess of faithful passion to incontinence and bestiality. Besides his sorceresses there are Malecasta, Hellenore, and the horrible per-

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sonification, Argante. Among his knights, Cymochles is the complete sensualist, and Paridell, the professional breaker-up of homes, much worse than loose-lived Cassio or Diomedes. The strange blend of idealized romantic love and bitter satire in the old Roman de la Rose, which so deeply affected Chaucer, lingers in Spenser and has its counterpart in Shakespeare.

In Colin *Clouts* Come Home Againe, after a long panegyric on the court, especially the court ladies, Spenser disconcertingly shifts key:

Not so (quoth he) love most aboundeth there.
For all the walls and windows there are writ,
All full of love, and love, and love my deare,
And all their talke and studie is of it.
Ne any there doth brave or valiant seeme,
Unlesse that some gay Mistresse badge he beares:
Ne any one himselfe doth ought esteeme,
Unlesse he swim in love up to the eares.¹⁸

He seems to burlesque his own preoccupation, but for the same reason that he burlesques false chivalry. Spenser is as much aware of sexual obsession as of sublimation and normal marriage. Some of his cynical studies of sex relationships anticipate Lucio and the "gentlemen" of Vienna in *Measure for Measure* and the moral atmosphere of *Troilus and Crccsida* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. In the key of Shakespeare's bitter comedies is the extraordinary story of the Squire of Dames, who at his lady's request sets out to see how many women he can seduce in a year. When he returns with the astonishing total of three hundred pledges of success, his lady poses him a second task—not to return to her

Till I so many other Dames had found,
The which, for all the suit I could propound,
Would me refuse their pledges to afford,
But did abide for ever chast and sound.
Ah gentle Squire (quoth he) tell at one word,
How many foundst thou such to put in thy record?

In deed Sir knight (said he) one word may tell
All, that I ever found so wisely stayd;
For onely three they were disposd so well,

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And yet three yeares I now abroad have strayd,
 To find them out. Mote I (then laughing sayd
 The knight) inquire of thee, what were those three,
 The which thy proffred curtesie denyd?
 Or ill they seemed sure avizd to bee,
 Or brutishly brought up, that nev'r did fashions see.¹⁹

Nothing reveals more clearly the cutting edge of gentle Spenser's laughter than comparison of the Squire of Dames with the host's tale in *Orlando Furioso* (28) which suggested it. Not only has Spenser condensed and focused the story; he has transmuted the racy earthiness of Ariosto: the tone of his version is identical with those acid passages in *Colin Clout* which recount his own experience at court. Neither Iago's nor Thersites' corroded mind summons up a more appalling vision than the twin birth of Argante and Oliphant:

Whiles in their mothers wombe enclosd they were,
 Ere they into the lightsome world were brought,
 In fleshly lust were mingled both yfere,
 And in that monstrous wise did to the world appere.

So liv'd they ever after in like sin,
 Gainst natures law, and good behavioure:
 But greatest shame was to that maiden twin,
 Who not content so fowly to devour
 Her native flesh, and staine her brothers bowre,
 Did wallow in all other fleshly myre,
 And suffred beasts her body to deflowre:
 So whot she burned in that lustfull fyre,
 Yet all that might not slake her sensuall desyre.²⁰

And this immediately precedes the Squire of Dames' story, which he tells after rescue from Argante; the context hardly shows what Dodge calls "scandalous verve."²¹ Hamlet's bad dreams about his mother and Claudius are not lust more naked.

Spenser is equally concerned with alluring manifestations of lust, tffe beauty of Acrasia and her nymphs charming every"sense. Tasso explains much, but Ariosto plus Tasso does not equal Spenser, who is more complex than either. Alive to the beauty of the Venus and Adonis legend with its wealth of implications,

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Spenser also recognizes a fundamental identity between her carrying off Adonis to enjoy him in secret and the nymphomaniac Argante's seizing the Squire of Dames. Add Malbecco and Hellenore, and we begin to appreciate the range of Spenser's understanding, his variety of presentation. Hellenore is own sister to Argante, less symbol than human embodiment of female lust, especially in the scene that tortures her cuckold husband:

At night, when all they went to sleepe, he vewd,
Whereas his lovely wife emongst them lay,
Embraced of a Satyr rough and rude,
Who all the night did minde his joyous play:
Nine times he heard him come aloft ere day,
That all his hart with gealosie did swell;
But yet that nights ensample did bewray,
That not for nought his wife them loved so well,
When one so oft a night did ring his matins bell.²²

Here rather than in the Squire of Dames is "scandalous verve" but not Ariosto unmodified. Dodge calls attention to several passages in *Orlando Furioso*²³ similar to this story of Malbecco and Hellenore, but neglects to mention that it is also reminiscent of Chaucer's tale of January and May, and that this particular stanza recalls the Reeve's Tale. Any indebtedness illuminates Spenser's achievement. His story surpasses Ariosto's tale of Clodion and Chaucer's of January and May in emotional power and in control of complex tone—satire, urbane humor, pathos, intensity, grim tragedy. It is Spenser's masterpiece in short narrative.

The Castle Joyous in the Third Book of the *Faerie Queene* portrays a decadent society again close to the Vienna of Measure for Measure; and the Squire of Dames' cynicism, together with Satyranc's worldly laughter, finds further justification when all the ladies at the tournament in the Fourth Book vainly try on Florimell's girdle of chaste womanhood:

Which when that scornfull Squire of Dames did vew
He lowdly gan to laugh, and thus to jest;
Alas for pittie that so faire a crew,
As like cannot be scene from East to West,
Cannot find one this girdle to invest.

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Fie on the man, that did it first invent,
To shame us all with this, Ungirt unblest.
Let never Ladie to his love assent,
That hath this day so many so unmanly shent.

Thereat all Knights gan laugh, and Ladies lowre. . . ,²⁴

The fun has more bite than Ariosto's, since the whole scene prepares for Amoret's triumphant donning of the girdle. An arresting comment of the Squire's on woman's chastity shows some tolerance in the bitterness. Among the three chaste, as against three hundred unchaste women whom the Squire had earlier found, only the damsel of low degree (a slap at the court) has true chastity:

Safe her, I never any woman found,
That chastity did for it selfe embrace,
But were for other causes firme and sound;
Either for want of handsome time and place,
Or else for feare of shame and fowle disgrace.²⁵

This has no parallel in Ariosto. Cynicism is qualified by a frank, though reluctant, recognition that idealism which seeks pure virtue in human beings is limited. Like Shakespeare, Spenser can plunge from idealism into the mire of cynicism; but he also shares Shakespeare's capacity for understanding and accepting the twisted, tangled instincts and motives of mankind. He anticipates the speech of good, worldly-wise Escalus to self-righteously chaste Angelo:

Let but your honour know,
Whom I believe to be most strait in virtue,
That, in the working of your own affections,
Had time cohered with place or place with wishing,
Or that the resolute acting of your blood
Could have attain'd the effect of your own purpose,
Whether you had not sometime in your life
Err'd in this point which now you censure him. . . ,²⁶

The recognition of human limitations, of Laodicean virtue, is the same, though" Shakespeare is more penetrating. Belpheobe, Spenser's personification of ascetic chastity, which he admires

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with reservations, is closer to Isabella in *Measure for Measure* than to the Lady in Milton's *Comus*. "Thus," says Padelford, "did Belpheobe learn that austere virtue is itself unlovely and wrong, and that chastity must be softened by mercy."²⁷ Spenser reveals a certain harshness and intolerance in Belpheobe's response to the hopeless passion of Timias; like Isabella, she learns greater sympathy and understanding. Spenser's *Amoret* has much in common with Mariana, Isabella's foil as *Amoret* is Belpheobe's; and Timias and Scudamour are kin to Claudio and Troilus.

Britomart's turmoil on hearing that Artegall is exposed to Raging, and Scudamour's in the House of Care show Spenser's understanding of Iago's green-eyed monster, jealousy. Othello is led falsely to believe that his friend Cassio has betrayed him with Desdemona, just as Scudamour is made insanely jealous of faithful Britomart. A dominant theme in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, the only thread of narrative continuity, is Colin's love for Rosalind and friendship for Hobbinol. This triangular pattern anticipates Shakespeare's sonnets, where it is developed with more power and penetration. Both poets continue to entangle love with friendship: Spenser combines his Third and Fourth Books, and Shakespeare repeats his Othello-Cassio-Desdemona triangle years later in the *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*.

Othello is more than a tragedy of jealousy, and, while *Measure for Measure* deals largely with the power of sex over the pure and the dregs of humanity, its fundamental problem is justice, to which Shakespeare returns in *King Lear*. Love is most manifest between man and woman, parent and child, one friend and another; but Spenser and Shakespeare transcend these individual relationships to portray love and respect for one's fellow man. In his revised plan for the *Faerie Queene*, by interweaving the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books, Spenser fuses love with friendship and loyalty, progressing naturally to justice, symbolized by Sir Artegall, the beloved of Britomart, and to the social virtue of courtesy and the vice of calumny. Courtesy and calumny, incidental themes throughout Shakespeare's plays, are especially prominent in *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*.

In treating these problems of human conduct, inevitable in any poetry concerned with society as well as the individual,

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Spenser and Shakespeare are distinguished from other Elizabethan poets, satirists, dramatists by their particular interrelation of varieties of conduct, by emphasis on particular moral values. The parallel must not be pushed too far; often it is parallel of thought rather than identity. I have already called attention to several instances of Shakespeare's superior grasp and depth; in general he excels in degree of comprehension and profits by the greater immediacy of dramatic presentation compared to allegorical narrative. He also has wider range. Spenser sympathizes with the common people,* but his personal inclinations and the design of the *Faerie Queene* are self-consciously aristocratic. By temperament Shakespeare is equally aristocratic; yet his genius for illuminating intuitions like Pompey's defense of himself, while admitting that his trade of bawdry "does stink in some sort"—"Truly, sir, I am a poor fellow that would live"²⁸—is beyond Spenser's reach. Spenser is more circumscribed by his age, as we see perhaps most clearly in his book on Justice, which he regards as the "most sacred virtue" of all, the controlling principle in both "fierce wanes and faithful loves." Justice should dominate individual, social, political life; that actually it does Spenser tries rashly to prove.

3.

Shakespeare is inscrutable observer rather than participant, though admiration for men of action is reflected in his protagonists—Henry V, Othello, Antony, Coriolanus, even Hamlet. Spenser more openly endorses Aristotle's axiom that virtue must issue in action:

The noble hart, that harbours vertuous thought,
And is with child of glorious great intent,
Can never rest, untill it forth have brought
Th'eternall brood of glorie excellent.²⁹

No more than Milton is he proponent of "fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed." His good knights bleed and

* Too much stress is sometimes put on his turning away from Court to find happiness in rural life among simple people (*Faerie Queene* 6.10; Colin C/out); despite this pastoral sentiment drawn from the *Arcadia*, Spenser's ideal remains the blooded gentleman in a purified Court.

sweat in battle; for those who languish in Phaedria's bower in the Idle Lake he has Milton's scorn, together with Shakespeare's pity and understanding.

To what extent Shakespeare was an active partisan of turbulent Southampton and Essex we cannot determine. Spenser's case is different. Like Swift disappointed at court, he played a definite minor role in Ireland as Secretary to Lord Grey, as Clerk of the Council, as soldier, and as one of the English landholders who had to cling to their crown grants like the tenacious Fastens. Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century resembled England a century earlier, when it was not enough to have a deed to property, which had to be constantly defended from lawsuits and marauding bands.

Lord Grey, upright but stern, a confirmed Puritan, with something of Cromwell's iron disposition and unshakable belief in the righteousness of his cause, set out to subjugate Ireland and the Irish in grim earnest. "His record after two years' campaign . . . was '1,485 chief men and gentlemen slain, not accounting those of the meaner sort, nor yet executions by law, which were innumerable/'³⁰ Spenser, a member of Grey's retinue, was in at the kill. His prose pamphlet, *View of the Present State of Ireland*, is a defense and approbation of Grey's severity, and Grey is generally considered the model for Artegall, personification of Justice; we can readily see why the book devoted to him sometimes lacks detachment. But fairness requires of us historical perspective: in the eyes of a gentle, scholarly predecessor of Spenser's in Ireland, Edmund Campion, an Englishman not personally involved in partisanship, the Irish were "much beholden to God for suffering them to be conquered, whereby many of their enormities were cured, and more might be, would themselves be pliable."³¹ And we should not read too much of Spenser's *View into the Faerie Oueene*, or take Artegall for a portrait of Lord Grey drawn from life, since Artegall embodies Aristotelian justice—"complete virtue although not complete in an absolute sense, but in relation to one's neighbours"³²

The fallibility of too literal justice Spenser warns against, first in an adaptation of Solomon's judgment, then more elaborately in his fable of the Giant of the Balances, who, impatient of the mean, tries to weigh extremes. Artegall rebukes him:

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Be not upon thy balance wroken:
 For they doe nought but right or wrong betoken;
 But in the mind the doome of right must bee;
 And so likewise of words, the which be spoken,
 The eare must be the ballance, to decree
 And judge, whether with truth or falshood they agree.³³

In Measure for Measure Shakespeare dramatizes this danger of literal, Old Testament justice, showing its effect on Angelo, the judge, as well as on Claudio, the judged; and when Polonius promises to use the players "according to their desert/" Hamlet protests: "God's bodykins, man, better: use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?"³⁴ Hamlet is moved less by pity than by horror at man's depravity. Even Artegall, watching Talus drag Lady Munera by the hair from her castle of ill-got and ill-distributed gains, softens to see a woman, however false, in distress:

Yet for no pity would he change the course
 Of Justice, which in Talus hand did lye.³⁵

^Susceptible alike to the horror of bloodshed and to the beauty of mercy, Spenser none the less argues that there are times when mercy is a weakness, a womanish self-indulgence. His perplexity proves he knows from his own experience that it is easier to expound than to practice the golden mean Artegall conquers his impulse of pity for Lady Munera, but in his major crisis softness unmans him. Though in the allegory of Isis Church he is the Crocodile sleeping under Isis' feet:

To shew that clemence oft in things amis,
 Restraines those sterne behests, and cruell doomes of his,⁸⁶

actually Artegall is tender-hearted as often as he is cruel, and often less cruel than Britomart (Faerie Queene 5.7.34).

Characteristic is Spenser's defense of him:

Some men,* I wote, will deeme in Artegall
 Great weaknesse, and report of him much ill,

* The need for defense and its partial failure are demonstrated by Mr. C. S. Lewis, who finds Artcgall "one of the most disagreeable characters in the whole poem/" vindictive and cruel (Allegory of Love, p. 348): Spenser and Mr. Lewis disagree on the nature of the weakness.

No contemporary reader will vibrate in sympathy with the conception

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For yeelding so himselfe a wretched thrall,
 To th'insolent commaund of womens will;
 That all his former praise doth fowly spill.
 But he the man, that say or doe so dare,
 Be well adviz'd, that he stand stedfast still:
 For never yet was wight so well aware,
 But he at first or last was trapt in womens snare.³⁷

Artegairs chivalry, along with his susceptibility to women (symbol of the flesh), has blinded him to Radigund's guile and made him her thrall; her price for his release is that he become her lover. In his judgment—or in his refusal to judge—Spenser weighs a delicate paradox: a virtue (though tending to excess) is partly responsible for placing Artegall in Radigund's power, and another virtue, faithfulness to Britomart, keeps him there. If his chivalry is rooted in sensuality, his refusal to pay the price of freedom is doubly admirable, since his punishment is the supreme indignity of Hercules and Achilles, spinning at the distaff in woman's clothing. His plight is ridiculous, humiliating, unrelieved by heroic suffering.

Just as Shakespeare, more interested in actuality than in decorum, does not hesitate to sacrifice his heroes' dignity: Othello's to animal jealousy, Coriolanus' to infantile tantrums, and Antony's to a botched and most un-Roman suicide; so Spenser shows without compromise yet with sympathetic tolerance the dilemma which often confronts a man of high-minded intentions. Such passion for reality is far from the limited conception of the heroic in Dryden's day, from the profound yet highly selective tragedy of Corneille and Racine; its closest counterpart even among the realistic Elizabethans is Shakespeare.

This desire to be honest with himself partly explains Spenser's failure to present a clear conception of justice and mercy. To reconcile the ethics of Aristotle, of Plato, of Cicero, of Christianity with his own knowledge of the world is hard for the philosopher, for the poet overwhelming. Further complicating his task Spenser takes on with the insouciance typical of his age

of justice in the View of the Present State of Ireland or in the Fifth Book of the Faerie Queene. One does not expect twentieth century sensibilities in a sixteenth century just man, who clearly represents a compromise between theory and practice.

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simultaneous political and historical allegory, which obscures his most ambitious attempt in the Fifth Book to present the relation between justice and mercy—Mercilla's trial of Duessa, a scene comparable in some ways to the end of *Measure for Measure*. Here Spenser dramatizes the balance of conflicting impulses and evidence which judgment always entails; but historical allegory (Elizabeth's trial of Mary of Scotland) makes an already complicated problem hopeless. He admits defeat in Chaucer's fashion:

Some Clarkes doe doubt in their devicefull art,
Whether this heavenly thing, whereof I treat,
To weeten Mercie, be of Justice part,
Or drawne forth from her by divine extreate.
This well I wote, that sure she is as great,
And meriteth to have as high a place,
Sith in th'Almighties everlasting seat
She first was bred, and borne of heavenly race;
From thence pour'd down on men, by influence of grace.⁸⁸

Abandoning intellectual analysis, he praises highest the justice of Mercy, thus satisfying his own feeling and paying tribute to Elizabeth (Mercilla). But complications have so wearied him that he does not have left for his praise the eloquence of Isabella and Portia.

Shakespeare surpasses Spenser here because he dramatizes the [conflicts and inconsistencies without trying to resolve them, and because he deliberately avoids any attempt at practical application of the truths which he reveals. We may question whether the Duke, having demonstrated that oversevere application of law is even more faulty than his earlier slackness, will actually improve administration of justice in Vienna; but Shakespeare sees to it that such speculation is outside his play and artistically irrelevant. His acceptance of what can be successfully accomplished is wiser, his artistic sense truer in this instance than Spenser's. Yet Spenser's very failure illuminates the problem of virtue in action; and if his passion for constructive criticism is aesthetically fatal, it is courageous.

His conception of the humane, while innocent of scruple on capital punishment,* is admirable:

* In *Measure for Measure* the Duke's motive in revoking death sentence of the serio-comic murderer, Barnardine, is a case for speculation rather than conviction.

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Bloud is no blemish; for it is no blame
 To punish those, that doe deserve the same;
 But they that breake bands of civilitie,
 And wicked customes make, those doe defame
 Both noble armes and gentle curtesie.
*No greater shame to man then inhumanitie.*³⁹

Inhumanity is to him as to Shakespeare the unforgivable sin; this is the essence of thier gentleness. Not so tolerant as Shakespeare, Spenser has certainly learned the lesson basic for any civilized man, the lesson which costs Angelo in Measure for Measure all that pain:

In vaine he seeketh others to suppresse,
 Who hath not learnd him selfe first to subdew:
 All flesh is frayle, and full of ficklencsse,
 Subject to fortunes chance, still chaunging new;
 What haps to day to me, to morrow may to you.

Who will not mercie unto other shew,
 How can he mercy ever hope to have?⁴⁰

These two passages from the Sixth Book, devoted to Courtesy, show how Spenser carries on the theme of justice while singling out for special detestation slander, perhaps the least excusable vice, seldom serving any purpose except malice. He and Shakespeare pillory slander relentlessly. Mercilla in her judgment of Duessa, like the Duke in Measure for Measure, has to deal with slander of herself. For irresponsibly sullyng the Duke's good name, Lucio, who alone receives real punishment at the mock trial, is humiliated by being married to his whore. We feel, and I think are meant to, that incorrigible Lucio like Spenser's Braggadochio, is only temporarily chastened. Whereas in the Second Book Spenser has Guyon demolish the Bower of Bliss and in the Fifth sometimes rashly attempts finality of statement, in the Sixth Book he has Calidore capture but fail to destroy the Blatant Beast, which after a time breaks its chains and continues its scurrility.

This slight but significant change in allegorical method shows Spenser coming to more realistic terms with his idealism. The last finished book of the *Faerie Queene*, like several of Shakespeare's most thoughtful plays, like Dr. Johnson's grave and iron-

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ical study of happiness, has a "conclusion in which nothing is concluded/" Spenser is no longer sure what the answers are. Together with a diminution of passionate conviction is a wiser and more tolerant acceptance of the mystery of life. Human nature dominates the Sixth Book. As in the later plays of Shakespeare, Spenser's poetry acquires a new delicacy and beauty which compensate for some loss of depth. However much they may owe to Ariosto, Tasso, Sidney, the various characters and their involvements are close to the tragi-comedies of Shakespeare.

Despite moments of great faith, Spenser's acceptance of life, like Shakespeare's, shows bitterness; his recognition of truth melancholy. To Shakespeare is attributed a "tragic period/" but with him and with Spenser melancholy is more persistent than progressive.

4.

Spenser's melancholy is neither causeless nor merely constitutional. It is not Tennyson's

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean;
Tears from the depth of some divine despair,

but a tragic sense of man's imperfect attainment of virtue in this world, not always allayed by virtue's triumph in the next. His despair, tempered by religious faith and never sounding such deeps, is the same as Shakespeare's: despair inevitable for the idealist who is at the same time an uncompromising observer of human nature, and who realizes in compassion how man's strength and weakness are bound together. Moralists that he is, Spenser at times feels so strongly that he suspends moral judgment. He and Shakespeare recognize in themselves as in others the dangerous instinct to refashion the world according to one's own aspiration. Both know what is more tragic in life than agony: that suffering can come from noble intentions; that disaster often is precipitated by spiritual striving; that virtue carried beyond a certain point turns monstrous.

Since Spenser is frankly didactic, we can estimate with relative ease the development and modification of his idealism. To reconstruct Spenser's ethical principles and sense of values is more difficult since he seldom chose to express them directly, any explicit formulation is the critic's. Seeking to fathom the personal

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convictions, the preoccupations essential to judge the individual quality of his poetry, one may slip imperceptibly into irrelevant biographical re-creation: this yardarm the critic must walk.

Certainly Shakespeare dramatizes idealism too often and too powerfully for us to question personal involvement. We cannot determine whether the many implications in his tragedies result simply from his happening to write tragedy, or whether he chose tragedy as the form best suited to express what he felt impelled to say; nor can we explain the quality and greatness of his plays by the law of supply and demand or by any historically demonstrable cause. We must probe more deeply, at the risk of losing ourselves among intangibles, with full knowledge that really illuminating generalizations about Shakespeare are rare, being, for example, fitful in Coleridge, who has genius for them, and conspicuously the least satisfactory part of Bradley's painstaking and brilliant study. The explicit clarity of Spenser may help to focus Shakespeare's idealism in relation to his sense of tragedy.

Spenser wrote the *Faerie Queene* "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline"; his principals in the narrative are variations of the perfect courtier. Shakespeare shares this Renaissance absorption in the idealized, well-rounded, integrated man. Ophelia sees in Hamlet:

The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword,
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form.⁴¹

This is spoken by an impressionable, hero-worshipping girl; but other contexts show that Shakespeare is more interested in the sentiment than in the mouthpiece. The disguised Duke in *Measure for Measure* in self-defense draws his own portrait for Lucio:

Let him be but testimonied in his own bringings-forth,
and he shall appear to the envious a scholar, a statesman,
and a soldier.⁴²

Though Shakespeare is not so directly as Spenser in the tradition represented in England by Elyot, Ascham, Sidney, he is clearly affected by it; how deeply we realize only when we discover how this conception of the unified man permeates his work.

We are no longer sure that Shakespeare was preeminently concerned with character, yet we need not let our quarrels with

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nineteenth century critics over techniques of characterization blind us to the importance of character in Shakespeare. So far as he is concerned with motivation, he portrays conduct as not merely the expression of judicial or emotional choice, but of the whole complex personality. Hamlet, Macbeth, Troilus, Othello, Antony, Coriolanus do what they do because of what they are. In each instance the tragedy springs in part from events beyond control and is modified by occasional sacrifice of motivation to theme, but its essence in terms of human behavior is failure in a personality, however noble or heroic. A seeming integration of varying subtlety is revealed by some significant circumstance or choice to be false, to lack flexibility; like the collapse of some great engineering work from a fault of structure, personality disintegrates. Fatal rigidity is most apparent in the deliberately simplified characterization of Coriolanus; Othello, though unable to overcome it, sees his difficulty most clearly:

I had rather be a toad,
 And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
 Than keep a corner in the thing I love
 For others' uses.

Had it pleased heaven
 To try me with affliction; had they rain'd
 All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
 Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
 Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
 I should have found in some place of my soul
 A drop of patience: but, alas, to make me
 The fixed figure for the time of scorn
 To point his slow and moving finger at!
 Yet could I bear that too, well, very well;
 But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
 Where either I must live, or bear no life;
 The fountain from the which my current runs,
 Or else dries up; to be discarded thence/
 Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
 To knot and gender in!⁴³

What Othello says is probably true; he could bear anything save this: yet it is precisely this that he is called upon to bear. His frantic attempts first at denial, then at a solution which negates

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his nobility, represent the tragedy of the man who cannot accept what he does not want to believe. This is equally true of more subtle Hamlet, whose basic inflexibility is clear, however obscured both to him and to us by his tortured analysis of tangential issues. The most conspicuous exception is Lear. Despite his eighty years' habit of denying what he dislikes to believe, he almost overcomes his inflexibility to achieve acceptance and patience; consequently, Lear during his few moments of humility approaches closest the greatest of all these tests of personality and character: Christ's agony in the garden, where tragedy is metamorphosed into victory. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt/" Man can only emulate, not be, Christ; otherwise tragedy would have no meaning.

Knowing Spenser's didactic purpose and the intellectual plan of the *Faerie Queene*, we are likely to underestimate his tendency to humanize his symbolical knights and ladies in the actual working out of that plan, and so we miss the close similarity to Shakespearean characterization, particularly to Shakespeare's combination of poetical conventions and psychology. And when we take into account Spenser's direct observations (observations which Shakespeare, the playwright, puts into the mouths of various characters), we see more clearly how close the final synthesis of Spenser's presentation of human experience is to Shakespeare's.

"The intensity with which both recognize the disparity between the ideal and the actual explains occasional negation in each and passages of superb turbulence; but their most profound tragic sense is more mature, revealing man's heroic, disastrous efforts to mitigate the disparity, to reconcile himself. Reconciliation when even relatively successful, whatever the consequences in suffering, is the rarest of human attainments: serenity after deep conflict.*" Such serenity, only fitful in Shakespeare, is more frequent in Spenser, because his conflicts were less severe and because in all probability he managed to find more actual satisfaction in his own life; also, though his faith wavered, he found an answer in religion.

Shakespeare's plays are steeped in the Bible and Christian ethics and portray religious characters with understanding and sympathy. In a dramatist this cannot be taken as evidence of

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personal feeling, of orthodoxy or lack of it; yet that Shakespeare is temperamentally as Christian as Spenser seems beyond dispute. Both are lovers of humility, tolerance, charity, mercy, patience; and Shakespeare has faith in more than human nature. It is more probable that Spenser actually had in mind Socrates' maxim, "Know thyself/" and Christ's rebuke to the Pharisees to search their own hearts; however that may be, he and Shakespeare possess this beginning of wisdom. Both realize that self-knowledge is not an end, but a means of knowing others, of knowing, so far as one can, truth. To Spenser especially, the beauty of the ideal is at times almost in itself enough, but neither he nor Shakespeare can ultimately accept the ideal without believing in it as truth, empirical rather than categorical. More fundamental even than their idealism or love of beauty is the desire to understand; both are preoccupied with the nature of truth, persistently concerned with what in terms familiar from a later age we call Appearance and Reality.⁴⁴ Trailing clouds of neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism, Spenser is more drawn than Shakespeare to Absolute Truth; but Spenser is neither a complete Aristotelian nor Platonist; his poetic presentation of Appearance and Reality is as protean as Shakespeare's.

F. H. Bradley's definition of metaphysics: "We may agree, perhaps, to understand by metaphysics an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance, or the study of first principles or ultimate truths, or again the effort to comprehend the universe, not simply piecemeal or by fragments, but somehow as a whole,"⁴⁵ is up to a point applicable to Spenser and Shakespeare, who are metaphysical poets in a much deeper sense than the term signifies when applied to a school. As idealists, they desire purity of motive; as lovers of truth, they are concerned with the mixed motivation of human conduct, the hidden springs of thought and action. They have mastered the art of peeling away surface appearances to reveal the innate tendency of human beings to hide from themselves as well as others their secret desires. Hamlet psychoanalyzes himself three centuries before Freud names the process. "Seeming, seeming! I will proclaim thee, Angelo," Isabella cries in *Measure for Measure* when at last she sees the discrepancy between Angelo's appearance and reality, little knowing that in the very next scene a similar discrepancy

will be revealed in herself. "Honest" Iago is amused and irritated that he is taken at face value when he knows how debased his coinage is. Lear willfully accepts, against his better judgment, the false affection of Goneril and Regan.

This predominantly psychological analysis of appearance and reality is rarer in the *Faerie Queene*, for Spenser, even when concerned with psychology, is less realistic. In order to demonstrate that a man's genuine desire for the beautiful and the good may in itself contribute to his downfall if he is rash and indiscriminate, he shows how Redcross is blinded by the dazzling surface beauty of false Duessa instead of Iago's psychological undermining of Othello's faith in Desdemona. Spenser has Archimago (Hypocrisy) destroy Redcross' faith in Una by magic sprites and dreams.* Neither Iago nor Archimago immediately succeeds, but each in his own way furnishes what seems to be damning ocular proof, Iago stages the Cassio-Bianca trick with the handkerchief while Othello looks on and misinterprets; Archimago uses two sprites, one in likeness of Una, the other of a Squire, and summons the knight to witness their lasciviousness.

The whole First Book of the *Faerie Queene*, concerned with the nature of truth, abounds in examples of discrepancy between appearance and reality. The apparent magnificence of the House of Pride is cellared with a dungeon of lost souls and founded on sand. Duessa is finally stripped of borrowed beauty to her true loathsomeness. Later, in the Third and Fourth Books, Spenser creates the true and the false Florimell, causing endless confusion; the distinction between them is finally made by the magic girdle, which has the property, like Una's intuition, of revealing the truth beneath appearances. In the Fifth Book one of Spenser's most remarkable imaginative creations is Artegall's groom:

His name was Talus, made of yron mould,
Immoveable, resistlesse, without end.
Who in his hand an yron flale did hould,
With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth unfould.⁴⁶

Justice, inseparably linked with love, friendship, temperance, like all these virtues has the aspects of falsehood and truth, of appearance and reality.

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These personifications and symbols are more complex than at first appears. The Bower of Bliss is only one outstanding instance where Spenser portrays the reality of the false, the beauty of evil, the seductive and varied power of which he no more underestimates than Shakespeare the magnificence of Iago and Goneril, or Milton the grandeur of Satan and beauty of the serpent. Appearance and reality are not invariably contrast or opposition. The dream and the symbol have reality of their own, apart from what they shadow forth: both Spenser and Shakespeare are concerned not only with falsehood masquerading as truth, with ugliness disguised as beauty, but also with various measures of beauty and degrees of truth. Realizing this, we are less likely to underestimate the manifold significance of the dream world of the *Faerie Queene* and its possibilities as a philosophical and artistic device. Spenser's half-humorous, half-serious defense of that world, which I quoted at the beginning, acquires deeper meaning/

Britomart's experience in the House of Busyrane illustrates the interdependence of technique and content. She patiently awaits the sorcerer:

Tho when as chearelesse Night ycovered had
Faire heaven with an universall cloud,
That every wight dismayd with darknesse sad,
In silence and in sleepe themselves did shroud,
She heard a shrilling Trompet sound aloud,
Signe of nigh battell, or got victory;
Nought therewith daunted was her courage proud,
But rather stird to cruell enmity,
Expecting ever, when some foe she might descry.

With that, an hideous storme of winde arose,
With dreadfull thunder and lightning atwixt,
And an earth-quake, as if it streight would lose
The worlds foundations from his centre fixt;
A direfull stench of smoke, and sulphure mixt
Ensewd, whose noyance fild the fearefull sted,
From the fourth houre of night untill the sixt,
Yet the bold Britonesse was nought ydred,
Though much enmov'd, but stedfast still persevered.

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All suddenly a stormy whirlwind blew
 Throughout the house, that clapped every dore,
 With which that yron wicket open flew,
 As it with mightie levers had bene tore:
 And forth issewd, as on the ready flore
 *Of some Theatre, a grave personage,
 That in his hand a branch of laurell bore,
 With comely haveour and countenance sage,
 Yclad in costly garments, fit for tragicke Stage.⁴⁷

Thus, with a Wagnerian flourish of trumpets, shattering silence like Childe Roland's, blast on the slug-horn before the Round Tower, Spenser introduces the Masque of Cupid. This is conscious drama, though at one remove, since it is presented as narrative rather than in a theater. Spenser incorporates into the verse itself the incidental symbolical music, which in an opera comes from the orchestra pit, which in Antony and Cleopatra comes from under the stage to signify that the god Hercules, whom Antony loves, now leaves him.

The Masque of Cupid, with its attendant figures—Fancy, Desyre, Doubt, Daunger, Feare, Hope, Dissemblance, Cruelty, and the rest—is more than delightful pageantry, more even than these names convey. Under cover of a similar pageant Busyranc had originally stolen Amoret from her betrothed in order to torture her into submission to his own desire; the masque is in part a psychological symbolism, expressing the nature and cause of the division between Amoret and Scudamour. After Britomart releases Amoret by breaking the spell, as the two escape from the House of Busyrane they discover that all the trappings and splendor have disappeared just as the masque had vanished:

Returning backe, those goodly roomcs, which erst
 She saw so rich and royally arayd,
 Now vanisht utterly, and cleane subverst
 She found, and all their glory quite dccayd,
 That sight of such a chaunge her much dismayd.
 Thence forth descending to that perlous Porch,
 Those dreadfull flames she also found delayd,
 And quenched quite, like a consumed torch,
 That erst all entrers wont so cruelly to scorch.⁴⁸

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The "seeming, seeming" has been proclaimed; what appeared to have objective reality (and had enough to prevent Scudamour's entry) has none save in the mind. But Spenser's meaning is more subtle than destruction of falsehood by truth; it is close to Bradley's belief, and Locke's before him, that if appearance is false "it must therefore be true reality, for it is something Which is/⁴⁹ Hamlet's "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"⁵⁰ implies among other things that what one thinks or imagines, however at variance with objective fact, has its own reality, determining much that one is and does. While Othello is under Iago's diabolical sway, Desdemona's guilt has unbearable reality to him; when he finally sees his error he has waked too late from a nightmare which has governed his actions and ruined his life. Spenser's Amoret, chaste and faithful, apparently beyond reproach, is in some indefinable way at fault, and so becomes prey to intense imaginative suffering which her lover is powerless to relieve, from which only Britomart can release her.

The House of Busyrane is closer to serious plays like Hamlet and Othello than to the romantic *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like it*, *Winter's Tale*, in which pastoral, dream and magic are used largely for charm and delight, though it anticipates most strikingly Shakespeare's use in the *Tempest* of masque and magic to veil serious ideas in surface beauty. Appearance and reality are ironically expressed in Miranda's naive admiration of mankind (consisting, as Prospero and we know but she does not, of a remorseful king who has connived at usurpation of a dukedom, two would-be fratricides, one good-hearted, senile courtier). More Spenserian are Ariel's harpy scene and the masque of Ceres. After his mock judgment Ariel fades in thunder; the masque of Ceres dissolves at a clap of Prospero's hands:

These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff

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As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.⁵¹

By frankly calling attention to the basic illusion of the theater, Shakespeare here talks to his audience as directly as Spenser; that the actors of the play and of the masque within the play are literally actors, as well as symbols for people in the story, establishes the various levels of reality.

"We have found that no one aspect of experience as such is real. None is primary, or can serve to explain others or the whole. They are all alike appearances, all one-sided, and passing away beyond themselves."⁵² The philosopher goes on to find a logical solution in the Absolute; the poet—especially Shakespeare in the *Tempest*, Spenser in the *House of Busyrane* and the *Mutabilitie Cantos*—is content to present imaginatively and concretely the appearance of reality and the reality of appearance.

5.

Perhaps understanding so much about human life and the nature of truth leaves Spenser and Shakespeare dissatisfied that they cannot understand more, cannot understand all; in neither does this human but dangerous drive toward omniscience, stigma of the Renaissance, work so strongly as in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or Bacon's aplomb in taking all knowledge to be his province. Spenser and Shakespeare have more humility than Marlowe, Bacon, Milton. But much knowledge is a dangerous thing, likely to leave man oppressed and overburdened by the finite, to increase his uncertainty and instability. Understanding too well human weaknesses, limitations, defeated aspirations, he may question the value of even that hard-won understanding. Self-consciousness is essential but limited.⁵³

To Spenser and Shakespeare poetry is the finest expression of human wisdom, the highest form of human experience; this Renaissance faith in the victory of poetry over time is not with them mere echo, yet neither finds satisfaction in it. Spenser is often troubled by the gradual dissolution of Chaucer's poetry through decay of language;⁵⁴ he catches the implications. If we take into account not only what they say but how they say it, we discern an undercurrent of melancholy, a haunting fear that

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despite the greatness of their own poetic achievement, which each fully realized, it is only fragments shored against time's ruin. Time, which philosophers can reduce with sang-froid to logical absurdity, is intensely real to poets, who have feared it from the beginning.

In Prosperous reduction of man to "such stuff as dreams are made on/" echoing with variation the earlier speech of the Duke to Claudio in *Measure for Measure*:

Thou hast nor youth nor age,
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both,⁵⁵

the sense of impermanence is so beautifully expressed that we may miss the protest in the resignation. Even when we allow for convention in poems like Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, *Ruines of Time*, *Visions of the Worlds Vanitie*, the constant recurrence of this theme proves its strong hold over them. Shakespeare's most arresting expression is Ulysses' speech to Achilles in *Troilus and Cressida*, transcending its occasion:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingratitudes.
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done.
For Time is like a fashionable host
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,
And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer.
For beauty, wit,
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time.⁵⁶

Transiency is the rub. In the conflict between ideal and actual, between appearance and reality, the world of flesh appears to be ceaseless change, meaningless flux; whereas the spirit desires resolution of conflict, peace and permanence/Spenser has Venus in

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the Garden of Adonis, the nursery of all living things, herself lament time's destruction of all beautiful forms:

For all that lives, is subject to that law:

All things decay in time, and to their end do draw.⁵⁷

That his suggested solution—the traditional paradox of Adonis, "subject to mortalitie," yet "eternc in mutabilitie"⁵⁵—does not really satisfy him is clear from the Proem to the Fifth Book in the second installment of the *Faerie Queene*. The new science, particularly the new astronomy, disturbs Spenser as some fifteen years later it disturbs Donne in his First Anniversary: "The new Philosophy calls all in doubt/" In the unsettled heavens planets go awry:

So now all range, and doe at random rove

Out of their proper places farrc away,

And all this world with them amissc doe move,

And all his creatures from their course astray,

Till they arrive at their last ruinous decay.

^If the publisher is right in his belief that the *MufabiKfie Cantos* are a fragment of the Seventh Book of the *Faerie Qucenc*, Spenser planned to give greater prominence to this themes/Their date of composition is relatively unimportant, however, since mutability was always in Spenser's mind; what matters is that they are his most ambitious poetic treatment of tiuucLS_dccay. The ceaseless flux of the four elements—earth, air, water, fire—leads to Spenser's grandest pageant, the *Passage of Time*: the four seasons, the months, day and night, the hours, and finally life and death. Then comes a dramatic argument* between the Titanccss (Mutability) and Jove (Stability), who, however benevolent he may be, is a usurper. Jove's usurpation is the classical equivalent of the Christian doctrine of original sio/Likc Milton afterwards with Satan, Spenser does not shrink from giving Mutability considerable point in argument. She voices much of his own questioning, his irrepressible skepticism:

To [Jove] thus Mutability: The things

Which we sec not how they are mov'd and swayd,

Ye may attribute to your selves as Kings,

* This whole canto is as dramatic as the Second Book of *Paradise Losf*. Milton repeatedly echoes it.

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And say they by your secret powre are made:
 But what we see not, who shall us perswade?
 But were they so, as ye them faine to be,
 Mov'd by your might, and ordred by your ayde;
 Yet what if I can prove, that even yee

Your selves are likewise chang'd, and subject unto mee?⁵⁹

"But what we see not, who shall us perswade?" reverses his defense of the Faerie Queene with which we started:

Why then should witlesse man so much misweene
 That nothing is, but that which he hath scene?

Mutability's argument dramatizes a point of view not entirely shared by Spenser any more than Satan's is shared by Milton; still Spenser's sympathetic presentation of this skepticism gives a double edge to the question defending the Faerie Queene by directing it to himself as well as to his reader. Mutability cogently attacks the fiction of Jove's supremacy: he is earth-born, and the only constant in the universe is the law of transience and change. The answer and the judgment come not from Jove but from Nature:

I well consider all that ye have sayd,
 And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
 And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
 They are not changed from their first estate;
 But by their change their being doe dilate:
 And turning to themselves at length againe,
 Do worke their owne perfection so by fate:
 Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne;
 But they raigne over change, and doe their states maintaine.

Cease therefore daughter further to aspire,
 And thee content thus to be rul'd by me:
 For thy decay thou seekst by thy desire;
 But time shall come that all shall changed bee,
 And from thenceforth, none no more change shall see.
 So was the Titaness put downe and whist,
 And Jove confirm'd in his imperial! see.

Then was that whole assembly quite dismiss,
 And Natur's selfe did vanish, whither no man wist.⁶⁰

Nature stays no further question.

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Man's intellectual efforts to get at first causes are endless. Nature's judgment, posing the intellect merely another dilemma, is essentially a revelation rather than proof of truth or philosophical attempt to arrive at the absolute/Where Shakespeare is content merely to present the paradox and the necessity and will of man to believe, Spenser seeks to commit himself. In the two stanzas of the unfinished following canto he drops the mask of his fable:

\When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare,
Of Mutability, and well it way:
Me seemes, that though she all unworthy were
Of the Heav'ns Rule; yet very sooth to say,
In *all things else she beares the greatest sway*,
Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
And love of things so vaine to cast away;
Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short Time shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.

Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd
Upon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie:
For, all that moveth, doth in Change delight:
But *thence-forth all shall* rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabnoths sight.

~ Probably the consuming sickle of time they celebrate explains why Spenser left these cantos a fragment; yet in the context of similar passages in his poetry, these two stanzas suggest that, while he knew what the solution for him was, his personal and artistic integrity warned that he could not do that solution justice till he himself had accepted and assimilated it more completely. In his effort to reconcile much traditional philosophy—Lucretius, Empedocles, Lipsius, Giordano Bruno, and others—with Christian teaching, Spenser does not entirely conquer his own skepticism.*

* Though too sanguine over Spenser's successful transmutation, Mr. Brents Stirling's is much the best discussion of these "influences" on a related passage, the Garden of Adonis Canto in the Third Book—*Variorum Spenser* 3.347.

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I cannot agree with Jones that Spenser's "awareness of mutability like his awareness of despair or idle mirth is sufficiently vivid, but the spiritual affirmation in the last stanza of the final canto of *Mutabilitie* is none the less emphatic/"⁶¹ for, estimating the cantos not just by what they say but by the way it is said, considering them in relation to the rest of Spenser's poetry, I cannot help feeling that the greater poetic power and conviction are on the side of Mutability. And when Spenser writes that brooding on mutability makes him

loath this state of life so tickle,
And love of things so vaine to cast away,

he is, on the evidence of his own work, indulging in wishful thinking. "He really loathes not life but its transience; however much he may have wished to cast away "love of things so vaine," countless passages in the *Faerie Queene* prove that he could not. Spenser's "emphatic affirmation of the spiritual/" unconvincing in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, is the Heavenly Hymnes; his reconciliation of physical and spiritual—his love of life and love of God—is found rather in the First and Second Books of the *Faerie Queene* and in the fusion of physical and spiritual in the symbolical marriage of Britomart to Arctegall.

✓ These two final stanzas of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* are moving precisely because they express humble and suppliant prayer, desire rather than affirmation. In his poetry are many instances of untroubled, vision-like beauty in contemplation of the ideal; moments, too, of clear-eyed recognition that he has not reconciled his conflict. His undertow of pessimism is less violent than Shakespeare's, yet strong enough to cause whirlpools of satire/

Both long for release. When depressed by mutability, Spenser thinks

Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd
Upon the pillours of Eternity,

since he despairs of rest in this world. Whenever, even in passing, he touches on this theme he becomes so poignant that clearly his own emotions are stirred. The stanza on the House of Morpheus where

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carelesse Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enemyes,⁶²

strikes a deeper note than Tennyson's Lotos Land, which echoes it, as does this passage in which Guyon, weary from his long quest, Ulysses-like almost succumbs to the siren voices singing:

O turne thy rudder hithcrward a while:
Here may thy storme-bet vessell safely ride;
This is the Port of rest from troublous toyle,
The worlds sweet In, from paine and wearisome turmoyle.⁶³

Shakespeare, too, invariably becomes intensely moving whenever in his plays he dwells on the longing for rest, putting into the mouth of prosaic, cold-blooded Henry of Lancaster, caught in the web of his own devious ambitions, this supreme eloquence:

O Sleep, O gentle Sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulncss?

· · · · ·
Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge

· · · · ·
Canst thou, O partial Sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king?⁶⁴

And a large part of Macbeth's nightmare is that he has murdered sleep.*

Spenser and Shakespeare know that in this passionate longing for rest the danger is an imperceptible shift from the elder to the younger brother, from sleep to death. As powerful as any passage in Spenser is the mingling of casuistry and promise of longed-for peace with which Despair tempts Redcross to suicide:

* Of course sleep and death, like birth and love, are conventional themes among; the Elizabethans and preceding poets; originality and importance are judged by quality of treatment.

AGAINST TIME'S RUIN

He there does now enjoy eternall rest
And happie ease, which thou doest want and crave,
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some litle paine the passage have,
That makes fraile flesh to feare the bitter wave?
Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,
And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet grave?
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after wane, death after life does greatly please.⁶⁵

Redcross is at his lowest ebb of failure, futility, exhaustion—an exhaustion comparable to that of Macbeth and of Hamlet toward the end. "The whole scene at the Cave of Despair is in the key of Hamlet's tragic soliloquies; and since it is not an isolated instance in Spenser's poetry, only outstanding among many, the dramatic power of this passage on despair and suicide is the more impressive. V

Without accepting it as a solution for even the most intense suffering, Spenser and Shakespeare have sympathetic understanding of suicide. Shakespeare seems more tolerant, though nothing can be argued from the suicides of Romeo and Juliet, of Antony and Cleopatra, since they are dictated by the stories; Othello's is the only noteworthy suicide of his own devising. Unlike the later Jacobean, Shakespeare does not ennoble suicide except in the Roman play; nor does he, like some Victorians, ennoble suffering for its own sake. In his most uncompromising tragedy, *King Lear*, where his own ideas and invention have freest play, suicide is smilingly by-passed, and serenity comes after suffering but not in direct proportion to it.



"KING LEAR" IN THE CONTEXT OF SHAKESPEARE

KING LEAR is a difficult play. Friendly and hostile critics agree on that, though they do not agree on the nature or importance of the difficulties. Johnson and the eighteenth century, for the most part, balked at what they considered the wanton cruelty of Cordelia's death and acquiesced in Tate's revision. (To Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, King Lear was Shakespeare's greatest creation but impossible to act; their solution, and Bradley's after them, was to remove the play from the theater and stage it with subtlety and insight in their own imaginations.) In our day Granville-Barker wisely refused to accept this compromise; he restored the play to the boards and ably defended its effectiveness there. Then, when balance seems regained, Mr. Murry questions boldly the integrity of King Lear both as poetry and drama.

Apparently Mr. Murry's Shakespeare could not have written King Lear except in an off-moment. (Mr. Murry) could almost believe that Shakespeare himself was on the edge of madness when he wrote it, and (suggests that King Lear and Timon and Troilus and Cressida may be taken as evidence of uncontrollable despair, lit by gleams of illumination.") But his somewhat occult opinion should not keep us from seriously considering his reflection that in King Lear Shakespeare was "if not perfunctory, perfunctory, uncertain" that he did not "master his vision," that the play is an "artifact,"² a professional work (in the highest sense, of course), the attempt of a superlative craftsman to subdue intractable material. Such charges justify reopening the case.

Though in this instance the critic can only look at familiar matter in a different light, any illumination, however fitful, is worth trying, so important is King Lear not only in itself but in

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the context of Shakespeare's plays. None is more closely woven into that context. Many critics, especially since Bradley, have called attention to obvious and subtle kinship to earlier plays in situation and character, in dominant themes and imagery: King Lear is a recapitulation of themes from plays like King John, Measure for Measure, Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Timon, Othello. That King Lear is also a culmination of technical experiments and, therefore essential to understanding Shakespeare's mature dramatic method has been less emphasised. ized.

"Mr. Murry's distinction between this" play and the other tragedies revives in different terms the neo-classical "art versus natural genius." In derogation he calls King Lear an "artefact.:" I accept his challenge in the hope that re-examining the play's structure and technique will explain, if not entirely answer, a few of the questions which have been persistently raised since Dr. Johnson, and will illuminate by example and implication the central problem of duality in any work of literature.

2.

Bradley considers King Lear almost as deficient structurally, especially in the fourth and fifth acts, as Antony and Cleopatra, which he calls "the most faultily constructed of all the tragedies."³ This "faulty" sequence of a number of scenes in which the characters frequently change is, of course, most characteristic of the history plays, to which Antony and Cleopatra and King Lear are closely related both in content and construction; they represent Shakespeare's metamorphosis of the old chronicle stage technique. Since Bradley wrote we have considerably revised our estimate of the structure of these two tragedies, largely owing to historical investigation of the Elizabethan stage and to technical analysis by such students of theatrical production as Granville-Barker. We realize now how brilliantly Shakespeare exploits a flexibility rivaled only by the revolving and multiple stages of the present day.

But Antony and Cleopatra comes after King Lear; while the structural relationship between the two is important, King Lear is best highlighted by plays which Shakespeare had already written when he faced the difficult problem of dramatizing the Lear

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story. Mindful of the close relation in substance and treatment between King Lear and the earlier historical series, I think at once of a play which has seldom* been mentioned in serious connection with King Lear, but which is so essentially similar in several important respects that it is probable that Shakespeare remembered it. Whether or not he actually was thinking of Richard II while writing King Lear, the relation between the two is instructive.

The problem confronting Shakespeare when he wrote Richard II strikingly anticipates the later tragedy. Each play portrays a king who does not rise to a height of power from which he subsequently falls, for each is at the zenith of his power at the opening and the action turns against him almost at once. Each protagonist, therefore, soon ceases to dominate the action, which is taken over by the opposing camp (Bolingbroke in Richard II, Goneril, Regan, and Edmund in King Lear), yet each must dominate the play. This problem Shakespeare solves primarily, of course, by shifting dramatic emphasis from action to character. This shift from historical to psychological tragedy, often ascribed to the turn from Henry V to *Hamlet* some five years later,⁴ is clearly evident in the first of the history plays showing Shakespeare's maturity in dramatic technique and his independence of Marlowe, since he is not so much imitating as consciously improving upon Edward II.

Richard and Lear are kingly, self-willed, impetuous. Both against sound, friendly advice (Gaunt—Kent) make fatal autocratic decisions which precipitate a train of calamities dragging them from the pinnacle of power to impotence and imprisonment. The problem of dramatizing this degradation of a man essentially passive Shakespeare solves in Richard II with extraordinary skill and resourcefulness. The action seems to be going in Richard's favor from the opening of the play until Gaunt's death providentially supplies him with revenue for his Irish War. From this point on his progress is steadily downward;

* Mr. Wilson Knight has a Note on "Richard II" at the end of his Imperial Theme, in which he indicates how Richard's speech (5.5.1-66) forecasts the future tragedies, among them King Lear. I had not read his note till after I had planned this essay; further, my purpose is different from his. Incidentally, Coleridge (Literary Remains, n) considered Richard II, as well as King Lear, unsuited to the stage.

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he initiates no other actions; decisions are made for him. The counteraction, already suggested in the early conversation between Gaunt and the Ducliess of Gloucester, is well under way by the end of the opening scene of the Second Act. in this switt pace lies the difficulty of portraying a protagonist whose active part in the play is so soon over. Almost four acts devoted to Richard's downfall and Bolingbroke's corresponding rise would have been as tedious dramatically as Tamburlaine's monotonous successes; consequently, Shakespeare disposes of this exchange of power, so far as action is concerned, in two scenes, the second and third of the Third Act. During the single scene comprising the Fourth Act he suspends the action completely, except for suggesting intrigue to prepare for the episode of Aumerle's treason in the last act, devised to sustain interest in action until Richard's murder.

Only in the Second and Fifth Acts is there any real action in the play, since Richard's submission to Bolingbroke in the Third is a foregone conclusion. Furthermore, Shakespeare makes no effort to create suspense of plot or character; he underlines Richard's psychological as well as physical surrender. We know exactly what Richard will do. Weak in action though it is, the play as a whole is dramatic, not just because Shakespeare makes a passive personality poetic and exciting, but also because in constructing a play he has already learned, by their placement and complex interrelation, to dramatize scenes in themselves undramatic.

Much suspense of action also depends on context—that is, on the relation of events in any one scene to others, whether the relation is mere sequence, or causality, or more subtly complicated. But there is another kind of relation, distinguishable from action and motivation, though co-existing—relation of emotional tone, of varying intensity, of repeating or contrasting theme or feeling; and this kind of relation kindles as much suspense and excitement as are produced by action and character.

The main themes in Richard II, worked out simply and swiftly in terms of action, are reinforced by scenes which, in themselves often static, sain dramatic effect from their contextual relations. The conversation between the Queen and the Gardener (3.4) is the clearest example, though the most famous is the deposition

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scene (4.1), which from the point of view of action is unnecessary, being merely repetitive stage business and pantomime. A different sort is Shakespeare's intensifying the effect on Richard of the Welsh desertion by relating it ironically to an earlier scene. Such lines as these:

BOLINGBROKE. How long a time lies in one little word!
Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
End in a word: such is the breath of kings.

GAUNT.
But not a minute, King, that thou canst give:
Shorten my days thou canst with sullen sorrow,
And pluck nights from me, but not lend a
morrow,⁵

echo and are meant to echo in our minds when Salisbury cries out after reporting the Welsh desertion, "O, call back yesterday, bid time return"; and Richard, "Is not the King's name twenty thousand names?"*

The most effective of these relations between scenes is the deliberate contrast which dramatizes the whole action and purpose of the play—the downfall of a king. In the first and third scenes of the First Act we see Richard in all the brilliance of his court, "not born to sue, but to command," his power superseding feudal trial by combat, which he breaks off at a whim. This is the appearance, its artificiality carefully exaggerated in order to emphasize its disintegration into the reality, its undermining by three forces structurally interwoven: Richard himself, the intrigues of his nobility, and the opinion of the common people. The full impact of Richard's fall, however, is due to the dramatic contrast between those two opening scenes stressing his autocratic power, and York's description of his final impotence:

As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
Are idly bent on him that enters next,
Thinking his prattle to be tedious;
Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
Did scowl on gentle Richard; no man cried, "God save him!"
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home;
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head. . . .⁷

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This contrast and interplay of scenes is fully as important as handling of action in the structure of Shakespeare's plays from Richard II and Romeo and *Juliet* on. In Romeo and *Juliet* his chief device is juxtaposition, but beginning with Richard II the scenes played against each other for effect may be widely separated, frequently marking the high points in the broad sweep of the play* We find this widely spaced contrast in Measure for Measure (5.1), where the full significance of Isabella's falling on her knees to beg the life of the man whom she considers her brother's murderer is italicized by our memory of the earlier scene (3.1) in which she turns like a virago on her brother:

I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee.

✓ In King Lear Shakespeare repeats and develops with more maturity and self-confidence the structural pattern of Richard II. The point of attack is practically the same as in the earlier play, but in King Lear Shakespeare attacks more boldly and paces the action more swiftly. He can afford to do this because now, instead of the lightly sketched, loosely related subplot of Aumerle's treason, he contrives a full-fledged subplot to support the action after the downfall of Lear, and by deliberate parallelism uses this subplot to reinforce the main action, with which it is closely integrated. A few comparisons will indicate the difference" in Tempo.

First, Richard makes his fatal decision to seize illegally Gaunt's lands and depart for Ireland in the fourth scene of the First Act but does not carry it out till the Second Act; whereas Lear's division of his kingdom and expulsion of Cordelia and Kent occur in the play's opening scene, at the end of which Goneril and Regan immediately begin their intrigue to divest him of authority, corresponding to the defection to Bolingbroke of Northumberland, Willoughby, and Ross in Richard II (2.1). And the secondary plot, of which there is scarcely a hint in Richard II until the opening of the Fourth Act, gets under way in King Lear immediately with Edmund's soliloquy in the second scene

* This structural device is characteristic of the Faerie Queene; Spenser in widely separated cantos, largely by contrast, sets up vibrations between the House of Pride (1.4) and the House of Holiness (1.10), the House of Medina (2,2) and the Bower of Bliss (2.12).

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of the First/* While Richard surrenders to Bolingbroke in the Third Act, his abdication is not brought home to us until the deposition scene of the Fourth, nor is his degradation completely dramatized until York's description of Bolingbroke's coronation in the Fifth; whereas Lear is shut out of Gloucester's house at the end of the Second Act and is at the lowest ebb of his fortunes by the time of the heath scenes in the Third

^This more daring speed is possible because in this act the burden of action is temporarily assumed by the secondary plot, which culminates in the blinding of Gloucester and thrusting him forth into the storm. Thus the secondary plot has reached the point of development anticipated by the main plot at the end of the previous act; and blind Gloucester, smelling his way to Dover in the opening scenes of the Fourth act, parallels Lear's storm-wanderings in the Third. The structure of the Fourth Act is usually difficult, but in *King Lear* Shakespeare solves the problem with ease by merging his two plots, Goneril and Edmund joining forces (4.2), precipitating the struggle between Goneril and Regan over Edmund and power. This struggle ends in their exposure and death in the last act, but not till after their victory over Cordelia. Edgar disposes of Edmund, leaving the stage clear for the ultimate tragedy of Cordelia and Lear. Contrary to Bradley, I find this holocaust of deaths no more confusing^ or excessive than is customary in Elizabethan tragedy, certainly no more than in *Hamlet*. The play as a whole is brilliantly constructed, with only minor inconsistencies and loose ends.⁴

Shakespeare repeats, whether consciously or not, other structural elements of *Richard II* than the mere pattern of events. *King Lear* opens with the same dramatization of Olympian regality, accomplished with more power and economy. And against this scene, as in the earlier play, is deliberately placed another (3.4) showing the old, proud king reduced to the level of "houseless poverty," entering the hovel last, exposed to feel what wretches feel. The advance over *Richard II* is manifest. In the earlier play the relation is little more than simple though highly dramatic contrast, like *Hamlet's* "Look here, upon this

* In a sense the structural parallel is exact for in the second scene of the First Act of *Richard II* the Duchess of Gloucester tries to arouse Gaunt against Richard; but her scheme is abortive and has no connection with the real revolt. *King Lear* shows greater economy.

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picture, and on this,"⁸ because Shakespeare has York report Richard's final degradation and does not reveal the change in Richard till his soliloquy in the last act."In *King Lear* Shakespeare discards the old descriptive-narrative technique for actual dramatization, combining internal and external, the king's new spiritual humility with his physical helplessness" The scene is in itself intensely dramatic, but its full quality is explicable only in terms of its calculated contrast with the opening scene of the

play'

This is one conspicuous instance. The improvement of the Richard II design as repeated and modified in *King Lear* illuminates admirably Shakespeare's development as a craftsman and his growth in stature during a decade/His problem in *King Lear* is more complicated, yet in one respect easier: the use of highly developed secondary plot, with a deliberate time lag increased to a full act in the middle of the play, avoids the action gap" in *Richard II*, a gap which he bridged ingeniously, as we have seen, but by improvisation.The danger in *King Lear* lies in excess rather than deficiency of action, in diverting too much interest in the Third Act away from the passive Lear to the plot against Gloucester, which is, simply as action, absorbing.//

Shakespeare's solution of these difficulties in the Third Act is one of his greatest structural triumphs in placing and apportioning scenes, in balancing tension of action and of poetry, in interweaving alternate scenes—largely through Gloucester, one of the group around Lear, as well as center of the secondary plot. Though interest in action is sustained by Edmund's successful maneuver against his father, Shakespeare devotes to it only one hundred fifty-nine lines (three separated scenes—3, 5, 7); whereas he devotes four hundred sixty lines (the other four interlocking scenes—1, 2, 4, 6) to Lear's wandering in the storm. Only the shortest of these (i—fifty-five lines), the conversation between Kent and the Gentleman, and a brief part of the sixth (eighteen lines) arc concerned with plot; the rest gain dramatic effect from imaginative and emotional intensity and from revelation of change in Lear. Shakespeare uses self-dramatization not only for psychological characterization of Richard, who is exhibitionary, but also to give his passivity tension/Hfn *King Lear* he makes different and even more daring use of selfdramatization in such

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symbolical scenes as the poetic fantasy of the mock-trial (3.6). During the swiftly moving scenes of complex action in the Fourth Act (the structure of which is less skillful than the Third, but superior to the corresponding act of Hamlet) Lear does not appear until the sixth scene, which in contrast to the surrounding scenes returns to symbolism and poetic fantasy—the continuation of Lear's mock-trial and the parallel mock-suicide of Gloucester.

Except for the awkwardness and unnecessary delay of the trial by combat in the Fifth Act,* there is nothing in the actual structure of King Lear to cause bewilderment; but by indicating the alternation of scenes of various kinds, and particularly the means whereby Shakespeare seeks to offset gaps in action, I have already touched on the real source of the difficulty—the sudden shifts in technique. These require closer scrutiny, for the shifts are not just between one scene and another; in King Lear they occur within the scene itself, even within a single speech.

3.

Most conspicuously of all the plays, King Lear shows Shakespeare's mixed technique, which for simplicity I shall call a combination of psychological realism and symbolical stylization. Though its seeds are to be found as early as the late fourteenth

* Mr. Knight's interpretation of Edgar's challenge as an allegorical universal judgment is in harmony with the theme of the play but far-fetched. The feudal panoply, appropriate to the opening of Richard 77, a leisurely play, is tedious and questionable at such a crisis in King Lear. See **Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 200.**

These terms are not, of course, absolute; nor is the opposition they imply. "Naturalism and conventionalism"⁹ seem to me too loose and too worn. By "stylization" I mean a deliberate, unrealistic formality in movement and in speech; "symbolism" alone does not express this. By "psychological realism" I hope to make a little more precise a slippery term; Shakespeare's realism is not concerned with milieu or always with action, but with the working of the mind. I mean by the term an artistic technique of presentation and do not imply that when dominant it excludes symbolism. Shakespeare even when "realistic" is using poetry. One might further say that complete absence of symbolism is impossible in any realistic technique which has value as art; for the moment that implications beyond the particular arise these suggestions of universality are themselves a sort of symbolism.

In recent times, dominated by realism, both Ibsen and O'Neill show that realism and symbolism are not only compatible but are almost an inevitable combination.

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century in Abraham and Isaac, psychological realism is a new development (at least a rediscovery) in Elizabethan drama; whereas symbolical stylization is a mature artistic technique" by the time of *Everyman*. The two methods "exist side by side in Richard II, as we have seen. In *King Lear* Shakespear attempts a more subtle fusion, and the result, wonfderful though it is, causes understable perplexity. Unlike Mr. Murry, I attribute whatever failure **there** is in the play not so much to the vision as to the artistry, which attempts and comes near achieving the impossible.

' This eclectic technique is no specialty of Shakespeare's, nor is it limited to the plays of his age. The poets had prepared the way for the dramatists. Wyatt and Sidney, while continuing artificial conventions of thought and style, had rebelled against them in search of more immediacy, more intensity, more passionate realism of image and rhythm. Elizabethan drama was the inevitable expansion of a kind of poetry no longer content with pure lyrical and narrative expression. Even poets who wrote poor plays or no plays were instinctively dramatic. Drayton combines the two techniques in his familiar yet invariably astonishing sonnet, "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,"* in which the direct, simple, colloquial speech of the first eight lines suddenly shifts in the last six to unexpected personification; realistic drama gives way to symbolical drama, as if the two lovers in the midst of their conversation look down and actually see Love lying dead on the floor. The colloquial directness is so firmly established in the first part of the poem and the daring transition so skillfully made that

* Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part;
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me,
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,
Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou mightst him yet recover.

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unity is not broken; the effect is attained almost without our realizing what happens.

While in the same current of poetry, Shakespeare of course does not imitate Drayton; he arrives at a similar eclecticism through experimenting with the technique which he learned partly from Kyd, primarily from Marlowe, and which he adapts to various purposes. His progress cannot be indicated by a straight line—toward greater realism, for instance—because he constantly turns on himself, recombining the newer technique with the old; but we can trace an increasing preoccupation with psychological realism clearly apparent in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II* and culminating, though by no means ending, in *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. This progress toward greater psychological subtlety and realism is the most important single force in developing the variety and flexibility of his blank verse, and the effect even increases in the blank verse of the later period after his psychological interest wanes. But I am concerned with technique in a larger sense than metrics.

In *Richard II* psychological realism is apparent in the simple, impassioned speeches of the Duchess of York, whose one human desire to save her son, traitor or no, by deliberate contrast reveals the artificiality of York's high-flown honor. But in Richard himself we find the most persistent probing of mental processes; if the psychological realism seems tentative, we should remember not only that this is an early play, but also that a certain artificiality is characteristic of Richard. His rhetorical outburst against Bushy, Bagot, and Greene,

O villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption!
Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!¹⁰

is followed by a meaningful silence when he learns that they are not traitors to him, but are dead. Then comes the speech in which Shakespeare traces with insight Richard's characteristic reaction: retreat from reality, escape from initiative and action into self-dramatization, self-pity, redeemed only by genuine intellectual and imaginative perception:

No matter where; of comfort no man speak.
Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs;

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Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.

A similar transition is Juliet's from the old-style dramatic rhetoric when she learns that Romeo has slain Tybalt:

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feather'd raven! wolvisish ravenous lamb!

to:

Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?
Ah, poor my lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,
When I, thy three-hours wife, have mangled it?¹¹

It may be argued that Shakespeare was immature at this period and capable of writing bad poetry, but several of these sudden shifts of tone and verse in *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet* I find hard to accept as accidental rather than Shakespeare's conscious distinction between different qualities of emotion in his characters.

At the end of the play Richard's self-knowledge and penetration are revealed in the first of Shakespeare's great soliloquies, a forerunner of Hamlet's in metrical and psychological flexibility. Less kin in subject to Hamlet's but even closer in technique is Romeo's opening speech in the balcony scene. With complete success Shakespeare dramatizes the shift and play of feeling and thought by means of short lines and pauses first used brilliantly by Marlowe in Faustus' last speech. Romeo begins with a set lyrical address, which suddenly comes home to him poignantly:

It is my lady, O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were,

the incomplete line marking a pause in his thought; then a new response to action on her part:

She speaks, yet she says nothing: what of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
I am too bold. . . .

This abrupt wavering of confidence is followed by another lyrical flight in which he can always be supremely confident since it calls for neither decision nor action. Again a gesture of hers interrupts,

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recalling him to himself with the same poignancy and self-distrust (he is at this stage the contemplative lover):

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!¹²

In *Measure for Measure* we find Shakespeare exploiting all these dramatic and poetic devices to their maximum realistic effect. The stripping of Angelo's surface is close to the conventional Elizabethan dramatic method; but the parallel stripping of Isabella shows how masterfully Shakespeare has worked out his new technique of psychological realism. No serious reader of the play can miss the conscious artistry with which Shakespeare prepares step by step through the First and Second Acts for the final revelation of Isabella in the first scene of the Third—not only to the audience or reader but to herself; and being beautifully prepared for, it is accomplished in a hundred lines of dialogue so subtle that even in reading it one follows exactly what is going on in Claudio's and Isabella's minds, and imagines the changing expression on their faces, the very inflections of voice. The germ of this technique is in Romeo's balcony speech and in Richard II; in *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare brings it to perfection.

Psychological characterization is of course most evident, in Hamlet, who is dramatized with such extraordinary realism and complexity that the tendency has long been to consider him an actual person rather than a character in a play. This is dangerous, and the check of the historical critic is needed to demonstrate that Hamlet is not a completely isolated phenomenon, to point out his relation to the Malcontent type and to the Revenge Play; but Mr. Robertson's, Mr. Schiicking's, Mr. Stoll's, Mr. Bower's stratifications,¹³ while valuable, are only a starting point for understanding what Shakespeare accomplishes in Hamlet. If we dismiss Coleridge's Hamlet, Goethe's Hamlet, Bradley's Hamlet, we are still left with a characterization somewhat analogous in realistic complexity to Boswell's Johnson and Joyce's Leopold Bloom, one historical, the other fictional. In each case there remains in the multiplicity of illuminating detail something enigmatic, just as we can never fully understand any person in real life, no matter how intimate our relation.

Mr. Eliot regards Hamlet as an artistic failure because of the

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inadequacy of the "objective correlative," and because he feels that Shakespeare did not himself fully solve the enigma of his creation.*¹⁴ "The great vice of English drama from Kyd to gals-worthy has been that its aim of realism was unlimited/" he writes elsewhere; "in one play, Everyman, and perhaps in that one play only, we have a drama within the limitations of art."¹⁵ This is pregnant but too restrictive, too much in the spirit of neo-classic rules. We can admire Everyman and still feel relief that all Elizabethan drama was not written in that pattern; another type of greatness lies elsewhere—in a realism which certainly in Shakespeare was limited in aim. Hamlet admittedly is the extreme; much of the difficulty, is, due to 'Shakespeare's deliberately pushing psychological realism so far that it comes near grossing the line from art itself into the material of art. We may call this extreme realism an artistic weakness, but we must recognize that it is responsible for the unique greatness of Hamlet's characterization.

The scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia, between Hamlet and his mother, between Isabella and her brother in prison, between Othello and Iago, show the full possibilities of the method; but Shakespeare by no means pursues it to the exclusion of others even in these plays. Along with the realistic characterization of Isabella we find the stylization of the Duke, just as earlier we find the Gardener scene in Richard II and the formal aubade adaptation in Romeo and Juliet side by side with the embryonic psychological technique. Similarly, the subtle psychological realism of Iago (especially in the temptation scene in the Third Act) is combined with the deliberately formal rhetoric of Othello's characteristic speech. Even when his realistic technique is at its highest point of development in Hamlet, Measure for Measure, Othello, Shakespeare clearly feels that he cannot accomplish, all he desires by using a single method, And returns more and more to poetic devices of stylization, lyricism, and symbolism in

* Unlike Mr. Eliot, I do not find Hamlet so disconcerting as the characterization of Coriolanus, where the beautiful finish conceals a basic equivocation in the important matter of Coriolanus' nobility—a crucial soliloquy seems missing; Mr. Eliot finds this Roman play one of Shakespeare's two "most assured" successes. He does not allow equal latitude for different types of drama.

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order to supplement his psychological insight and give richer depth and implication to what he has to say.*

^/Edmund's intrigue against his brother and father in King Lear invites comparison with Iago's practices on Othello's credulity. After the formal dramatic soliloquy of Edmund (1.2), reminiscent of the Angelo type, Shakespeare develops the rest of the scene in the psychological vein of Iago, and portrays Gloucester at this point, in his credulity and garrulity, with the realism which in his earlier exhaustive study of Polonius' old age risks tedium. That the scene as a whole is neither subtle nor convincingly realistic may be due to Shakespeare's boredom in repeating what he has already so consummately done; more probably, he is no longer primarily concerned with psychological realism, though he is using the method, as he does more skillfully in the main plot.

The opening scene of King Lear is predominantly formal and stylized? Lear is portrayed with little detail; only his childish vanity and his impetuous anger are blocked in. But when next we see him—"Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready"¹—these suggestions are picked up and dramatized in more detail, with more insight into the workings of his mind:

LEAR. Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into't. But where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days.

KNIGHT. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away.

LEAR. No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her.¹⁷

In this passage we have not only a revelation of his thought processes and of the change that is coming over him, but an indication that there is much on his mind that he is not talking about: No more of that; I have *noted it well*. This is brought home to us by a seeming irrelevance of Lear's in the next scene, occurring in the midst of a conversation which he seems to follow, since he makes the necessary answers:

FOOL. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle on's face?

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LEAR. No.

FOOL. Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.

LEAR. I did her wrong—

This is indeed subtle, in one stroke revealing the mind at work on two levels. Shakespeare uses this method more sparingly in *King Lear* than in *Hamlet* and *Othello*,* but it marks the change coming over Lear as the unpleasant truth is borne home to him, for instance, again:

Fiery? the fiery duke? Tell the hot duke that—

No, but not yet: may be he is not well. . . ,¹⁸

In general, psychological emphasis centers our attention on Lear as a person and on his individual tragedy, and this is important in the total effect of the play.

That psychological realism is not Shakespeare's primary method is early apparent. The inferiority in realistic conviction of Edmund's plot to Iago's indicates, besides the necessity for economy in the subplot, a shift in emphasis, already manifest in the stylized,

* That much of this psychological subtlety revealed in study is lost on an audience unfamiliar with the play does not invalidate the fact that, while Desdemona's characteristically ill-timed plea for Cassio explains Othello's anger in striking her (4.1), the real clue to his torture is the final ejaculation, "Goats and monkeys!" He has been unable to exorcise from his memory Iago's horrible speech (3.3):

Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on—
Behold her topp'd?

It is impossible you should see this,
Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys. . . .

The relation between Hamlet's get-thee-to-a-nunnery scene with Ophelia (3.1) and his later scene with his mother (3.4), especially:

Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire,

is psychologically so intimate that each scene is dependent on the other for full understanding. Any intelligent audience, however unfamiliar with the play, can grasp at once the double focus of the phrase "except my life," letting us know what is really on Hamlet's mind beneath the surface banter of his allowing Polonius to withdraw (2.2):

"You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life."

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heightened Olympian sovereignty of Lear's court scene preceding. Both methods are evident from the beginning; the first transition from the predominantly symbolical stylization of the opening (emphasized by the use of rhymes—lines 257-85) is made when at the end of the scene Goneril and Regan lapse into their prose consideration of ways and means. Then comes the semi-psychological realism of the second scene. An even more abrupt shift is in the Fourth Act, where the realistic *tête à tête* of Regan and Oswald is immediately followed by the scene containing Gloucester's imaginary leap over Dover cliff and Lear's capering in the meadow. During the storm Lear's tearing off his clothes (3.4) is symbolical—"Off, off, you landings! come, unbutton here"; the same action in the final scene—"Tray you, undo this button"—is both realistic and symbolical.*

But Shakespeare's most arresting combination of the two techniques is his treatment of the hundred knights, now realistic, now symbolical, now a combination of the two. The hundred knights are an essential part of Lear's compact with his daughters, and the first mention of them hints at their symbolism:

Ourself, by monthly course,
With reservation of an hundred knights,
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
Make with you by due turn. Only we still retain
The name, and all the addition to a king.¹⁹

Almost immediately the knights become a center of contention. Goneril remarks to Oswald:

His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On every trifle. . . .
And let his knights have colder looks among you;
What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak____²⁰

The effect of this appears in the very next scene, in which one of the knights in question calls attention to the "abatement of kind-

* The first instance may be called symbolism (dropping "stylization"), the second realism with symbolical overtones. Terms of opposition are useful without being absolute.

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ness," and Lear confesses that he has "perceived a most faint neglect." Finally Goneril brings the matter to a head, complaining to her father of the riotous behavior of his train:

Be then desired
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train;
And the remainder, that shall still depend,
To be such men as may besort your age,
Which know themselves and you.²¹

So far the whole question of the knights is treated in terms of a domestic situation as a quarrel between Goneril and Lear. Except for the clear threat in Goneril's last-quoted speech and our well-based suspicion of her motives, there seems to be reasonableness in her complaints (Shakespeare has given us no evidence—only Lear's word against hers—of the knights' character and conduct). Furthermore, Lear's own behavior up to this point has been willful, arrogant, childishly imperious. Certainly Goneril, whatever she has up her sleeve, has so far done nothing to justify Lear's savage curse.²² In the preponderantly realistic treatment Shakespeare risks our sympathy with Lear; for if we take him literally at this point he has little to excuse his self-will, his savagery, except magnificent arrogance and the pity that we feel for one who, having made a foolish mistake, will not accept responsibility.

Arrogance may be called Lear's "tragic flaw," but in no other protagonist except Antony does Shakespeare so greatly emphasize the "flaw" before enlisting sympathy. After his curse of Goneril, Lear leaves the stage briefly and returns crying, "What, fifty of my followers at a clap! Within a fortnight!" and proceeds with a speech which, interpreted realistically, is that of a thwarted child, but is much too eloquent and moving to be explained thus; the poetic quality of his anger is out of proportion to the motivation. To those familiar with the play it is apparent that Shakespeare is not stressing psychological, realistically convincing motivation, that he has a certain symbolism in mind with Lear and his hundred knights from the start; the quality of the poetry causes no ultimate difficulty: and yet psychological realism has been so stressed at various points that it does not easily slip into stylization and symbolism. For the unwary the shifting gear grates.

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Goneril's frequent repetition of "hundred knights"²³ may be attributed to her irritation, but the repetition by now has the effect of a poetic refrain and is beginning to convey implications. The theme is next picked up by Regan, transparently rationalizing her wishes:

Was he [Edgar] not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father?

No marvel, then, though he were ill affected:

'Tis they have put him on the old man's death. . . ,²⁴

This keeps the theme in mind till its culmination in the fourth scene of the Second Act, where the two dramatic methods fuse. By this time the pain of Lear's growing awareness of what is being done to him and the terrible momentum of his two daughters' persecution have become so great that questions of motivation and responsibility, legitimately felt in the First Act, do not arise. What is being done is so much more engrossing than why it is being done. Goneril's and Regan's determination to eliminate the hundred knights continues to be a practical plot still with traces of psychological realism; but no one interprets realistically Lear's willingness to shift from one daughter to the other on the basis of the number of knights which she allows him or his equation of love with number: that is patently absurd. Apart from the irony, even to the most literal-minded the symbolism of the oft-repeated number must by now be apparent, and Lear's turning to one daughter, then to the other, as the number is relentlessly diminished has an inevitable effect of stylization in acting as well as in dialogue:

LEAR. Return to her, and fifty men dismissed!
No, rather I abjure all roofs . . .

I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.

REGAN. Not altogether so:

... What, fifty followers!
Is it not well? What should you need of
more?

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~~GONERIL~~. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance

From those that she calls servants or from mine?

REGAN. Why not, my lord? . . .

... I entreat you

To bring but five and twenty: to no more
Will I give place or notice.

LEAR. I gave you all—

REGAN. And in good time you gave it.

~~LEAR~~. Made you my guardians, my depositaries;
But kept a reservation to be followed
With such a number. What, must I come to you

With five and twenty, Regan? Said you so?

REGAN. And speak't again, my lord: no more with me.

LEAR. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd

When others are more wicked; not being the worst

Stands in some rank of praise. [To Goneril]

I'll go with thee,

Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,

And thou art twice her love.

~~GONERIL~~. Hear me, my lord:

What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,

To follow in a house where twice so many

Have a command to tend you?

REGAN. What need one?

Then comes the speech to which all this symbolical diminution of the hundred knights has been leading. On the psychological level there has been insufficient preparation for it; Lear suddenly voices experience too profound for a character looked at objectively as a fond, proud, spoiled old king disowned by his daughters; yet poetically the speech rises as a magnificent culmination of the symbolical elimination of the hundred knights:

GONERIL. What need you five and twenty, ten, or five.

. . .

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REGAN.

What need one?

LEAR.

O, reason not the need! our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's. Thou art a
lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous
wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. . . .

That the whole scene has been planned as dramatic setting for this speech is inescapable; but the setting, which would have been subtly psychological in *Hamlet*, is here only slightly so, is closer to the setting in *The Tempest* of Ariel's "Full fathom five," which rises from its context like an aria in opera. Lear's speech is like the climax of a great musical movement.

Even during the course of this speech Shakespeare shifts to the other technique, to psychological realism. Lear falters on the key word need, and the association brings him back to his own plight in a brilliant transition from one technique to the other:

But, for true need,—

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep.

At once our attention shifts from grand universal tragedy to the plight of one tragically broken old man, with the pathetic suggestion at the end of a child's frustration.

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4.

In the portrayal of Lear there is enough psychological realism to explain why most nineteenth century critics, so predominantly interested in character and psychology, and some of their present followers* approach King Lear in the same way they approach *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. Bradley attributes "And my poor fool is hang'd" to Lear's wavering mind, confusing Cordelia and the Fool. In this instance Bradley rightly calls attention to Shakespeare's subtle psychology. But he insists that unless we suppose the Fool "is touched in the brain we lose half the effect of his appearance in the Storm-scenes/" and proceeds to the re-creation of the Fool so dear to Victorian critics.² This re-creation assumes that Shakespeare's characterization of the Fool is by the same method of psychological realism which he employs in *Hamlet* and to some extent in *Lear*. This lovable Fool, heroically out-jesting his master's calamities, cannot survive a glance at the text. If we insist on psychological realism here, the Fool becomes a monster of sadism, taunting Lear with his follies, diabolically fingering the raw nerve at every opportunity[^] It is understandable that Shakespeare's mixed technique leads a critic with the nineteenth century bias into realistic interpretation of the Fool, but surprising that an acute critic like Bradley is so unrealistic in following the method.

[^]Perhaps I go to the other extreme in saying that the Fool has no character at all; none the less, he is personalized only enough to get by in a cast of characters. He is more dramatic and poetic device than characterization, and is presented almost entirely by stylized symbolism. That the Fool has pined away since Cordelia's departure is significant primarily for its effect on Lear, who is presented largely by psychological realism. We never see Cordelia and the Fool together, nor any real evidence in the Fool himself of this devotion. Similarly, Lear's fondness for the Fool characterizes Lear not the Fool, who completely, not inexplicably, disappears toward the end of the play: Shakespeare has not forgotten a beloved character; he simply dispenses with a dramatic device which has served its purpose.

That purpose illuminates admirably his mature symbolical

* For instance, J. S. H. Bransom, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, 1934.

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stylization. Beneath the old saws, seeming nonsense, snatches of verse uttered by the Fool is always relentless reiteration of Lear's folly, so that only the appearance of the fool's role (to entertain) remains to cloak a new function of poetic and dramatic intensification. Kent calls him "not altogether fool" and Lear complains of his bitterness; yet the bitterness is impersonal, since the Fool is a personification of the truth tormenting Lear to madness: "Truth's a dog must to kennel."²⁰ He is a psychological device, but stylized and unrealistic, a dramatization of what really goes on in Lear's mind, supplementing those few revealing remarks: "No more of that; I have noted it well," and "I did her wrong." This technique, though incomparably more skillful, is essentially the symbolical objectification of the Good and Evil Angels in Doctor *Faustus*) Shakespeare uses it again in Antony and Cleopatra, the play closest in method to King Lear. Enobarbus is much more a characterization than the Fool, yet like the Fool he is at times merely a dramatic device for intensification, usually of the realistic and cynical, but twice ("Age cannot wither her" and the barge speech) of the romantic side of the great love affair.

King Lear anticipates another stylistic device of Antony and Cleopatra: the poetic heightening of the death scene by what is actually a song phrase. Immediately after Lear's moving speech in psychological realistic vein:

Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives,

Kent, Edgar, and Albany break in like a lyrical chorus:

KENT.	Is this the promised end?
EDGAR.	Or image of that horror?
ALBANY.	Fall, and cease! ²⁷

This lyricism recurs in Kent's "Break, heart; I prithee, break!" just after Lear dies, and also during Cleopatra's death speech in Charmian's two interjections, "O eastern star!" and "O, break! O, break!"²⁸ Realism and psychology are subordinated to poetic lyricism.

"With the possible exception of Lear himself," remarks Brad-

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ley, "no one of the characters strikes us as psychologically a wonderful creation, like Hamlet or Iago or even Macbeth; one or two seem even to be somewhat faint and thin. And, what is more significant, it is not quite natural to us to regard them from this point of view at all." He continues acutely: "We seem to trace the tendency which, a few years later, produced Ariel and Caliban, the tendency of imagination to analyse and abstract, to decompose human nature into its constituent factors, and then to construct beings in whom one or more of these factors is absent or atrophied or only incipient. This, of course, is a tendency which produces symbols, allegories, personifications of qualities and abstract ideas." . . . While it would be going too far to suggest that he was employing conscious symbolism or allegory in *King Lear*, it does appear to disclose a mode of imagination not so very far removed from the mode with which, we must remember, Shakespeare was perfectly familiar in *Moral* plays and in the *Faery Queen*."²⁹

Fearful of going too far, Bradley does not go far enough; after this excellent intuitive suggestion he retreats into his usual interpretation of character. The analogy which he urges timidly without pursuing can be explained by looking backward in Shakespeare, as we have been doing, as well as by looking forward to *The Tempest*. The type of characterization in *King Lear* resulting from this combination of psychological realism and symbolical stylization, though naturally more intense and dramatic, is of the same order as Spenser's when, at his best in the *Faerie Queene*, he fuses abstract and concrete; figures like Una and Britomart constantly shift between the symbolical and the realistic levels.

Goneril, the most astonishing characterization in *King Lear*, represents this fusion perfectly. We have only to contrast her with Lady Macbeth to see the difference in method. Like Iago, she seems to be a personification of evil, but she is much more consistently a symbol; her subtlety is poetic, not psychological, though psychology is present. She is imaginatively so convincing that we find no disconcerting shift from one technique to the other as in *Lear*; we are not tempted to puzzle over motivation. For her Shakespeare evolves a beautifully individual manner of

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speech, flexible yet terse and formal, imitated afterwards by Webster, anticipated by Spenser:*

Wear this; spare speech;
Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.
Conceive, and fare thee well.³⁰

When Albany confronts her with evidence of her crimes she dismisses him and them contemptuously, "An interlude!"³¹ She is a superb embodiment of evil and no less one of Shakespeare's greatest character creations because, unlike Lady Macbeth, she is superhuman, a symbol in the allegory toward which the play tends.

5.

Though much of the technique of King Lear is implicit in Richard II, there is no characterization even remotely suggesting Goneril. The difference between the two plays is most apparent in the central figures where the similarities are also clearest. To say that Lear is Richard grown old is one of those biographical extensions of Shakespearean characters so easy to make and so fallacious; yet there is something of the character and spirit, as well as dramatic design, of King Lear in Richard II.

Richard, though he has no storm to play obligato to his grief, shows a hint of Lear's greatness of spirit: "Swell'st thou, proud heart? Til give thee scope to beat"³² He, too, transcends (some-what theatrically) his physical suffering:

My grief lies all within;
And these external manners of laments
Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
That swells with silence in the tortured soul.³³

✦

And impetuous Richard, according to York, for a while achieves patience, till at the end he repudiates it: "Patience is stale, and I am weary of it"³⁴ These faint adumbrations of Lear are most interesting in Richard's finest moment, his soliloquy in prison. He blesses whoever is responsible for playing music—a symbolism more daringly repeated in Antony and Cleopatra:

* If my claim that Spenser perfected dramatic dialogue of this advanced type seems temerity, see the dialogue between Britomart and Talus, quoted below, p. 140-41.

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For 'tis a sign of love; and love to Richard
Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.

Immediately the theme is dramatized by the appearance of the loyal groom come, like Gloucester and Kent to Lear, to seek him in adversity. Richard greets him with the cynicism of an immature Hamlet:

GROOM. Hail, royal prince!

RICHARD. Thanks, noble peer!

The cheapest of us is ten groats too dear.

Still, the theme is Lear's though the tone is different. Richard apprehends it intellectually but does not accept it emotionally:

But whatever I be,
Nor I nor any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing.³⁵

In the equivocation on "nothing" here, and previously in the passage, the greater emphasis is on the death motive, and certainly without Hamlet's justification, since Richard's suffering is not comparable. The "poor, bare, forked animal" sense of "nothing" is here, too, but not as something honestly faced; Richard remains to the end too much self-preoccupied: even in these intimations of mortality he cannot really transcend himself as Lear does at high moments. Richard is self-defeated; his surrender to Bolingbroke is an act of compulsive will. He shares the fatality of Romeo, who cries out on receiving word of Juliet's death, "Is it even so? then I defy you, stars,"³⁶ almost as if her death were a thing he had unconsciously forewilled: the more positive reaction would be to refuse belief at first, to protest against a fact intolerable to accept, at least to investigate further.

This psychology qualifies the nature of the tragedy and of the tragic feeling in Richard II, which, though it has deeper implications, remains essentially the tragedy of an individual, with self-pity deliberately stressed. Romeo escapes complete self-pity because he is concerned at least in part with Juliet; Hamlet escapes it through his greater intellectual penetration and honesty. This duality of tragic feeling in Richard II is not a limitation of the play, which achieves its scope for the very reason that it portrays

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with beautiful precision a type of human tragedy in ordinary experience far more usual than that of the titanic plays. ^

King Lear is of course more profound, yet many of these earlier elements persist. Sovereignty, which in *Richard II* is largely a political concern, in *King Lear* has more complex symbolism, and this extension of meaning broadens the base of the tragedy; still we cannot explain the difference between the two merely by difference in scale, and the resemblance in personality of the two kings is not superficial. *King Lear* is much more than an individual tragedy, but it is that too, and from this point of view comparison with the earlier play is especially enlightening.

Perhaps the most significant change is that Lear does not, like Richard, will his own surrender. He is equally helpless physically, spiritually he fights back to the end. His last burst of action—killing the Captain who hanged Cordelia—is not like Richard's gesture of cornered desperation in turning on his murderers; it is a positive reach for his glimpsed new life with Cordelia. This alters the whole psychological effect of his personal tragedy. And where Richard only play-acts, Lear actually grapples with the problem of patience, which he comes near reaching. To my purpose of isolating momentarily the personal tragedy, the principal relevance is not Shakespeare's greater maturity but merely that Richard finally repudiates patience, Lear does not.

Unlike Richard in this respect, he resembles him in others. No one feels more pity for his own suffering; like Richard, he constantly dramatizes himself. I have earlier suggested that Shakespeare uses self-dramatization as a necessary device, apart from characterization. Mr. Eliot traces self-dramatization to Seneca, making the distinction that it is not "the attitude of Seneca" but derived from him. He finds it in the deaths of Coriolanus, Antony, and conspicuously of Othello. His comments on Othello's death speech are perspicacious:

"What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavoring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself. Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve; nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of oneself. Othello succeeds in turning himself into a pathetic figure, by adopting an *aesthetic* rather than a moral attitude, dramatizing himself against

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his environment. He takes in the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to take in himself."³⁷

This speech of Othello's has always seemed to me a tour de force, as much because Shakespeare's intended dramatic effect fails, however, as for the reasons Mr. Eliot assigns. The intention, so far as one can determine intention from the play itself, is essentially like the belated attempt in *Henry IV*—Part I to lift Prince Hal by his own bootstraps into a heroical figure—Vernon's elaborate portrait of Hal vaulting on his horse for battle.³⁸ Though far more skillful, Othello's speech (besides the weakness which Mr. Eliot so shrewdly observes) does not re-establish the Othello injured in our estimation by his barbarous actions in the Fourth Act and his curiously archaic soliloquy in the first scene of the Fifth, incongruous with the famous "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul"

J Mr. Eliot's essay is concerned primarily with death speeches, and Lear's dying words are of a different order. What he says of Othello's speech is true of Richard, in whose case, however, the flaw is part of Shakespeare's conception of Richard's personality; his attitude is intended to be aesthetic rather than moral. But the aesthetic in Lear is disturbing. We feel the drag of Lear's self-pity even in some of his finest moments:

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children.
 . . . Here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.
 ... I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

Then dawns awareness of others:

Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.³⁹

And in the next scene, after asking the Fool to go first into the hovel, he prays memorably for the "poor naked wretches/"

Alternation between self-pity and concern for others dramatizes the change coming over the old king and this change is deeply moving. Self-pity re-emerges during the mad scene with Edgar:

The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.⁴⁰

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This is pathos rather than tragedy; psychologically, it is today called a persecution complex: yet Lear is persecuted. The question becomes most acute in the great scene of his awakening, which, despite emotional power, disquiets, for self-dramatization again results in self-pity. Lear is heart-rending:

You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.

But one is troubled by this:

I should even die with pity,
To see another thus,

and by theatricality:

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.⁴¹

This is the spirit of Richard, of Othello's dying speech; if Shakespeare had ended here Mr. Eliot might have included Lear in the same category as Othello, Antony, and Coriolanus. But Shakespeare does not end on this note.

In Lear's speeches of happy reconciliation with Cordelia Shakespeare partly underlines the tragic irony of what is to come. Those who profess to find him nihilistic in King Lear or who consider the play the extreme of the stoicism derived from Seneca probably feel that in this scene Shakespeare grimly stacks the cards, as he does for Cressida to betray Troilus. That is not the total effect. Here is the old Lear:

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;
The good-years shall devour them, flesh and fell,
Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starved first. '

But Lear with a difference:

Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage.
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down

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And ask of thee forgiveness. . . .
And take upon's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies. . . .^{4J}

Still desire and will, but no longer mere self-will. And the last scene, the greatest in Shakespearean tragedy, shows how much Lear's spiritual stature has changed. In this final moment of the play psychological realism and symbolism again fuse, though curiously the realism is dominant. Lear's weariness and bewilderment are subtly revealed in his broken thoughts. There is no question about his primary concern—Cordelia's death:

She's gone for ever!

I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She's dead as earth. . .

, . . No, no, no life!

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!

The question is agonizing, not asked, as earlier Lear might have asked it, with furious, balked will; and the answer is neither nihilistic, in Mr. Wyndham Lewis' sense,^{4*} nor vaguely deistic, as Mr. Knight infers,* for Shakespeare does not, even by implication, answer. Nowhere else is the finality of death so profoundly expressed. Bradley's interpretation of "Look there, look there*" is subtle, but does not alter the stark fact.

This finality, however powerfully expressed, is a general limitation of almost all Elizabethan tragedy. When Macbeth dies, it is the end; his hell has been on earth. Coriolanus and Antony die and have their funeral orations; Othello speaks his own. Cleopatra "looks like sleep"; Antony's "where souls do couch on flowers" is wishful thinking. Even for Hamlet, though "flights of angels" may sing him to his rest, "the rest is silence." Hamlet has Christian overtones, and Hamlet is the only one of the great Shakespearean protagonists to feel concern about the soul:

*G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 218: "Love is the last reality but one in Lear's story: Love and God." Mr. Knight rightly but equivocally stresses the naturalistic in *King Lear*. His two essays on the play are illuminating but not entirely coherent.

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the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,⁴⁴

quite different from the more characteristically Elizabethan tone of Marlowe's passage in *Edward II*, on which it is possibly based:

weepe not for Mortimer,
That scornes the world, and as a traveller,
Goes to discover countries yet unknowne.⁴⁵

Hamlet gives an orthodox Christian reason for not killing his uncle at prayer; but his explanation, partly dramatic device, partly Hamlet's rationalization, is equivocal. The strong infusion of Christianity in *Hamlet* is hard to judge precisely, since it conflicts with the revenge morality; the play has a double focus. The deepest note that Shakespeare ever strikes on the after life, the fate of the soul, is Claudio's speech in *Measure for Measure*:

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice. . . .⁴⁰

The great single exception is Marlowe's *Faustus*, and Marlowe is writing a *Morality*—Play rather than an Elizabethan tragedy; *Faustus* in his last soliloquy, the most terrible thing in English poetry, is Everyman facing eternal damnation of his soul. That Marlowe turned from *Faustus* to the *Jew of Malta*, a non-moral play, even its cynicism lacking the tragic-satirical tone of Jonson's greater *Volpone*, indicates rather strongly that, however profoundly Marlowe explored *Faustus'* tragic plight imaginatively, he need not have been himself so Christian as Mr. Eliot considers him.⁴⁷ After rediscovering a great type of tragedy, Marlowe was perfectly content afterwards with the more limited Elizabethan conventional ending. And within those limitations, which Shakespeare also accepts, he never equals Shakespeare's moral sense or power in exploring man's spiritual possibilities within this world. There is no moral development in Marlowe as there is in Shakespeare. Moral bankruptcy, which in the *Jew of Malta* is not

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macabre comedy but, in Mr. Eliot's phrase, macabre "farce/" is grim tragedy to Shakespeare in Hamlet and to Jonson in Volpone. If in his great plays Shakespeare takes over a Renaissance stoicism derived from Seneca, it permeates his characters and is refined to the point where it is compatible with the Christian morality with which Mr. Murry and Mr. Knight are so anxious to identify it completely. Indeed, Mr. Knight has the impression that Shakespeare gave his days and nights to the New Testament; if so, it must have been, judging from his plays, in the spirit of a Unitarian.

Certainly in King Lear is no hint of the divinity of Christ, though the ethics are essentially Christian. Why is it, then, that this play, which lacks even the Christian touches of Hamlet, this play which refers to divinity in neo-pagan terms, stirs us as we are stirred by Faustus? Mr. Knight is right in saying that Macbeth (in some respects one might include Hamlet) portrays the Inferno of this life and that King Lear adds to that Inferno, Purgatory; he is wrong in calling Antony and Cleopatra paradise,⁴⁸ unless he means "earthly paradise/" for the Paradiso in Shakespeare is always lacking.* Antony is as intensely individual as Coriolanus, whereas Lear is not only Lear but Everyman. King Lear is not a Morality play like Faustus, but it has the same effect because of the unusual measure of symbolical stylization, which makes possible universal emotional power and meaning. More than in any other Shakespearean play the tragedy and the tragic feeling embody and transcend the individual. Consciously or unconsciously Shakespeare attempts to fuse the native medieval tragedy and the Senecan derivative.^

Since he clearly dramatizes the modification of Lear's egoism by intense suffering, we are tempted to see in the persistence to the end of this egoism (as self-pity) Shakespeare's recognition of human frailty: some self-concern stains man's greatest humility. Though this reconciles us completely to Lear, though we may take it as an implication, there is insufficient evidence in the play itself that it is Shakespeare's intent/ Speaking historically, we may say that, despite Shakespeare's refinement, some traces of the

* Lear's momentary glimpse is hardly sufficient:

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire. . . .

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cruder stoicism remain. Speaking technically, and with more certainty, we may say that self-pity is in part an inevitable by-product of the useful device of self-dramatization.* I think we can further say that this is simply one of the insoluble difficulties of combining two different techniques in an attempt to present simultaneously a psychologically realistic individual tragedy of ingratitude and misused authority, and a symbolical tragedy of man's inhumanity to man.

6.

The assumption that *King Lear* is primarily a tragedy of ingratitude is partial interpretation. Very much more than ingratitude is involved and much more than the individual. If we say that ingratitude or misused authority is merely the focus of *King Lear*, as justice in terms of sex is of *Measure for Measure*, then Shakespeare does not subdue the complexity of *King Lear* to focus as he does the moral problems in the earlier play, and this is a failure in artistry. Though much greater, *King Lear* is not so successful in dramatic and poetic realization as *Antony and Cleopatra*, the only other Shakespearean play of comparable spaciousness and grandeur. *King Lear* attempts too much; it is unquestionably Shakespeare's most nearly all-inclusive tragedy. There are too many themes; some are merely stated without any, at least with ineffective development, except as one remembers the contexts of previous plays; this in itself shows that Shakespeare is working on a grander scale than ever before or after.

Albany's speech epitomizes much of the tragedy:

If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come,
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.⁴⁹

This necessity for heavenly grace, which is dominant and specifically Christian in Spenser, is the most profound observation in the play, for it recognizes the loosing of the forces of evil in mankind and offers a possibility for their control. But we must not read too much into this; one character is speaking, and here as elsewhere

* To explain the self-pity by "stage convention" is no solution.

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Shakespeare dramatizes various points of view. Albany later in this scene finds evidence of divinity in Cornwall's paying with his life for Gloucester's blinding, a sentiment contrasted with Gloucester's "as flies to wanton boys are we to the gods" and deserving equal weight. Perhaps the nearest thing to endorsed answer given in *King Lear* is simple endurance in the face of withering truth—a type of stoicism:

EDGAR. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
 their going hence, even as their coming
 hither;
 Ripeness is all.⁵⁰

Though Shakespeare offers no final or definite word on the divine in *King Lear*, and is content with dramatizing various conflicting speculations on this all-important point, he does probe deeply into man's share in the holocaust. If there is any single dominant theme in the play, it is the stripping of man to the bone, the reduction of magnificent, proud man to the level of "poor, bare, forked animal/" not in the spirit of Hamlet's reduction to the quintessence of dust, for in *King Lear* is less of satire, of the spirit of negation; and in the agonized search for truth are indications that not everything is calcined in its fire. We should not forget in this storm of destruction let loose by evil in man, evil even in good men, that some positive values are lit up: good though faulty Kent, Edgar, Albany, Cordelia, and Lear's vision of true spiritual values.

In their broad, simple outline, the careers of Richard and Lear are beautifully adapted to this theme, and Shakespeare realized it even in the earlier play, wherein are deeper implications than the political beneath the stripping of power, sovereignty, trappings from Richard, who, as we have seen, actually strips himself:

Discharge my followers; let them hence away,
From Richard's night to Bolingbroke's fair day.⁵¹

In *King Lear* the theme is psychologically and symbolically more skillful. I have shown how much more central the reduction of the hundred knights is to the main theme of the play than at first appears. But there are other variations. Begun by Lear's divesting himself of all save the "name and all the additions of a king" fol-

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lowed immediately by the stripping of Cordelia, the theme is given unexpected positive statement by France's defense of her:

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor,
Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised!⁵-

Those who see only negation in the play forget this speech, which is prophetic of Lear, too. Next we find Edgar, for self-protection,

bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury, in contempt of man
Brought near to beast,⁵³

a disguise device which Shakespeare uses with rich symbolism while Edgar is with Lear during the heath scenes of the Third Act. Finally,

Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,⁵¹

Lear prays, as he begins to accept the unwelcome truth, reduced to the level of Edgar, of "poor, unaccommodated man/" and like Edgar left to the mercy of the pitiless storm. But Lear's acceptance is not yet complete; in his madness he reverts to the by now mocking emptiness of the hundred knights symbolism, as he turns to Edgar:

You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say they arc Persian attire, but let them be changed.⁵⁵

Shakespeare anticipates Swift and Carlyle in this symbolism of clothes. "If only to go warm were gorgeous" becomes "Robes and furr'd gowns hide all."TM

Already the stripping has acquired another meaning:

Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice.⁵⁷

And Lear's desire to "anatomize Regan" to "see what breeds about her heart"⁵⁸ is fulfilled in this vivisection of Goneril when Albany turns upon her:

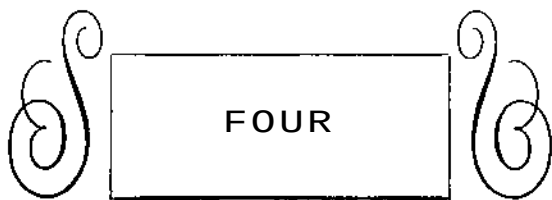
Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame!
Be-monster not thy features. . . .

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. . . Howe'er thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee/⁹

And so, in countless ways, the complexity of symbolism—relentless stripping to the bone, the ultimate truth—is dramatized, until we feel with Edgar when he first meets his blind father: "O gods! Who is't can say, I am at the worst?" ⁶⁰

This is not the favorite medieval theme—vanity of vanities—any more than it is a restatement of the familiar medieval conception of tragedy—the fall of princes; but *King Lear* is related to both, just as this literal and symbolical stripping is reminiscent of Everyman deserted in turn by all his friends, deprived of everything except Good Deeds on his way to the grave. The primary difference is that Everyman stands naked before God, Lear naked before himself and the world. But the bare bone and sinew of Lear's nakedness is a residual strength of spirit.



THE PAINTED DRAGON: ALLEGORY AND CHARACTERIZATION

WELL over a century ago (Hazlitt) in a series of lectures on the poets laudably attempted to win readers for the (Faerie Queene:) "Some people will say that all this may be very fine, but that they cannot understand it on account of the allegory. They are afraid of the allegory, as if they thought it would bite them; they look at it as a child looks at a painted dragon, and think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with[^] the allegory, the allegory will not meddle with themi/"M

Just as later Arnold was to recommend throwing overboard Wordsworth's philosophy in order to salvage his poetry, so Hazlitt is willing to re-establish Spenser on the basis of poetic and narrative appeal. Taken on this level, the Faerie Queene has the charm of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which stories are strung together with much less pains at connection and transition, in which the constant stream of new faces (all, as in the Faerie Queene, conspicuously alike), strange happenings, changes from animal to vegetable and bird, are in themselves enough to hold our interest. But Ovid has more in mind in his *Metamorphoses* than perpetuating in beautiful form the ancient myths that he loves. And Hazlitt's solution is not merely unjust to Spenser, it is unjust to us. I intend to be very idle, to meddle with the allegory, for, despite Hazlitt's specious comfort, the allegory meddles with any intelligent reader of the Faerie Queene.

When Mr. Bush tells us that "John of Salisbury, the best scholar and one of the best minds of the twelfth century, read the Aeneid as an allegory of the life of man, and found precepts of morality in the Gorgias" and even*in parts of Ovid,² we may, if

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we wish, regard that as merely a curious historical phenomenon, part of the medieval effort to Christianize the ancients. And when Spenser in his letter to Raleigh justifies his use of allegory because "Homer . . . in the Persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governor and a vertuous man . . . then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas/"We may attribute it to the persistence into the Renaissance of this same tendency, still so strong that cynical Ariosto encouraged allegorical interpretation of his Orlando Furioso, and Tasso, after he had begun Gerusalemme Liberata, hastily superimposed an allegorical significance to meet the criticism of immorality. This magnetic attraction of allegory, which to some extent distorts medieval and Renaissance interpretations of classical literature, represents, none the less, more than lip-service to fashion. It is in one respect a supersensitivity, responsible for the creation of allegories where there are none, but also for illuminating interpretation. (We disagree with Spenser that Homer and Virgil consciously intended allegory in their epics; yet Agamemnon, Ulysses, Aeneas do typify good governors and virtuous men) That Ariosto and Tasso compromise with a strong bias of critical theory should not blind us to the fact that allegory in the Renaissance is something besides a tyranny of scholars and critics.

In art the religious allegories of Giovanni Bellini, the philosophical allegories of Piero di Cosimo, such figures as Diirce's Melancholia, above all, the powerful allegories of Michelangelo, show the creative vitality of the tradition. The fusion of neo-Platonic and Christian allegory in Michelangelo's Medici tombs and Sistine Ceiling anticipates, in fact, what Spenser was later to try in poetry with less power but equal seriousness. Allegory is essential to appreciation of both the painter and the poet. ^x

{As we see in Plato's own writings, to an idealist of a Platonic cast allegory is an inevitable technique. Spenser's mind constantly hovers between the world of fact and the world of ideas} Unlike Yeats,³ I find allegory as perfectly designed for its expression as is the Elizabethan stage for the production of Antony and Cleopatra or King Lear. This more than literary fashion explains why Spenser's use of allegory is so natural, so vividly imagined, so seldom perfunctory. He had too keen a sense of humor and irony to be taken in, as some aver, by Ariosto's tongue-in-cheek moral-

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ity; he was no slavish imitator and he saw serious possibilities in the method which Ariosto inclined to mock.⁴ In sensuous allegory both sides of Spenser's nature find outlet and expression. His own term for it is "dark conceit/" which he considers in part a mode of presentation.

(The basic allegory of the Faerie Queerze is the most important clement in "its structure; and this is one reason why allegory meddles with any reader of the poem. "I labour to pourtraict in ArthurJxtfore he was king, the image of a brave,knight, perfected in thejwelve private morall vcrtuēs, ajrAristotle hath devised, thē which is the purpose of these first twelve bookes."⁵ The twelve moral virtues are to be twelve allegorical figures, to each of which a book will be devoted; and all twelve virtues will be united in Arthur, who is to appear at some critical point in each book, thus symbolizing the union of all the ideal qualities in the perfect knight, and structurally tying the twelve books together. Such in barest outline is the allegorical scheme^which simply and neatly gives an architectonic structure to the poem as conceived at one point during its composition;*(jf the Faerie Oueene had been carried out thus fewer would complāin that^ Spenser's sense of form is so inferior to Dante's and Milton's, That fills scheme was not strictly realized is owing as much to the nature of poetic allegory as to the fact that sections written earlier are included without sufficient revision.(His scheme might have succeeded in mural painting; it is not well adapted to poetry. *)

The moment Spenser embodies Holiness in Redcross, the knight has to move, act, talk, meet situations; in so doing he is necessarily going to be courteous or discourteous, just or unjust, chaste or unchaste, qualities which are relegated by the new scheme of the poem to other books. Consequently, in practice as distinct from theory, more and more the principal knight in each book becomes an epitome of the gentleman, with the quality which he represents merely emphasized in him and in the nature of his experiences. Spenser's realization that he cannot carry a knight representing only one quality through a whole book brings us back to the crux of allegojji, the question whether these modi-

* There is sufficient evidence (especially in contradictions between the letter and the poem) that Spenser arrived at this conception of the Faerie Oueene after considerable parts of it had already been written.

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fications in the Faerie Queene are limitations of allegory or legitimate extensions of the allegorical method.

Hazlitt deserves praise for trying to win Spenser readers by drawing attention to poetic qualities likely to be overlooked in a difficult poet; that he gives the unfortunate impression of trying to get around an obstacle by pretending it is not there is not entirely his fault. (The examples and conclusions of most philosophical and aesthetic critics of allegory suggest that when they speak of it they almost invariably mean bad allegory. They incline to believe that the two greatest allegorical poets, Dante and Spenser are at fault owing to allegory; great despite allegory, or owing to shift from allegory to symbolism. For, though the traditions of allegory and symbolism are closely entwined, our present tendency is to approve of symbolism, while discarding allegory as being not only outmoded but philosophically and aesthetically indefensible.

(To separate them is all the harder, since at least two dominant meanings of literary symbolism are current. In its broadest sense symbolism, one thing standing for another, includes not only allegory but all literature. In its more restricted sense of a ^{specific} poetic technique, something concrete standing for something immaterial, it is a conscious emphasis on words and images used as symbols, their immaterial meaning paramount. Allegory is never found without symbolism in both senses of the term.) Mr. C. S. Lewis, who has contributed greatly to the understanding and slightly to the confusion of the two,* draws this distinction:

"On the one hand you can start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions which you actually experience, and can then invent *3*visibilia to express them. If you are hesitating between an angry retort and a soft answer, you can express your state of mind by inventing a person called Ira with a torch and letting her contend with another called Patientia. This is allegory. . . . But there is another way of using the equivalence, which is almost the opposite of allegory, and which I would call sacramentalism or symbolism. If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. As the god Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and

* Mr. Lewis' Allegory of Love is a book of rare perception and intelligence. Like Grierson, he seems least happy in his treatment of Spenser.

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our 'real' world are to something else. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archtype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism. It is, in fine, 'the philosophy of Hermes that thisjyisable world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein, as in a portrait, things are not truly but in equivocal shapes, as they counterfeit some real substance in that invisible fabrick/ The difference between the two can hardly be exaggerated.(The allegorist leaves the given—his own passions—to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find,, that which is more real."⁶

(According to this view, allegory and symbolism have in common the fundamental equivalence between the immaterial, and, the material; but they work in different directions, allegory from the "given" to the "less real/* symbolism (sacramentalism) from the "given" to the "more real.")This distinction (really a commitment to a particular metaphysics) would probably have appealed to Yeats, who exalts symbolism and deprecates allegory as being for the most part a cold intellectualization, because he feels that the "story" is a puzzle which must be worked out independently to arrive at meaning. Yeats finds allegory too often only intellectually alive. Even Mr. Lewis, an ardent champion, calls it "less real" than symbolism. It will be noted that he takes the lowest common denominator of one term (allegory) to contrast with an extended sense of the other (symbolism), and it is doubtful whether the poets, painters, and critics of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance would follow him, especially when he makes a final distinction: "symbolism is a mode of thought; but allegory is a mode of expression."

(If we accept this generalization, allegory in the last analysis becomes the mode of expressing symbolical thought, since what Mr. Lewis calls symbolism happens to be the content of much allegorical poetry. But allegory is just as much as symbolism a mode of thought; and symbolism as much as allegory a mode of expression.Mohn of Salisbury's interpretation of Virgil and Ovid and Spenser's of Homer represent an allegorical mode of thought which may have been artificial with Ariosto, but is none the less as natural and instinctive to man as logic and considerably more instinctive than esoteric symbolism as Mr. Lewis defines it. The

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allegorical tendency, which leads many today to interpret the Old Testament as allegory, is, unfortunately, easily diverted into rationalization, into the type of intellectualization which Yeats, a poet, instinctively resents.

But we should not allow legitimate distrust of the faulty intellectual to sweep us into wholesale condemnation of intellect in poetry. (Long study and much intellectual analysis are required for complete understanding of the *Faerie Queene*. Ideally, for full appreciation of the *Divina Commedia* we should be versed in the whole mode of medieval thought, in Aristotle and Plato, as well as in the great philosophical-theological synthesis of Aquinas; in addition we should be familiar with the Ptolemaic system, with Catholic ritual and dogma, with Italian political, social, and literary history. Yeats' own poetry, especially his individual symbolism and his frequent though seldom protracted allegories, is richer and more significant if we master his account in *A Vision* of the growth of his own poetic mind. Fine poetry—as Housman insists—may give us sinking sensations in the stomach; the greatest poetry brings the whole of man, including the brain, into harmonious activity.

Analysis is, of course, a critical function in the study of poetry differing from the operation of the intellect in subsequent reading, when it is no longer dominant but merely one element in a complicated experience. The faulty intellectualization of which Yeats and other hostile critics of allegory rightly disapprove occurs only when, quite apart from preparatory critical study, it is impossible to read allegory without a bifurcation of intellect and imagination. Such bifurcation often results when allegory is either too abstract, or too explicit, or both.)

The stanzas in Spenser's *House of Alma*, portraying the processes of digestion—the Steward, Diet; the Marshal, Appetite; the Master Cook, Concoction; and the little wicket gate representing discharge of the bowels—are perhaps the poetic low-water mark of the poem (displaying a humor not to our taste), as well as an example of bifurcated allegory. The *House of Alma* offers also this instance of symbolism:

The frame thereof seemed partly circulare,
And part triangulare, O worke divine;
Those two the first and last proportions are,

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The one imperfect, mortall, foeminine;
Th'other immortall, perfect, masculine,
And twixt them both a quadrate was the base
Proportioned equally by seven and nine. . . .⁷

This mathematical symbolism⁸ is reminiscent of similarly elaborate symbolisms in Dante, particularly his use of the number nine in *La Vita Nuova*; but poetically it is just as questionable as the digestion allegory and for the same reason: it is too abstract and too explicit.

In these two examples there is no fusion between abstract meaning and concrete presentation; the result may be called translation rather than transmutation. Translation and transmutation, however, represent the difference not between allegory and other forms of art, but between bad and good art, regardless of form. Bad allegory, admittedly, translates; but good allegory transmutes, for transmutation is a function of the imagination, Coleridge's analytic and synthetic faculty. Faulty allegory is often accused of being overintellectual when really it is simply deficient in imagination.

(The two charges most frequently brought against allegory—that it is too abstract and too explicit—may be true specifically but are not generically true. Complete abstraction is impossible, of course, not only in allegory but in any poetry?) which must embody that abstraction in concrete terms to express it at all. When we speak of "abstract" we are using a necessary but relative term. We cannot make the unqualified generalization that poetry must never be explicit or abstract, even in this relative sense, unless we wish to dismiss such poetic phenomena as Dante's *Paradise*, Milton's exposition of Christ's role, Wordsworth's characteristic use of imagery. Wordsworth in particular achieves his most remarkable effects by first presenting concrete imagery, as in the opening of *Tintern Abbey*, and then deliberately abstracting, so far as he can, to "beauteous forms" which (not (he images) haunt him in solitude. The process is even more striking in the familiar passage in the *Prelude*:

for many days, my brain
Work'd with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; in my thoughts
There was a darkness, call it solitude,

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Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
Of hourly *objects*, images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
Like living men mov'd slowly through the mind
By day and were the trouble of my dreams.⁹

Similarly, all philosophical, meditative, dramatic, narrative poetry would be impossible without some direct, explicit statement.

The significance of Mr. Lewis' distinction between allegory and symbolism—"that the allegorist leaves the given, his own passions, to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction; whereas the symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real"—depends on what he means by "real" and "fiction." He does not make these two terms opposites; consequently we need not open the floodgates of metaphysics by questioning the nature of the real. Accepting, as he does, degrees of the real, we may legitimately question his grounds for concluding that the symbol has invariably a mystical reality greater than the "fiction" of allegory. In the best work of Chretien de Troyes, GuilTaume de Lorris, Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, the allegorical figures in the action, though "fiction," are powerfully real, deriving their reality ultimately from what they represent. Reality in this sense is imaginative vitality and meaning.

When Spenser says that his "dark conceit is coloured with an historical fiction," he seems at first glance to be confirming Mr. Lewis' distinction; yet if Spenser's treatise, *The English Poet*, had come down to us, we should probably be left in no doubt that he uses "fiction" in Sidney's sense—that is, as equivalent to all imaginative creation as opposed to historical fact. (To Spenser and Sidney symbol would also be fiction. But more precise comment on the theory of allegory is found in Dante) its greatest¹ poetic master, from whose conception Mr. Lewis in part draws his own. In the *Convito* Dante writes:

"I intend to demonstrate the true meaning of those Poems, which some could not perceive unless I relate it, because it is concealed under the veil of Allegory; and this it not only will give pleasure to hear, but subtle instruction, both as to the diction and as to the intention of the other writings"¹⁰

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Dante far more explicitly, at times in overwhelming detail, does what Yeats objects to in Spenser—fastens his poetic creations "with allegorical nails to a big barn-door of common sense, of merely practical virtue/"¹¹ In his familiar letter to Can Grande and in the Second Treatise of the Convito, Dante distinguishes four meanings: literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical (mystical or supernatural). Of the last two Mr. Grandgent says, "the one is merely the useful inference that the reader may draw from a story, for the guidance of his own life; the other, which is obscurely defined, seems to be a revelation of spiritual truth, hidden in the words of the text/"¹² Dante himself devotes most of his attention to the literal and allegorical ("sometimes I will touch incidentally on the other meanings as may be convenient to place and time").¹³ In present usage we include moral and anagogical under the allegorical; Mr. Lewis' symbolism (sacramentalism) Dante would probably have called anagogical. His own meaning of allegory is restricted and definite.

(Dante sharply distinguishes between theological and poetic allegory, the former being true in the literal as well as the mystic sense, "the latter being fiction in the literal sense and true only in, allegory. Poetic allegory is "that which is concealed under the veil of fables, and is a Truth concealed under a beautiful Un-truth; as when Ovid says that Orpheus with his lute made the trees and the stones to follow him, which signifies that the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel hearts gentle and humble, and makes those follow his will who have not the living force of knowledge and of art; who having not the reasoning life of any knowledge are as the stones/"¹⁴ Where Mr. Lewis conceives of fiction as being merely less real than what it portrays, (Dante and Spenser regard fiction as being a definite un-truth which conveys a concealed truth; neither would make fiction the distinction between allegory and symbol.^)

What Dante means by his use of allegory we should call metaphor in its broadest sense. Inevitably a poet so deeply concerned as Dante with language realized the fundamental importance of the metaphorical. It is of the very nature of language to body forth the immaterial in concrete terms readily perceived by the senses. This is clear from primitive picture writing—the first and literal "speaking picture"; but it is just as true of more highly

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developed modes of expressing in words thought and feeling. From the beginning of time such opposites as Life and Death, Joy and Sorrow, Love and Hate, Youth and Age, have had analogues in Day and Night, Spring and Winter; man is by nature an observant and imaginative animal, for whom comparison is a fundamental method of coping with experience. When Shakespeare writes his familiar sonnet, "That time of year thou mayst in me behold/" he is talking, among other things, about approaching age, loss of youthful warmth and joy; but we do not have to translate his meaning consciously, since the metaphor, autumn of life, is of the very nature of our language. He mentions bare, cold branches, deserted of birds, and we, while absorbing the poignant images, also absorb the ideas behind them.

If Shakespeare had extended his sonnet to a fairly long poem in which his life and love were portrayed throughout in terms of the tree changing with the changing seasons, we should call it an allegorical poem, for our modern sense of the word, unlike Dante's, is a matter of extension. The elaborately worked out conceits and comparisons of the metaphysical poets—such as the compass of Donne—are good examples of the metaphorical stretched almost to what we call allegorical. As Mr. T. M. Greene puts it: "A metaphor may ... be expanded into a simile . . . where the comparison is usually marked by the words 'as' or 'like/ And similes, in turn, can be developed into parables or fables, and, finally, into allegories in which abstract ideas of great complexity are set in analogical relation to images of comparable complexity, as for example in *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Divine Comedy*, *The Faery Queen*, and *The Hind and the Panther*."¹⁵ Allegory Mr. Greene defines as "in essence a more or less dramatically developed story in which the characters and events are given a 'secondary' symbolic meaning into which the reader is continually invited to translate them. This meaning is reflectively expounded, usually in the timeless manner of presentation, whereas the events depicted are usually accorded a temporal orientation."¹⁶ ^

(Mr. Greene rightly emphasizes the interrelation of metaphor, simile, parable, allegory, which he envisages as a series of concentric circles in what Asher Hinds very aptly calls "the metaphorical dimension."¹⁷ We need not question his statement that

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the progression from metaphor to allegory is a matter of expansion; yet Mr. Greene does not imply that it is also necessarily a matter of explicitness, that one can arrive at allegory from metaphor only by way of simile. Metaphor and simile, while usefully distinguished by presence or absence of "like" or "as," are actually in practice as indissoluble as allegory and symbolism. Metaphor and simile are constantly shading into each other imperceptibly, as almost any passage from Shakespeare and Spenser, or any conceit of Donne's, will show. Similarly, while we can formulate a theoretical distinction between symbolism and allegory, attempts to reapply that distinction to any specific work of literature reveal that the distinction may be temporarily useful but is not altogether valid.

(We may say that allegory is dynamic and narrative, whereas symbolism is more frequently static and lyrical; that the figures in an "allegory are symbols, their action allegory." Though this indicates a tendency, it does not express the whole complexity of their difference and relation. The Cup called the Holy Grail is a familiar symbol; yet, since it stands for a whole body of legend, with its ideals, desires, quests, difficulties, a distinct element of narrative is subsumed. We may say, then, that the narrative element in a symbol is implicit, in allegory explicit, provided that we recognize in certain specific allegories passages in which the borderline is too fine to draw.

I labor the point perhaps overmuch because to the serious allegorist, to Dante almost invariably and to Spenser much of the time, the symbolical meaning is primary, in the sense that it is the "truth" concealed under a beautiful untruth"; it is secondary only, as Dante himself points out, because the "literal must always go first, as that in whose sense the others are included *and without which it would be impossible and irrational to understand the others*. Especially is it impossible in the Allegorical, because in each thing which has a *within*, and a *without*, it is impossible to come to the within if you do *not first* come to the without."¹⁸ This is, while a truism, the most helpful of Dante's admirably sensible comments. And, though he himself

* "Thus allegories, as opposed to stories, may be defined as combinations of personifications and/or symbols." Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, note i, p. 6.

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seems to confirm bifurcation by undisguisedly translating his allegorical meaning, his poetic allegory and Spenser's do not always invite the reader to translate, but rather convey their double or triple meaning as spontaneously as Shakespeare in his sonnet, with no more key to secondary meaning than Shakespeare supplies. Allegory can be metaphor as well as simile.

That the allegorist often "reflectively expounds" his meaning need not diminish the quality of the poetry, any more than a simile does. It becomes faulty only when imagination fails. A fundamental cause of this failure may well be purely mechanical—overextension, making too burdensome a demand for harmonious cooperation of imagination and intellect, so that, in the effort to understand, intellect monopolizes attention. A danger in both conceit and allegory is that inner meaning may be lost in overelaboration of comparison. The faulty split—the duality objected to by many critics—is emphasized when, aware of this danger, the writer seeks to obviate it by too rational and unimaginative restatement of his inner meaning. Instances of successful and sufficiently imaginative, though rational, restatement are any of Milton's elaborate epic similes in *Paradise Lost*. Since, therefore, the question is one of degree, there can be no logical test; we must perforce trust critical judgment.

The insuperable difficulty of overexpansion in space is illustrated by Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, which cannot be apprehended as a whole. After long study we can seize upon the grandeur of the imaginative conception with its multiple significance, and we can appreciate not just separate panels, but whole sections, such as the creation of the world and of Adam and Eve, at a time. Yet we cannot simultaneously take in the totality and the details, primarily because of the size and unfortunate situation of the mural, partly because Michelangelo's complex conception makes too heavy demands in the expansion of metaphorical (religious and philosophical) as well as pictorial significance. Spenser in his *Faerie Queene* attempts to extend allegorical significance in time beyond the point where it can be assimilated simultaneously, even after preliminary study.*^

* Ultimate imaginative synthesis is impossible. On a smaller scale, one can read Mr. Eliot's notes on the final lines of the *Waste Land* (or Wordsworth's exposition of *The Thorn*) and understand what he is trying but failing to accomplish.

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The conscious allegorist is, of course, most liable to this error, which lies in the path of any artist who wishes to achieve great complexity. Thomas Mann confronts this problem in using myth and symbolism in his Joseph novels; young Joseph's rescue from the pit typifies the resurrection of the pagan Adonis, of Christ, of man, who is psychologically conceived of as constantly dying and being reborn—an effect analogous to allegory, as, in a somewhat different way, is the cycling and recycling in *Finnegan's Wake*. However interesting it is to speculate on creative theories and processes, to rationalize the creative directions of the allegorist and symbolist, even the artist himself can rarely tell just what is happening in a purely theoretical pre-expressive stage; the steps which he recalls are only the ones which he remembers or can make sense of. In judging a poem, it makes little difference whether the writer sat down deliberately to compose an allegory or discovered that what he was writing had allegorical significance, suggested by some revelation or accidental stroke and strengthened from that point on; for the actual process of creation is one of the most important influences in shaping a work. It is essential, however, to remember, as Dante's separation of moral from allegorical meaning serves to emphasize, that allegory is not necessarily didactic; it is a natural creative instinct, in large part dramatic.

Allegory is one of the earliest developed artistic devices for psychological portrayal. Several writers of the Middle Ages have delicate psychological penetration, especially in the matter of love, which has seldom been more exhaustively and analytically studied than in these old allegories. Guillaume de Lorris' part of the *Roman de la Rose*, written in the thirteenth century, is the best proof of the effectiveness and delicacy with which the allegorical method can express mental and emotional complexity. His psychology contributes depth and acuteness to Chaucer's story of *Troilus and Criseyde* a century later, though Chaucer's abandonment of the strict allegorical method disguises the extent of his indebtedness; his portrait of *Criseyde* in its subtle realism seems contemporary with Shakespeare's *Cleopatra* rather than with its actual contemporaries of the fourteenth century.

In their conflict Mr. Lewis' *Patentia* and *Ira* suggest Medieval plays in which Virtues and Vices contend, becoming in the proc-

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ess astonishingly lifelike. When a mature dramatist like Marlowe portrays the struggle going on in Faustus' mind, he splits that mind in two and presents the halves actually on the stage as the Good and Evil Angels, who at crucial moments embody visibly Faustus' inner conflict. The Good and Evil Angels are too natural and effective a device to be dismissed as merely archaic and crude, though it may appear so (as Lorris does in relation to Chaucer) when compared with Hamlet's arguing aloud with himself. Just as Chaucer in his psychological analysis of Criseyde discards the allegorical method of Lorris, so Shakespeare by a revolutionary change achieves greater subtlety and realism. The soliloquy is none the less a device, a convention, discarded in its turn by subsequent writers. Now, in an age increasingly weary of realism and receptive to stylization, the wheel seems to be coming full circle. Mr. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is a recognizable Morality Play; both it and Mr. Auden's *Ascent of F 6* in their stylization recall the old allegorical tradition of poetic drama.*

(Spenser is seldom credited with much dramatic sense; yet numerous episodes in the *Faerie Queene* show full awareness of the psychological and dramatic effectiveness of allegory^ Guy on, the shyest and most well bred of knights, meets in the House of Alma a girl covered with confusion:

She answered nought, but more abasht for shame,
Held downe her head, the whiles her lovely face
The flashing bloud with blushing did inflame,
And the strong passion mard her modest grace,
That Guyon mervayld at her uncouth cace:
Till Alma him bespake, Why wonder yee
Faire Sir at that, which ye so much embrace?
She is the fountaine of your modestee;

You shamcfast are, but Shamefastnesse it selfe is shee.¹⁹

In a realistic encounter Guyon comes face to face with a concrete representation of his own state of mind and one of his own abstract qualities. In Spenser's mixed technique we have story and allegory, character and personification.

* For over a century allegory has been part of the tradition of the American novel: Hawthorne, Melville, Henry James. Recently Edmund Wilson's fiction is really social-cultural allegory; and critics like Cowley and Warren resort to allegory as well as symbolism to interpret Faulkner.

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The greater the allegorist's sense of drama, the greater his tendency toward the concrete is likely to be, until he may indulge in drama for its own sake. If he had desired to make the conflict in Faustus' mind even more intense than it is, Marlowe could have had the Good and Evil Angels actually struggle physically with each other, as Jacob wrestles with the angel of the Lord. Immediately the angels would be humanized, and we should watch their fight as if it were an actual wrestling match. Should the dramatist be too much carried away by his realistic imagination, we might lose sight of the real struggle, the moral issue, in the excitement of the physical action. This shift of interest is exactly what happens in medieval Morality plays, when in the process of time the allegorical Vice, whether because the actor representing him Begins to take liberties with the part, or because the moral interest of the dramatist and audience lessens, gradually becomes the buffoon and jester, the ancestor of Shakespeare's clowns. The *FooTin + King Lcar* shows an interesting reversal of this tendency, a return to stylization and to the earlier allegorical method.

The reversal is of great significance, quite apart from the question of style and technique, quite apart from Shakespeare's own development. Allegory is not merely a technique, something which is outmoded and cast aside; it is a normal and inevitable tendency in creative expression. Since much confusion comes from attempting too precise definition, it may be wiser and more helpful to arrive at a conception of allegory from seeing how it works in poetry, how instinctive a development it is. Such a conception will inevitably be fluid, for it is impossible to make any lengthy allegory conform to strict, unqualified definition. Just as poetic intensity varies in any long poem, so allegorical significance will vary—now explicit*, now implicit; now close to the abstract, now so concrete as to be lost to sight. Being dynamic, allegory is constantly changing before our eyes: it ebbs and flows between abstract and concrete as do the sea-tides caught between the pull of gravitation and the magnetic attraction of the moon.

2.

Like democracy and Protestantism, allegory carries in its nature the seeds of dissolution. Tolerating freedom of speech and action, democracy cherishes its potential undoing; revolting against

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authority in religion, Protestantism becomes dangerously centrifugal; inviting greater concreteness, allegory can be humanized out of existence. This basic tendency is not fully explained but may be clarified by considering for the moment the abstract and the concrete as two magnetic poles between which allegory ranges.²⁰ Theoretically, the problem of the allegorist is to keep equidistant from each pole in a borderland where concrete and abstract exert equal pull or tension. Actually, this is impracticable.

Considered in the light of the relative proportion of abstract to concrete, an extended allegory reveals a constant shift between symbol and characterization. This shift results from tendencies inherent in allegory; it may, as in Spenser's case, be emphasized by deliberate employment of different techniques during the course of the allegory. Not the purely theoretical extremes, but something of the range between them, is illustrated by these two allegorical representations of Gluttony. The first is from Langland's *Piers Ploughman*, written in the fourteenth century:

He had no strength to stand, till he his staff had;
Then 'gan he to go like a gleeman's bitch,
Sometimes to the side, sometimes to the rear,
Like a man laying lines to catch birds with.
When he drew to the door, then his eyes grew dim,
He stumbled at the threshold, and threw to the ground.
Clement the cobbler caught Glutton by the middle,
And to lift him up he laid him on his knees;
And Glutton was a great churl, and grim in the lifting,
And coughed up a caudle in Clement's lap,
That the hungriest hound in Hertfordshire
Durst not lap that loathsomeness, so unlovely it smacketh;
So that, with all the woe in the world, his wife and his wench
Bore him home to his bed, and brought him therein.
And after all this surfeit, a sickness he had,
That he slept Saturday and Sunday, till sun went to rest.²¹

And this is Spenser's portrayal:

And by his side rode loathsome Gluttony,
Deformed creature, on a filthie swyne,
His belly was up-blowne with luxury,
And eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne,

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And like a Crane his necke was long and fyne,
With which he swallowed up excessive feast,
For want whereof poore people oft did pyne;
And all the way, most like a brutish beast,
He spued up his gorge, that all did him deteast.²²

Gluttony is equally hateful to both poets, and that hatred is expressed in concrete imagery. But Spenser uses imagery with more conscious and obvious symbolism—the swine, the crane-like neck; whereas Langland portrays in the detail of Flemish realism a drunk coming home on Saturday night from the pub.

Langland's abstractions are almost invariably not only personified but personalized in this way; his allegorical method is remarkably consistent, and of course his poem is short. Spenser's allegory, on the contrary, has infinite variety. In this instance his method is more abstract than Langland's, but his dominant trend, like Langland's, is toward characterization. Let us turn to another pair of portraits, more savory than these, more complex and subtle manifestations of creative allegorical tendencies.

In Marlowe's play, Faustus, growing rapidly more bored and more desperate in his boredom, demands Helen of Troy for his paramour; according to the implications of the play, paramour is to be taken literally, for Faustus has become degraded to feverish sensuality. Yet the nature and tone of his address to Helen, when she appears, is unexpected in the circumstances:

O thou art fairer then the evening aire,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand starres,
Brighter art thou then flaming Jupiter,
When he appeard to haplesse Semele,
More lovely then the monarke of the skie
In wanton Arethusaes azurde armes,
And none but thou shalt be my paramour.²³

These lines are passionate, but unlike Romeo and Juliet or Antony and Cleopatra, curiously unsensual, expressing contemplation of something as remote as the stars. Helen ceases to be the breaking, palpable woman in Faustus' arms and becomes the symbol for all the beauty of Greece, which poets since those early days, but not usually in such moments, have celebrated. Dramatic portrayal of Faustus' personal disintegration is at this

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point sacrificed to the culmination in symbolism of one of the play's dominant themes—celebration of the learning and beauty of Greece (blind Homer and Helen). Helen's change under our eyes in these lines from characterization to symbol is only one instance of Marlowe's natural tendency from the concrete toward the abstract.

Contrast this stanza from the *Faerie Queene*, in which Spenser is thinking of the abstract beauty of truth:

Nought is there under heav'ns wide hollownesse,
That moves more deare compassion of mind,
Then beautie brought t'unworthy wretchednesse
Through envies snares or fortunes freakes unkinde. . . .

Observe what happens:

I, whether lately through her brightness blind,
Or through allcageance and fast fealtie,
Which I do owe unto all woman kind,
Feele my heart perst with so great agonie,
When such I see, that all for pittie I could die.²⁴

Spenser's tendency is the opposite from Marlowe's; he has completely personalized his personification; the abstract beauty of truth has become a beautiful woman. It is the old Pygmalion trick) He has created a symbolical Galatea so lovely that he has fallen in love.

This paradox is all the more remarkable since Marlowe is dealing with actors on a stage, whereas Spenser, unhampered by the need for physical representation, is concerned only with imaginative fictions. Milton reveals the same paradox. Eve in *Paradise Lost* becomes under his hands a grand dramatic figure who sheds actual tears, though they are tears such as angels weep; and careful as he is with God's spoken words, Milton has not succeeded, in preventing many readers from judging God as if he were just another person in the story. The pull towards characterization, inherent in the nature of allegorical narrative, whose figures must act and speak, is accentuated in Spenser even more than in Milton by an inclination of temperament.

The emotions which Spenser feels for Una are more complex than Pygmalion's for Galatea. Simultaneously he feels "deare compassion of mind" for Una as Truth hardpressed in a world of

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evil, and as a lovely woman separated from her knight and beset by dangers; furthermore, since he is a militant Protestant, some of his sympathy is for his Church on the defensive against her enemies. None of these aspects of *Una* are mutually exclusive, though each probably supersedes the others at various points impossible to put one's finger on; and so the most that we can say with certainty is that the only relatively constant element is the situation of *Una*, in her various aspects and the emotion which she arouses in that situation. Diagrammatic representation by the pull between two poles (abstract and concrete) is ineffectual in such complex instances as this.

Certain figures of myth and legend have acquired by accretion so many symbolical meanings (almost as many as the poets who have used them) that even a poet of powerful originality can but imperfectly control this manifold meaning inherited from tradition. Spenser frequently seeks to exploit rather than to limit this range of traditional implications; there is in the Medieval and Renaissance poet some of the joy and more of the pride of the Medieval scholar. Thus a traditional figure like Venus becomes in the *Faerie Queene* bewilderingly protean, by turns myth, philosophical concept, emotional symbol partly touched by the cult of the Virgin, and a favorite character in a variety of interesting stories. Philosophically, she usually represents the dual Platonic aspects—Venus Pandemos (Earthly Love) and Venus Urania (Heavenly Love). But this is not enough for Spenser. Quite apart from philosophical or moral considerations, Venus has from earliest times been a symbol of fertility, and he presents her thus with equal pleasure.

On one occasion Venus and Diana are treated in terms of Alexandrian mythology as two eminently human goddesses. Venus, in search of her son Cupid, happens upon Diana bathing with her nymphs. Brushing aside Diana's anger at the intrusion, Venus questions closely whether she has seen Cupid, hinting broadly that Diana is concealing him by disguising him as one of her nymphs, in order to have a monopoly of love:

So saying every Nymph full narrowly she eyde.

Diana, goddess of Chastity, is highly incensed at these insinuations:

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And sharply said; Goe Dame, goe seeke your boy,
Where you him lately left, in Mars his bed;
He comes not here, welcome his foolish joy.
Ne leld we leisure to his idle toy:
But if I catch him in this company,
By Stygian lake I vow, whose sad annoy
The Gods doe dread, he dearely shall aby:—
I'll clip his wanton wings, that he no more shall fly.²⁵

The antithesis of the two abstract concepts, love and chastity, is evidently a symbolical implication of the hostility between the two goddesses; yet in the amusing contretemps between two distrustful women that symbolism is forgotten, is at most an afterthought. Allegory drops out, because Spenser ranges too far from the pole of the abstract; there is little tension, no pull in opposite directions. His two goddesses are characterizations, drawn into the realm of the concrete. Such instances are frequent throughout the poem, especially when subsidiary figures are involved; that so many of these instances occur in the Third Book has been cited as evidence that Spenser started his poem there under the influence of Ariosto's type of allegorical (or lack of allegorical) method. Some passages in the later books were imperfectly adapted to a change in design, but these are insufficient evidence for more than a partial and speculative reconstruction. Just as Spenser often overelaborates a simile until we forget what he originally sought to illuminate by the comparison, so he sometimes gets lost in the sheer narrative of adventure, in the personality of personification.

Inevitably a protracted allegory occasionally lapses into pure narrative—a condition rather than a failure of the form. This fable of Venus and Diana is not an example of the faulty overextension which I considered earlier, since Spenser does not give it allegorical weight. Isolated, it becomes narrative and characterization, but when the incident is replaced in the context of its canto it does contribute, however indirectly, to the total symbolical effect of the Third Book (In the Faerie Queene this inherent tendency of allegory to dissolve into frequent characterization and straightforward narrative is further complicated by Spenser's occasional abandonment of allegory for straight narrative technique. There is a very real difference, slight though it may seem, and that differ-

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ence explains why the Faerie Queene causes so much more difficulty than Dante's or Bunyan's allegories, both of which contain fables and parables but seldom pure narrative.)

The major actors in the story, being at the core of Spenser's meaning, are naturally his chief concern and best exemplify his allegorical techniques. As we should expect, they are more consistently than the minor figures between the two poles (abstract and concrete); though they range at times nearer one than the other, they are seldom mere characterizations in concrete terms, or pure abstractions. Brief examination of three of his finest creations, Una, Britomart, and Malbecco, will not only illustrate how allegory works in practice, but also clarify, in Una and Britomart, Spenser's combination of allegory with straight narrative.

Malbecco is one of the few instances in the Faerie Queene where, like Marlowe's Helen of Troy, the person becomes a symbol. He is first introduced as a withered, miserly old man who has married a beautiful young wife, Hellenore, of whom he is insanely jealous. He shuts her up and discourages with violent inhospitality any guest, especially male. The story is familiar: the unwelcome, reluctantly admitted knights; the ingenious ruse by which, despite elaborate precaution, one of them escapes with the young wife; the husband's tragi-comic grief. Recovering from his transport, Malbecco sets out after Hellenore, and finds her where she has been abandoned by her careless seducer, living a completely brutish but happy life among satyrs. His final humiliation comes when she spurns his offer to let bygones be bygones and return home with him. He flees for his own safety and discovers that he has been robbed in the meantime of his wealth.

All of this is told with real power in two cantos of straight narrative, and Malbecco emerges a rounded characterization—mean, jealous, bitter, craven. Any shred of dignity is relentlessly stripped from him until he becomes a pitiable but disgusting figure. Then occurs his astonishing metamorphosis, more intensely dramatic than any in Ovid. In complete despair Malbecco throws himself over a cliff:

But through long anguish, and selfe-murdring thought
He was so wasted and forpined quight,
That all his substance was consumed to nought,
And nothing left, but like an aery Spright,

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That on the rockes he fell so flit and light,
That he thereby received no hurt at all,
But chaunced on a craggy cliff to light;
Whence he with crooked clawes so long did crall,
That at the last he found a cave with entrance small.

Into the same he creepes, and thenceforth there
Resolv'd to build his balefull mansion,
In dreary darkenesse, and continuall feare
Of that rockes fall, which ever and anon
Threates with huge ruine him to fall upon,
That he dare never sleepe, but that one eye
Still ope he keepes for that occasion;
Ne ever rests he in tranquillity,
The roring billowes beat his bowre so boystrously.

Ne ever is he wont on ought to feed,
But toades and frogs, his pasture poysonous,
Which in his cold complexion do breed
A filthy bloud, or humour rancorous,
Matter of doubt and dread suspitious,
That doth with curelesse care consume the hart,
Corrupts the stomacke with gall vitious,
Croscuts the liver with internall smart,
And doth transfixe the soule with deathes eternall dart.

Yet can he never dye, but dying lives,
And doth himselfe with sorrow new sustaine,
That death and life attonce unto him gives.
And painefull pleasure turnes to pleasing paine.
There dwels he ever, miserable swaine,
Hatefull both to him selfe, and every wight;
Where he through privy grieffe, and horreur vaine,
Is woxen so deform'd, that he has quight
Forgot he was a man, and Gealosie is hight.²⁶

Malbecco becomes, like Swift's Struldbrugs, a figure of terrible immortality. He is first characterized, then depersonalized into a symptom of jealousy. Unlike Marlowe's Helen, the depersonalization is as explicit as Wordsworth's stripping away concrete im-

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agery to get at abstract forms beneath it. Malbecco is a formidable challenge to the validity (when imagination participates) of the two most weighty objections to allegory—its being too abstract and too explicit.

(Unajand Britomart are more characteristic of Spenser's allegory. Though their development is superficially the same, Britomart shows even more than Malbecco a mixture of allegory and straight narrative techniques, whereas Una's frequent drift toward characterization is primarily inherent in allegory itself. Our first introduction to Una is in a stanza fraught with symbolism* the whiteness of herself, of her mount, of the lamb, typifying Truth, the quality that she represents; the blackness of her veil and stole typifying truth hidden in misunderstanding, or from mortal eyes which cannot bear it) Yet even from the beginning Una is no cold symbol, the pictorial quality in the sharp contrast of black and white, and the skillful suggestion of loveliness and sorrow in a phrase perfect in itself—"one that inly mournd"—give warmth to the stanza, so that (Una's entrance is as moving and arresting as that of a mysterious veiled lady in a dream: j

A lovely Ladic rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
And hcavic sat upon her palfrey slow:
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.²⁷ 114

Despite this human situation and the emotion which it arouses, Una remains an other-world lady, even after her knight has been duped into forsaking her.) Later her symbolism is again evident:

One day nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,
From her unhastie beast she did alight,
And on the grasse her daintie limbes did lay
In secret shadow, farre from all mens sight:
From her faire head her fillet she undight,
And laid her stole aside. Her angels face
As the great eye of heaven shyned bright,

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And made a sunshine in the shadie place;
Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace.²⁸ 134 ·

Both stanzas are an almost perfect balance of abstract and concrete. The imagery and action are simple but sufficient in themselves to create poetic beauty, pictorial and emotional; and yet not one concrete detail or movement lacks symbolical meaning in the allegory of truth. We are not invited to translate here, for allegory is metaphor rather than simile; the literal and allegorical are interdependent and simultaneous. "~~~~~"

The Tenderness shows how Spenser is himself moved by contemplating Una. Observe how imperceptibly his personal involvement in the human aspect of her situation—a woman deserted by her lover—increases. ^Shortly Una meets Archimago disguised as Redcross and mistakes him for her lover:)

And weeping said, Ah my long lacked Lord,
Where have ye bene thus long out of my sight?
Much feared I to have bene quite abhord,
Or ought have done, that ye displeasen might,
That should as death unto my dcare hart light:
For since mine eye your joyous sight did mis,
My chearefull day is turnd to chearelese night,
And eke my night of death the shadow is;
But welcome now my light, and shining lampc of blis.²⁹

The faint initial reproach, quickly stifled, the humility and readiness to believe the fault her own, show Spenser's insight into her distress, his imaginative grasp of the human:

His lovely words her seemd due recompence
Of all her passed paines: one loving howre
For many yearcs of sorrow can dispence:
· · · · ·
She has forgot, how many a wofull stowre
For him she late endur'd; she speakes no more
Of past_____³⁰ ·

(Allegorically, this encounter signifies Truth deceived by Hypocrisy⁷ which seems "slightly irrational." * But Una has become a character in a love story, and, while she does not lose her symbol-

* See below, pp. 157-59.

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ical meaning, there are increasingly frequent revelations of her womanhood. When Arthur and the Squire have killed Orgoglio, Una, who has been keeping an eye on Duessa, sees her sneaking off in the confusion and cries out in alarm:

Ne let that wicked woman scape away.⁸¹

We cannot help feeling that she is not so much Truth guarding against Falsehood as a woman naturally determined that the female who broke up her love affair pay the price) She is personalized to the extent of the quarrelsome Diana and Venus.

(Redcross when released from the dungeon is a sorry sight, thin, bearded, haggard. Una is compassionate:"^

Ah dearest Lord, what evill starre
On you hath fround, and pourd his influence bad,
That of your selfe ye thus bcrobbed arre,
And this misseeming hew your manly looks doth marre?

But welcome now my Lord, in wele or woe,
Whose presence I have lackt too long a day.³-

Though she is irreproachably generous, in this speech there is a hint of jiatural dismay at finding her handsome lover so metamorphosed and of disappointment that her knight has failed so ignominiously, since without his timely aid of Arthur he would still be in his dungeon plaintively crying for death to release him. The contrast between his sorry case and the valiant Arthur does not escape Una, for when Arthur at her request tells a few stanzas later of his love and eager search for Gloriana, she involuntarily breaks out:^)

(O happy Queene of Faeries^ that hast found)
Mongst many, one that with his prowessse may
Defend thine honour, and thy foes confound:
True Loves are often sown, but seldom grow on^ground.³³

Without swerving from loyalty to Redcross, Una sees that there are advantages in having a superior knight; her comment is implied criticism, evidence that Spenser is by no means deficient in psychological subtlety. The crowning proof of her very feminine reaction is found in the same canto when Redcross, overcome by Despair's skillful rubbing the acid of his failures into the wounds

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in his pride, seizes the proffered knife to kill himself. Una's patience breaks:")

(Out of his hand she snatcht the cursed knife,")
 And threw it to the ground, enraged rife,
 And to him said, Fie, Fie, faint harted knight,
 What meanest thou by this reprochfull strife?
 Is this the battell, which thou vauntst to fight
 With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and bright?

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight.
 Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
 Ne delivish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.³⁴

,This is not sweet reasonableness. Una's exasperation provides the safety valve so often needed in *Othello*, while at the same time the limitations of her imagination show her failure to read the secret of Redcross' torment.)

(During the course of the First Book Una and Redcross, having begun as symbols of Truth and Holiness in an allegory of their relationship, at times slip into characters in a love story, which in its turn becomes a psychological symbolism of quite a different sort—the sort that Shakespeare achieves in his character studies, and that Ibsen in his best plays reaches from the opposite direction. (Consciously or not, Spenser portrays in the relations of Redcross and Una a universal human pattern, incidental and yet closely related to the moral meaning from which it springs: usually it is interpreted as the good, well-intentioned man of weak will ari3 the superior woman in loye_with_him; I find this a simplifcatori, Tor Spenser reveals subtle differences in the working of the masculine and feminine minds, and Una never falls from grace because" sHe is never really tempted by what undermines her lover.* Still allegory here leads to dramatization just as often in Shakespeare and Ibsen dramatization leads to symbolism bordering on allegory.

Though like Una she first appears in a panoply of symbolism and in an allegorical incident, Britomart is a differen.type from Una, and we are conscious of that difference at once. Guyon, rid-una with Prince Arthur7 meets a stranger knight and tries a

* See below, pp. 162-68.

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friendly tilt, only to find himself, to his chagrin, unhorsed. Knowing that Guyon is Temperance and Britomart Chastity, we easily understand the meaning of this impasse. Spenser anticipates Milton:

She that has that, is clad in compleat steel.³⁵

The symbolism of Britomart's magic lance, strength from heaven as well as from her own virtue, may be explained by Milton's line. Britomart's war-like prowess is such that she seldom needs this advantage, this crown to her invincibility, for, since Spenser makes chastity an active and militant force . she combines masculine strength and intelligence with her feminine qualities. But it is not long before we learn her secret, which at once modifies her symbolism and humanizes her. She is in love with Artegall, whom she has seen only in a mirror.

With this revelation immediately Britomart slips from symbol to characterization, the transition being far more abrupt than in Una's case. It is disconcerting to find an idealization resorting to guile in order to induce Redcross in defense of Artegall to expatiate on his noble qualities; and the mode of Spenser's presentation of Britomart changes completely in the flash-back to the time when, rummaging in a closet of her father's castle, she comes across an antique mirror. Like Madeline in the Eve of St. Agnes:

So thought this Mayd (as maydens use to done)
Whom fortune for her husband would allot,
Not that she lusted after any one;
For she was pure from blame of sinfull blot,
Yet wist her life at last must lincke in that same knot.³⁶

In the glass when she looks is Artegall's image, which she likes uncommonly well without taking it seriously; yet, unaccountably, from being content with hunting and jousting and riding:

Sad, solemne, sowre, and full of fancies fraile
She woxe; yet wist she neither how, nor why,
She wist not, silly Mayd, what she did aile,
Yet wist, she was not well at ease perdy,
Yet thought it was not love, but some melancholy.³⁷

The Amazonian Britomart has suddenly become just a girl in love. Finally the old nurse tells her what is the matter and offers

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to go with her to seek her love; here Spenser slips back into simple naturalism, especially the lonely old nurse's grief over first love:

Her chearefull words much cheard the feeble spright
Of the sicke virgin, that her downe she layd
In her warme bed to sleepe, if that she might;
And the old woman carefully displayd
The clothes about her round with busie ayd;
So that at last a little creeping sleepe
Surprised her sense: She therewith well apayd,
The drunken lampe downe in the oyle did steepe,
And set her by to watch, and set her by to weepe.³⁸

This is so far from the abstract, so completely concrete characterization that only with a start we realize that the girl who finally drops off to sleep while the nurse watches is Chastity. Allegorical interpretation at this point is rationalization.

By the Fifth Book Britomart's characterization has progressed so far that for whole cantos at a time Spenser himself seems to lose sight of allegory, absorbed in the human creature of his imagination. This is conspicuously evident in his portrayal of her mixed emotions when she fails to hear news of Artegall:

Sometime she feared, least some hard mishap
Had him misfalne in his adventurous quest;
Sometime least his false foe did him entrap
In traytrous traine, or had unwares opprest:
But most she did her *troubled mynd* molest,
And secretly afflict with jealous feare,
Least some new love had him from her possest;
Yet Joth she was, since she no ill did heare,
To thinke of him so ill: yet could she not forbear.

1 One while she blam'd her selfe; another whyle
She Him condemned, as trustlesse and untiew:
AuS then, her grieve with errour to beguyle,
She fayn'd to count the time againe anew,
As if before she had not counted trew.
For houres but dayes; for weekes, that passed were,
She told but moneths, to make them seeme more few:
Yet when she reckned them, still drawing neare,
Each hour did seeme a moneth, and every moneth a yeare.⁸⁹

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She grows more frantic with suspense, deciding now to send some knight to look for him, now to go herself. In her mind always lurks the fear that she may find him

Amongst loose Ladies, lapped in delight.⁴⁰

And so when Talus comes to tell her that Artegall is being held captive by a lady, Radigund, Britomart at once suspects the worst;

A while she walkt, and chaufft; a while she threw

Her selfe uppon her bed, and did lament:

Yet did she not lament with loude alew,

As women wont, but with deepe sighes, and singults few.

Like as a wayward childe, whose sounder sleepe

Is broken with some feareful dreames affright,

With froward will doth set him selfc to weepe;

Ne can be stild for all his nurses might,

But kicks, and squals, and shriekcs for fell despight:

Now scratching her, and her loose locks misusing;

Now seeking darkenesse, and now seeking light;

Than craving sucke, and then the sucke refusing.

Such was this Ladies fit, in her loves fond accusing.⁴¹

While praising the effectiveness of the wayward child simile, Jones feels that it "may be criticized as subtracting something from the dignity of Britomart's character." He finds the whole passage on Britomart's jealousy heavily indebted to Ariosto's Bradamante, inferior and less energetic than Ariosto, who uses soliloquy where Spenser resorts to indirect discourse: in short, comparison shows "the difference between the dramatic and the descriptive treatment."⁴² On the contrary, I find this instance of Spenser's adaptation of largely borrowed material more effective, paradoxically more dramatic, than the original. It is one of the best examples of his individual metamorphosis, comparable to Chaucer's and Shakespeare's Free treatment of sources.

In the first place, Spenser is concerned with intensity of effect; consequently (this will surprise those who consider him incorrigibly diffuse) he compresses some fifty-one stanzas of Ariosto's⁴³ into sixteen. Ariosto's two rhetorical soliloquies (eighteen stanzas), patterned possibly after Ovid's long-winded Heroides, Spenser condenses into roughly two stanzas (one and parts of two

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others). He substitutes for Ariosto's quite ordinary Gascon cavalier, who reveals the news of Rogero's confinement, his own powerfully imaginative creation, Talus, the Iron man^ ordinarily, devoid of feeling but on this occasion partially drawn into humanity:

Even in the dore him meeting, she begun;
And where is he thy Lord, and how far hence?
Declare at once; and hath he lost or won?
The yron man, aJbe he wanted sence
And sorrowes feeling, yet *with* conscience
Of his ill newes, did inly chill and quake,
And stood still mute, as one in great suspense,
As if that by his silence he would make
Her rather reade his meaning, then him selfe it spake.

There is nothing in Ariosto's version so dramatic as this: the contrast between Britomart's reckless impatience—expressed in the direct, colloquial "Declare at once"—and the mysterious foreboding of a revelation direful enough to have this effect on an "iron man" (a creation and a situation which would have delighted Mozart). Spenser continues, shifting back to terse, realistic dialogue:

Till she againe thus sayd: Talus be bold,
And tell what ever it be, good or bad,
That from thy tongue thy hearts intent doth hold.
To whom he thus at length. The tidings sad,
That I would hide, will needs, I see, be rad.
My Lord, your love, by hard mishap doth lie
In wretched bondage, wofully bestad.
Ay me (quoth she) what wicked destinie?
And is he vanquish*: by his tyrant enemy?

Not by that Tyrant, his intended foe;
But by a Tyrannesse (he then replide,)
That him captived hath in haplesse woe.

Quite different from this hushed suspense, this news reluctantly told, this atmosphere of disaster, is Bradamante's learning a garbled story from a casual soldier, whom Ariosto takes three stanzas to exonerate from willful falsehood. Spenser proceeds at once to Britomart's reaction—swift, unreasoning accusation:

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Cease thou bad newes-man, badly doest thou hide
Thy maisters shame, in harlots Bondage hide.
Therest my shame, in harlots bondagetidel.
With that in rage she turn'd from him aside,
Forcing in vaine the rest to her to tell
And to her chamber went like solitary cell.⁴⁴

Then follows the anguished solitary bedroom weeping which I quoted earlier.

Unlike the Gascon's tale, what Talus tells is true; Britomart has no further grounds for jealousy than that Artcgall is Radigund's captive. Spenser has been accused of taking away motivation, since Britomart (Chastity) of all women should have chiyalric faith in her lover. Artcgall's "guilt" is mainly a product of her overwrought imaginafion, worn out by months without news, by irrational fears and jealousies. Spenser is not only more subtle and realistic psychologically in this instance than Ariosto; he is more profound. Behind the irrational jealousy which temporarily debases Britomart is a moral purpose—unrelenting attack on jealousy, love's greatest enemy' against which none is proof. This I think is ultimately what gives a momentary but overpowering sense of disaster to this encounter between Britomart and Talus, arid to her surrender in solitude to doubt and despair.

It is momentary, for certainly the simile of the wayward child dispels it. The child is entirely original and characteristically Spenserian. Others besides Jones have objected to the lack of dignity, even while enjoying the stanza for itself. Not the lack of decorum, which Spenser scorns as much as Shakespeare, but a contradiction which seems to have bothered no one else bothers me. Spenser first describes Britomart as not lamenting

with loude alew,

As women wont, but with deepe sighes, and singults few.

Then she becomes at once the squalling baby, kicking his nurse. Perhaps this inconsistency indicates that the wayward child is an afterthought, or that Spenser had the stanza already written and failecTo adapt it smoothly. But he does include it, which shows intention, and its effect is the final characteristic touch of humorous naturalism to a thoroughly original (however derivative), complex and dramatic passage.

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While we have to search closely among a mosaic of Ariosto's stanzas from which Spenser actually draws his story, except for the tragic tone of a few stanzas, the characterization and scene suggest at once Cleopatra's receiving from her messenger news of Antony's marriage to Octavia. Cleopatra is another mixture of dignity and wayward child; she not only in rage stops her ears to an unwelcome message, but belabors the messenger, whereas Britomart retires to sulk. Spenser anticipates Shakespeare in feeling (both comic and tragic), in intensity, in method of characterization. If he does not entirely succeed, we must remember that he is attempting an amazingly eclectic technique—ruthlessly condensing Ariosto; introducing a startling concrete-abstract figure in Talus; transposing rhetorical soliloquy into a brief, stylized medieval "complaint"; contrasting with this stylization a terse, colloquial dialogue; and adding as a crowning touch the popular naturalism of the wayward child, an impressionistic sketch which would have delighted the old House-Book Master of the Rhine.

Unlike the characterization of Una, which is largely inherent in the symbol and grows out of it naturally, rarely progressing far enough toward realism to make symbolical meaning evaporate, the characterization of Britomart is so complete, the transition from symbol so abrupt that duality in technique is marked. Partly under the influence of Ariosto, Spenser at moments with Britomart abandons allegory altogether for psychological realism. Fine as if's, the combination of symbol and characterization is less coherent than in Una, is comparable to the not completely successful amalgamation of different techniques in *King Lear*. The thread of the Britomart-Artegall story becomes on occasion less an allegory than an exemplum. Allegory so dominates the poem, however, that in the final effect these narrative incidents are largely subsumed to the general meaning of the book.

By emphasizing selected passages in order to demonstrate characterization, both as a natural outgrowth of allegory and as a separate process, I may unintentionally have given the impression of a steady progression from symbol to characterization, to which Malbecco is the only exception. What actually happens is ebb and flow between the two. Even with the more humanized Britomart the balance is not always tipped toward the concrete. Perhaps the high point of her double function as woman and symbol occurs

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when she first meets her lover. She and Artegall, who is unaware that she is a woman, engage in combat without quarter; he is getting the better of her and with a vicious stroke shears away part of her helmet:

With that her angels face, unseene afore,
Like to the ruddie morne appeared in sight,
Deawed with silver drops, through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder, then beseem'd aright,
Through toylesome heate and labour of her weary fight.

Her blond hair, no longer restrained, falls about her shoulders:

And as his hand he up again did reare,
Thinking to worke on her his utmost wracke,
His powrelesse arme benumbd with secret feare
From his revengefull purpose shronke abacke,
And cruell sword out of his fingers slacke
Fell downe to ground, as if the steele had sence,
And felt some ruth, or sence his hand did lacke,
Or both of them did thinke, obedience
To doe to so divine a beauties excellence.⁴⁵

It is no derogation of Ariosto, so superior in elan, in fluent, inventive narrative, to remark that he never creates a situation at once so dramatic and rich in complex symbolism as this. Straightway Artegall falls on his knees before Britomart as before a vision. This is not only a dramatic way to introduce two lovers (all that would really have concerned Ariosto); it is beautifully imagined symbolism of the power of Chastity.* It is a "recognition scene"—recognition of a quality more than of a person, though that, too—and its full drama is spiritual intensity. Artegall sees Britomart as Dante in *La Vita Nuova* sees Beatrice. That Artegall's vision is a little red in the face and dewed with sweat is perhaps the most astonishing combination of abstract and concrete in Spenser, and distinguishes him sharply from Dante. Beatrice represents intensity of spiritual passion, of sublimated love which Spenser never attains except in his *Heavenly Hymnes*. No poet has ever sung so magnificently of spiritual contemplation as Dante; it is no detraction to recognize that his intensity is reached partly by denial as

* The encounter, of course, is also a perfect example of Spenser's personal modification of Platonism.

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well as by sacrifice of this life, for which Britomart, holy yet eminently human, transcendent in loveliness yet dewed with sweat, is intended.

✓ 3.

"Allegory and, to a much greater degree, symbolism are a natural language by which the soul when entranced, or even in ordinary sleep, communes with God and with angels/" writes Yeats. "They can speak of things which cannot be spoken of in any other language, but one will always, I think, feel some sense of unreality when they are used to describe things which can be described as well in ordinary words/" On these grounds he justifies his complete acceptance of allegory in Dante and Bunyan, and, a little unfortunately for his point, in the Roman de la Rose, which is no communion with God and with angels, which is as much as the Faerie Queene concerned with ordinary things. "Spenser"" Yeats continues, "to whom allegory was not, as I think, natural at all, make us feel again and again that it disappoints and interrupts our preoccupation with the beautiful and sensuous life he has called up before our eyes." No one would have been more dismayed than Spenser by this purely aesthetic approach to his poem; Yeats, like Hazlitt, is willing to abandon all of the Faerie Queene which does not appeal to him or fit his theories.

I Allegory and symbolism are preeminently adapted to visionary poetry, and, as Yeats himself admits in his inclusion of the Roman de la Rose, "visionary" should be interpreted broadly enough to include the dream world of the Faerie Queene. Yet Yeats' intuitive reservations on Spenser's allegory express a difficulty felt even by more sympathetic readers, a difficulty caused not by Spenser's struggles with a form alien to his temperament, but by his eclecticism. Though Dante, Chaucer, Langland, Bunyan follow different methods of allegory, each method is fairly consistent with itself and readily wins our acceptance. Spenser, with Renaissance exuberance, seeks to combine not only the widely different allegorical methods of Dante, Chaucer, Langland, but also* the realistic narrative techniques of Chaucer and Ariosto.

Redcross' adventures iii "the" First Book are fundamentally the simple allegorical narrative of Christian's Progress in search of salvation or of Dante's journey through Hell and Purgatory to Paradise. Scudamour's adventures in the Temple of Venus, on

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the other hand, are an example of the elaborate, sophisticated, schematized allegory of *Lorris*. Spenser's habit is frequently to restate his central meaning in one way after another (as well as to use various loose exempla) so that the total effect is of a theme with variations played on several instruments. In the *Second Book*, for instance, there are various exempla of intemperance—in grief, of *Amavia*; in physical passion, of her husband, of *Cymockles*; in anger, of *Pyrochles*. The main significance of the book is presented in the schematized allegory of the House of Medina, the golden mean. The Cave of Mammon, though richly elaborated, is basically the straightforward allegory of Langland or Bunyan. Then, set off against the House of Medina is the House of Alma, or Temperance in a different sense; whereas one is a philosophical allegory, the other is the popular native type, portraying the castle of the body assailed by the seven deadly sins and the five senses through which they gain access. This, in turn, dissolves into an allegorical struggle between Arthur and the leader of these enemies of the body, Maleger, spurred on by the two hags, Impotence and Impatience. The book concludes with a completely different type of presentation the symbolical Bower of Bliss, whose enchantress Guyon destroys. And scattered in between these allegorical pillars of the book are numerous narratives like the discomfiture of Braggadochio by Belphoebe, only loosely related and faintly symbolical.

In the *Divina Commedia*, Mr. Grandgent finds six different literary types blended into one: the Encyclopaedia, the Journey, the Vision, the Autobiography, the Praise of Woman, the Allegory.⁴⁷ Dante had a more powerfully assimilative and synthetic imagination than Spenser; once we understand the main scheme of his poem our progress is clear. Spenser constantly requires a new adjustment, a new orientation; he unifies his complexity (though practice makes for proficiency in following his abrupt transitions), because he refuses to recognize the limits of his medium as well as of his own powers. This refusal, however, explains his most original effects as well his failures. His greatest beauty is often achieved not despite but because of allegory.

The Dragon is marvelously painted. The Dragon is Sin. If the reader does not bring to the poem at least an imaginative sense of sin as well as a feeling for beauty, there is little point in reading the *Faerie Queene*.')



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"For' in other places, although the beginning of his Allegory or mysticall sense, may be obscure, yet in the processe of it, he doth himself declare his own conceptions in such sort as they are obvious to any ordinary capacitie: But in this, he seems onely to glance at the profoundest notions that any Science can deliver us, and then on a sudden (as it were) recalling himself out of an Enthusiasme, he returns to the gentle Relation of the Allegoricall History he had begun, leaving his Readers to wander up and down in much obscuritie, & to come within much danger of erring at his Intention. . . /"—SIR KENELM DIGBY, 1643-1644.

None will ever pluck out the heart of the Faerie Queene's mystery. There are too many unknowns which no amount of scientific scholarship, of intellectual ingenuity, of critical acumen will ever discover. We can only hope to approximate the truth more closely.

Spenser wrote and revised the first three books of the poem over a decade, during which he was frequently interrupted by pressure of personal, civil, political, military affairs. Milton sacrificed his poetic career for many years to a greater extent and to political demands of greater moment, but, instead of attempting under pressure to write his epic, he spent whatever time he had carefully choosing his subject, slowly maturing it in his mind; consequently, when he was finally free to write, Milton had the advantage of a long-considered scheme, as well as leisure and a fortunate kindling of creative energy. If he had begun *Paradise Lost* in 1640, we should have in history of composition a rough analogy to Spenser's experience.*

* In comparisons like this, differences in age should be remembered. Spenser began his *Faerie Queene* at 28, finished the first three books at

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The problem of a critic primarily interested in helping his generation to estimate the value, as well as to appreciate the beauty, of Spenser's poetry, yet recognizing the need to assimilate such historical and specialized knowledge as bears directly on interpretation, is complex. He must walk delicately!"liis skepticism at the ingenious rationalizations of many commentators makes him all the more aware of his own danger of re-creative ingenuity. Further, owing to the peculiar difficulties of the Faerie Queene, an unfinished personal-historical philosophical-religious-ecclesiastical allegory (to crib From Polonius), interpretation is impossible without some knowledge of why and how it came to be written, of the circumstances of its composition, of its chief sources, and of the nature as well as extent of his "borrowing."

The source study of Spenser is an introduction to Medieval and Renaissance humanism, especially Christian humanism? Authors, together with centuries of commentators, mingle in a vast reservoir, from which each writer drew what irrigation he could. Troublesome to the historian and scholar, this conception of communal learning is healthier than our own. Man's intellectual life is as organic as his blood system and less easily, less profitably vivisected.* Spenser is eclectic, but not mechanically so, nor is his unfinished poem a mosaic. Mr. Renwick wisely observes: "A poet is not a passive body impinged on by external forces, and Spenser was a man of positive mind who chose his own way. The mark of an 'influence' is the record of an affinity; the exploitation of a 'source' is an indication of taste or reason, or both'" Books Spenser regarded as a sum of human experience to be applied to present and future, shaping men's lives not only in mind and heart, but in word and deed; he wished to make

38, and all, with the exception of Mutabilih'e Cantos, that he was to write of the poem at 42; he died at 47. Milton began late, at 49 or 50, and finished *Paradise Lost* at 56. Dante was at least 35 when he began *Divina Com media*.

* In his Phaedrus, Socrates: "Now I am conscious of my own ignorance, and I know very well that I have never invented these things myself, so the only alternative is that I have been filled through the ears, like a pitcher, from the well springs of another; but, again because of my stupidity, I have forgotten how and from whom I heard it."

And Paul in Romans: "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise"

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active in his poem this wisdom drawn from the past, together with his own observation and experience.

The first two books of the *Faerie queene* considered in relation to each other and to the rest reveal the central meaning of the poem. Spenser's desire, as a poet feeling an essential harmony, to fuse the moral and ethical wisdom of the ancient with Christian teaching, not in a philosophical-theological system like the Thomistic, but in the substance of poetry. Much of the interfusion (sometimes merely) of these and other sources like Ovid and Lucretius Spenser accepts uncritically; yet with his genius for affinities, for richness of implication, for complexity of meaning, the final synthesis is his. The dominant effect of the two books is to subsume Greek and Roman ethics to Christian moral belief, and this ambitious, only partly realized design affects the whole nature of the poem, no matter in what order written, or with what ideas and plots originally begun.

Since he is a poet writing in concrete terms, Spenser presents this most nearly universal part of his allegory not only in the form of stories and situations drawn from classical, Italian, French, English literature and illustrative of traditional psychology, but also in terms of his own particular living in Elizabethan England; and so the historical enters, quite apart from consciously historical purpose. In an age when politics and religion are inseparable, historical allegory of England's past is also ecclesiastical. Elizabeth is to most Elizabethans a natural though consciously idealized symbol. To Spenser she is in her person a summation of the virtues, in her royalty the apotheosis of England's noble achievements, in her capacity as head of the Established Church a symbol of true religion, which to him means specifically the Reformed Protestant Church of England.

2.

Moral allegory and didacticism are alien to Spenser's genius, Legouis believes; thus the *Faerie Queene* "shows an inverse progression; ... it passes from the more serious to the more frivolous." In a limited sense and for different reasons, the poem does show "inverse progression," the nature of which is more readily perceived if we turn from Spenser's devious method to

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Milton's clarity and control.³ For *Paradise Lost*, despite grand unity of structure, also shows inverse progression, less serious but no less real. And if the Faerie Queene is a cross between romance and epic, *Paradise Lost* combines epic and tragedy)

("Milton is concerned with human tragedy, Spenser with human comedy, more or less in Dante's sense of the word, Spenser's, inverse progression is less immediately noticeable and less triumphantly counterbalanced. With both poets, plunging "in medias res" is not just a traditional narrative device; the first two books carry us to the heart of each poem.

In the dramatic account of Satan's fall, in the evolution of the scheme for revenge against God through man, Milton's imaginative conception of the origin, nature, machinations of evil is set forth with full implications, including its corroding effect on human nature, since his characterization of the Fallen Angels anticipates the human story of Adam and Eve. If we add the conversation between God and Christ about free will and redemption by sacrifice, we can say that by the time we are half-way through the Third Book we have penetrated to the core of *Paradise Lost*. From this point on, though given much elaborate and often beautiful exposition, our interest shifts to the detailed working out of a prophecy already fulfilled in Satan, to the re-dramatization in terms of mankind of a foregone, even fore-enacted conclusion.⁴ No heroic poet of equal stature ever devised or accepted a scheme so essentially anticlimactic, and no other poet could have mitigated so skillfully the anticlimax. In this respect *Paradise Lost* is a magnificent tour de force.

But it is not merely Milton's skill in interrelating structurally, 1 poetically, logically, the Fall of the Angels with the Fall of Man, and in diverting attention from the fact that he is working in two different modes (allegorical and realistic) and in two different forms (epic and tragic drama) that obviates the disparity and makes his parallelism, despite its unbalance, an artistic triumph.] There is a psychological explanation. While no reader fails to remark the diminution in grandeur, most see it as diminution in scale only; the average man is more deeply moved by evil manifest in the human relations of Adam and Eve than by the cosmic

* Dante, in contrast with Spenser and Milton, progresses directly from the Inferno through Purgatorio to the crowning Paradise.

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and theological conception of evil in the first two books and in the opening of the Third: consequently, the Ninth Book achieves emotional climax. Grand moral allegory gives way to psychologically realistic human tragedy; evil as a force in the universe becomes evil in this world—even in the home of a married pair, for, like Othello, Milton's tragedy in Paradise is domestic.

Just as the core of *Paradise Lost* is in the first two books, in the opening of the Third, and, repeated in different terms, in the Ninth; so the central meaning of the *Faerie Queene* is in the first two books, and is partly (much less inclusively than in Milton) repeated in different terms in the *Britomart-Artegal* episodes throughout the Third, Fourth and Fifth.

(The opening two books of Spenser's poem embody explicitly or implicitly all⁵ that he has to say on the great central issues.* In them he is concerned with fundamental principles of human conduct; he establishes the relationship between man and God, as well as between man and his fellows. The problems of evil and free will enter inevitably with the need for action; likewise, the problems of love, friendship, justice, courtesyt From the ethical, moral, religious, even psychological points of view, the four remaining books contribute little that is new; they are primarily elaboration and specific application of the central position set forth in the careers of Redcross and Guyon, variations on many of their emotional, social, moral crises of choice and action. Only the *Britomart-Artegal* love story, with its corrolaries, among these repetitive themes attains special stature.(Milton, after developing his grand imaginative conception of evil and his view of free will, turns to the particular story of Adam and Eve) Spenser, in the scheme which he finally settled on for publication, turns from the great allegory of what he, with Elizabethan freedom, considered the Christian-Platonic-Aristotelian life, to the human situation of Artcgall and Britomart.t

To begin with maximum meaning insures drama, an advantage

* It may be argued with reason that Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Love best expresses his personal faith; however, by its limitations a lyric cannot show the development and application of dramatic narrative.

t Spenser of course does not turn from Angels to men; he repeats in the same terms. Love, only one element in the story of Redcross and Una, is the focus of attention in that of Artegal and Britomart, which may have been written first.

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seriously offset by danger of anticlimax, and this problem is reflected in technique. In each poem the opening books form distinct, separate units within the whole, partly because of structural and technical shifts, which are noticeable but superbly handled in *Paradise Lost*. Milton welds his epic-tragedy together by poetic fiat of will/ Architectonic structure, though present in a skeletal way in the Fifth, is conspicuously evident only in the first two books of the *Faerie Queene*, the whole formal conception of which, whether Spenser began with it in mind or later superimposed it, is artistically impossible. I question whether Spenser, even granted the time, could ever have finished the poem any more than Chaucer the original scheme of his *Canterbury Tales*.⁶

Spenser juxtaposes two self-contained entities in the Book of Holiness and the Book of Temperance, just as he relates two different treatments of temperance within the Second Book, the House of Medina and the House of Alma. But even this pointed juxtaposition, reminiscent of Shakespeare's placement of critical scenes, is not enough; he weaves the two books together by threads of theme, cross reference, imagery. Many have observed that characters from the First Book reappear in the Second for more important reasons than narrative sequence. Nowhere else in the *Faerie Queene* does the link between two books mean so much allegorically as the transitional incident at the beginning of the Second, the encounter between Redcross and Guyon; and the symbolism of the devices on their shields, the key to the incident, indicates the interrelation.

^The device of the Heavenly Maid as a symbol is elastic, at times all-embracing, at others strictly limited. Unlike the Cross, it is Spenser's own creation; its meaning is sometimes private and confusing. As the poetry of Blake and Yeats more conspicuously shows, a personal symbol, however profound, is always less accessible. The Heavenly Maid has more in common with Arthur, whose own shield is of veiled diamond, than with Guyon. Guyon has to explain to Arthur (and to us) the reason for the image's paralyzing spell in a stanza (2.9.3) ^o^ unadulterated neo-Platonism.⁷ Then he praises Gloriana as "the flowre of grace and chastite," whose mercies reach afar, and tells Arthur of his quest for Acrasia, who represents the antithesis of these qualities. This is

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more appropriate to the next book, devoted to Chastity, and is one of the many ways in which the Second Book not only anticipates the rest of the poem, but has itself been anticipated by the Redcross-Una-Duessa story in the First.

The device of the Red Cross presents no difficulty. The shield is part of "the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul"; Spenser is even more specific, citing the book of Ephesians, thus providing a commentary so obvious that it has been too much taken for granted.⁸ The symbolism, frequently emphasized throughout the First Book, is most dramatically revealed in the opening canto of the Second. Guyon (2.1.27), deceived by Archimago and Duessa into avenging on Redcross a feigned crime, is stopped in mid-career, his spear suspended by the cross on his opponent's shield:

And cryde, Mercie Sir knight, and mercie Lord,
For mine offence and heedlesse hardiment,
That had almost committed crime abhord,
And with reprochfull shame mine honour shent,
Whiles cursed steele against that badge I bent,
The sacred badge of my Redeemers death. . . .

Redcross with humility equal to Guyon's replies (2.1.28):

Ah deare Sir Guyon, well becommeth you,
But me behoveth rather to upbrayd,
Whose hastie hand so farre from reason strayd,
That almost it did haynous violence
On that faire image of that heavenly Mayd. . . .

Abruptly breaking off battle provoked by guile between the two, Spenser dramatizes the reconciliation between classical humanism and Christianity. ~

Guyon, the embodiment of Temperance through control of Reason, with its power of achieving the Platonic Harmony and the Aristotelian Mean, pays more than lip-service to "the sacred badge of my Redeemer's death/" Like Redcross, he is a Christian. Guyon is the reasonable man; the Palmer who guides him is Reason itself. To make doubly sure his point that there can be no conflict between Reason and Christianity, Spenser (2.1.31) has the Palmer, too, pay reverent tribute to Holiness as embodied in Redcross "and that deare Crosse upon your shield devizd."

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No one familiar with Spenser and with the nature of poetic allegory is disconcerted to find the Palmer (Abstract Reason) later addressed by the Angel of God (2.8.7) as "thou reverend Sire/" when Guyon is committed to his pastoral care, and to discover threads of Christian temperance among the Medievalized Aristotelian-Platonic. It is not a pure abstraction, nor is it meant to be, who cries out to Arthur (2.8.40), "great God thy right hand blesse."

On his part, Redcrossjays heart-felt tribute to Guyon's device of the Heavenly Maid, which, he says in self-rebuke, his hand "so farre from reason strayd" as almost to attack. He speaks from sad experience. At this time he is a full-fledged hero; he has conquered first himself, then the Dragon Sin. But he remembers his earlier tendency to stray from reason into intemperate self-indulgence, anger, and despair.

Not even Hypocrisy and Falsehood can provoke combat between H o l i n e s s Temperance, between faith and reason. What Spenser arrives at, or at least gropes toward, in these two books of the Faerie Queene is not so much a logical as an emotional conviction that the highest ethics of reason buttress faith and confirm it, and that, of the two, faith transcends reason. This does not cover the whole complexity of the first two books or explain numerous passages which cannot by any stretch of imagination be said to contribute to this conception,* which is, none the less, the most coherent meaning to be found in the First and Second Books and, indeed, the whole Faerie Queene.

Taken on one plane, the group of characters who share in this crucial allegorical incident—Archimago, Duessa, Redcross, Guyon—are an analytic portrayal of human qualities abstracted: Hypocrisy, Falsehood, Holiness, Temperance. But analysis is combined in Spenser's allegorical method with synthesis. This encounter, like a chemical reaction, is a compound of natural attraction and repulsion, a fusion and precipitation. Hypocrisy and Falsehood are precipitated, while Holiness and reasoned Temperance show a natural affinity, as they should in the ideal individual whom Spenser is portraying in concrete terms which,

* The most extraneous passage is the third canto of the Secdfth Book. This canto is considered separately in Note i, p. 293.

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while embodying that ideal, show its frequent failures in the flesh, thus giving the poem its drama.

3.

The story of Una and Redcross is essentially straightforward; when the two are separated from each other, the narrative strands are carried forward by simple alternation until again interwoven by Una's bringing Arthur to the rescue of Redcross from Orgoglio, after which Una and Redcross continue their quest. The few joose ends, and slight inconsistencies are largely attributable to ambitious elaboration of allegory; for in this book Spenser attempts, not always continuously and simultaneously, religious, ecclesiastical, philosophical, historical, political allegory: the wonder is not that he is sometimes obscure, but that he clarifies such richness and variety of meaning.⁹

He himself could not carry on simultaneously every one of his allegories; it is even more impossible for a critic to consider them simultaneously.¹⁰ Today the story is of primary interest, but the philosophical allegory, which centers especially in Una, is so closely involved as to be inseparable; and since the philosophical at times clouds the human story, let us dispose of these difficulties first. (Una, so far as she is a Platonic symbol, represents Love, Beauty, Truth, in such characteristically Platonic interrelation as to be almost identified. Platonism is with Spenser both "a system of philosophic thought held consciously in the mind" and "a more intimate possession of the spirit in its outlook upon life."¹¹ But his conception of love and truth is fundamentally modified by other traditions and his own observation, and is predominantly Christian. Only the Platonic conception of Beauty, particularly the beauty of virtue, is constant throughout. With perfect freedom Spenser draws on the treasure house of Platonic imagery and symbol with or without its original significance. And the symbolical contrast between light and darkness, which Spenser uses as effectively as Milton and more persistently, is of course both Biblical and Platonic.

To complicate a complicated poem is invidious, yet the frequent complete identification of Una with Absolute Truth oversimplifies and distorts Spenser's method and meaning. To Mr.

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B. E. C. Davis* puzzling statement that, "representing absolute Truth," Una's "face, even veiled, can tame the savage passions of lion and satyr, and when she reveals herself in her awful loveliness, like Beatrice in Paradise or the image of beauty as figured in the Phaedrus, she inspires first terror and then reverence in her beholders"¹²—I can answer only that she has "laid her stole aside/' being unveiled when the lion rushes upon her, and that her veil, pulled off by Sansloy, remains off when the satyrs come to her rescue: on these occasions, the lion shows reverence but no terror; Sansloy merely rage and lust; the satyrs compassion, wonder, reverence. There is no suggestion of terror even when she is for the first time unveiled in the Twelfth Canto to Red-cross; he feels only wonder and delight, possibly reverence. And, though this is a matter of opinion, Una is closer to Petrarch's Laura than to Dante's Beatrice.

There is Platonism, of course, in all these passages. The incident of the lion is in part historical allusion, in part inspired by the romantic legend of the lion or unicorn and the virgin; yet Spenser comments:

O how can beautie maister the most strong,
And simple truth subdue avenging wrong?¹³

From the Platonic point of view, Sansloy's imperviousness to the beauty of truth (Una) may signify that, being complete sensuality without intuition or soul, he is ignorant of all that the senses cannot perceive. As Truth would, Una tries but fails to teach the satyrs. The Platonism throughout these passages, especially the episode of old Sylvanus, has the quality of Alexandrian myth-making, variations on the theme of beauty.} The pastoral loveliness is hardly disturbed by Spenser's comment:

Eternall providence exceeding thought,
Where none appeares can make her selfe a way.¹⁴

Yet eternal providence is there; we never lose completely the feeling that Una's beauty is that of virtue guarded. The Sansloy incident strikes more deeply than something out of Ariosto, because the very name of the brutish knight, without any intellectual translation, easily conveys the idea of lawlessness as an enemy to all beauty. This part of Una's story intensifies a sense

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of truth lost to the world, powerless without aid from others. Beauty is at the mercy of anarchy and love has become lust.)

(Some of Spenser's most moving love poetry is in this book as we have already seen; and since it arises naturally from various crises of the story, it is as much dramatic lyric as comparable speeches of Juliet. (Spenser is several times so carried away by the drama of Una's love that its allegorical meaning becomes obscure.) He certainly does not intend the ultimate triumph of flesh, as Legouis preposterously believes,¹⁵ nor is his faith in the power of pure and noble love to redeem the soul entirely Platonic. With two notable exceptions, all the great love passages are Una's and most occur during her separation from Redcross.

At the turn of the book, while she and Arthur discourse of love, Redcross is silent. Arthur tells his dream vision of Gloriana in a lyrical passage shot through with Platonism, yet with an intensity of physical passion derived straight from medieval romance, lifting his song above the conventional "complaint" which in part inspired it. Struck by Arthur's devotion to the Faery Queen, Redcross makes his one really moving love speech to Una:

Thine, O then, said the gentle Redcrosse knight,
Next to that Ladies love, shalbe the place,
O fairest virgin, full of heavenly light,
Whose wondrous faith, exceeding earthly race,
Was firmest fixt in mine extremest case.¹⁶

In this single recognition of his debt to her, Redcross is, paradoxically, more restrained than Arthur (his superior just as Gloriana is Una's); and this moment of clarity and dignity is lost soon in Redcross' preoccupation with his past folly.

When he has in the House of Holiness been purified—of sense (in Platonic terms), of sin (in Christian)—in his rapture at Contemplation's vision he ignores Una and begs not to go

Backe to the world, whose joycs so fruitlesse are.¹⁷

Reminded of Una and of his quest:

Then shall I soone, (quoth he) so God me grace,

* See pp. 134-36 above. The effect of Una's speeches is quite different from Arthur's set lyrics to love, and later to night (Faerie Queene, 3.4.55-60).

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Abet that virgins cause disconsolate,
And shortly backe returne unto this place. . . ,¹⁸

Many readers are chilled by his seeming indifference, which illustrates the difficulty of elaborate allegory. Spenser himself has previously been so caught by the human situation that he has no way of warning us when deeper meaning suddenly supplants the love story.

(^Redcross is on the Hill of Contemplation. Contemplation to both Platonist and Aristotelian is the highest end of man, also to the Christian, since Redcross is contemplating the New Jerusalem of Revelation (not to mention the New London of England's future greatness, and other implications here beautifully synthesized). Yet Plato's views in the Republic on action following contemplation, Aristotle's emphasis on virtue in action, Paul's conception in Ephesians of the battle for salvation—all of these make Redcross' descent to slay the Dragon more than a necessity of plot.)

Definite inconsistencies in the tenth and twelfth cantos show that Spenser originally probably had in mind a slightly different conclusion. The love story reaches a happy, though ambiguous outcome, since the exigencies of Spenser's latest scheme force him to send Redcross back to Gloriana's Court after the betrothal.¹⁹ The lingering traces of romance conclusion arc in the spirit of the Sixth Book, reminiscent of Troilus and Criseydc and of the medieval Court of Love.

But Una symbolizes truth more than love, and the most bewildering thing about her as truth is her failure until the very end to recognize Archimago (Hypocrisy), though she at once pierces the disguise of Ducssa (Falsehood). When she and Redcross first meet Archimago dressed as a hermit, Una takes him at face value, just as Redcross later takes Duessa. Subsequently she mistakes Archimago for her true knight, deceived by his similar armor, and is enlightened only after Sansloy cuts away his visor.²⁰ Still a third time she is taken in, when Archimago, dressed as a pilgrim, falsely announces Redcross' death.²¹ Only at the end does she show in regard to hypocrisy the penetration that we naturally expect of Truth. When the strange messenger is about to disrupt the betrothal with his accusation that Redcross is already engaged to Duessa, Una steps forward:

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Ye shall him Archimago find, I ghesse,
The falsest man alive; who tries shall find no lesse.²²

No one has solved satisfactorily this enigma.* Una's significance as Truth incarnate has been so stressed that this failure does violence to imaginative acceptance and confuses intellectual interpretation, for her blind spot puts her too frequently on the same plane of fallibility as her knight beguiled by Duesza.

Separated from Redcross by Archimago, against whom she is powerless to warn him, Una loses all sense of direction. Until she comes upon Arthur halfway through the book, she drifts like the hapless Florimell from one adventure to another; she is indeed "the wofull Ladie, wofull Una/"²³ most woeful when she hears that Redcross is now helpless in Orgoglio's dungeon. Thrice she faints; this is her nadir, corresponding to Redcross' misery in the dungeon and later in the Cave of Despair. Unlike his, her trial is brief and her recovery swift (she is the stronger character and has nothing on her conscience):

At last when fervent sorrow slaked was,
She up arose, resolving him to find
Alive or dead. . . .²⁴

Providentially Arthur appears. Once reunited with Redcross, she takes control; at least when she cannot herself help him she directs him to those who can. In much of her story Spenser is busy with human and narrative situations and with various neither consistent nor simultaneously maintained allegories. Truth cannot be portrayed as omnipotent in an allegory made up so conspicuously from the material of everyday life^)

(^Certainly we cannot accept the familiar interpretation of the First Book—Holiness is always helpless without Truth—since Truth is so often helpless without chance succor, and insufficient alone to aid her knight, t When they arrive at the House of Holi-

* The various allegories are not continuous, and allegory is sometimes sacrificed to story. Other explanations offered: too close imitation of Ariosto; hypocrisy by definition assumes the guise of truth.

t Arthur rescues Redcross from Orgogho; in Redcross' fight with the Dragon providential nightfall, the well of life and the tree of life (Baptism and the Lord's Supper),²⁵ save him, while Una helplessly stands by. Even more significant (since Una is no militant virtue, no Britomart and could hardly be expected to battle) is the House of Holiness, to which Una

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ness Una, perhaps discouraged by her failure to teach the satyrs, frankly asks Fidelia to have Redcross '

into her *schoolhouse* plaste,))
That of her heavenly learning he might taste,
And heare the wisdom of her words divine.

.
And that her sacred Booke, with bloud ywrit,
That none could read, except she did them teach,
She unto him disclosed every whit,
And heavenly documents thereout did preach,
That weaker wit of man could never reach,
Of God, of grace, of justice, of free will. . . .²⁰

Fidelia, not Una, is comparable to Sapience in the Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, whom Mr. Osgood identifies by quoting, among others, this passage from the Old Testament: "For she is the schoolemistress of al knowledge of God, and the chooser out of his workes."²⁷ Fidelia's discipline is supplemented by "wise Speranza," who teaches him to have hope (as Una had failed to do in the Cave of Despair), lest he forget Fidelia's wisdom. Mercy gives him lessons in charity and good works, and Charissa instructs him in love, warning against wrath and hatred.

(Una is, most likely, a philosophical concept deliberately subsumed to Christian faith in a truth which man cannot know through his own reason, but only through revelation and heavenly discipline; the revealed truth of the New Testament, associated with Redcross as Christ's champion, is dramatized in the House of Holiness. Una is certainly not the only or always the dominant symbol of truth. Even at the end of the tenth canto, when she and Redcross climb to the dwelling place of Contemplation—a passage in large part neo-Platonic—we find from her own words that the keys to the heavenly house have been given to Contemplation by wise Fidelia, and the dominant vision is the New Jerusalem of Revelation/)

One cannot disentangle Christianity, neo-Platonism, and pagan conceptions of glory here, nor is it necessary. Mr. Harrison, after discussing the Christian discipline of Redcross, adds: "But the

directs him after snatching him from the Cave of Despair and turns him over to those who can aid.

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emphasis laid by Platonism upon the loveliness of that wisdom which is the object of contemplation results in quickening the imagination and in stirring the soul to realize the principle in love/²⁸ While agreeing about the Platonic contribution of beauty, I can cite as more immediate sources such verses as these in Ephesians, the key provided by Spenser himself:

"As he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the worlde, that wee should be holy, and without blame before him in love.

"But let us followe the trueth in love, and in all thinges growe up into him, which is the head, that is Christ/²⁹

/ Paul of course was himself affected by Platonism.

I That Una (Truth) is powerless to save Holiness without the providential assistance of Arthur (Grace) means that God is greater than truth, which derives its value from Him. Further, Spenser stresses in the First and Second Books man's helplessness without God's grace:

What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might,
And vaine assurance of mortality,
Which all so soone, as it doth come to fight,
Against spirituall foes, yeelds by and by,
Or from the field most cowardly doth fly?
Ne let the man ascribe it to his skill,
That thorough grace hath_gaincd victory.
If any strength we have, it is to ill,

But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will.³⁰

How well Redcross has learned this we can judge from his humble answer in the next book to the Palmer's eulogy:

His be the praise, that this atchiev'ment wrought,
Who made my hand the organ of his might:
More then goodwill to me attribute nought:
For alH did, I did but as I ought.³¹

"Not of workes," says Paul in Ephesians, "least any man should boast him selfe."³² "God guide thee, Guyon," the Palmer (Reason) prays, and Guyon, too, we shall find helpless without God's grace in the person of Arthur.

I do not mean, in thus emphasizing Ephesians, to ignore the

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importance to the First Book of chivalric romance, history, Platonism, Revelation and other books of the Bible.* But this particular epistle of Paul's, cited by Spenser himself as a whole, helps toward the synthesis necessary after too close analysis. We find, for instance, not merely the source of the "armour of God" brought to Redcross by Una, but constant association of holiness, wisdom, truth, faith, unity in love—love is not conspicuous in John's apocalyptic, triumphant visions in Revelation; furthermore, Paul stresses the fallibility of man without God's grace, warning against the dangers of "fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness," "spiritual wickednesses, which are in the hie places," the danger of "vainc wordes" and deceit and guile, as well as against wrath and hatred.^t The Christian life is conceived as a constant war against "powers, & against the worldly governours, the princes of the darknes":

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful! workes of darknes, but even reprove them rather.

"But al things when they are reprov'd of the light, are manifest: for it is light that maketh all things manifest."³⁸

Again and again on reading Ephesians in the light of the Faerie Queene, one is reminded of Una, Arthur, and the House of Holiness; of Archimago, Duessa, Lucifera, Orgoglio, and the Powers of Darkness; and reminded especially of Redcross torn between opposing forces.

(The House of Holiness and the House of Pride (cantos 4, and 10) are in direct opposition. Whatever else he means, Spenser intends a contrast between the worldly, materialistic life, with its splendor, luxury, lusts, perversions of truth on the one hands; on the other the simple, austere Christian life) though Spenser softens the austerity of Paul, as of Calvin. Hypocrisy and Blind Devotion may assume the guise of religion, but their partner Falsehood (Duessa) leads Redcross to the House of Pride and to the Castle of Orgoglio, with its ecclesiastical corruption, portrayed in

* Miss Grace Landrum finds over 130 Biblical references in Book I.

^t Compare Charissa's specific warning against wrath and hatred (1.10.33) with Ephesians 4.31: "Let all bitterness, and anger, wrath, crying, and evill speaking be put away from you/" This theme, introduced in the First Book, is fully developed in Guyon's early adventures in the Second—another instance of the close interrelation.

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the splendid imagery of the Scarlet Whore, the many-headed beasts, the lusts and luxuries of Revelation; whereas Una leads him to what Spenser considers *Jr^rdi^ion^The House oT Pride* is a Christian conception *T*with direct reference to the parable of the house built on sand. The way to it is a broad, much traveled highway; whereas Redcross and Una, when admitted by Humility to the House of Holiness, have to stoop low,

For streight and narrow was the way, which he did show.

Spenser's characteristic elaboration of symbolism and iconology, bewildering as it seems, does not obscure his main theme:

So few there bee,
That chose the narrow path, or seeke the right:
All keep the broad high way, and take delight
With many rather for to go astray,
AncT BeT partakers of their evill plight,
Then with a few to walke the rightest way.³⁴

He is no dissenter; yet despite instinctive fondness for ritual, intellectual complexity, greater breadth and sympathy, he shares Bunyan's conviction that the veil of ecclesiasticism and empty ritualism* must be torn aside, that personal religious experience is essential. Opposed to the Seven Deadly of Pride are the Christian virtues—Humility, Reverence, Obedience, Paffience, Repentance, Mercy, and particularly the great Christian triad—Faith, Hope, Charity. Contrasting with the self-love dominating the House of Pride, symbolized in Lucifera's hypnotism by her own mirrored image, Celia and her household manifest in countless ways Christian humility, self-forgetfulness, qualities ever present in *Una*.)

(J)najs sometimes shifting symbol, sometimes character, (as in her low point of grief), usually both together. Her relations with Redcross imply a symbolism of truth that is psychological rather than allegorical.) Viewed on this plane, truth seems more relative than absolute, and the difficulty is not so much to recognize as to accept it. While in the depths of Orgoglio's dungeon, Redcross contemplates his folly and shame; he succumbs later in the Cave of Despair largely because he knows his guilt. His fate is ominously foreshadowed as early as the House of Pride, where he

* Christian's meeting with Formalist and Hypocrisy in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

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overcomes Sans/oy, but is cheated of victory by Duessa; from here on Redcross' growing /oylessness is subtly portrayed. Una snatches the Knife out of his hand and makes him see that his faults, great as they are, have already been mitigated by Heavenly Grace (Arthur) and are subject to redemption. Yet (she saves him from suicide, not from despair,³⁵ which recurs even in the House of Holiness:)

When him his dearest Una did behold,
Disdeining life, desiring leave to die,
She found her selfe assayld with great perplexitie.³⁶

(^ His trouble, we begin to suspect, is a sense of personal sin so exaggerated that it becomes self-preoccupation, a spiritual pride which brings him in the House of Holiness almost to sin against the Holy Ghost; he wants to cut himself off from God and man. What Una is incapable of doing Celia accomplishes, with the teaching of Fidelia, with the aid of Hope and Repentance—true repentance in contrast with self-indulgent remorse—Patience, Charity, Mercy, and the rest. ;J

^Possibly Spenser means by Una's limited helpfulness that to know the truth about oneself, to pierce the sophistical rationalizations of Despair, is diagnosis without cure, which must be found in reliance on God and His infinite mercy. Charity and Mercy teach Redcross to turn from self to others; he has to accept his weakness as not only a personal problem, but a condition of humanity. We are in some ways reminded of Lear's great prayer in the storm, though Spenser is writing a sort of divine comedy, not tragedy. In contrast with the escape of death offered by Despair is the true rest of the Christian after-life offered by Contemplation.*)

Looking Back from this climactic point, I find an allegorical consistency and psychological inevitability distinguishing the career of Redcross from Una's. Redcross begins with high heart. To Arthur Una explains that all other knights have failed to rescue her parents from the Dragon "for want of faith, or guilt of sin/" until by good chance she found in Gloriana's court this "fresh unproved knight."³⁷ In the exchange of presents, Redcross¹ gives Arthur a copy of the New Testament, reminding us that he is specifically Christ's Champion, though by then he has lost the

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"fresh youth fretted in a bloomfall"³⁸ which was his on setting out. Redcross has found the going not easy; he has not remained "right faifHfull true/" From the start he is solemne sad,"³⁹ too afnxiouis to accomplish praiseworthy deeds, and this over-seriousness contributes to his difficulties. Himself a passionate idealist, Spenser knows well the danger of excessive zeal. His emphasis on Redcross' failures causes Mr. B. E. C. Davis, for instance, to consider Redcross "pale and ethereal/" for "the interest aroused by his story depends upon neither personality nor adventure but upon the adaptation of both to an allegory of the Christian pilgrimage."⁴⁰ I should rather say that the personality and adventures of Redcross hold our interest and give freshness and individuality to the conventional theme.(Despite occasional obscurity of meaning, Una is Spenser's greatest symbolical jcreation; Redcross one of his greatest characterizations.)

Redcross often lacks strength of character,seldom virility; he is never ethereal .His bravery in battle is unquestionable; injFair combat he always wins: fearlesslyJhe overcomes Error Sansfoy, is cheated""of victory over Sansjoy; and though in his final encounter with the Dragon Sin he is saved by supernatural means, his prowess is not at fault. But his innocence, impetuosity, seriousness make him easy prey to guile, and later to unrestrained despair. Spenser's own sympathy with him is balanced by critical awareness of these weaknesses. Except that Redcross is a Christian Knight, in his combination of nobility and purity and sensuality he has in the early stages of his career something in common with Shakespeare's Troilus.

Redcross comes triumphantly through his first test, one of simple bravery in conquering the Dragon Error. Una is quick with praise;⁴¹ later she is incredulous when the Pilgrim (Archimago) reports that he is slain—"and he the stoutest knight, that ever wonne?"⁴² At first Redcross seems to survive his second, more subtle test—the sensual dreams and visions which Archimago' prepares for his temptation (Belial's suggestion in Paradise~RegainedI for the temptation of Christ) .* This time Spenser

* Spenser borrows details of Archimago from Ariosto and Tasso; but Paul's warning "that ve cast of, concerning the conversation in time past, the old man, which is corrupt through the deceyveable lustes,"⁴³ characterizes him fitly.

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makes perfectly clear that Redcross comes through singed: he sternly refuses to yield to the supposed Una, appearing at his bedside, but afterwards

That troublous dreame gan freshly tosse his braine,
With bowres, and beds, *and Ladies deare delight*.⁴⁴

And when Archimango offers apperently irrefutable evidence of Una's unfaithfulness, Redcross accepts the fact as uncritically as Romeo~dic news of Juliet's death, as impulsively as Troilus Cressida's actual perfidy with Diomedes. Redcross is too unsophisticated to perceive that sexual jealousy, as well as unconscious desire to flee temptation of a kind he fears, is part of his indignation. Spenser is aware:

Still flying from his thoughts and gealous feare;
Will was his guide, and grieve led him astray.⁴⁵

His jealousy is the keener since he resisted the very temptation to which he believes Una succumbed. Before he has time to get hold of himself he meets Duessa and, as he thinks, rescues her. She catches him on the rebound from Una; he is betrayed by lack of insight, by impulsiveness, by chivalric devotion to woman in distress—and by self-righteousness. Caught off balance, still smarting from the shock of Una's seeming brazen sexuality, he feels the contrast when Duessa says that the Sarazin led her

With him away, but yet could never win
The Fort, that *Ladies hold in soveiaigne dread*⁴⁶

Her story is just what he wants to believe; here is a woman who justifies his bruised idealism, who restores his faith in woman-kind, who is all that he thought Una to be (and that Una is): but Spenser reveals a secret explanation of Duessa's easy victory over Redcross' credulity, for the knight has been more stirred by Archimago's visions of sensuality than he himself realizes:

He in great passion all this while did dwell,
More *busyng his quicke* eyes, her face to view,
Then his dull eares, to heare what she did tell;*
And said, Faire Lady hart of flint would rew
The undeserved woes and sorrowes, which ye shew.⁴⁷

* Compare Whetstone's Promos and? Cassandra (prose version, 1582): "Promos' cars were not so attentive to hear Cassandra's ruthful talc as his eyes were settled to regard her excellent beauty."

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Similarly, Artegall, in letting Radigund overcome him, is as much moved sensually by her beauty as by chivalry; the motivation of both knights is subtly mixed, as in Shakespearean characters. Redcross later is too much blinded by passion and willfulness, and by real devotion to what he mistakes as beautiful, good, true, to take in Fradubio's warning, and Duessa has only to resort to that age-old female device of fainting:

Her eyelids blew*
 And dimmed sight with pale and deadly hew
 At last she up gan lift: with trembling chcare
 Her up he tooke, too simple and too trew,
 And oft her kist.⁴⁸

"Too simple and too trew" suggests "plaine and true" Troilus. C Infatuated Redcross willingly follows his new mistress to J:he House^ of Pride. Spenser takes occasion to point an everyday mtffal (1.4.1) to all young men of the shame of fickleness in love; like so much of his allegory, the House of Pride is a combination of homely advice and deep spiritual warning. The Seven Deadly Sins appear, partly as the sort of masque entertainment which one might see at some great Elizabethan House; yet the double meaning, now that we are geared to it, strikes with such immediate force that the complexity of straight narrative, symbolism, allegory, is more successful than in any other canto of the Faerie Queene.) Especially to the Elizabethan well versed in his Bible, something like these words of Paul in Ephesians must have occurred:

"Wherein, in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, & after the prince that ruleth in the aire, even the Spirit, that nowe worketh in the children of disobedience,

"Among whom we also had our conversation in time past, in the lustes of our flesh, in fulfilling the wil of the flesh, and of the minde, and were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others.

"That yc were, I say, at that time without Christ, and were aliens from the common wealth of Israel, and were strangers from the covenants of promise, and had no hope, and were without God in the world."⁴⁹

* Compare the tactics of the less successful Venus in Venus and Adonis:

Her two blue windows faintly she uphcaeveth. . . .

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Redcross with the help of the Dwarf (Prudence) escapes from the House of Pride, but not, as some Spenserians imply,* from the sensual dominance of Duessa, or from the ill effects of the life which he has been leading. His lassitude after disarming and drinking of the poisoned fountain, his dalliance:

Yet goodly court he made still to his Dame,
Poured out in loosenesse on the grassy grownd,
Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame,⁵¹

form his private Bower of Bliss in such unmistakable terms that there is no possible question of his lust and sloth, or of his help-less remorse when Despair later accuses him:

Is not enough, that to this Ladie milde,
Thou falsed has thy faith with perjurie,
And sold thy selfe to serve Duessa vilde,
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy selfe defilde?⁵²

The difference between his conduct with Duessa and his earlier chivalrous respect for Una reveals how his sensibilities have dulled, how he has finally acted his sexual dreams. And just as he is occupied with Duessa, *his armor of salvation laid aside*, Orgoglio surprises him. Wounded pride opens the way to lust; reason is usurped by passion; character disintegrates. Thus is it later with Milton's Satan and Adam and Samson.

* Mr. B. E. C. Davis is not the only one to give a curious interpretation of Redcross. Mr. J. H. Walter finds it "strange" that Redcross, "one who had little difficulty in repelling incontinence/" should be involved with six knights who seek to force him into their lady's service.⁵⁰ I find it strange that Mr. Walter ignores Redcross' relations with Duessa and his transparent sensuality.

Even the Editor of Variorum I writes at cross purposes: "From the sins of lust, gluttony, avarice, sloth, anger, and envy the knight is immune, but as pride is the sin which most besets a man of spirit and of lordly nature, the hero is here subjected to the temptations of carnal pride." Again: "Now, in the events of these last two cantos, we see him, lulled by a false philosophy and with no objective in life, his irksome armor laid aside, surrender to complacency and soft living his noble spirit, built for high emprise."⁵⁰

Has not Redcross burned with anger on discovering the supposed licentiousness of Una:

Which when he saw, he burnt with gealous fire?

Has he not been guilty, not only of pride, but of lechery with Duessa? And the Editor's second comment convicts Redcross of sloth.

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Redcross, being a three-dimensional though generalized character, inevitably foreshadows the heroes of the following books and the weaknesses against which they fight, as well as their virtues. In this First Book more than in any other we can ignore symbolism when it contuses, since the basic Human allegory is as simple as Bunyas; indeed Redcross is more normal than Christian, who is set apart from average human nature by the intensity of his creator's individual religious feeling, and by his desire to flee the world in search of salvation. Spenser makes his Christian knight intent finally on salvation, but until it comes, wants him to adjust himself to life here on earth. Even the casual reader usually feels sympathy for Redcross, readily appreciating the nature of his human experience; and the occasional perplexities of Una's chameleon significance need not bother him, since she is in herself a noble and beautiful heroine, easily conceived, in a general way, as Truth. The story can be taken as representing the career of any normal, idealistic, but callow and impetuous young man.^{5;9}

4.

The characterization of Redcross is really crystallized in the Second book where Guyon becomes his foil. The Christian view of life, "with its belief in sin and redemption by Christ, allows Spenser to portray in Redcross the everyday strivings, defeats, despairs, and final victory of man through God's grace; whereas Guyon shows that reasoned ethics is more difficult to humanize. "Sir Guyon, following his level course, knows neither the humiliation nor the ecstasy of the Red Cross Knight"⁵⁴ Spenser loosely calls Guyon Temperance actually he chooses Continence* rather than Temperance, because Aristotelian Temperance (absolute control by reason) is static, while Continence involves struggle with the emotions.⁵⁵ Occasionally Spenser shifts from Continence to Temperance: in the beginning the Palmer is constantly at

* Spenser uses the terms interchangeably; for instance, he uses Continence 2.6.1; 2.9.1, etc.

Aristotle, being a practical philosopher, would regard Guyon's anger at Furor and Occasion as perfectly compatible with Continence, since he overcomes it; to feel no anger at all in such a situation would be a deficiency.

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Guyon's elbow to restrain him, for in the Pyrochles and Cymochles episodes Guyon shows more emotion than Aristotelian Temperance allows; he becomes Temperance, generally speaking, when separated from the Palmer and on his own. For instance, with Phaedria:

But he was wise, and warie of her will,
And ever held his hand upon his hart:
Yet would not seeme so rude, and thewed ill,
As to despise so courteous seeming part. . . ,⁵⁶

Surely Spenser, who shows considerable humor in the Second Book, smiles when he writes of their farewell that

She no lesse glad, then he desirous was
Of his departure thence. . . .⁵⁷ i -^

Having lost his trusty guide, Guyon proceeds confidently on his way:

And evermore himselfe with comfort feedes,
Of his owne vertues, and prayse-worthy deeds.⁵⁸

This delight in one's own virtue, which strikes us as coiiiplacent, is^oodJJatonisin-and Aristotdianism, and^characteristically Renaissance. We miss the humility so marked in Una and Arthur and later in Redcross—the Humility which is the porter of the House of Holiness. Guyon's confidence in his own reason is justified, for he remains impervious to Mammon's temptations, though the aftermath is exhaustion. Human touches in his two-dimensional characterization are few: his gracious behavior in the House of Medina, his shyness among the ladies in the House of Alma, his relief and pleasure (a repetition in milder key of the reunion of Redcross and Una) on waking to find the Palmer restored to him.

Guyon suffers partly by contrast with eminently human Redcross, and he lacks romantic interest (the Palmer takes Una's role); but the chief explanation, besides the nature of his virtue, of his thin characterization is that, while the twojriain figures dominate the First Book, they do not the Second. The "humiliation and ecstasy" are by the very nature of the allegory relegated to minor roles—Amavia's despair and suicide; the mixture of sensuality, procrastination, and violence in the career of Cymochles;

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Phedon's crime of passion; the Nessus-shirt agony of Pyrochles. Things happen to Una and Redcross; Guyon and the Palmer are free to intervene or pass by.

Characterization of the main figures in the Second Book is fitful, often weak, but in certain dramatic scenes remarkably lively, even when allegory is most serious. Paradoxically, much of the time the Palmer, Reason, is more human than Guyon, the Reasonable Man.¹ The relation between them is close. Their conversations are sometimes monologues split in two, sometimes a master's talk with a favorite pupil. On the plane of narrative and characterization, they remind us of Laertes and Polonius, of Romeo and Friar Laurence. The Palmer is most like Friar Laurence in his distress and dismay on finding Guyon prostrate with an Angel nearby (z.8.4 ff.); but his dignified and courageous stand against two bullies, Pyrochles and Cymochles, shows more spirit and courage than the Friar possessed. His excited participation from the sidelines during the fight between them and Arthur reminds us of Una during Arthur's fight with Orgoglio. The eighth canto of the Second Book is further proof of Spenser's dramatic sense of character in action.

Though we may forget it in the human drama of this conflict, the Palmer is Reason. The ethical-philosophical theme of the book is announced immediately after the death of Amavia, when Guyon turns to him:

Behold the image of mortalitie,
And feeble nature cloth'd with fleshly tyre,
When raging passion with fierce tyrannie
Robs reason of her due regalitie,
And makes it servant to her basest part:
The strong it weakens with infirmities,
And with bold furie armes the weakest hart;
The strong through pleasure soonest falles, the weakest
 through smart? 1.59

This comment—indeed the whole conversation—rises naturally out of the initial tragedy of the book: Mordant, being strong, has succumbed through pleasure; Amavia, being weak, through grief

Guyon's observation on their fate—unlike Redcross, he is ob-

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server as well as actor—is a generalization which the rest of the book illustrates. Later Spenser gives this theme a specifically Aristotelian twist; at least the following stanza happens to coincide with Aristotle's opinion (*Ethics*, 2.3) that "it is harder to fight with pleasure than with anger":

*A Haider lesson, to kame Continence
In joyous pleasure, then in grievous paine:
For sweetnesse doth allure the weaker sence
So strongly, that uneathcs it can refraine
From that, which feeble nature covets faine;
But griepe and wrath, that be her enemies,
And foes of life, she better can restraine.*⁶¹

Though Spenser pays more attention to pleasure, much of Guyon's experience is with various forms of wrath; both Spenser has already touched on in the First Book. We might, for instance, attribute the following to Guyon and the Palmer, if the anger were not too extreme for Guyon, and if we did not know that this refers to Redcross and Archimago:

. . . That false couple were full closely ment
In wanton lust and lewd embracement:
Which when he saw, he burnt with gealous fire,
The eye of reason was with rage yblent
And would have *shine* them in his *furious ire*,
But hardly was restrained of that aged sire.⁶²

In answer to Guyon's comment on Amavia's suicide, the Palmer offers an equally general rule of conduct:

But temperance (said he) with golden squire
Betwixt them both can measure out a mean,
Neither to melt in pleasures whot desire,
Nor jry in hartTesse grief and dolefull teene.
Thnse happie man, who fares them both atween.⁶³

Thus wiTare prepared, even before we get there, for the House of Medina, the most explicitly Aristotelian passage in the Second Book, an intellectual concept transposed with admirable economy into concrete terms:

Therein three sisters dwelt of sundry sort,
The children of one sire by mothers three;

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Who dying whylome did divide this fort
 To them by equall shares in equall fee:
 But strifull minde, and diverse qualitee
 Drew them in parts, and each made others foe:
 Still did they strive, and dayly disagree;
 The eldest did against the youngest goe,
 And both against the middest meant to worken woe.⁶⁴

While Elissa, the eldest, representing Deficiency, sports glumly with the appropriately melancholy Sir Huddibras—an early example of the Malcontent, soon to become so familiar on the Elizabethan stage—and Perissa, the youngest, representing Excess, wantons like a manic-depressive on the upswing with her loose lover, Sansloy; Medina, the middle sister, the Golden Mean, manages to play courteous hostess to Guyon, with whom she is by nature congenial. The House of Medina is often called dull and tedious because it is a kind of allegory no longer fashionable. None can claim for it sensuous beauty or excitement, but this conception of the mean is not mathematical, rigid, abstract, it is dynamic;⁶⁵ for in the Nicomachean Ethics, which Spenser follows here, Aristotle, dealing with human nature (a subject which he felt is not susceptible to scientific exactitude), allows contradiction and a certain inconclusiveness. The unresolved conflict among the three sisters, with Medina barely able to prevent disaster, shows Aristotelian virtue in action;^v it pales, of course, before Malcger's life and death struggle, which it foreshadows.

This dramatization of a principle is formal allegorical restatement in more universal terms of the theme expressed by the Palmer, and we can group many of the incidents of the narrative under the threefold heading represented by Medina, Elissa, Perissa.* Other groupings are equally effective, as we shall see, and this simple schematization does not represent the full complexity of the Golden Mean as Spenser conceives it. The main stages of Guyon's progress are designed to illustrate various

* In Medina's ranks are Guyon, the Palmer, Arthur, Alma. To Elissa's party of deficiency belong Huddibras, Braggadochio, Maleger, and in part Belphoebe, the coldness of whose chastity is developed later. Perissa's group is the largest—Sansloy, Amavia, Mordant, Phedon, Pyrochles, Cymochles, Phaedria, Mammon, Verdant, Acrasia.

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forms of intemperance—in passion and grief (Amavia), in anger (Phedon, Pyrochles), in pity (Guyon himself), in pleasure and idle mirth (Phaedria), in lust for wealth and power (Mammon, Philotime), in sensuality (Acrasia, with Mordant, Cymochles, Verdant, Grill, and nameless others in the Bower of Bliss). Though Spenser has certain fundamental principles in mind, he usually develops each illustrative incident individually, often improvising.

Jones demonstrates perfunctorily the structural parallel between the First and Second Books, a parallel which has sometimes been pushed too far, and which is not so close as he, and even Mrs. Bennett and Mr. Strathmann, who analyze minutely, consider it.⁶⁶ In each book are two allegorical houses, structurally balancing each other, in roughly analogous positions; but the position in relation to the books is slightly different—the placement being in the First Book cantos four and ten; cantos two and nine in the Second. What may seem a small point indicates a very real difference in the conception, development, and pace of the narrative in the Second Book, and, certainly in one instance, a closer relation of allegorical house to narrative and meaning.⁶⁷ The cohesion of the two books is due to repetition and variation of themes more than to structural likeness. While the Second Book is in many ways similar in pattern, Spenser finds the narrative insufficient to carry his whole meaning, and relies on a more complex interplay of ethical-moral-psychological significance among crucial incidents more widely distributed. The books of the Faerie Queene can no more be reduced to an exact formula than the tragedies of Shakespeare; like Shakespeare, Spenser always, but not always so successfully, adapts his structure to his specific purpose.

To return for a moment to the House of Medina and the House of Alma. If the first is often dull, the second is sometimes grotesque; but this should not blind us to passages of great beauty in the House of Alma and to the richness of the whole. Here the treatment of Temperance is Platonic and Christian, showing influence of traditional psychological theories developed by writers and Church fathers and derived, as Mr. Hughes says, ultimately from Aristotle, Plato, the Stoics.⁶⁸ Untangling this raveled skein must be left to specialists, but Spenser's chief meaning is explicit:

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Of all Gods workes, which do this world adorne,
 There is no one more faire and excellent,
 Then is mans body both for powre and forme,
 Whiles it is kept in sober government;
 But none then it, more fowle and indecent,
 Distempred through misrule and passions bace:
 It growes a Monster, and incontinent
 Doth loose his dignitie and native grace.

Behold, who list, both one and other in this place.⁶⁹

The Chaucerian nonchalance of the last line does not destroy the seriousness of the rest, but modifies it, as if a smile crosses Spenser's face as he writes. Even in his most serious moments cheerfulness keeps breaking in; much of the grotesque in the *Castle of the Body* is playfulness. Spenser is most deeply moved by the body's transience, the haunting theme of mutability.⁷⁰

After showing them the wonders of the body and introducing each to his ruling passion, Alma (Reason or the Soul) conducts Arthur and Guyon up to the region of the mind. Here from the Library of Memory Arthur and Guyon choose a book: Guyon picks up the *Antiquitie of Faerie Land*, by which Spenser may mean "fiction" in the broad sense that he and Sidney use it—that is, work of creative imagination with its veiled truth; while Arthur settles down to Briton monuments, history or literal truth.⁷¹ Thus Spenser not only makes a skillful transition to his chronicle canto and a clear distinction between it and purely symbolical tributes to Gloriana; he also approaches truth more directly than in the First Book, illuminating his whole conception of the *Faerie Queene* and of poetry in general. At least he makes clear that his excursion into history, a prime interest is planned, arising naturally out of the ethical-philosophical-psychological allegory. His versified history on two levels may seem, except for its music, dull to us, but it interested him and the Englishmen of his day profoundly, for they regarded history as principle in action.

The narrative and allegory are at this point deliberately bifurcated when, having read history (69 stanzas) with Arthur and fable (7 stanzas) with Guyon, we find ourselves back in the House of Alma, returning to the allegory of temperance and the body:

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What warre so cruell, or what siege so sore,
As that, which strong affections do apply
Against the fort of reason evermore
To bring the souJe into captivitie:
Their force is fiercer through infinittie
Of the fraiJe flesh, relenting to their rage,
And exercise most bitter tyranny
Upon the parts, brought into their bondage:
No wretchednesse is like to sinfull vellenage.

But in a body, which doth freely yeeld
His partes to reasons rule obedient,
And letteth her that ought the scepter weeld,
All happy peace and goodly government
Is setfed there in sure establishment;
There Alma like a virgin Queene most bright,*
Doth flourish in all beautie excellent:
And to her gwestes doth bounteous banket dight,
Attempted goodly well for health and for delight.⁷²

This first mention of health we shall find a principal key to the whole book, for Guyon and the Palmer rise early and go down to the riverside to continue their search for Acrasia. Arthur remains behind to lift the siege of Alma's Castle, thus becoming himself a champion of Temperance in his role as Magnificence, a summation of the virtues even as Gloriana is.

Alma's castle is constantly besieged by Maleger's twelve troops, consisting of the Seven Deadly Sins, who make the direct onslaught, and five shock troops especially equipped to attack the five large bulwarks—the five senses. The assault reaches a peak of fury, to Alma's dismay, "for never was she in so evill case," when Arthur sallies forth with his squire. Any distaste (owing partly to change in taste) felt at the beginning of the literal allegory of the body vanishes in the feverish intensity of this struggle, which shows at its best Spenser's dramatic power and imaginative grasp of man's predicament.

Arthur comes forth "in glitterand armes," the "prowest and

* A particularly graceful compliment to Elizabeth after the chronicle in her honor, this serves to identify her with Temperance while marking the transition from history to moral allegory.

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most gent" of knights, accompanied by "his gay Squire." After his hideous encounter with Maleger, he

Thought to have mounted, but his feeble vaines
Him faild thereto, and served not his need,
Through losse of bloud, which from his wounds did
bleed,
That he began to faint, and life decay. . . ."

He owes being alive at all to his Squire, who beats off the two hags, Impotence and Impatience. For the only time in the whole poem Arthur knows naked fear:

Thereat he smitten was with great affright,
And trembling terror did his hart apall,
Ne wist he, what to thinke of that same sight,
Nc what to say, nc what to doe at all;
He doubted, least it were some magicall
Illusion, that did beguile his sense,
Or wandring ghost, that wanted funerall,
Or aerie spirit under false pretence,
Or hellish fccnd raysd up through divclish science.⁷⁴

Maleger, wan as ashes, "cold and drery as a Snake," cannot be conquered in the ordinary way; Arthur's sword is useless against this bloodless apparition. The relentless struggle has the quality of nightmare, of exerting immense effort against the intangible. Spenser's free adaptation of the Antaeus legend is brilliant, incomparably superior to Ariosto's.⁷⁵

Maleger, as his name indicates, is "desperately sick," "sick unto death"—disease.⁷⁶ The whole allegory of the body and soul has led up to this attack of disease, lowering moral resistance to the edge of fatality. We remember that at the critical moment when Orgoglio surprises him, Redcross has been "both carelcse of his *health*, and of his fame."⁷⁷ Indeed, Child's interpretation of Maleger—the results of disease from intemperance or failing spiritual—applies not to Maleger but to Redcross:

His sad dull eves deepe sunck in hollow pits,
Could not endure th'unwonted sunne to view:
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His rawbone armes, whose mighty browed bowrs

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Were wont to rive steele plates, and helmets hew,
Were cleane consum'd, and all his vitall powres
Decayd, and all his flesh shronk up like withered flowres.⁷⁸

This inner conflict of Redcross and the physical struggle of Arthur with Maleger, both devastating, illustrate beautifully Spenser's interweaving his First and Second Books by repetition of theme with variation in meaning and technique. The theme is interrelation of body and soul in resisting evil.

One cannot say that Spenser intended it, but his having Arthur rather than Guyon fight Maleger implies that Reasoned Temperance is not enough against the moral ravages of disease, which only Heavenly Grace can subdue. Spenser in Redcross stresses spiritual disease. Since the dominant conception in the House of Alma is interdependence of body and soul, besides his straightforward meaning, Maleger also suggests a human paradox—the great force of passive resistance accumulated in mankind by over-indulgence, tedium, cynicism—a resistance requiring terrific spiritual force to overcome. The effect of Arthur's struggle is powerful enough to cause Kitchin with unconscious irony and point to reverse himself: "Spenser as carefully excludes the religious side from this allegory as he had introduced and enforced it in that of the Red Cross Knight," he comments on the first stanza of this canto; yet of Arthur's exhaustion at the end of the canto he says, "we are reminded of Him, to whom after the great victory over the tempter, angels came and ministered."⁷⁹ Though classical ethics is more evident in this book, it is absorbed and ultimately dominated by Christian.

The twelve troops of Maleger have been queried since Upton's day, and inconsistencies in this canto have recently been stressed; however, Spenser's meaning is plain enough. The passions, attacking the five senses (which determine the number of their troops'), try to undermine the bulwarks of the castle of the body, while the seven deadly sins rush the main gates, and the attack is directed at the lady of the castle, Alma (Reason or Soul). Spenser is not systematic about the attackers of the senses; he seems primarily concerned with creating in the medieval manner an effect of horror and deformity. But some of the chief identifications—such as beauty and money as enemies of sight; Iviene. "backbitings." bad counsel as enemies of hearing; vain feasts and idle superfluity

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as enemies of taste; "stings of carnall lust/" as enemies of touch—these indicate sufficiently the relation of the five troops to the seven. When the passions working through the senses undermine man, the sins have stormed the fort. The Seven Deadly Sins are prominent in the Second* as in the First Book.⁸⁰ And the condensed Odyssean nightmare of the perilous journey to the Bower of Bliss epitomizes the whole book, for the pitfalls and dangers of classical legend become an allegory of the sins and temptations besetting man in his journey through life, with shipwrecks and disasters along the way as exempla of all the evils to which unwary man is exposed.

There are loose ends, but Spenser pursues the chief narrative thread—and relates allegorical significances with considerable skill. We sense Acrasia's vicious power from the beginning, and often feel it even when her name is not mentioned.⁸¹ She causes, through Mordant's death, Amavia's suicide; she later hinders Cymochles' rescue of his brother and prolongs through her servant Phaedria his procrastination in idleness. In the wrath episodes, Pyrochles is related to Amavia by the suicide theme. Though Acrasia is not mentioned, Phedon, whom Guyon rescues from Furor and Occasion, has come to grief through a crime of passion. Above all, Cymochles ties these threads together in plot and meaning. He is more a characterization than any of the others, exemplifying wrath and idleness as well as sensuality; in a sense, he is an intensification of Redcross' weaknesses, with no redeeming virtue.

We are fully prepared, consequently, when we come to the last canto; that we are not bored by repetition proves Spenser's variety of technique and his descriptive power. Heavily indebted to Tasso though he is, Spenser creates one of the rarest passages in English poetry—a beauty sensuous and sensual, at first without shame, then shadowed by growing moral uneasiness which finally, intensified by self-distrust, smashes beauty like a looking glass. Perhaps Spenser, like Shakespeare in *Anfony and Cleopatra*, succeeds too well for his purpose. Acrasia's Bower is superficially similar to Mr.

* The characters fall into this Christian category as readily as into the Aristotelian-*Lechery*—Mordant, Cymochles, Verdant, Acrasia; *Wrath*—Phedon, Pyrochles; *Idleness*—Phaedria, Cymochles; *Pride*—Philotime, Pyrochles (2.8.52); *Gluttony*—Tantalus, Excess (in Bower of Bliss), Grill; *Avarice*—Mammon; *Envy*—Braggadocchio.

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Mario Praz's "beauty of Medusa" formula,⁸—but actually more complex. In the Bower of Bliss are uninhibited naked beauty, slightly perverse delight in tainted beauty, heart-breaking consciousness of beauty devoted to destruction, and a stern moralist's condemnation of beauty predominantly evil.

Acrasia signifies Aristotelian "lack of self-control" and the figure Excess in the Porch of her Bower implies: "Abandon the Mean, all ye who enter here." Excess is Perissa of the House of Medina in a different guise; she also, like Grill, extends the conception of sensuality beyond the sexual. An incidental descriptive touch—the ivy, already associated with Cymochles (2.5.29)—is one of Spenser's subtlest symbols of lust:

And over all, of purest gold was spread,
A trayle of ivie in his native hew:
For the rich mettall was so coloured,
That wight, who did not well avis'd it vew,
Would surely deeme it to be ivie trew:
Low his lascivious armes adown did crepe,
That themselves dipping in the silver dew,
Their fleecy flowres they tenderly did steepe,
Which drops of Christall seemd for wantones to weepe.⁸³

Beside this and the earlier portrait of Cymochles (2.5.34), the two bathing girls, however wanton, are wholesome.

At first Guyon merely wonders at this loveliness,

yet suffred no delight
To sincke into his sence, nor mind affect,
But passed forth, and lookt still forward right,
*Bridling his will, and maistering his might.*⁸⁴

But the two girls crack this iron control:

Withall she laughed, and she blusht withall,
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall:
Now when they aspide the knight, to slacke his pace,
Them to behold, and in *his sparkling* face
The secret *signcs of kindled lust* appeare,*

* At once Guyon is humanized. We are reminded of another parallel in the First Book—Redcross' unconscious lust (after Archimago's dream

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Their wanton meriments they did encrease,
And to him beckned, to approach more neare,
And shewd him many sights, that courage cold could reare.

On which when gazing him the Palmer saw,
He much rebuked those wandring eyes of his,
And counseld well, him forward thence did draw.⁸⁵

This easy victory of Reason is not altogether convincing, the allegory somewhat mechanical. Unconsciously Spenser illustrates here the mathematical interpretation of the Aristotelian mean and the ascetic extreme implicit both in Platonism and Puritanism. The experiences of Redcross and Arthur's struggle with Maleger, showing that health and the grace of God are needed to supplement man's will, strike deeper than this picture of man overcoming temptation by reason alone. There is a more Chaucerian parallel in the First Book, where Timon, like the Palmer, warns Arthur to subdue excessive love rationally:

It was in freshest flowre of youthly yeares,
When courage first does crepe in manly chest,
Then first the coale of kindly heat appears
To kindle love in every living brest;
But me had warn'd old Timons wise behest,
Those creeping flames by reason to subdew
Before their rage grew to so great unrest,
As miserable lovers use to rew,
Which still wax old in woe, whiles woe still waxeth new.

.
But all in vaine: no fort can be so strong,
No fleshly brest can armed be so sound,
But will at last be wonne with battrie long,

temptations) when he feeds on Duessa's beauty rather than hears her story. He, of course, succumbs. See above, p. 16q.

There is another reason why Guyon's easy victory over lust leaves us skeptical. Partly due to primitive instinct, partly to ancient convention, male resistance to female advances is latently ludicrous. Joseph and Potiphar's wife and the temptation of Saint Anthony are always susceptible to the farcical treatment which Fielding so richly exemplifies in *Joseph Andrews*. As we have already seen, Marlowe capitalizes on this in *Hero and Leander*, whereas in *Venus and Adonis* Shakespeare falls between the serious and the comic.

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Or unawares at disavantage found;
Nothing is sure, that growes on earthly ground:
And who most trustes in arme of fleshly might,
And boasts, in beauties chaine not to be bound,
Doth soonest fall in disaventrous fight,
And yeeldes his caytive neck to victours most despight.

Ensample make of him your haplesse joy,
And of my selfe now mated, as ye see. . . ,⁸⁶

One of the main themes of the Second Book—that "the strong through pleasure soonest falles"—is anticipated in this speech of Arthur's with more understanding and humility, characteristic of the Christian view of humanity and springing from Spenser's self-knowledge. Arthur here speaks of the body as a besieged fortress, a metaphor expanded subsequently into the House of Alma—one of the many instances of the coherence of Spenser's symbolism. Recurrent images re-enforce his central allegory, especially in these two interdependent books, but also throughout the *Faerie Queene*.

When Guyon restores the enchanted men from beasts to their original state, some, like Caliban, cry to sleep again; but they receive short shrift from Reason and the Reasonable Man:

Said Guyon, See the mind of beastly man,
That hath so soone forgot the excellence
Of his creation, when he life began,
That now he chooseth, with vile difference,
To be a beast, and Jacke intelligence.
To whom the Palmer thus, The donghill kind
Delights in filth and foule incontinence:
Let Grill be Grill, and have his hoggish mind,

But let us hence depart, whilest wether serves and wind.⁸⁷

Eminently sensible, yet chilling. The "beast that wants discourse of reason" drives Hamlet to distraction. Redcross is redeemed from bestiality by God's grace. Guyon and the Palmer pass by.

There are grounds for feeling, as many have felt,⁸⁸ that the Puritan-rationalist rejection of beauty is more intellectually than emotionally conceived, that Spenser is caught in a cross-current of sympathies. The dramatic power of Mammon's Cave and of

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Arthur's struggle with Maleger makes the Bower of Bliss, beautiful though it is, a "set piece." The design of Guyon's quest and the poetic beauty of the last canto may give that impression, but the richness of the Second Book is not subsumed to Acrasia. The destruction of the Bower is final in the sense that Guyon's quest is ended; yet, so far as central meaning goes, it is a coda. Possibly in revision for publication Spenser developed the Cave of Mammon beyond its episodic relation and superimposed Arthur's fight with Maleger on an earlier treatment of the House of Alma. At any rate, Arthur's defense of Alma and Guyon's temptation by Mammon are more complex treatments of temperance than the Bower of Bliss.

5.

Two crucial experiences in the life of Christ best clarify the meaning of the first two books of the *Faerie Queene*, providing a key to the richness of implication Spenser achieves and revealing the difference in quality between the two books. For Guyon's temptation by Mammon corresponds to Christ's by Satan through worldly power and domination; whereas Redcross' temptation by Despair is comparable in many respects to Christ's agony in the Garden, his "soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Despair undermines a man already too conscious of his own insufficiencies and the weakness of the flesh. Reason seems to be against Redcross, and intense human suffering leaves little room for calm intellect. Reason sustains Guyon as the Word of God sustains Christ; yet both Christ and Guyon are prostrate after the event, wholly dependent on God's mercy. !

The Cave of Mammon, together with the following canto, is the turning point in Guyon's career. Like the House of Pride in the First Book, it is the Material as opposed to the Spiritual Life; for Mammon and his domain represent far more than Avarice. To his cave there is no broad highway; like any old miser, he is hiding in the shade trying to protect his treasure when Guyon stumbles upon him. But whereas in the First Book the Dwarf discovers the victims of Pride in the cellars and dungeons of that unstable palace, Duessa's descent to Hades being only loosely connected, in the Second Book Spenser boldly identifies Hell and Materialism. His conception broadens at once when Guyon descends into

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Mammon's world, for the rich portrayal of which, like Milton after him, Spenser draws widely on Biblical and classical sources, with consequent multiplicity of allusion.

Guyon easily resists mere greed for gold, parrying Mammon's sophistries. We may, if we wish, call Mammon's arguments commonplace, since the drama of this debate, inherent in human experience, has been written and rewritten through the centuries. The temptation becomes more subtle when gold is means rather than end—means to power, pleasure, beauty. For beauty and sensuality enter, too, when Mammon conducts Guyon into the presence of Philotime (Ambition), who sits enthroned like Lucifera in "glistening glory," whose beauty, like Una's

great brightnes threw

Through the dim shade, that all men might it see,⁸⁹

yet, like Ducssa's, her beauty is "wrought by art and counterfettéd shew." More overwhelming than seductive, Philotime is no Acrasia. At this point in the allegory, Acrasia and the sensuality that she represents are subordinated to a broader conception of the worldly life. Unlike Redcross with Duessa, Guyon, not for a moment deceived, spurns Philotime.

So far as central relation to theme goes, Guyon's temptation by Mammon's sophistical dialectics corresponds less to the Orgoglio incident (its seeming parallel in the First Book) than to Redcross' temptation by Despair:

God of the world and wordlings I me call,
Great Mammon, greatest god below the skyc,
That of my plenty poure out unto all,
And unto none my graces do envye:
Riches, renowne, and principality,
Honour, estate, and all this worldes good,
For which men swinck and sweat incessantly,
From me do flow into an ample flood,
And in the hollow earth have their eternall brood.

Wherefore if me thou deigne to serve and sew,
At thy *commaund* Jo all these mountaines bee;
Or if to thy great mind, or greedy vew
All these may not suffice, there shall to thee

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Ten times so much be numbred francke and free,
 Mammon (said he) thy godheades vaunt is vaine,
 And idle offers of thy golden fee;
 To them, that covet such eye-glutting gaine,
 Proffer thy giftes, and fitter servants enttaine.⁹⁰

Both Upton and Todd observed the resemblance between these and following stanzas to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness and suggested the similarity to *Paradise Regained*.⁹¹ Throughout this pregnant and dramatic scene the almost spotless Guyon is kin to Christ, who triumphs over Satan's sophistries with the Word of God, illustrating equally well the Platonic-Aristotelian conception of the ideal reasoning man.* Spenser does not point the comparison; that Christ himself fulfills perfectly the ideal of the ancient philosophers he leaves to implication.

Guyon is not intended to be Christ; he refuses Mammon because he is determined to be true to himself and to go about Gloriana's business like a Christian knight. But the parallelisms with Christ's own career at these points are too unmistakable to be overlooked. After the duel of will and reason, the canto loses for a while specifically Christian implications in the shifting allegory of the exploration of Hell, in comparison with which the House of Morpheus and Duessa's visit to Aesculapius in the First Book are not so much preliminary sketches, as adaptations in a simpler and completely different mode. The latter half of the canto further establishes the fact that Mammon is lord of the underworld and aspirant for the upper—a combination of Pluto and Satan. After exhausting all means

to do him deadly fall
 In frayle intemperance, through sinfull bayt,
 Mammon has perforce to return Guyon, whose

vittall powres gan wexe both weake and wan,
 For want of food, and sleepe, which two upbeare,
 Like *mightie* pillours, this fraile life of man,
 That none without the same endure can.
 For now three dayes of men were full outwrought.⁹²

* This temptation especially appeals to Milton with his Unitarian leaning.

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In these three days in Hell again hovers the symbolism of Christ's descent.

The objection has been made and seconded that there is no moral justification for Guyon's swoon.⁹⁸ On the contrary, there are several justifications, perhaps not strictly moral, but so closely related to Spenser's allegorical purpose as to be essential to understanding. " 'Healthy/ as I conceive/' says Socrates, "is the name which is given to the regular order of the body, whence comes health and every other bodily excellence/⁹⁴ And in his discussion of the nutritive faculty of the soul in *De Anima* (2.4) Aristotle remarks: "Hence the psychic power which we are now studying may be described as that which tends to maintain whatever has this power in it of continuing such -as it was, and food helps it to do its work. That is why, if deprived of food, it must cease to be." The meaning is literal as well as figurative. Spenser may have got this idea from either, directly or indirectly.

But we need not go to Plato and Aristotle. Christ was "an hungered" before being tempted by Satan. Arthur's exhaustion after his struggle with Maleger reminds Kitchin of this Biblical passage, but Kitchin seems to miss completely the implication. The literal explanation which Spenser gives—want of food and sleep—is enriched by Plato and Aristotle, especially by Christ's humanity as well as Godhead. And when we relate this stanza to the whole meaning of the House of Alma and of Maleger, where Spenser stresses health, its importance to temperance, to soul as well as body (paralleled, as we have seen, in the experience of Redcross), then Spenser's complex drama and symbolism shine clear.

Guyon, like Christ, survives his temptation; if Christ, being God made man, shows its effects and requires ministering angels, to Spenser it would not seem amiss for Guyon to show exhaustion and require assistance. He has particularly emphasized in the First Book man's helplessness without God; he stresses the same helplessness here and in the opening stanzas of the following canto:

And is there care in heaven? and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is: else much more wretched were the case

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*Of men, then beasts. But O th'exceeding grace
Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,
And all his workes with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed Angels, he sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe.**

*How oft do they, their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us, that succour want?
How oft do they with golden pineons, cleave
The flitting skyes, like flying Pursuivant,
Against foule feends to aide us millitant?
They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
And their bright Squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love, and nothing for reward:
O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?⁹⁵*

Whereupon, for the only time in the whole Faerie Queene we have no dream vision, but an actual Angel of God, such as ministered to Christ in the wilderness.

The Palmer, who has been of little help (the insufficiency of Reason alone) in his knight's darkest hour, hears a voice summoning him to the sleeping Guyon, beside whose head he finds the angel visitant:

*Whom when the Palmer saw, abasht he was
Through fear and wonder, that he nought could say,
Till him the child bespoke, Long lacJct, alas,
Hath bene thy faithful! aide in hard assay,
Whiles deadly fit thy pupill doth dismay;
Behold this heavie sight, thou reverend Sire,
But dread of death and dolour doe away;*

* Legouis is outraged that Guyon, who "has proved a sage and a saint," should by implication be called in this passage a "wicked foe of God." He wants to know what Guyon has "in common with the 'creatures base' to whom God shows His infinite mercy by saving and rescuing them from their baseness." Variorum Spenser, 2.271. Except that Legouis' interpretations have been so widely accepted and frequently so unfortunate, this could be ignored.

Here he is literal and rationalistic. Guyon has in common with "creatures base" at least humanity. But Spenser, as so often in these direct addresses to the reader, is thinking of mankind in general rather than of the specific measure of Guyon's virtue.

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For life ere long shall to her home retire,
And he that breathlesse seemes, shal corage bold respire.⁹⁰

No need to complain that the "guardian angel should have been able to awaken Guyon when danger threatened" unassisted by the Palmer/⁷ when Spenser so clearly expresses the angel's function—to summon Guyon's lost mentor, to quiet his fears while warning of danger:

The charge, which God doth unto me arret,
Of his deare safetie, I to thee commend:
Yet will I not forgoe, ne yet forget
The care thereof my selfe unto the end,
But evermore him succour, and defend
Against his foe and mine: watch thou *I* pray;
For evil! is at hand him to offend.

So having said, eftsoones he gan display
His painted nimble wings, and vanisht quite away.⁹⁸

Spenser is not writing a Miltonic poem in which angels are actors; for pure narrative reasons he wants to bring in Arthur: more important, as a symbol of Heavenly Grace, necessary to rescue even the wisest and purest of men in moments of exhaustion, Arthur's appearance is the core of Spenser's established meaning.

Spenser is a creative "borrower," and in the highest sense original. The angels ministering to Christ, a fleeting recollection of Tasso,* and of some idyll (for Spenser in his description draws on Cupid as well),⁹⁹ coalesce with his specific meaning. Neither Tasso nor Milton would have broken the serious tone of

* Warton first suggested that this whole passage is reminiscent of Tasso's *Gerusa/emme Liberate* (1.13), where God sends Raphael down to rouse Godfrey from momentary lethargy to resume his crusade. Actually, Milton's descriptions of God's dispatching angels to Adam and Eve are much closer than this passage of Spenser's to Tasso. Spenser may have been reminded of the Tasso context by an earlier stanza (1.10) as much as by the angel descent referred to by Warton. The angel does not appear to Rinaldo, but Tasso portrays him (1.10):

An ardent soul, impatient of repose,
The warrior's virtue, in Rinaldo shines,—
Which nor to lust of *gold* nor power inclines,
But to that quenchless thirst of fame which leads
To generous acts, and for distinction pines.

Rinaldo is closer than Godfrey to Guyon, and in this passage he is specifically unmoved by Mammon.

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the occasion and risked damaging the beautiful hybrid apparition thus:

The Palmer seeing his left empty place,
And his slow eyes beguiled of their sight,
Woxe sore affraid, and standing still a space,
Gaz'd after him, as fowle escapt by flight. . . .¹⁰⁰

Later in the same stanza (one image clearly begetting the other) the Palmer starts nursing Guyon back to life, "as chicken newly hatcht, from dreaded destiny." Chaucer might have written thus, and the homely, semi-humorous image is part of the characterization of the Palmer, who is in these scenes completely personalized. The whole passage is another tantalizing glimpse into the way Spenser's mind and imagination work.

No sooner has the angel vanished than Pyrochles and Cymochles turn up to wreak their vengeance on the still-sleeping Guyon. The Palmer bravely stands his ground, appealing to reason and the code of chivalry: but only the providential appearance of Arthur, as in the First Book, prevents the two enraged brothers from killing the helpless knight, after despoiling him of his armor. Spenser makes the relation between Arthur and Guyon more complex than that between Arthur and Redcross, partly because the simple story of Guyon and Acrasia does not convey all that he has to say about temperance (continence), and his revision makes the Second Book at times obscure, but it is not so obscure if we do not assume that exact parallelism is intended.¹⁰¹ The integration of the two books is more subtle, depending on repetition with variation of themes, on interplay of meaning between sometimes widely spaced cantos in each book, and between the two books as wholes.

The angel is not the first instance of duplicating symbol in the *Faerie Queene*, and this duplication, which may trouble our logical minds, was a commonplace in Medieval and Renaissance literature and art. By preparing the way for Arthur's coming, the angel makes him less a god from the machine than he is in the First Book. God's watchfulness is doubly stressed, and Arthur is more explicitly His champion:

Indeed (then said the Prince) the evill done
Dyes not, when breath the bodie first doth leave,

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But from the grandsyre to the Nephewes sonne,
And all his seed the curse doth often cleave,
Till vengeance utterly the guilt bereave:
So streightly God doth judge. But gentle knight,
That doth against the dead his hand upreare,
His honour staines with rancour and despight,
And great disparagment makes to his former might.¹⁰²

The first six lines of this speech addressed to Cymochles are a transposition of God's own words (Exodus 20.5);¹⁰³ furthermore, it answers a speech of Job's* put as a question into the mouth of Cymochles:

For what art thou,
That mak'st thyselfe his dayes man, to prolong
The vengeance prest?

In *Paradise Lost* we are of course constantly aware of the Biblical background; with Spenser we are likely to overlook instances like this, where the reference is not casual but has dramatic point, is, in fact, the main key to meaning, easily recognized by an age more familiar than ours with the Bible.

The battle begins as one of words, when Arthur expostulates with Cymochles and Pyrochles, who, smarting under their afflictions, seeking revenge on the helpless, determine to take into their own hands the judgment and justice belonging to God; but Pyrochles soon throws away words and reason for the sword.¹⁰⁴ While he and Cymochles are still in this eighth canto types of intemperance, they take on specifically Christian meaning, and with it greater force of evil.

Since the two brothers have possessed themselves of Guyon's sevenfold shield and Arthur's own sword (given Pyrochles by Archimago), they are much more formidable opponents than when Guyon met them. Though Arthur's sword never "may be used by his fone,"¹⁰⁵ it causes him considerable discomfort in Pyrochles' hands. For a while Arthur is in almost as serious straits as he is later with Maleger. His enemies turn the weapons of the

* Job 9.33: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

Miss Landrum includes this among some 40 Biblical allusions in the Second Book.

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right against the right. He discovers too late that Pyrochles, unprincipled and lawless, takes full advantage of surprise:

False traitour miscreant, thou broken hast
The law of armes, to strike foe undefied.

But thou thy treasons fruit, I hope, shalt taste
Right sowre, and feele the law, the which thou hast defast.¹⁰⁰

Spenser, while nodding, may not be asleep. In the dramatic fury of this far from perfunctory fight, in their heightened viciousness and hatred and lawlessness, Pyrochles and Cymochles are indeed foes of God.* Knights in old romances are often conventionally called sarazin or pagan, a relic of the crusades, but Spenser is writing more than romance, and if he was reading Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (as seems probable from the beginning of this canto and certain from the last canto), in which sarazins are literally unlawful possessors of Christ's tomb, it is quite likely that Tasso's usage confirms Spenser's giving to "Sarazin" the specific meaning "Infidel," enemy of Christ. Cymochles swears by "Mahoune"; later

Horribly then he gan to rage, and rayle,
Cursing his Gods, and himselfe damning deepe.¹⁰⁸

And the "Sarazin" Pyrochles fights with a ferocity of hatred surpassed in the whole poem only by Maleger; indeed, I question whether it is surpassed by Maleger, who is a cold, inexorable force, passion belonging rather to Impatience, one of his hag accomplices. In the end Pyrochles responds to Arthur's magnanimous offer of pardon with all the arrogance of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean hero-villain (sponsored early by Marlowe in *Mortimer*):

Foole (said the Pagan) I thy gift defye,
But use thy fortune, as it doth befall,
And say, that I not overcome do dye,
But in despight of life, for death do call.¹⁰⁹

* In the First Book Sansfoy is of this ilk:

Curse on that Crosse (quoth then the Sarazin)
That keepe thy body from the bitter fit;
Dead long ygoe I wote thou haddest bin,
Had not that charme from thee forwarned it.¹⁰⁷

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Arthur's struggle against the two brothers is not only a final destruction of kinds of intemperance, but also a fight to the death between Christian and Infidel. Not till it is over does Guyon wake. His sleeping is not oversight or narrative necessity; it is the culmination of Spenser's meaning; even Guyon's pre-eminent reason and control (that is, the whole Platonic-Aristotelian ethical system) are insufficient by themselves to save him. As in the First Book, though this time through no sin of commission, man is shown to be helpless without God's grace.

6.

Dante had behind him the great theological-philosophical synthesis of Aquinas. Spenser and Milton, coming after the modification and partial disintegration of medieval thought, had to construct, with considerable assistance from Calvin (whose misfortune has been identification with the worst implications of his weakest doctrines), their own philosophical-religious systems from what had become an embarrassment of possibilities and contrarieties. Neither English poet achieves a synthesis comparable to that of the Medieval Church—certainly not Spenser, who is much less philosophical than Milton. We are not justified in concluding that Spenser ever, even to his own satisfaction, completely reconciles Christianity with Platonism and Aristotelianism.

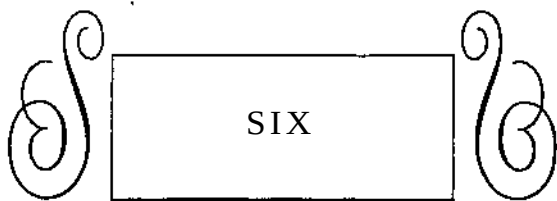
In his last years his interest in neo-Platonism, Lucretius, the new scientific and naturalistic thinking increases, but some critics are too much inclined to take a poet's last work for his "last word," when it may be the interest of a moment. That Shakespeare, after writing a terrific play like *King Lear*, finally turns to tragi-comedy (in such plays as the *Winter's Tale* merely another way of presenting man's tragic potentialities) does not mean he has lost his sense of tragedy. That Spenser turns from the early books of the *Faerie Queene* to the more worldly Sixth Book, the more elaborately Platonic-Christian Hymnes, the curious and fascinating fragment, *Mutabilitie*, by no means invalidates the first two books of the *Faerie Queene*, and does not of itself prove any lessening of Christian belief. Like others of his age, he may have lost his faith; on the evidence there are no grounds for supposing so.

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fin the first two books of his unfinished poem Spenser probably assimilates classical ethics and Christianity to the best of his power, tAnalysis reveals innumerable faults and inconsistencies; yet few who become familiar with these two interlocking books fail to experience a time when all these difficulties drop away, leaving a sense of beauty and wisdom, of moral fervor, of subtle, complex, occasionally profound religious experience, which by its scale and breadth of human application has a wider appeal than Spenser's personal creed, Hymne of Heavenly Love.

Dante, Milton, Bunyan, Blake are like the prophets of old, men set apart by the intensity of their spiritual passion. Each in his own way lifts us out of this world. Spenser, except in his Hymne of Heavenly Love, never attains comparable heights of religious experience. He has compensating qualities. If he seldom rises to spiritual ecstasy, he never shows the inhumanity of the prophet, the seer—that fierce identification of self with vision so characteristic of Dante and Milton, who on occasion mistake personal hatred for God's wrath. Spenser's breadth of human sympathy, his unfailing compassion—qualities which he shares with Chaucer and Shakespeare—make up for lack of exaltation. His portrayal of the Christian life and the dignity of the individual takes charitably into account the failings of human nature.

* The identification in a different way makes us at times recoil from Blake's visions and "system." In Blake the saint skirts the devil.



MARRIAGE SONG: A CODA

IN APRIL, 1580, Spenser writes to his friend Harvey: "I minde shortly at convenient leisure, to sette forth a Booke in this kinde, whiche I entitle, Epithalamion Thamesis, whiche Booke I dare undertake wil be very profitable for the knowledge, and rare for the Invention, and manner of handling. For in setting forth the marriage of the Thames: I shewe his first beginning, and offspring, and all the Countrey, that he passeth through, and also describe all the Rivers throughout Englande, whiche came to this Wedding, and their righte names."¹

Thus early marriage becomes a Spenserian theme—in this instance a means of unifying what was to him and to his age a serious type of poetry; and we find this topographical-historical element completely metamorphosed many years later in the loveliest of his fables, the elopement of the rivers Mulla and Bregog in Colin Clout, and in his great betrothal song. The perennial freshness of this symbolism, which had such lasting hold on Spenser's imagination, has been recently recaptured by Milles' great sculptured group in St. Louis of the marriage of the Missouri and the Mississippi.

English history and the English countryside, so vitally important to Spenser, are among the tributaries enriching his marriage symbolism. In the *Faerie Queene* his historical interest shifts from places to people; consequently love becomes increasingly important to this symbol of union. His particular concern with Elizabeth and her Court disturbs and qualifies, but only temporarily impedes the triumphant current of his conception that married love is paramount in human relations. '-

In the *Elisa Song of the Calender* the union of the white and red roses, the marriage of the warring factions of Lancaster and

MARRIAGE SONG: A CODA

York, already signifies to Spenser the harmony and stability of the House of Tudor, whose latest and rarest flower is Elizabeth. Britomart and Artegall embody this underlying conception of the Faerie Quccne, especially in these lines from Merlin's prophecy:

Thenceforth eternall union shall be made,
Betweene the nations different afore.²

But Elisa of the April Song, "Syrinx daughter without spotte/" is by the time of the Faerie Queene, many years later, still unwed:

Now th'only remnant of that royall breed,
Whose noble *kind at first was sure of heavenly seed.*³

She is Belpheobe not Britomart. Her persistent virginity leaves its mark on Spenser's poem as on English history.

Spenser's apotheosis of the Virgin Queen is unquestionably felt deeply, for he is by temperament idealistic, and the beauty of Platonism intensifies a natural leaning toward asceticism, occasionally manifest even in his attitude toward woman, his worship of whom has been sometimes compared to Dante's.⁴ Yet in all his poetry there are only two passages truly comparable: his portrait of Sapience in An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, and to a less degree Colin's speech silencing the friends who berate Rosalind for her failure to return his love:

Ah shepherds (then said Colin) ye ne weet
How great a guilt upon your heads ye draw:
To make so bold a doome with words unmeet,
Of thing celestiall which ye never saw.
For she is not like as the other crew
Of shepherds daughters which emongst you bee,
But of divine regard and heavenly hew,
Excelling all that ever ye did see.
Not then to her that scorned thing so base,
But to my selfe the blame that lookt so hie:
So hie her thoughts as she her selfe have place,
And loath each lowly thing with loftie eie.
Yet so much grace let her vouchsafe to grant
To simple swaine, sith her I may not love:
Yet that I may her honour paravant,

MARRIAGE SONG: A CODA

And praise her worth, though far my wit above,
Such grace shall be some guerdon for the griefe,
And long affliction which I have endured:
Such grace sometimes shall give me some reliefe,
And ease of paine which cannot be recured.
And ye my fellow shepheards which do see
And heare the languours of my too long dying,
Unto the world for ever witnesse bee,
That hers I die, nought to the world denying,
This simple trophy of her great conquest.⁵

It is hard to doubt the reality of the conquest, equally hard to determine its exact nature. No man after fourteen years could keep up without weariness the pretense of being in love with a shadow. These lines ring true. But Rosalind, whose real name matters little, may represent a coalescing of more than one early love (including his young first wife); or not so much a particular woman as a stage in the development of love itself. Perhaps her role is simply that of many a man's youthful first love: a magnet drawing together adolescent romanticism and sublimated ideals impossible of full realization, but which remain in the mind and grow with the years. Only Dante can transmute such an idealization into divine comedy.

For this moment in Colin Clout Rosalind becomes a minor Beatrice, with Petrarchan coloring. Spenser seems wistfully to remember that Paul personally preferred chastity to marriage: "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that/¹⁶ With the best of intentions, Spenser was not to die Rosalind's. His proper gift was not after the manner of Paul, nor even of Dante, who leaves his wife unsung. The Bible speaks elsewhere with more certainty of marriage and progeny, and Spenser's diapason is Christian rather than Platonic:

She was a woman in her freshest age,
Of wondrous beauty, and of bountie rare,
With goodly grace and comely personage,
That was on earth not easie to compare;
Full of great love, but *Cupids wanton snare*

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As hell she hated, chaste in worke and will;
Her necke and breasts were ever open bare,
That ay thereof her babes might sucke their fill;
The rest was all in yellow robes arrayed still.⁷

This portrait of Charissa the mature Spenser would have delighted to be able to paint of his queen. And despite some wavering, he finds sublimation not in an ascent of neo-Platonic steps, but in the marriage of Christ and the Church, an allegory which provides the greatest latitude, since it is stretched in the Bible to interpret the Song of Solomon.

When portraying chastity Spenser kindles with imaginative fire like Milton in *Comus*; but Spenser's portrait of chastity is equivocal. No one in England more intensely desired Elizabeth's marriage; whenever he dared he spoke of it with the urgency of Shakespeare's recommendations to W. H. Spenser's dilemma emerges clearly in the curious vicissitudes of Belpheobe and Timias (Elizabeth and Raleigh), whose reconciliation seems intentionally ambiguous in the light of Timias' hopeless passion:

Which sory words her mightie hart did mate
With mild regard, to see his ruefull plight,
That her inburning wrath she gan abate,
And him receiv'd againe to former favours state.

In which he long time afterwards did lead
An happie life with grace and good accord,
Fearlesse of fortunes chaunge or envies dread. . . .⁸

Topically, this is hopeful prophecy that Raleigh, who had incurred Elizabeth's displeasure, will be restored to favor; but in the poetic narrative this consummation sharply contrasts with that of all the other couples in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Books. The marriage of the dominant pair, Britomart and Artegall, is documented by a versified genealogy of their descendants, among whom Spenser places Elizabeth, since her reluctance to marry made complete identification with Britomart impossible. By her own choice of single life Elizabeth prolonged the celebration of chastity in the *Faerie Queene*—not enough, however, to dislocate Spenser's belief that virgin love matures into married faithfulness according to natural law and the law of God. And this concep-

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tion, developed with rich complexity, is a radiating center of his poetry.* He is the first great poet of married love, which has dominated English society and literature ever since the sixteenth century. We find it unchanged in Browning and Tennyson, except that it has grown pallid, has lost the robust candor of Spenser and Milton; in the nineteenth century (least so in Browning), it becomes genteel as passion yields to sentiment.

No other English poet has written more greatly of love than Spenser,^t for to no other has it been the key to his intellectual beliefs, to his religious faith, to his knowledge of himself and others. The primarily Platonic and Christian sources of his intellectual concept of love have been traced so far as they can be in the mind of a poet not strictly consistent or philosophic. More important to his poetry is the centrality of love in his own emotional life and in the maturing breadth of his interpretation of human nature. Emotional and intellectual convictions can be only theoretically separated; especially in Spenser dominant ideas grow out of instinctive and emotional drives. His whole work is an attempt to harmonize body and spirit. In his love poetry the moralist and would-be philosopher are conspicuous, not always with happy results; yet when they are subsumed in his best love poetry to a powerful emotional conviction of essential harmony, coupled with sensuous intensity, they contribute to his great poetic distinction.

* For a summation of his intellectual beliefs many turn from such perplexing central passages in the *Faerie Queene* as the Gardens of Adonis and the Mutabilirie Cantos to the Fowre Hymnes. With one exception, the Fowre Hymnes are most effective when they express sheer delight in beauty and admiration for love; in many ways they are intellectual tours de force. An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie never attains the depth and quality of the religious feeling which permeates the first two books of the *Faerie Queene*, nor is its self-conscious fusion of neo-Platonism and Christianity so effective as the frequently implicit fusion in his earlier poetry. The exception is An Hymne of Heavenly Love, which in a sense is the lyrical culmination of the first two books of the *Faerie Queene*, in which Christian faith draws to itself the beauty and richness of the classics. Apart from religious poetry, yet of course interlocked, Spenser's most persistent, concrete, personal symbol is marriage.

^t In saying this of course I have in mind An Hymne of Heavenly Love and the whole range of Spenser, sacred and profane; this range compensates for greater individual passages in Shakespeare, who is his only equal in English as a poet of love. As a third I should include a poet less great, but great on this particular subject, Donne.

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2.

Marriage, no exclusive theme of either poet, is important to Shakespeare, too, though he is less concerned with the marriage sanction as a rule than with quality of emotion and motive. Yet Shakespeare in his Sonnets passionately pleads the cause of marriage. Even more passionately here:

Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,

 makes marriage vows
As false as dicer's oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of *contraction plucks*
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. . . .⁹

Thus Hamlet in the terrible scene with his mother. Of all the Elizabethans, Shakespeare and Spenser stand together in the manner and spirit of their treatment of marriage, a kinship of little significance in the conventional resolution of the romantic comedies, but important in plays where marriage is a dominant theme—Romeo and Juliet, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Othello*—and in such subordinate though carefully delineated relationships as Claudio and Juliet in *Measure for Measure*, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Coriolanus and Virgilia, Leontes and Hermione, Posthumous and Imogen. In the most fully developed of Spenser's many love stories the focus is primarily on love after marriage (or betrothal, its virtual equivalent to an Elizabethan), as it is in countless incidental passages in the poem.

To some degree Spenser is preoccupied with marriage because he hopes to mold the youth of his day. Among other things, the Faerie Queene is a Book of Conduct, designed to teach what Professor and Mrs. Haller call the Puritan Art of Love,¹⁰ a grave concern of the Puritan clergy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Spenser's greatest pupil is Milton, who gathers from the body of his master's poetry not only a noble conception of marriage, but a deal of specific and detailed instruction. From this point of view, Artegall's enslavement by Radigund shows the danger of infracting the "divine law" that woman submit to man, a cardinal principle to Spenser as well as

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Milton. The Temple of Venus is a subtle model of courtship, readily understood by all familiar with medieval psychological allegory. Malbecco and Hellcnore show how disparity in age can wreck a marriage. The mother-dominated Marinell is a warning against the danger of parental interference in marriage. Nor are more practical problems neglected. Calidore forces Maleffort to marry Briana without a dowry, and Beige and Burbon reveal the dangers of marriage for money.

This explicitly didactic vein, which irritates many modern readers, is not altogether alien to Shakespeare.* The King of France takes Cordelia without a dowry, pointing a moral as he does so; just as an earlier King of France in *All's Well that Ends Well* (in part a study of marriage) advocates in a wife values greater than birth or fortune:

If she be
All that is virtuous, save what thou dislikest,
A poor physician's daughter, thou dislikcst
Of virtue for the name: but do not so:
From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by the doer's deed:
Where great additions swell's, and virtue none,
It is a dropsied honour.¹¹

On the other hand, Spenser is too much a poet to deal in precepts alone; that he presents the whole problem of marriage so concretely explains not only its effectiveness as teaching in his own day, but its similarity to Shakespeare and its lasting value as poetry. He writes from passionate conviction and from years of observation, of familiarity with the ways of men and women. He began early.

A dominant theme in the *Shepherdcs Calender* and the only slight thread of narrative continuity is love and friendship—Colin's love for Rosalind and friendship for Hobbinol. Even in the *Calender*, where it may have been an afterthought to help weave together scattered poems, Spenser sketches the theme of love and friendship dynamically, as evolving through time; and when he picks it up again for richer development in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Books of the *Faerie Queene*, his greater ma-

* Through his characters Shakespeare constantly moralizes, often with deep seriousness, if not always with personal commitment.

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turity is evident. What was often in the youthful poem conventional platitude has been tested by experience. His complete awareness of what he is doing and of his own progress (as well as a natural economy in a poet committed to such a scale of composition) is clear from deliberate references in the *Faerie Queene*, in Colin Clout, and in the *Mufebilitie Cantos* to his early introduction of favorite themes.¹²

On occasion when Spenser attempts explicit analysis (as so frequently at the beginning of a canto), he is unsatisfactory, inconsistent, even banal. There are several explanations: he wrote his poem in sections over a period of years and never reached final articulation; he often concentrates on particular instances to the neglect of general design; his inspiration flags. Friendship, being a form of love, Spenser relates, as he does marriage, to Concord, which throughout the Fourth Book is opposed to the strife and discord sedulously provoked by Duesza and Ate. Those incapable of harmony for various reasons (Blandamour, Paridell, Druon, Corflambo) represent social anarchy and are likewise incapable of friendship and true love.¹³

Spenser introduces three kinds of love:

Hard is the doubt, and difficult to deeme,
When all three kinds of love together meet,
And doe dispart the hart with powre extreme,
Whether shall weigh the balance downe; to wcet
The deare affection unto kindred sweet,
Or raging fire of love to woman kind,
Or zeale of friends combynd with vertues meet.
But of them all the band of vertuous mind
Me secmes the gentle hart should most assured bind.

For naturall affection soone doth cesse,
And quenched is with Cupids greater flame:
But faithfull friendship doth them both suppressc,
And them with maystring discipline doth tame,
Through thoughts aspyring to eternall fame.
For as the soule doth rule the earthly masse,
And all the service of the bodie frame,
So love of soule doth love of bodie passe,
No lesse then perfect gold surmounts the meanest brasse.

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All which who list by tryall to assay,
 Shall in this storie find approved plaine;
 In which these Squires true friendship more did sway,
 Then either care of parents could refraine,
 Or love of fairest Ladie could constraine. . . .¹⁴

These stanzas promise much but yield little except fragments of traditional praise of friendship, which is important to Spenser, who has himself natural gift for it, and important to the ideal gentleman whom he is fashioning; but the rest of the poem does not bear out this extreme evaluation. While Spenser by no means rejects the Renaissance ideal of neo-Platonic friendship endorsed by Sidney, whom he particularly admires, this stilted treatment suggests an incompatibility of which he is possibly himself unaware. Even in the Fourth Book devoted to the subject, the most illuminating examples of friendship are not Cambel and Telamond, Amyas and Placidas, where Spenser gives the explicit theme the thoroughly conventional romantic treatment of a literary exercise. We must look rather to the natural companionship of knights and ladies more central to the poem; such are the friendships of Redcross and Guyon, Arthur and Timias, Britomart and Amoret, Britomart and Scudamour, Calidore and Priscilla, Calidore and Calepine.

In the canto which opens with the above stanzas Spenser celebrates the devotion of Amyas and Placidas, in undeviating loyalty resisting sensual temptations and threats of punishment; yet this is the test in their story, not its resolution, which is the happy marriage of the two friends to badgered Aemilia and to badgering Poëana—given special emphasis, since it is Arthur himself who disentangles these two couples drifting towards tragedy. Curiously enough, Spenser turns his spotlight on erring, willful Poëana, and in a way which modifies the meaning of friendship:

And for to shut up all in friendly love,
 Sith love was first the ground of all her grieve,
 That trusty Squire he wisely well did move
 Not to despise that dame, which lov'd him liefe,
 Till he had made of her some *better* priefe,
 But to *accept* her to his wedded wife.
 Thereto he offred for to make him chiefe

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Of all her land and lordship during life:
He yeelded, and her tooke; so stinted all their strife.

From that day forth in peace and joyous blis,
They *liv'd together long without debate*,
Ne private Jarre, ne spite of enemis
Could shake the safe assuraunce of their state.
And she whom Nature did so faire create,
That she mote match the fairest of her daies,
Yet with lewd loves and lust intemperate
Had it *defaste; thenceforth reformd her waies*,
That all men much admyrde her change, and spake her praise.¹⁵

Spenser begins the canto with neo-Platonic exaltation of friendship, then shows that the two friends' loyalty is of highest value only so long as Poëana persists in licentiousness and in usurping the man's dominant role; for with her change of heart, "friendly love" becomes the crown of a successful marriage built not in a daydream of perfection, but in the wisdom of forgiving past sins and accepting human limitations, with what corrections man can achieve with God's grace (Arthur). The element of companionship between man and woman in love, fatally absent from the too exclusive passion of Amoret and Scudamour, is essential to the stability of marriage. This quiet conclusion to the story of the Squire of Low Degree is characteristic of Spenser, who knew only too well the marital obstacles in his own day.

The marriages in Elizabeth's court were of a kind to discourage him and later to give Shakespeare local color for the Vienna of *Measure for Measure*: and Elizabeth was herself partly responsible for conditions which made love of the sort that Spenser desired for his gentleman difficult.* We have seen earlier how

* Her favorite courtiers and ladies-in-waiting incurred not only her displeasure but frequently disgrace if they married. Thus Raleigh fell from favor. And when the Earl of Pembroke seduced Mary Fytton, while admitting he was the father of her child, he deserted her, fearing the Queen's anger if he married. As a result of marriages of convenience, vows seemed to mean so little that even Sidney, though not guilty of actual moral lapse, appears to have had little regard for those of his Stella, Lady Rich. Afterwards she and Lord Mountjoy had even less. The mysterious death of Amy Robsart in 1575 and Leicester's subsequent conduct made impossible his marriage to Elizabeth. Here is an account of the great Leicester's love life in the year 1579 from Neale's summary of fact and gossip: "He had mar-

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Colin Clout with its disconcerting shift from panegyric to satire, shows that Spenser saw the reverse side of the tapestry. His and Shakespeare's faith in human nature was severely shaken but not uprooted by these courtly carryings-on, reflected, like other courtly behavior, among the citizens of London: indeed, the very weight of this evidence in high places against marriage not only explains much of their satire, but gives poignancy and intensity to their faith in married love. In Spenser's case it heightens the triumph of his wedding songs.

It is easy to see why so much of Spenser's poetry pivots on woman and why, though along with his age he believes in her subjection to man, his whole attitude toward her is so liberal. Nor are his demands excessive. When her knight is delivered from Orgoglio, Una shows great magnanimity:

Whom when his Lady saw, to him she ran
With hasty joy: to see him made her glad,
And sad to view his visage pale and wan;¹⁷

whereas in a parallel situation much later in the poem Britomart on freeing Artegall from ignominy shows undisguised hurt pride:

At last when as to her owne Love she came,
Whom like disguise no Icsc deformed had,
At sight thereof abasht with secrete shame,
She turnd her head aside, as nothing glad,
To have beheld a spectacle so bad. . . ,¹⁸

Una is the rarer type, but both are Spenserian patterns of womanhood.

The Amazonian Britomart loses no time in righting the anarchic state which Artegall's subjection to Radigund, breaking a fundamental law of nature, portrays:

And changing all that forme of common weale,
The liberty of women did rpeale,

ried, a year before, Sir Francis Knolly's daughter, the widowed Countess of Essex, concerning whom London gossip, at the end of 1575, had been saying that during her husband's absence in Ireland she had had two children by Leicester. She was not Leicester's only amorous adventure. He had had a son by Lady Sheffield in 1574 and was said to have been secretly married to her the previous year but had now repudiated her."¹⁶

MARRIAGE SONG: A CODA

Which they had long usurpt; and them restoring
To men's subjection, did true Justice deale.¹⁹

Marriage is related to Justice, whose human embodiment is this very Artegall subjected to humiliation. Thus Spenser, following Paul, takes it for granted that the dominance of the husband is an essential law of marriage, which makes order and harmony possible by redeeming love from licentiousness. Implicit is a warning against abuse of power even by a queen. The true freedom resulting from restraint he expresses beautifully in *Amoretti* 65, where he is thinking of his own courtship:

The doubt which ye misdeeme, fayre love, is vaine,
That fondly feare to loose your liberty,
 when loosing one, two liberties ye gayne,
 and make him bond that bondage earst dyd fly.
Sweet be the bands, the which true love doth tye,
 without constraynt or dread of any ill:
 the gentle birde feeles no captivity
 within her cage, but singes and feeds her fill.
There pride dare not approch, nor discord spill
 the league twixt them, that loyal love hath bound:
 but simple truth and mutuall good will,
 seekes with sweet peace to salve each other wound:
There fayth doth fearlesse dwell in brasen towre,
 and spotlesse pleasure builds her sacred bowre.

Spenser does not justify man's dominance by casting him in an exaggeratedly heroic mold. All of his knights, like Shakespeare's heroes, are brought low and require redemption, whether in the House of Holiness or in the House of Care. His partnership in marriage is between a more equal breed than Milton's; in fact, his women often surpass his men in strength of character, and this cannot be entirely explained by the need to celebrate his Queen. Pride, impulsiveness, too ready despair are masculine flaws shared equally by Redcross, Timias, Scudamour; and man's susceptibility to sensual beauty is everywhere stressed. But idealization of woman does not prevent Spenser from censuring her for pride or timidity or selfishness.

He finds woman's greatest weakness in a conscious or unconscious denial of her nature, as he conceives it, and of her higher

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responsibility in sexual matters; for he condemns sensuality in woman, whether open or masked by hypocritical scorn of love, more than in man. Mirabella shows the scornful woman justly scorned. Spenser's concern is early evident in his May eclogue:

Three things to beare, bene very burdenous,
But the fourth to forbear, is outrageous.
Women that of Loves longing once lust,
Hardly forbearen but have it they must.

This censure, savage in Argante, Hellenore, and Malecasta, inevitably recurs in connection with marriage.

The identity between Artegall's emotional reaction when he first sees Britomart's beauty and later Radigund's is deliberate. In the fierce encounter between the two, Artegall shears off Britomart's helmet:

With that her angel's face, unseene afore,
Like to the ruddie morne appeard in sight,
Deawed with silver drops, through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder, then beseem'd aright,
Through toylesome heate and labour of her weary fight.

.
And as his hand he up again did reare,
Thinking to worke on her his utmost wracke,
His powresse arme benumbd with secret fcare
From his revengeful! purpose shronke abacke. . . .²⁰

Later Radigund is at his mercy:

But when as he discovered had her face,
He saw his senses straunge astonishment,
A miracle of natures goodly grace,
In her faire visage voide of ornament,
But bath'd in bloud and sweat together ment. . . .

.
At sight thereof his cruell minded hart
Empierced was with pittiful regard,
That his sharpe sword he threw from him apart,
Cursing his hand that had that visage mard:
No hand so cruell, nor no hart so hard,
But ruth of beautie will it mollifie. . . .²¹

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This ironic parallel* recognizes that a good knight's love for woman can lead as easily to error as to virtue; the choice is largely the woman's, and Radigund is traitor to her sex.

Spenser implies the same close kinship when chaste Britomart meets in the Castle Joyous licentious Malecasta;²² the intensity of their desire is the same, though morally and spiritually they are worlds apart. Despite her unassailable virtue and nobility, Britomart is subject to violent jealousy and hurt pride. Artegall has remained faithful to her at the price of enslavement; yet, knowing his original mistake, she is unwilling to qualify her judgment, and we are left wondering if she will ever stop secretly distrusting his weakness. Even the strong show fear in love.

The more feminine Florimell, Serena, Pastorella show greater fear. The puzzle is Amoret, whose captivity and torture by Busyrane seem sadism unrelated to her character or desert, since as Belpheobe's twin, she is clearly designed to represent a second kind of chastity closer to Spenser's heart—married faithfulness. She alone of all the ladies at the tournament can wear Florimell's girdle; she has found a fitting mate in Scudamour, who has fully justified his right to be her husband; she prefers torture and death to freedom with dishonor: yet, rescued from Busyrane by Britomart, she must soon after be rescued from Lust by Timias and Belpheobe. Our bewilderment in her case is partly due to an excess of strands in the tapestry Spenser is weaving, but primarily to the fact that he presents Amoret's and Scudamour's story almost entirely by the old psychological allegory rather than the realistic method he uses with Britomart. Spenser clarifies his purpose by associating Amoret with the hapless Aemilia, whose passion for her Squire leads her to guile, and eventually to unexpected captivity by Lust, instead of the happy union with her lover which she had planned.

Amoret's fault is no violation of marriage even in thought, but rather an excess and willfulness in her love for Scudamour, together with an unwary though innocent carelessness in her man-

* Parallel, of course, with a difference, and only on the human level. Britomart's beauty (allegonically the beauty of chastity) paralyzes Artegall; Radigund's (allegonically the beauty of sensuality) disarms him. The problem is to distinguish true from false beauty, and Artegall repeats Redcross' mistake with Ducsa.

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ner toward Timias, laying her open to slander,³ just as Desdemona's overimpulsive friendship for Cassio makes her easy victim of Iago's distortions.

3-

The ambitious conception of the Faerie Queene and his own temperament make it impossible for Spenser to treat love merely in human terms; and the importance of love in the Platonic scheme encourages him to formulate what is a kind of philosophic myth drawn from various not entirely reconcilable sources. Venus and Cupid assume many masks in his poetry. Often merely decorative, idyllic figures, often signifying wantonness, on occasion they have deeper meaning. In a fine passage on the inexhaustibility of life/⁴ which may have suggested the "salmon-falls" and "mackerel-crowded seas" in Yeats' *Sailing to Byzantium*, sea-born Venus is the ancient symbol of fertility, the sea the source of life. Usually the sun is the generating principle, and life's origin is some form of immaculate conception.⁵ In the Gardens of Adonis²⁰ where Belphoebe's twin, Amoret, is nurtured, Spenser attempts to explain the genesis of life as imposition of form on matter (he was, however, no Aquinas) in an allegory which shows how early cosmological and scientific theories, while dwindling into pseudo-science, remain the substance of poetry. There are other accounts of creation in *Colin Clout* and, more Christianized, in the Hymnes. We need not lose ourselves in the intricacies of neo-Platonic, Lucretian, Ovidian, Biblical interfusion in Spenser's thought, since it is enough to stress the persistence of his concern with the origin of life, the variety of his poetic exploration of this question, and a few clear-cut beliefs which emerge. That many are commonplace does not invalidate the quality of his belief.

Primary among these is that love, being the only principle capable of reconciling opposites, is the sole explanation of the origin of life, and the sole means of maintaining it. Through love, life rises from chaos into form and meaning; without the perpetuation of love, it disintegrates into anarchy and oblivion. Spenser expresses this most simply in *Colin Clout*:

Of loves perfection perfectly to speake,
Or of his nature rightly to define,

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Indeed (said Colin) passeth reasons reach,
And needs his priest t'expresse his powre divine.
For long before the world he was y'bore
And bred above in Venus bosome deare:
For by his powre the world was made of yore,
And all that therein wondrous doth appeare.
For how *should* else *things* so far from attone,
And so great enemies as of them bee,
Be ever drawne together into one,
And taught in such accordance to agree?
Through him the cold began to covet heat,
And water fire. . . ,²⁷

As we have seen,* Othello is less philosophic but more succinct and moving:

when I love thee not

Chaos is come again.

For Othello often transcends the Shakespearean "sensualist," with a finer love than Antony's and Cleopatra's.

Elizabeth's personal and diplomatic choice of virginity; Paul's preference for chastity, while reluctantly urging marriage for others; such rare sublimation as Dante's love for Beatrice; the strong pull of Platonic doctrine that spirituality is secured by leaving the senses behind and below—all of these are magnets to Spenser's idealistic nature. He, too, has moments when the spiritual seeks to dominate by casting off the flesh or rising above it; then Rosalind becomes sublimation of an unfulfilled dream and Spenser is seduced from harmonious dualism into monism. But he finds it impossible for any length of time to throw off natural law or to blink the limitations and necessities of human life. He shows a certain divided loyalty, like his earlier, more speedily resolved dilemma between classic and English prosody. In each case he withstands strong pressure.

Spenser cannot accept any solution of the problem of human love which violates the progress of being. Despite his eloquence on chastity and his desire to celebrate the virgin Queen, he is not blind to the danger of spiritual as well as biological sterility in singleness. Among the unbalanced lovers—Claribell, Blandamour,

* See above, pp. 19-20.

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Paridell—ranged in fight against each other and against Britomart and Scudamour, he places Druon, the deficient, whose "delight was all in single life/"²⁸ And in Marinell he deplores the neglect of natural love through fear, through absorption in self and material riches. Fortunately Marinell overhears in time Florimeirs soliloquy from prison.

And if ye deeme me death for loving one,
That loves not me, then doe it not prolong,
But let me die and end my daies attone,
And let him live unlov'd, or love him selfe alone.²⁹

Spenser is tactful and a good courtier, but Elizabeth can hardly have missed the full import of the poem in her honor; for while Belpheobe undoubtedly represents an austere love superior to the mundane, her one marked aberration, her jealousy when she sees Timias pitying the bruised Amoret,³⁰ evokes only too human harshness—is, in fact, not only psychologically acute, but Spenser's most daring censure of his queen. It is Belpheobe's twin, Amoret, with all her flaws, who in the Temple of Venus becomes Spenser's pattern of womanhood, as Mariana in *Measure for Measure* is more essentially human than Isabella:

Thus sate they all a round in seemely rate:
And in the midst of them a goodly mayd,
Even in the lap of Womanhood there sate,
The which was all in lilly white arayd,
With silver streames amongst the linnen stray'd;
Like to the Morne, when first her shyning face
Hath to the gloomy world it selfe bewray'd,
That same was fayrest Amoret in place,
Shyning with beauties light, and heavenly vertues grace.³¹

Love demands audacity. Britomart finds in the Castle of Busy-rane this advice: "Be bold, be bold. Be not too bold."³² Like Britomart, Scudamour feels no fear but jealousy. His assertion of his rights expresses Spenser's deepest conviction:

Thereat that formost matrone me did blame.
And sharpe rebuke, for being over bold;
Saying it was to Knight unseemely shame.
Upon a recluse Virgin to lay hold,

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That unto Venus services was sold.
To whom I thus, Nay but it fitteth best,
For *Cupids man* with Venus mayd to hold.
For *ill your* goddesse services are drest
By virgins, and her sacrifices Jet to rest.

.

And evermore upon the Goddesse face
Mine eye was fixt, for feare of her offence,
Whom when I saw with *amiable grace*
To laugh at me, and favour my pretence,
I was emboldned with more confidence,
And nought for nicenesse nor for envy *sparing*,
In presence of them all forth led her thence,
All looking on, and like astonisht staring,
Yet to lay hand on her, not one of all them daring.³³

Scudamour, in his exit from the Temple as on his entrance befriended by Concord, the principle of marriage as well as of universal harmony,³⁴ boldly, even mischievously, leads away his hard-won bride.

But on the very threshold of triumphant consummation Scudamour's and Amoret's fortunes take a turn for the worse. Busy-rane kidnaps her, subjects her to imprisonment and torture, and Scudamour is powerless to cross the intervening moat.

Having brought his model pair of lovers to the conventional happy union, Spenser, in revising the end of the Third Book, is not content to leave them without weighing more delicately the probity of their love, the balance of sensual and spiritual which is to him all important. For, the moment he accepts physical love as the basis of human life, he must justify its perfect compatibility with man's spirituality. The quality of that love becomes all important; one of his main concerns in the innumerable human situations which he borrows, adapts, invents in the Faerie Queene is to reveal any secret impurity defiling love between a virtuous man and woman. And this occasions many of those flashes illuminating human conduct which we associate pre-eminently with Shakespeare.

Spenser sometimes projects the ideal reconciliation of spirit and flesh backwards into an Eden before the Fall or a Golden

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Age—not, as may appear, from nostalgia, but to establish a prototype for oblique social criticism:

But antique age yet in the infancie
Of time, did live then like an innocent,
In simple truth and blamelesse chastic,
Ne then of guile had made experiment,
But voide of vile and treacherous intent,
Held vertue for it selfe in soveraine awe:
Then loyall love had royall regiment,
And each unto his lust did *make* a lawc,
From all forbidden things his liking to withdraw.

.
Then bcautie, which was made to represent
The great Creatours own resemblance bright,
Unto abuse of lawlesse lust was lent,
And made the baitc of bestiall delight:
Then faire grew foule, and foule grew faire in sight,
And that which wont to vanquish God and man,
Was made the vassall of the victors might;
Then did her glorious flowre wex dead and wan,
Despisd and troden downe of all that overran.³⁵

Chastity is not to be taken here in its ascetic sense, as in the case of Bclphoebe; it is loyal and faithful love, gladly accepting proper restraint of law. It is the keystone of a healthy society.

Marriage in all its multiple meanings is Spenser's reconciliation of Renaissance and Reformation, flesh and spirit, fusing Platonism and Christianity. It is no easy solution. Even a fore-ordained marriage, he knows well, does not close the door on this problem of the fine line between love and lust, the drawing of which occupies him even more than it does Shakespeare, whose Adonis speaks almost with Spenser's voice when he turns on Venus:

"Call it not love, for Love to heaven is fled,
Since sweating Lust on earth usurped his name;
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed,
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame;
Which the hot tyrant stains and soon bereaves,
As caterpillars do the tender leaves/"

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This distinction, as we have seen earlier, recurs frequently in Shakespeare's later work. In *Othello* a newly married couple are, like Scudamour and Amoret, threatened with separation at the very beginning of their honeymoon. Desdemona's justification for accompanying her husband is simply stated: "The rites for which I love him are bereft me." *Othello* is more elaborate and less convincing in his echo of Shakespeare's famous sonnet:*

Vouch with me, Heaven, I therefore beg it not
To please the palate of my appetite,
Nor to comply with heat, the young affects
In my defunct and proper satisfaction,
But to be free and bounteous to her mind.³⁶

Nobility and purity are here, but also disaster like Scudamour's. Even before the play progresses, one wonders whether *Othello* is not rationalizing, and whether Desdemona's innocent candor is not, like her marriage, too impulsive. For generals to take their wives to the battlefield is not wise; Enobarbus would have spoken bluntly to the point. In thus rashly winning over the Senators, in exaggerating their daily necessity to each other, in brushing custom aside, both Desdemona and *Othello* help to create the very situation which makes possible the undermining of their marriage.

4.

Spenser's two wedding songs are triumphant vindications of the poet's urge to restate his central themes. That most poets actually have few themes disconcerts those who overprize originality and inventiveness,! but great themes are few and imply

* Sonnet 116:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments.

While "marriage of true minds" expresses Platonic transcendence, *Othello*'s version is overpassionate, however pure. Either Shakespeare is too rhetorical, or *Othello* in overshooting the mark deceives himself.

t Prothalamion, strictly speaking, celebrates betrothal, to an Elizabethan virtually as binding as a wedding and similar in pageantry.

t Poets in this respect are like painters who produce a dozen varying canvases of the same subject. Limitation of theme seems to have dried up the stream of Arnold's poetry, but Donne progresses by richer variations.

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much, and the stature of a poet is determined by the wisdom of his choice and the increasing maturity of his restatement. Marriage is an inevitable theme for Spenser, and fortunately in his day had a freshness which its repetition since has wilted for many poets.

At least on one occasion, when Colin surprises the Graces dancing on the green,³⁷ Spenser introduces his own love into the Faerie Queene. In a poet whose writings are so conspicuously all of one piece it is not surprising to find this thread of personal lyricism woven into his epic-romance. Even his separate love lyrics are fully understood only in relation to the Faerie Queene; for all those years of preoccupation with individual, social, moral, philosophic aspects of love and marriage give richness and profundity to the later poems. In his great work he fails to attain complete clarity; he gets lost in hair-breadth distinctions between love and lust, seduced at times into revulsion from the physical, at others into the beauty of sensuality. In his less ambitious poetry these contradictions are resolved. Especially his concept of married love, explored more than fully realized in the Faerie Queene, finds culmination in his wedding songs, for, no longer hobbled by philosophical and moral complexity, he strikes a natural poise of physical and spiritual. Both songs are the final fruit of his love poetry (as *An Hymne of Heavenly Love* of his religious), the consummation of technical experimentation reaching back to the *Elisa Song* and the *Dido Elegy of the Calender*, and of a conception of love slowly maturing for twenty years to a justification in his own experience.

It is better to read the wedding songs than to talk about them. Still it may be profitable to indicate how Spenser's greatest personal symbolism is refined both in content and technique to its ultimate form. His *Amoretfi* and wedding songs already exist in the matrix of the Faerie Queene, and comparison of a few related passages enables us to isolate the rare emotional quality of his final expression.

Spenser was nearing forty when he courted and married Elizabeth Boyle. He had already lived a full life and achieved fame as the poet's poet. From youth, when he had married and soon lost

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his wife,* to the mature wisdom of the prime of life he had been writing about love and marriage. Now as he approached the event which was to give him new lease and new stimulation to his poetry, he composed a sonnet sequence on his own courtship which falls surprisingly short of three by younger contemporaries. Even to many Spenserians the Amoretti are important primarily for autobiographical and historical reasons. To the ordinary reader they remain, with few exceptions, graceful but frigid.

Undoubtedly they are in part reworking of earlier poetry in a rapidly outmoded fashion, and they seem lifeless to us largely because, unlike Sidney and Shakespeare and Drayton; Spenser does not rebel against the Petrarchan conventions. He is the last great poet to accept them and work inside their limitations with ease and mastery, often with the sheer pleasure in craftsmanship of a composer writing a fugue. Though technically original, almost all of these sonnets are traditional in subject, in imagery, in emotional shifts, in thematic development. Inclined to side with the rebels against the "poetasters/" we are likely to forget how rich the Petrarchan tradition is, and so to miss the quiet delight which Spenser derives in his Amoretti from singing of his own love in the accents of his peers long dead. For those who listen closely there is individuality and warm feeling, to which convention is not necessarily hostile.

That the convention is not to blame is evident in his marriage poems. Epithalamion, the song for his own bride, is, paradoxically, written in the strict classic tradition, whereas Prothalamion, composed for the double betrothal of the Ladies {Catherine and Elizabeth Somerset, is only slightly related to that convention; yet the first is the more personal. Though many will never see the Amoretti as anything except "sugared sonnets/" few will question the intensely personal feeling in the equally conventional Epithalamion, the chief originality of which is its emotional orientation.

It is hard today to appreciate fully the novelty of blending passionate love with marriage. If we turn to Chaucer's *Troilus* and *Criseyde*, the greatest English love poem prior to Spenser, we can better estimate the extent of the revolution and understand why

* See A. C. Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser*, Johns Hopkins, 1945, for evidence of Spenser's first marriage.

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Chaucer's kindly Pandarus becomes Shakespeare's ignominious pander. Chaucer is writing in the spirit of the Middle Ages (though with the technique of the Renaissance) when marriage was a social and economic contract having little to do with love. That a man should fall in love with the woman he married appeared to the Middle Ages a pure accident—frequently an inconvenience. Criseyde is a young widow and Troilus a bachelor, yet they are too much in love ever to consider marriage. On this rock Ascham foundered, unable to conceive of such a non-moral standard. His Puritan abhorrence of the "bold bawdry" and "foulest adultery" of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, on the other hand, would have been incomprehensible to the earlier age, when Arthurian legends were actually preserved by pious monks copying in monasteries. This change in point of view is not Spenser's invention nor is it Ascham's; but Spenser is the first English poet to give the revolutionary change imaginative richness and even a certain philosophical meaning.

Novelty is not the poem's great distinction; yet nowhere else is the ideal of marriage so beautifully realized and expressed. Though like all great love poetry its basis is frankly physical, the Epithalamion contains no false note, nothing in bad taste. The supreme praise which Grierson gives to Milton's hymn to married love in *Paradise Lost*, fine as that passage is, belongs to Spenser.

That the spirit and form of the epithalamium early seized Spenser's imagination explains his easy mastery.* In the First Book of the *Faerie Queene* we come upon this casual echo:

And eke the Graces seemed all to sing,
Hymen 10 Hymen, dauncing all around,³⁸

and of course the betrothal of Una to Redcross at the end of the book³⁹ is an early sketch for the Epithalamion,¹ as is Amoretti 70, one of the sonnets certainly not to any ear deficient in emotion:

* His juvenile translations from Bellay for the Theatre in 1569 may well have led him to read Bellay's elaborately titled *Epithalame sur le Afariage de Tresillustre Philibert Emanuel, Due De Savoye, et Tresillustre Princesse Marguerite de France*, etc., a modernization of the ancient form, with its solemn note *Au Lecteur*. Spenser was as familiar with the originals as with Italian and French derivatives. There are traces of epithalamium in the 18th Book of the *Iliad* and in the 18th Idyll of Theocritus. Among Latin poets Catullus, Statius, Claudian wrote in this form. Spenser probably knew them all, Catullus beyond question.

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Goe to my love, where she is carelesse layd,
yet in her winters bowre not well awake:
tell her the joyous time wil not be staid
unlesse she doe him by the forelock take.
Bid her therefore her selfe soone ready make,
to wayt on love amongst his lovely crew:
where every one that misseth then her make,
shall be by him amearst with penance dew.
Make hast therefore sweet love, whilst it is prime,
for none can call againe the passed time.

The way Spenser develops by poetic experiment the felicitous refrain is equally typical of his continuity.*

In the flame of personal passion even archaic technical devices are transmuted. The itemized catalogue of feminine beauty, derived from the Song of Solomon, strikes most modern ears as cold and grotesque in Amoretti 15:

Ye tradefull Merchants, that with weary toile,
do seeke most precious things to make your gain;
and both the Indias of their treasures spoile†,
what needeth you to seeke so farre in vaine?
For loe my love doth in her selfe containe
all this worlds riches that may farre be found,

* The neighbour woods around with hollow murmur ring.
[Faerie Queene, 1.8.11.]

The woods, *the* hills, the rivers shall resound
The mournful accent of my sorrowes ground. [Astrophel.]

With noyse whereof the quyre of Byrds resounded
their anthemes sweet devized of loves prayse,
that all the woods theyr ecchoes back rebounded.
[Amoretti, 19.]

The basic form of the Epithalamion:

The woods shall to me answer and my Eccho ring,
is varied slightly according to the sense of each stanza, and finally reversed,
as in an elegy:

The woods no more us answer, nor our eccho ring.

† Our modern preference is Donne's dramatic version in *The Sunne Rising*:

Whether both the India's of spice and Myne
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee.

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if Saphyres, loe her eies be Saphyres plaine,
if Rubies, loe hir lips be Rubies sound:
If Pearles, hir teeth be pearles both pure and round;
if ivorie, her forehead ivory weene;
if Gold, her locks are finest gold on ground;
if silver, her faire hands are silver sheene.
But that which fairest is, but few behold,
her mind adorn'd with vertues manifold.

That such a catalogue at least need not be cold Spenser proves in
portraying Serena with the sensuality of Ovid or Ariosto:

Her ivorie necke, her alabaster brest,
Her paps, which like white silken pillowes were,
For loves in soft delight thereon to rest;
Her tender sides, her bellie white and clere,
Which like an Altar did it selfe upreare,
To offer sacrifice divine thereon;
Her goodly thighes, whose gloric did appeare
Like a triumphall Arch, and thereupon
The spoiles of Princes hang'd, which were in battel won.

Those daintie parts, the dearlings of delight,
Which mote not be prophan'd of common eyes,
Those villeins vew'd. . . .⁴⁰

But it is not until Epithalainion that this itemized portrait
comes to full life and the quaint catalogue redeems itself. Spenser
avoids extremes of cold anatomy and sensual scrutiny, coalescing
both of the above passages to express frank delight in the physical
beauty of his bride:

Tell me ye merchants daughters did ye see
So fayre a creature in your towne before,
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,
Adorned with beautyes grace and vertues store,
Her goodly eyes like Saphyres shining bright,
Her forehead ivory white,
Her cheekes like apples which the sun hath rudded,
Her lips like cherries charming men to byte,
Her breast like to a bowle of creame uncruddled,

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Her paps like lillies budded,
Her snowie necke like to a marble towre,
And all her body like a pallace fayre,
Ascending uppe with many a stately stayre,
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre;

and this delight is perfectly poised with the spiritual:

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright,
Garnisht with heavenly gifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight.

.
There dwels sweet love and constant chastity,
Unspotted faith and comely womanhood,
Regard of honour and mild modesty,
There vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne,
And giveth lawes alone. . . .

The sentiment derives from neo-Platonic earthly and heavenly beauty; the imagery echoes the Song of Solomon; the metamorphosis is Spenser's.

Catullus 61, written to celebrate the marriage of Manlius Torquatus and Vinia Aurunculeia, is especially in Spenser's mind as he writes,* but his modifications, even when slight, are highly individual. Catullus wishes that a son may be born to Manlius and Vinia "who shall be like his father and so attest his mother's purity." Nothing could be more alien than this cynical jocularly to Spenser's marriage song, in which the prayer for children is holy as well as prophetic.

Yet sage and serious Spenser in altering the Roman tone throws no pall over the occasion by abolishing the fun:

This day for ever to me holy is,
Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,
Poure not by cups, but by the belly full,
Poure out to all that wull,

* The main elements in the cpithalamium—the invocation; the waking and dressing of the bride; the procession; the torches; the wine and feasting; the shouts to Hymen; the impatience of the groom for night; the plea for harmonious love and for offspring—all occur in Spenser.

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And sprinkle all the postes and wals with wine,
That they may sweat, and drunken be withall.
Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,
And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine. . . .

Halfway through his poem Catullus cries out: "Let not the merry Fescennine jesting be silent long/" and launches into the traditional indecent fun at the expense of the bride and groom, and into the phallic symbolism of the old fertility rites. Donne, in his *Epithalamium on the Princess Elizabeth*, daughter of James I, composed in 1613, expands this element of the pagan wedding song with gusto in terms of sparrows and barnyard fowl:

The husband cocke lookes out, and straight is sped.
And meets his wife, which brings her feather-bed.

Spenser does not ignore the traditional jesting. With instinctive good taste he purges it of grossness without losing the humor inherent in the situation. He is intensely serious, never solemn nor prudish:

But for this time it ill ordained was,
To choose the longest day in all the yeare,
And shortest night, when longest fitter were.

And toward the end, after exorcising evil spirits from his marriage bed, he prays half humorously for a quiet, undisturbed night:

Ne let the unpleasant Ouyrc of Frogs still croking
Make us to wish their choking.
Let none of these their drery accents sing;
Ne let the woods them answer, nor their eccho ring.

A local touch from the neighboring Irish bog.

At one of the stages in his poem where convention coincides perfectly with the natural impulse which it expresses, Spenser voices the groom's impatience:

Ah when will this long weary day have end,
And lende me leave to come unto my love?

We are reminded of another occasion where this impatience for the day to be over and the night to come is transferred from groom to bride. Just about the time that Spenser was composing

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his rhapsodic hymn and getting married in Ireland to Elizabeth Boyle, a younger contemporary of his in London was likewise composing an epithalamium—somewhat different in form but similar in spirit:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a waggoner
As Phaeton would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That runaway's eyes may wink; and, Romeo,
Leap to these arms, untalked of and unseen.
Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love grow bold,
Think true love acted, simple modesty.¹¹

These lines show the same frank recognition of the physical, blended with modesty and reverence; and, like Spenser's, the consummation of Romeo's and Juliet's love is sanctioned by marriage. Juliet's speech is so much the substance of the play, so natural an expression of her feelings that we may overlook Shakespeare's skillful adaptation of the conventional epithalamium.*

Spenser's Epithalamion is intensely dramatic in its rising sweep and sudden shifts of emotion, as well as in its handling of action—the bustle waking the bride, the procession to church, the feasting, the bedding of the bride. Yet for all its complexity it remains song-like, as fine a dramatic lyric as English poetry provides. Its nearest rival is Prothalamion, in which the dramatic is less prominent and the lyric more. Unlike Arnold, whose *Thyrsis* seems inhibited by his fear of repeating the Scholar Gypsy, Spenser manages to avoid any staleness, so that his two wedding songs do not really compete. The Prothalamion is simpler and shorter, and only loosely related to the epithalamium convention.

* Along with his incorporation of the formal aubade in the second balcony scene and of the sonnet earlier, this indicates one of the chief ways in which Shakespeare enriches dramatic poetry and enlarges its scope by incorporating lyrical forms along with lyrical feeling.

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Again Spenser draws on the rich store of the past—on idyll, elegy, and complaint primarily—though with such unusual freedom that the Prothalamion is not so much the greatest achievement in a form of poetry as a form unique. His chief model is his early imitation of Camden, the Epithalamion Thamesis, one of his lost works; his own account of it opens this essay.* Again he demonstrates his mature power by completely transmuting the quaint device of the topographical poem, and again he raids his earlier poetry.

The swans of Prothalamion first appear in Spenser's adaptation, *Ruines of Time*:

Upon that famous Rivers further shore,
There stood a snowie Swan of heavenly hew,
And gentle kindc, as ever Fowle afore;
A fairer one in all the goodlie crew
Of white Strimonian brood might no man view:
There he most sweetly sung the prophecie
Of his owne death in dolefull Elegie.

.
Whilest thus I looked, loe adowne the Lee,
I saw an Harpe stroong all with silver twync,
And made of golde and costlie ivorie,
Swimming. . . .⁴²

And the hint of a casual line in his own *Faerie Qucene*:

That we may us reserve both fresh and strong,
Against the Turneinient which is not long,⁴³

undergoes a sea-change, becoming perhaps the most subtle and haunting refrain in English poetry:

With that, I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe,
Come softly swimmming downe along the Lee;
Two fairer Birds I yet did never see:
The snow which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew,
Nor Jove himselfe when he a Swan would be

* The nature of the lost work we can judge from his later *Marriage of the Thames and Medway*, *Faerie Queene*, 4.11.

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For love of Leda, whiter did appeare:
Yet Leda was they say as white as he,
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing neare;
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle streame, the which them bare,
Seem'd foule to them, and bad his billows spare
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might
Soyle their fayre plumes with water not so fayre,
And marre their beauties bright,
That shone as heavens light,
Against their Brydale day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes runne softly, till I end my Song.

That the whole poem rises from a personal "complaint" into vision—a psychological situation which had early given birth to a poetic convention, whose unconscious duplication in Keats' Ode to the Nightingale attests its firm basis in human need—paradoxically gives the poem its exquisite remoteness. The deliberate dramatization of personal difficulties, followed by their abrupt dismissal, moors the poem in reality while detaching it.

The Epithalamium is gorgeous, dramatically triumphant; elaborate in its imagery, rhythms, cadences, but personal in feeling. The Prothalamion is subdued in emotion, more delicate in imagery, more subtle in varied music; it is oblique, especially in the symbolism of the two Swans and the marriage of the rivers Lee and Thames, so skillfully interwoven to shadow forth the double marriage of the two daughters of the Earl of Somerset. If it were necessary to choose between the two, most poets would prefer its rare quality of a dream, grave yet joyous and tender, set to incomparable music.

Without long immersion in the Faerie Queene it is impossible to appreciate Spenser's full greatness. But for those who lack time and patience for that experience not only Spenser's technical mastery but his true quality is best perceived in his wedding songs.



SPENSER'S PALACE OF ART

SPENSER'S House of Busyrane, like his earlier Castle Joyous, is an art gallery, anticipating in lavish detail Tennyson's Palace of Art. But the display is tapestry rather than painting. The loves of the gods arc hung around the walls—Jove's affairs with Helle, Antiope, Europa, Leda, Danae, Semele, Alcmena; Apollo's pursuit of Daphne; Mars and Venus; some eighteen stanzas in all. For such tapestries he finds ample precedents among earlier poets, especially Ovid,¹ who was an inexhaustible source of pictorial matter to all the Renaissance painters, tapestry makers, poets. The central focus for tapestry in Ovid is the Arachne episode in *Metamorphosis* 6, which Spenser retells with considerable freedom in *Muiopotmos*.

The extraordinary sense of texture in the Busyrane hangings has been often observed:

Woven with gold and silke so close and nere,
That the rich metall lurked privily,
As faining to be hid from envious eye;
Yet here, and there, and every where unwares
It shewd it selfe, and shone unwillingly;
Like a discolourd Snake, whose hidden snares
Through the greene grass his long bright burnisht back
declares.²

These tapestries are part of the evil though beautiful magic (the snake image is warning) that vanishes when Britomart breaks the spell; but nothing magical is intended in the hangings of Mercilla's House, where the quality of workmanship and texture is equally rare:

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All over her a cloth of state was spred,
Not of rich tisew, nor of cloth of gold,
Nor of ought else, that may be richest red,
But like a cloud, as likest may be told,
That her brode spreading wings did wyde unfold;
Whose skirts were bordred with bright sunny beams,
Glistring like gold, amongst the plights enrold,
And here and there shooting forth silver streames,
Mongst which crept little Angels through the glittering
gleames.³

Britomart is even more impressed when she passes from the tapestried room to Busyrane's second gallery:

For not with arras made in painefull loome,
But with pure gold it all was overlayd,
Wrought with wilde Antickes, which their follies playd,
In the rich metall, as they living were.⁴

Frequently, as here, Spenser finds his chosen artistic medium unequal to the demands of his pictorial conception. This mosaic craftsmanship or hammered gold-leaf can hardly be taken literally; its superiority to the "painefull loome" is figurative. Yet to Mr. Hard "it seems impossible not to conclude that in these portrayals Spenser is indebted less to literary sources, classical or medieval, than to contemporary tapestry-work which he saw with characteristically full appreciation!"⁵

What is Spenser up to if he is not trying to transcend the artistic limitations of tapestry? In overemphasizing the actual objects of art which Spenser could have known, historical criticism unintentionally limits the freedom both of Spenser's imagination and of words as a pictorial medium. The visual imagery of Homer, of Virgil, and of Ovid is far more expressive than the painting of their day; not until the high Renaissance does painting reach comparable development: and it is hard to believe that Spenser was content merely to reproduce tapestries of the sort that he actually saw, though there is little question that what he saw in tapestry modified what he read and dreamed of. We cannot so mechanically account for genius, nor should we ever forget that Spenser's pictorial medium is words.

The butterfly in Muiopotmos is one of his best and least familiar tapestries:

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Amongst these leaves she made a Butterflie,
With excellent device and wondrous slight,
Fluttring among the Olives wantonly,
That seem'd to live, so like it was in sight.
The velvet nap which on his wings doth lie,
The silken downe with which his backe is dight,
His broad outstretched homes, his hayrie thies,
His glorious colours, and his glistering eies. . . .⁶

Spenser never laid eyes on any tapestry capable of this subtlety of texture and highlighting, for which the nearest approximation is perhaps the Japanese combination of cut velvet and silk embroidery in threads of varying fineness. The delicacy of this butterfly's texture, a detail of the web woven by Pallas to overgo Arachne, surpasses anything in Ovid. Spenser catches a hint of such rare effects from Marot's version of Petrarch, which he translated for Van der Noodt's *Theatre* (1569), his first published verse:

White seemed her robes, yet woven so they were,
As snowe and golde together had bene wrought.

But in the texture of Acrasia's veil he transcends Petrarch and Marot as well as Ovid:

All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
More subtile web Arachne cannot spin,
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched dew, do not in th'aire more lightly flee.⁷

He has in mind both aspects of Arachne, superlative weaver and metamorphosed spider; yet he goes further, for he discards the actual spider filament, leaving only the "scorched dew" clinging to it. No other poet has achieved textural effects of such impalpable delicacy.

Ovid provides the driving impulse behind Spenser, to whom the tapestried butterfly of Pallas "seem'd to live." Earlier in *Muiopotmos* he is translating almost word for word from Ovid Arachne's weaving of Europa's rape, which Spenser reproduces most frequently of all Ovidian stories:

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so lively seene,
That it true Sea, and true Bull ye would weene.

Always, as Mr. Hard points out, Spenser insists upon the reality of his scenes. Often, as in this Europa stanza from Ovid, he secures that reality by the ancient and natural poetic device of shifting from description to narrative (the transition marked here by the change from seem'd to direct statement), thus dropping the "frame" in a dramatization. Europa

seem'd still backe unto the land to looke,
And her play-fellowes aide to call, and feare
The dashing of the waves, that up she tooke
Her daintie feete, and garments gathered nearer
But (Lord) how she in everie member shooke,
When as the land she saw no more appeare,
But a wilde wilderness of waters deepe;
Then gan she greatly to lament and weepe.

Unhampered by the temporal limitations of tapestry and painting, the poet has an advantage when it comes to action.

Spenser is too self-conscious a craftsman not to appreciate advantages like this inherent in the medium of words; he is not merely traditional when he writes:

But living art may not least part expressc,
Nor life-resembling pencill it can paint,
All were it Zeuxis or Praxiteles:
His daedale hand would faile, and greatly faint,
And her perfections with his error taint:
Ne Poets wit, that passeth Painter farre
In picturing the parts of beautie daint,
So hard a workmanship adventure darre,

For fear through want of words her excellence to marre.⁸

Chastity itself (and Elizabeth), the occasion of this passage, is superior to any portrait which he can put into words, just as being is to appearing. This seems to imply not only an advantage of poetry over painting, but also of nature over all art.

On resuming his narrative of Clarion, the butterfly, in Muioptomos he turns from Arachne to the actual spider:

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So soone as Clarion he did beholde,
His heart with vengefull malice inly swelt,
And weaving straight a net with manie a folde
About the cave, in which he lurking dwelt,
With fine small cords about it stretched wide,
So finely sponne, that scarce they could be spide.

Not anie damzell, which her vaunteth most
In skilfull knitting of soft silken twyne;

.
Nor anie skil'd in workmanship embost;
Nor anie skiTd in loupes of fingring fine,
Might in their divers cunning ever dare,
With this so curious networke to compare.

Indeed, the spider web surpasses even that "subtil gin"* which Vulcan fashioned to ensnare his wife sleeping with Mars. Here the natural spiderweb is sufficiently exquisite without superseding it, as in the passage quoted earlier, by the purely poetic creation—"fine nets . . . of scorched dew/" Underlying the two passages is a seeming contradiction: Acrasia's veil, a work of art, is beyond the reach of nature; the spider web, a work of nature, is beyond the reach of Vulcan's art. That Acrasia's veil, wrought by evil magic, signifies delusion only partly explains this inconsistency.

"It has often been noticed that [Spenser] is fond of describing pictures or tapestries, but it has not been equally noticed that he usually puts such artifacts in places which he thinks evil/" This shrewd observation Mr. Lewis carries too far when he concludes that, except in the House of Alma, "everywhere else Spenser uses art to suggest the artificial in its bad sense—the sham or imitation/"⁹ Spenser is not so easily systematized. I have already considered one instance of tapestries, those in Mrcilla's House, which have no possible connotation of evil, but are symbolic of Elizabeth's magnificence as queen and embodiment of Justice. Nature versus Art is not a fundamental Spenserian antithesis, like Day and Night and others which Mr. Lewis considers, though it is frequently one means of expressing a fundamental antithesis—Truth versus Falsehood. Spenser's great strength and vitality come largely from his writing what he knows of people and places; even the dream world of the Faerie Queene is constructed partly of

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homely, natural imagery.* But the conception of Nature in Spenser's day was not that of Wordsworth or even of Pope. Nature and Artifice are sometimes, but not consistently, rivals to a poet as much at home in the idyls of Theocritus as in the Irish and English countryside. Spenser is often concerned with different levels of reality—the higher reality (Platonic and Christian), the reality of the world around him, the heightened reality of art—but he does not always keep these distinctions clear. In spirit he is close to Yeats' opposition of Life and Art: the vitality of the first is marred by transience, the permanence of the second by bloodlessness. Unlike Yeats, he does not consistently feel the antithesis.

He is too passionate a lover of "artifacts" to give them exclusively or even dominantly a symbolism of evil, though this love does not keep him on occasion from using art to signify false beauty. And he is disarmingly naive rather than philosophical in saying, for instance, that the variegated, sweet-smelling wildflowers gathered by nymphs from the brookside

richer seem'd than any tapestry,
That Princes bowres adorne with painted imagery.¹⁰

This is simply a poetic device of intensification, a kind of hyperbole. In material riches (such as these tapestries and the inlaid gold in Busyrane's second chamber) the Elizabethan took a fresh and artless delight; he probably found less bathos than we do in the culmination of Marlowe's splendid, cosmic passage in *Tamburhine*: "the sweet fruition of an earthly crown."

So far as he has in mind certain advantages in the medium of poetry over that of art, Spenser has valid reason for his preference; but in ranking poetry highest he does not rank other arts low.^f

* See above, pp. 38-9.

^t Perhaps Spenser's occasional disparagement of arts in which he delighted is due partly to his limited firsthand knowledge. Tireless research cannot make out that the tapestries and paintings on display during his lifetime at Westminster and Hampton Court, or in great houses of men like Leicester, provided a very good introduction to the art of the Continent. Ariosto, who had direct access to the greatest European art of the time, expresses (*Orlando Furioso*, 7.11) an opposite opinion:

Her shape is of such perfect symmetry,
As best to feign the industrious painter knows,

though "industrious" from Ariosto suggests a sly smile. He has Bradamante

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Instinctively he sees from the artist's point of view; he apostrophizes the designer of the Leda tapestry:

O wondrous skill, and sweet wit of the man,
That her in daffadillics sleeping made. . . ."

The moral connotation of the Busyrane tapestries is forgotten in the craftsman's unalloyed *delight*. He takes details borrowed from poetry and the graphic arts and composes so much in the spirit of the painter and with such an extraordinary sense of design that we are constantly reminded of certain styles of engraving and painting, more than of tapestry, and frequently of actual pictures.

Spenser is the artist's poet. With the catholic taste for all the arts and unconcern about demarcations typical of the Renaissance, his poetry is filled with paintings, tapestries, architectural designs, musical instruments, mosaics, engravings, strange machines, fragments of statuary, ancient relics. His great Dragon Sin, wheeling through the end of the First Book of the Faerie Queene, might be constructed after a Leonardo fantasy; it anticipates by a quarter of a century some of the machine effects designed by Inigo Jones for the costly masques of the Stuarts. This interest in other forms of art often clutters Spenser's poetry, yet it is the source of much power and beauty besides mere decorative effect. The Faerie Queene may at times appear to be a series of versified didactic statements to which are appended decorative medallions, but we must distinguish between pictorial effects which exist almost for their own sake, and those which embody in concrete terms the central meaning of the poem.

The Romantics accepted and enjoyed—even exploited—the pictorial in Spenser, usually content with pointing out compositions in the style of their favorite painters, an irresistible and incidental pleasure in reading the Faerie Queene. Their appreciation of the pictorial is more imaginative, but critically they do not advance beyond Dryden, who moves with easy grace among the confusions of the Horatian doctrine, *ut pictura poesis*, to which Spenser himself without reservation subscribed. Like Ariosto's, his pictorial methods and effects show this doctrine, with

feast in a hall magnificently decorated with paintings, not tapestries (O. F. 32.95 & 96). The guests at first cannot eat for wonderment, till one cries:

First fill your bellies, and then feast your eyes.

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its virtues and defects, in full operation. In seeking analogies to Spenser in painting and the other graphic arts we cannot stop with what he knew,¹² but must range from archaic to modern art. This range is a tribute to the potentialities of poetry as a pictorial medium, as well as to Spenser's special genius.

2.

Poets like painters determine as well as reflect the ways in which we see the world around us. Wordsworth as much as Constable taught us new ways of seeing landscape; Baudelaire and Eliot as much as any contemporary painter new ways of seeing our cities. Visual imagery, the common ground of poetry and painting, is less definite, less pure, but in some respects more richly suggestive in poetry.

Spenser was born with a painter's eye. In closeness of observation he often suggests Wordsworth;* in fusion of sight and touch he anticipates Keats; in occasional minute fidelity of detail he is like Tennyson and Browning. This comparison of an old man's white hair hanging down to his shoulders,

As hoarie frost with spangles doth attire,
The mossy braunches of an Oke halfe ded,¹³

is Wordsworthian. Spenser's eye is not scientifically focused,¹⁴ nor does he specifically and accurately distinguish delicate shadings of color in vegetation—no more, in fact, than Wordsworth. Yet we find in the Ruines of Rome this passage:

Like as the seeded field greene grasse first showes,
Then from greene grasse into a stalke doth spring,
And from a stalke into an eare forth-growes,
Which care the fruitful! graine doth shortly bring;
And as in season due the husband mowes

* Long before Wordsworth's gratitude to Dorothy for giving him "eyes and ears" Spenser writes:

The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde,
In this delightfull land of Faery,
Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
And sprinkled with such sweet variety,
Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,
That I nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight,
My tedious travell doe forget thereby. [Faerie Queene, 6. Proem.]

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The waving lockes of those faire yeallow heares,
Which bound in sheaves, and layd in comely rowes,
Upon the naked fields in stackes he reares. . . ,¹⁵

and in Muiopotnios:

The woods, the rivers, and the medowes green,
With his aire-cutting wings he measured wide,
Ne did he leave the mountaines bare unseene
Nor the ranke grassie fennes delights. . . .¹⁸

These lines resemble many famous passages in Wordsworth where color is conveyed by other qualities than specific hue. "Ranke grassie fennes/" the last image, carries us beyond Wordsworth to Keats, whose sense of texture and fusion of sight, touch, smell are anticipated (so far as this generalizing mode permits) not only by Shakespeare* but by this Spenserian herb garden:

Lavender still gray,
Ranke smelling Rue, and Cummin good for eyes,
.
Sharp fsope, good for greenc woundes remedies,
Cool Violets, and Orpine growing still,
Dull poppies
Cold lettuce, and refreshing Rosemarine.¹⁷

And these two images:

Like as a flowrc, whose silken leaves small
Long shut up in the bud from heavens vew,
She mote perceive a litle purple mold
That like a rose her silken leaves did fair unfold,¹⁸

anticipate Shakespeare's identification of Imogen, who, like Pastorella, is delicately birth-marked:

* Compare Shakespeare in the Winter's Tale (4.4.103-6):

Here's flowers for you;
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to be wi' the sun
And with him rises weeping. . . .

Such flower passages arc, of course, traditional; Shakespeare and Spenser simply excel.

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On her left breast
A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
F the bottom of a cowslip.¹⁹

Shakespeare surpasses Spenser, and both surpass Browning's

As a shut bud that holds a bee.²⁰

This miniature technique and fidelity to detail are reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts, of medieval painting; they also naturally suggest to us the Pre-Raphaelites. Burne-Jones designed but never finished a series of panels illustrating the *Faerie Queene*; yet it is not Spenser but Shakespeare who, in the drowning of Ophelia, provided the most typical Pre-Raphaelite subject. The range of the Pre-Raphaelites is too narrow, their fidelity to detail too close, to catch more than incidental pictorial effects of either poet.

The analogies with painting and other graphic arts which Spenser constantly suggests are inescapable, but always limited to a partial area of agreement; this we must bear in mind, lest we fall into the confusion which mars some of the best earlier investigations of Spenser's word-painting. The harm wrought by *ut pictura poesis* is in direct proportion to the literalness of its application, of which exclusively Ruskinian standards of naturalism are only one example. Among Renaissance poets and painters naturalism coexisted with idealization; this divided allegiance is one reason why we cannot truthfully say that Nature versus Art is a fundamental antithesis of Spenser's, for in imitating classical imitations of nature as well as nature herself he had the confused authority of Renaissance criticism.²¹ To say, as Hazlitt and Campbell said, that one painter, Rubens (the early Titian would be a wiser choice), can do most justice to Spenser is to generalize a partial kinship ludicrously; for not even a single school of painters could illustrate Spenser, whose pictorial technique is more varied and eclectic than Dante's or Milton's. Similarities in color are much less important than kinship in design and feeling. In the knowledge that Spenser was well acquainted, along with his age, with pageants, engravings, wood-cuts, emblem books, to hold him to their pictorial limitations is more hindrance than help. Typical of these many "influences" is his use, so far as we can trace it, of emblem books.

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Spenser often combines emblematic details (he helped translate the first emblem book into English in 1569) and their crudely pictured processions with the actual pageants so popular in his own day. Since his medium is poetry, he can present his Masque of Cupid as an actual theatrical pageant, not only with colorful emblematic costumes, but with trumpet music and sweep of movement; the actors pause to exhibit themselves as they cross the page. His Seven Deadly Sins were no doubt partly inspired by emblem books, though their iconography had long been familiar in poetry before this graphic representation was hit upon. Again they are presented in a pageant (as in Doctor Faustus), but with effects beyond the reach of Elizabethan theatrical representation. Like Shakespeare's scenery, they require poetry.

The mixture of realistic detail and intellectual imagery in this procession of the Sins disturbs some. Gluttony, whom we have met earlier, is for the most part strikingly realistic:

And by his side rode loathsome Gluttony,
Deformed creature, on a filthie swyne,
His belly was up-blowne with luxury,
And eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne,

.
In greene vine leaves he was right fitly clad;
For other clothes he could not weare for heat,
And on his head an ivie girland had,
From under which fast trickled downe the sweat;
And in his hand did beare a bouzing can,
Of which he supt so oft, that on his seat
His dronken corse he scarsc upholden can,

In shape and life more like a monster, then a man.²²

But in the midst of this realistic portrait Spenser suddenly gives Gluttony a neck "long and fyne . . . like a Crane/" symbolizing pleasure in tasting and swallowing which Gluttony would like to prolong to this preposterous extent. The moment we visualize this, of course, we face the grotesque. Fletcher, who compares the realistic parts of the portrait to Rubens' "Triumph of Bacchus" in the Uffizi, explains that Spenser got the inharmonious neck from the emblem books.²³ North, on the other hand, side-steps the issue by warning us that words are for the imagination,

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that painting has little, perhaps, to do with such subjects, "for her power is limited/"²⁴ Neither is satisfactory; Fletcher underestimates poetry, North painting, both the imagination.

Spenser's free poetic portrayal transcends the often crude emblem books by adding to its intellectualized imagery a richness and realism of detail similar to Rubens, whose work of course he never saw. The result is hybrid, drawing on different levels of experience and using different modes of expression. What Spenser knows is the emblem books. What he achieves in such instances as Gluttony is closer to Rubens on the one hand, and on the other to the powerful grotesqueries of the School of Hieronymus Bosch, who, unlike Rubens, were often concerned with morality in their fantasies. And a chief common source of such moral imagistic fantasy to all western Europe was Revelation used again in our day by Mr. Eliot in the *Waste Land*.

"The Faerie Queene is packed with emblematic imagery/" says Fletcher. "It is the least successfully managed. At the very outset we see the Lady Una leading a Lamb in leash. Illustrated, it would form an emblem of Innocence led by Truth. But, on the literal side, for Una to drag that poor Lamb along with her on her long quest would be an outrage."²⁵ Like other critics too much swayed by naturalism, he obviously is preoccupied by "the literal side" to an extent irrelevant to the poem and fatal to the image. The lamb, having served its iconographical purpose, is dropped by Spenser before it can become either a physical encumbrance to Una or an object of pseudo-humanitarian pity to us. Despite the verb "lad" the lamb is really a space, not a time image. Since Hallam, too, has found this opening picture of Una in its snow whiteness "a hideous image,"²⁶ we may best judge for ourselves:

A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
And heavie sat upon her palfrey slow:
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.²⁷

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The iconography of the lamb (innocence), the ass (humility), Una (truth) is easily assimilated and beautifully fused with the broader Platonic-Christian symbolism of light hidden in darkness. To anyone not perversely literal, the contrast of this subtlety with the vigorous and intentional grotesquerie of the Seven Deadly Sins illustrates the extraordinary range of emblematic effects in Spenser.*

More important than any influence of wood-cuts and engravings in emblem books of his day is a fundamental difference between these two equally characteristic portraits—Gluttony and Una. The first is a "set piece"; though rising naturally out of the House of Pride canto and essential to its full meaning, the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins is elaborated in such descriptive detail that it becomes an end in itself, an example of those decorative pendants often objected to as violating the nature of poetry by trespassing on the painter's preserve: whereas Una's portrait, while separate and distinct, is so skillful a summation of the meaning of the First Book that its decorative element is subordinate, more means than end. Only an extreme purist would deny its poetic justification.

Naturally, it is in the "set pieces" that Spenser is most conspicuously the painter, and there we must look to estimate his sense of line, composition, and color, before considering more powerful effects where the pictorial has deeper poetic meaning.

3.

Spenser's description of Mount Acidalc in its essentials might be an engraving after Mantegna's "Parnassus." Spenser's dimensions are more spacious, but his level-top hill set in a plain is formalized in the style of Mantegna:

It was a hill plaste in an open plaine,
That round about was bordered with a wood
Of matchless bight, that seem'd th' earth to disdaine,

* The origin, variety, and persistence into the most sophisticated period of Italian painting of such iconography as Spenser uses has been brilliantly demonstrated by Mr. Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, Oxford Press, New York, 1939. What he has to say is especially relevant to Spenser, since he is primarily concerned with the neo-Platonic influence on Piero di Cosimo, Bandinelli, Titian, and Michelangelo.

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In which all trees of honour stately stood,
And did all winter as in sommer bud,
Spredde pavilions for the birds to bowre,

And at the foote thereof, a gentle flud
His silver waves did softly tumble downe,

And on the top thereof a spacious plaine
Did spred it selfe, to serve to all delight,

So pleasantly the hill with equall hight,
Did seeme to overlooke the lowly vale. . . .

And against this semi-natural, semi-idyllic background the idealized human figures are similarly if not identically disposed:

There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found
Full merrily, and making gladful glee,
And in the midst a Shepheard piping he did see.

There he did see, that pleased much his sight,
That even he him selfe his eyes envye,
An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
AH raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight.

All they without were raunged in a ring,
And daunced round; but in the midst of them
Three other Ladies did both daunce and sing,
The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,
And like a girlond did in compasse stennne.
And in the midst of those same three was placed
Another Damzell as a precious gemme,
Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced.²⁸

This garland design so frequent in Spenser is found in Botticelli more often than Mantegna, and the final grouping of figures suggests the three Graces in "La Primavera." Such coincidental resemblances almost invariably involve more than one painter. The combination of delicate sensuality and reticence so characteristic of Botticelli is often Spenser's too, and his nudes, despite Hazlitt's and Campbell's preference for Rubens, are often closer

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to Botticelli. Diana, "her lancke loynes ungirt, and breasts unbraste," is surprised at her bath by Venus:

Soone her garments loose
Upgath'ring, in her bosome she comprized,
Well as she might, and to the Goddesse rose,
Whiles *all her Nymphes did like* a girlond her enclose.²⁹

Comparison of Spenser's various naked girls with snaky hair like golden wire to Botticelli's Venus rising from the sea has been frequent.* Less obvious but equally striking is the similarity to Botticelli's "Sleeping Mars" of Spenser's Verdant in the Bower of Bliss:

The young man sleeping by her, seemd to bee
Some goodly swayne of honorable place,
That certes it great pittie was to see
Him his nobilitie so foule deface;
A sweet regard, and amiable grace,
Mixed with a manly *stemnesse did* appcare
Yet *sleeping, in his well* proportioned face,
And on his tender lips the downy heare
Did now but freshly spring, and silken blossomes beare.

His warlike armes, the idle instruments
Of sleeping praise, were hong upon a tree,
And his brave shield, full of old moniments,
Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might sec;
Ne for them, ne for honour cared hee,
Ne ought, that did to his advancement tend,
But in lewd loves, and wastful luxuree,
His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did *spend*:
O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend.³⁰

Spenser's moral sense is stronger, but he catches Botticelli's peculiar quality of beauty—sad, tender, slightly decadent, a fusion of extraordinary grace with manly sternness. Perhaps the haunting sorrow of Botticelli's wakeful Venus shows a gentle intrusion

* "Hair like golden wire/" an image unpleasantly artificial to us until we recall Botticelli, had been a poetic commonplace in English poetry as early as Bevis of Hampton.⁸¹

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of doubt or satiety into pagan beauty. But Verdanfs companion figure, Acrasia, is not Botticelli's Venus.

For a counterpart in painting to Acrasia we must go to Giorgione and Titian.* She is closer to the opulent, arrogant "Urbino Venus" of Titian than to the immaculate, remote beauty of Giorgione's "Sleeping Venus": yet Acrasia has a suggestion of Giorgione's delicacy, and the "Sleeping Venus" is a closer parallel in composition:

Upon a bed of Roses she was layd,
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of sillce and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtile web Arachne cannot spin,
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched dew, do not in th'aire more lightly flee.

Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle
Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild,
And yet through languour of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,
That lifce pure Orient perles adowne it frild,
And her faire eyes sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beamcs, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not; like starry light
Which sparclcling on the silent waves, docs seeme more bright.³²

Any actual influence of Italian painting here probably comes indirectly through Tasso's Armida in *Gerusalemme Liberata*, but Spenser is working with great creative freedom. And the brilliance of the eyes is not found in Giorgione, whose Venus is sleeping, or even in Titian; it is paralleled only in painting of a later age.

Though he never went to Italy, Spenser is temperamentally closer in some ways to the spirit of the Italian Renaissance than

* Mr. Rensselaer Lee suggests that a better parallel may be found among the sixteenth century Italian mannerists, like Bronzino, who see beauty as seductive and capable of rousing baser instincts; whereas Giorgione and Titian accept physical beauty without question. My own choice was partly influenced by the greater familiarity of Giorgione and Titian.

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Milton is. How perfectly he catches the quality of Italian secular painting we see again in the two bathing girls surprised in the Bower of Bliss by Guyon and the Palmer; this encounter, in careful pictorial detail, is not a static and posed composition like Acrasia, but fluid action, a painting come to life. In his intense desire for vitality and movement, which makes even his tapestries like Ovid's "seem to live/" Spenser instinctively dramatizes.

A similar desire for drama among later Italians led to the astonishing technique of Michelangelo and of the great baroque painters, the later Titian and Tintoretto, from whom stems El Greco. By bold foreshortening, as Mr. Panofsky points out,³³ Michelangelo includes within his frescoes figures much too large for their allotted space, figures in his sculptures crowded into and pressing against their marble confines, figures which, whether in paint or stone, attain terrific dynamic energy from this thrust against physical limits. Milton more than Spenser works in this grand style of Michelangelo, creating his titanic angels by what is basically a series of relative proportions: the highest Norwegian pine is to Satan's staff as a wand is to the highest pine. The actual size of Satan, beyond our comprehension, is merely indicated. But the technical analogues in poetry are Donne and Hopkins. Working within the narrow confines of the sonnet, they secure a comparable effect of rhythmic and emotional tension almost exploding the restraining form.

Tintoretto and his followers fall short of Michelangelo's heroic dynamism, but they use every possible device of distortion, foreshortening, flow and interruption of line, grouping, juxtaposition of startling colors to secure dramatic effects of arrested movement which are like "stills" from a movie film. And of course they turn more and more to theatrical subjects. Shakespeare's kinship to these baroque painters has been stressed; for instance, Schiicking: "It is certainly not difficult to find parallels between Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Rubens, or Rembrandt. Comparisons between, say, a scene of horror like Rembrandt's blinding of Samson and the blinding of Gloucester in King Lear almost force themselves upon the mind of the onlooker."³⁴ In the general neglect or denial of Spenser's dramatic sense, his anticipation of Shakespeare in baroque pictorial effects as well as baroque feeling (even allowing that the term "baroque" is becoming dangerously loose) has

been ignored, though comparisons to Rubens and Rembrandt in voluptuous realism and chiaroscuro are frequent.

Chiaroscuro itself, if the contrast between light and shade is sufficiently skillful, is dramatic. There is little drama in the portrait of Una isolated from its context; none the less this portrait, though in black and white, cannot be derived from either the "laid-on" coloring of illuminated manuscripts or any engraving Spenser knew.* The most striking parallel in chiaroscuro is the familiar one of Redcross in the Cave of Error and Rembrandt's "Man with the Helmet":

The youthfull knight could not for ought be staide,
But forth unto the darksome hole he went,
And looked in: his *glistring* armor made
A little glooming light, much like a shade.³⁶

But there are more elaborate baroque effects in Spenser, combining highly developed chiaroscuro with theatrical composition and movement, in which controlled light is focused on melodramatic action in the fashion of Rembrandt's scenes in the temple ("Simeon in the Temple," "The Tribute Money," the "Woman taken in Adultery"), which anticipate stage spotlighting by three centuries. Spenser secures his baroque quality not like Donne or Hopkins by a revolutionary verse technique, but simply by adapting with great originality the painter's sensitivity to light and by exercising the poet's right to drop the frame. This

* "Black and white" in Una's portrait have too positive a value for the phrase to mean mere absence of color, as in drawing. This positive use of black and white probably begins with Spenser's translations from Marot for Van der Noodt's Theatre.³⁵ By contrast, a typical Spenserian engraving effect, uncomplicated by symbolism, is this:

Till that at length she found the troden grass,
In which the tract of peoples footing was,
Under the stecpe foot of a mountame hore;
The same she followcs, till at last she has
A damzell spyde slow footing her before,
That on her shoulders sad a pot of water bore.

[Faerie Queene, 1.3.10]

This is not a "set piece"; it does not slow up narrative to focus on an elaborate portrait; yet it shows easy and effective composition, unusual sculpture-like form, and economy of line. Only a few German and Italian masters in the sixteenth century were capable of such subtlety in woodcuts or engraving.

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theatrical picture of Serena and the bandits is seventeenth century baroque:

Tho when as all things readie were aright,
The Damzell was before the altar set,
Being aJreadie dead with feareftill fright.
To whom the Priest with naked armes full net
Approaching nigh, and murtherous knife well whet.

.
There by th'uncertaine glims of starry night.
And by the twinkling of their sacred fire,
He mote perceive a litle dawning sight
Of all, which there was doing in that quire:
Mongst whom a woman spoyld of all attire
He spyde, lamenting her unluckie strife,
And groning sore from grived hart entire,
Eftsoones he saw one *with* a naked knife

Readie to launch her brest, and let out loved life.³⁷

The melodrama is heightened by the cries of the savages, by their squabble over Serena, by the shrill accompaniment of "the bagpipes and the homes/" Painting dissolves into pageant and pantomime.

This is from the Sixth Book of the *Faerie Queene*, in which much of the feeling is decadent baroque; theatrical effects are often ends in themselves. Pastorella among the Brigands is conceived more exclusively than Serena as a painting, showing even the innovation of the candle, like the studies in artificial light which fascinate El Greco ("Boy Blowing Charcoal"), Rembrandt ("The Good Samaritan"), the French and Dutch Caravaggians, Chardin ("The Charcoal Burner"), and the moderns:

The sight of whom, *though now* decayd and mard,
And eke but hardly scene by candle-light,
Yet like a Diamond of rich regard,
In doubtfull shadow of the darkesome *night*,
With starrie beames about her *shining bright*,
These marchants fixed eyes did so amaze,
That what through wonder, and what through delight,
Awhile on her they greedily did gaze,

.

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Their Captaine there they cruelly found kild,
And in his armes the dreary dying mayd,
Like a sweet Angell twixt two clouds uphild:
Her lovely light was dimmed and decayd,
With cloud of death upon her eyes displayd;
Yet did the cloud make even that dimmed light
Seeme much more lovely in that darknesse layd.
And twixt the twinckling of her eye-lids bright,
To sparke out litle beames, like starres in *toggle* night.⁸⁸

Spenser's characteristic concentration on the light of the eyes suggests the technique of El Greco's weeping, brilliant-eyed Magdalenes; but there is in Pastorella none of the intensity of El Greco's meaning. Spenser's combination in Pastorella of violence and sentimentality, of delicacy and brilliant chiaroscuro, detached from any depth of spiritual quality, is the mannerism of Correggio and the late seventeenth century Italians.

Pastorella among the Brigands* and Serena among the bandits are so lifelike that we may not at first notice the absence of color. The Sixth Book, one of the most picturesque of the Faerie Queene, has the least color, less even than the Fifth.f.To see what Spenser can do with theatrical chiaroscuro in pigment, let us take a final example, which also extends his range. Duessa's visit to old Night is not baroque of the same caliber, nor is it in the spirit of Rembrandt, since light and shadow are too sharply contrasted:

Where griesly Night, with visage deadly sad,
That Phoebus chearefull face durst never vew,
And in a foule blacke pitchie mantle clad,

* The Shakespearean equivalent of Pastorella among the Brigands (I have already mentioned the similarity in birthmarks) is Imogen as seen in her chamber by Iachimo:

The flame o' the taper
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids
To see the enclosed lights, now canopied
Under these windows white and azure, lac'd
With blue of heaven's own tinct. . . . [Cymbelinc, 2.3.19 ff.]

Iachimo is of course deliberately memorizing pictorial detail of Imogen and her chamber; the result is not only a portrait but an interior comparable to several in the Faerie Queene.

t See Appendix, "Spenser's Palette."

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She findes forth comming from her darkesome mew,
Where she all day did hide her hated he.w.
Before the dore her iron charet stood,
Alreadie harnessed for journey new;
And *coleblacke* steedes yborne of hellish brood,
That on their rustic bits did champ, as they were wood.

Who when she saw Duessa sunny bright,
Adornd with gold and jewels shining cleare,
She greatly grew *amazed* at the sight,
And tli'unacquainted light began to feare.

.
Then to her iron wagon she betakes,
And with her beares the fowle wellfavoured witch:
Through mirlcesome aire her readie way she makes.
Her twyfold Teme, of which two blacke as pitch,
And two were browne, yet each to each unlich,
Did softly swim away, ne ever stampe.
Unlcse she chaunst their stubborne mouths to twitch;
Then foming tarre, their bridles they would champe,
And *trampling the fine* element, would *fiercely* rampe.⁸⁹

The various shades of black—from the pitch black of Night, the coal-black and tar of the steeds, to the variegated murky shadows—throw into relief the brilliance of the golden, bejeweled Duessa. In these lines are really three separate pictures: Night shrinking in fear from the brightness of Duessa, whom she does not yet recognize as a witch; the two contrasting figures in the smoothly swimming chariot; the same two with the horses fiercely ramping.* In baroque painting movement is caught just as it flows from previous into subsequent action. The two motions of Night's chariot seem more poised than arrested, closer to the harmony of movement and repose which after Poussin becomes the posturing of David's theatrical waxworks.

4.

Shakespeare's plays are rich in pictorial and atmospheric effects too familiar to need more than mention: Romeo's creation in

* In contrast with Spenser's movie technique, which I shall discuss later, the feeling of static pose is strong here.

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poetry of the moonlit Capulet orchard; the cold, dark battlements in Hamlet; the heath in Lear; Enobarbus' half-Venetian half-Turner canvas of Cleopatra in her barge on the Cydnus. Equally characteristic and less remarked are such casual effects as this impressionistic landscape with figure from Macbeth:

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:
Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn. . . .⁴⁰

Of the pictorial examples which we have already considered, there is more ether than air in Spenser's Mount Acidale, as there is in Mantegna's Parnassus; the figures in those stanzas and Verdant in the Bower of Bliss exist almost in a vacuum. But the moment Spenser introduces light and shadow, atmosphere, in any sense one wishes to take the slippery word, is there. Depth and space are no longer, as in Mount Acidale, achieved only by line and perspective; imperceptibly shaded or sharply contrasted light and shadow add the third dimension.

Subtle atmospheric quality, secured only by rare masters of engraving, is easier in pigment. Frequent absence of color is largely responsible for Fletcher's complaint that Spenser lacks atmosphere.⁴¹ Certainly Spenser never approaches in this respect the Venetian and late Flemish schools, for his color sense is far less sophisticated than his design and composition—is, in fact, often medieval in its pure, flat primary hues.

Ariosto is one of the most colorful of poets, and color in Orlando Furioso is more evenly spread than in the Faerie Queene, richer and more concentrated, though less lavish, when it occurs. In this respect as in others, Spenser owes him much, but he is far from being a slavish imitator, his best pictorial effects being of a quite different order. Some indication of this difference is found in this costume of Ariodantes (Orlando Furioso, 6.13):

Black was the vest and buckler which he bought,
Where green and yellow striped the sable field,

in contrast with Spenser's Tristram (Faerie Queene, 6.2.5):

All in a woodmans jacket he was clad
Of Lincolne greene, belayd with silver lace;

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And on his head an hood with aglets sprad,
And by his side his hunters home he hanging had.

Almost invariably Spenser's coloring is more subdued.

His palette would in itself be an elaborate study and deserves more investigation than it has ever received, more than there is occasion for here.* We have heard the complaint that Spenser's vegetation is never realistic, always merely green or pallid-green. Among hundreds of uses in his long narrative poem, it is no wonder that green and particularly greenwood (as in Ariosto) should often lose any real connotation of color, and verdant is too literary for concrete suggestion. Yet simple mention of green in richly pictorial contexts suggests color, and Spenser is not unaware of shading. In the *Faerie Queene*, besides emerald and Lincoln green, there are among the usually conventional application of green to vegetation, grassie green, shades of moss and ivy. In the *Shepherd's Calendar* are corn-green, lusty green, gaudy green, primrose green, and green in gray *instinct*. Virgil's Gnat adds the Keatsian mosse as greene as any goord. But; the real explanation why any sensitive reader receives definite and continuous impressions of color in Spenser's vegetation—his meadows and woods and brooksides—is that certain contexts in poetry manage to suggest color without specific mention, or by such generalized phrases as Spenser's frequent "sundrie colours," "divers colours," "rainbow hews," "Peacock's spotted train," "gay carpeted with flores."

Of actual pigmentt his special favorites in order are gold, red, white, green, silver, black, and he uses, sometimes for mere variation, sometimes with a painter's instinct, many shadings of three of these: of red—blood (used specifically as color), scarlet, crimson, vermilion, rust, rose, flame, ruddy, ruby, castory; of white—snow, lily, milk, ivory, *alabaster*, *adamantine*, *pallid*, *chalk*, *ermine*; of black—pitch, coal, tar, iron, *jet*, soot. At his best, the shadings show the same sense of texture revealed in his tapestries. Blue Spenser uses steadily and effectively but sparingly in shades of

* See Appendix, "Spenser's Palette."

t Overliteral correspondence between words and color is one of the fallacies of neo-classic English and French critics (Rensselaer Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting/" *The Art Bulletin*, xxII, 4, p. 202). Words of course are never an exact equivalent of pigment, as I hope I make clear.

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azure, blue instinct with black, cerulean, sapphire, sky, watchet (pale). Yellow is rare, sometimes only a substitute for the conventional golden hair, but usually has the strong effect of color and is sharply distinguished from tawny yellow or tawny, and from copper. Brown is distinguished from tan; both, though rare, have definite color effect, unlike the eighteenth century conventional brown woods. Saffron appears only once as color and is lifted from Homer and the Latin poets rather than from the Venetian painters, whom Spenser never saw. Purple and impurpled, too, are in their indefiniteness usually literary, even when Hyacinth or royal is specified.

In the excessive carnage throughout the *Faerie Queene* often purple, crimson, vermilion are applied indiscriminately to blood merely to relieve monotony; on occasion all three may occur in the same blood-splashed stanza. Similarly, lily, milk, alabaster, snow become interchangeable flesh tints. Before agreeing with Hallam that they are hideous in their lack of realism, we should recall Manet's chalk-white "Olympe" and the superbly effective clay and chalk tones of Piero della Francesca in his "Queen of Sheba," "Nativity," and "Baptism of Christ." The difference is that in the use of these tones they are original, Spenser conventional.

What Fletcher disparages—color laid on "as a child might color an engraving"⁴²—is actually more analogous to medieval illuminated manuscripts. In the House of Holiness are three iconographical figures possibly indebted to the emblem books or to church frescoes painted flat, without perspective. We meet Faith and Hope first as two lovely girls; then they are made to pause for portraits:

Thus as they gan of sundry things devise,
Loe two most goodly virgins came in place,
Ylinked arme in arme in lovely wise,
With countenance demure, and modest grace,
They numbred even steps and equall pace:
Of which the eldest, that Fidelia hight,
Like sunny beames threw from her Christall face,
That could have dazd the rash beholders sight,
And round about her head did shine like heavens light.

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She was araied all in lilly white,
And in her right hand bore a cup of gold,
With wine* and water fild up to the hight,
In which a Serpent did himselfe enfold,
That horroure made to all, that did behold;
But she no whit did chaunge her constant mood:
And in her other hand she fast did hold
A book, that was both signd and seald with blood,
Wherein darke things were writ, hard to be understood.

Her younger sister, that Speranza hight,
Was clad in blew, that her beseemed well;
Not all so chearefull seemed she of sight,
As was her sister; whether dread did dwell,
Or anguish in her hart, is hard to tell:
Upon her arme a silver anchor lay,
Whereon she leaned ever, as befell:
And ever up to heaven, as she did pray,
Her stedfast eyes were bent, ne swarved other way.

Later we meet the third sister, Charissa, like the separated panel of a triptych:

She was a woman in her freshest age,
Of wondrous beauty, and of bountie rare,
With goodly grace and comely personage,
That was on earth not easie to compare;
Full of great love, but Cupids wanton snare
As hell she hated, chaste in worke and will;
Her necke and breasts were ever open bare,
That ay thereof her babes might sucke their fill;
The rest was all in yellow robes arayed still.⁴³

In these three figures the pose, gestures, stage properties are dictated by traditional iconography⁴⁴ as they are in Diirer's "Melancholia." Even the colors are symbolic. But only the highest development of engraving and painting can compare with the grace and ease of movement or repose which Spenser secures in poetry; and just as the rich emotional significance of these stanzas is

* Whether wine suggests color here is questionable. To me, coming right after white and gold, it does; whereas blood (sealing the Testament) in the same stanza does not.

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beyond the grasp of the most skillful illuminators, so is the brilliant lighting of *Fidelia* beyond the possibilities of laid-on color. As with tapestry, Spenser's transcendence is due both to the power of his pictorial conception and to the expressiveness of words as a medium.

The prevalence throughout all Spenser's poetry of pearl, crystal, precious and semi-precious stones owes most to the imagery of the Bible, particularly *Revelation*, which is the direct source of *Duessa*, brilliant in jewels, in purple, scarlet and gold, at Arthur's slaying of *Orgoglio*. Such Oriental brilliance has a double impact on Spenser: directly from the Bible, and indirectly through the influence of Byzantine Christian art as modified by the Italian (and later French) painters and poets. A portrait less familiar than *Duessa*, the Angel guarding *Guyon*, is probably derived by many indirections:

How oft do they, their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us, that succour want?
How oft do they with golden pincons, cleave
The flitting skyes, like flying Pursuivant,
Against foule feends, to aide us millitant?
They for us fight, they watch and dclwy ward,
And their bright Squadrons round about us plant. . . .

.
Beside his head there sate a faire young man,
Of wondrous beautie, and of freshest yeares,
Whose tender bud to blossome new began,
And flourish faire above his equall peares;
His snowy front curled with golden heares,
Like *Phoebus* face adorned with sunny rayes,
Divinely shone, and two sharpe winged sheares,
Decked with diverse plumes, /ike *painted* Jayes,
Were fixed at his backe, to cut his ayerie wayes.⁴⁵

In this context the conventional "snowy front" and "golden heares" come alive in the beautiful fusion of white, gold, silver, with the blue, black and white of the jay's "painted" plumage, which, though no color is mentioned, together with another un-specific color phrase—"bright squadrons"—lifts the whole portrait above any convention. This angel, as we have seen earlier, is indebted in part to Tasso:

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A stripling seemes hee, thrice five winters old,
And *radiant* beanie's adorn'd his locks of gold,
Of silver wings he took a shining paire,
Fringed with gold; unwearied, nimble, swift;
With these he parts the winds, the clouds, the aire,
And over seas and earth himself doth lift:
Thus clad, he cut the spheares and circles faire,
And the pure skies with sacred feathers clift.
On Libanon at first his foot he set,
And shooke his wings with rosie niay-dewes wet.⁴⁰

Warton, who thinks that Milton in *Paradise Lost* improves on the originals, brings all three poets together for comparison. Milton is closer to Tasso in visualizing flight through the spheres to a specific landing point. Yet Spenser's angel is the most pictorial composition, though he appears and vanishes in a mysterious flash, and is less characterized, more delicately poised between concrete and spiritual vision. Also, Spenser's coloring is more precise, more original (the jaywing instead of rosy dew) than Tasso's and Milton's.

This angel, Fidelia, and resplendent Duessa have in common one of the most characteristic effects in Spenser—the brilliant play of light, which he secures by combinations of sun reflected from water, gold, crystal, diamond, pearl—a brilliance which transcends the color value of any of these objects or words taken separately. This constant preoccupation with the quality of light is explained in him and in Tasso by their mutual devotion to the Christian-Platonic symbolism of light, and the compatibility of the two poets explains the extent of Spenser's borrowing, though imagery and symbolism of light occur in Spenser long before *Gerusalemme Liberata* was published.⁴⁷ Each poet gives the symbolism arresting concrete expression by intense visual imagination. Spenser's portrayal of light, dazzling or shrouded or blotted out, is at once the most powerful and original manifestation of his pictorial imagination (for which there are no analogues in any form of art which he could have known at first hand), and one of the most profound and persistent of his dominant symbols.

His originality is as marked as his indebtedness to Tasso. This, for example, is another typical effect of brilliant light in *Gerusalemme Liberata*:

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Meanwhile the car that bears the lightning brand
Upon the eastern hill was mounted high,
And smote the glistering armies as they stand,
With quivering beams which dazed the wondering eye,
That Phaeton-like it fired sea and land,
The sparkles seemed up to the skies to fly. . . .⁴⁸

In the First Book of the *Faerie Queene*, where the influence of Tasso is almost as great as in the Second, we find this portrait of Lucifera in the House of Pride:

High above all a cloth of State was spread,
And a rich throne, as bright as sunny day,
On which there sate most brave embellished
With royall robes and gorgeous array,
A mayden Queene, that shone as Titans ray,
In glistring gold, and peerelesse precious stone:
Yet her bright blazing beautie did assay
To dim the brightnesse of her glorious throne,
As envying her selfe, that too *exceeding shone*.

Exceeding shone, like Phoebus fairest childe,
That did presume his fathers firie wayne,
And flaming mouthes of steedes unwonted wilde
Through hiest heaven with weaker hand to rayne;
Proud of such glory and advancement vaine,
While flashing beames do daze his *feeble* eyen,
He leaves the welkin way most beaten plainc,
And rapt with whirling wheelcs, inflames the skyen,
With fire not made to burne, but fairely for to shync.

So proud she shyned in her Princely state,
Looking to heaven; for earth she did disdaync,
And sitting high; for lowly she did hate:
Lo underneath her scornfull feete, was layne
A dreadfull Dragon with an hideous trayne,
And in her hand she held a mirrhour bright,
Wherein her face she often vewed fayne,
And in her selfe-lov'd semblance tooke delight;
For she was wondrous faire, as any living wight.⁴⁹

Spenser accumulates all effects of brightness—a sunny day, sun

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refracted from gold and the facets of jewels—attributes these to the throne and costume; and then intensifies the effect by having Lucifera outshine even this brilliance. Next, probably at Tasso's suggestion, he takes over the familiar story of Phaeton running in riotous disorder of fire between earth and sky, and with firmness unusual for him (quite equal to Milton), subdues this pictorial excursion to Lucifera, adding the reflection of her brilliance in the mirror.

Such intensity and variety of glittering light is not paralleled on canvas until painters begin to break up pigment to secure color vibration. We find suggestions* of it before Rembrandt, or El Greco, with his separate layers and bold strokes of pure white across irises to achieve light refracted from wet eyes, but it is really not until the nineteenth century impressionists and the pointillism of Seurat that we find equivalent effects of light playing over a surface. In Spenser's portrait Lucifera is featureless, very much like Monet's disembodied cathedral facades, where the substance of structure seems to melt under the light playing over its surface.

Even more extraordinary is the effect of light playing on a moving figure, which no painter can give. When from her despair Una first looks up to glimpse Arthur, this is what she sees:

A goodly knight, faire marching by the way
Together with his Squire, arayed meet:
His glitterand armour shined farre away,
Like glauncing light of Phoebus brightest ray,
From top to toe no place appeared bare,
That deadly dint of steele endanger may:
Athwart his brctst a bauldrick brave he ware,
That shynd, like twinkling stars, with stones most pretious rare.

And in the midst thereof one precious stone
Of wondrous worth, and eke of wondrous mights,
Shapt like a Ladies head, *exceeding* shone,
Like Hesperus amongst the lesser lights,
And strove for to amaze the weaker sights;

* Earlier painters (Masaccio, for example) use light; but light in this modern sense perhaps first appears in Giovanni Bellini's *Agony in the Garden*, and is first marked in the background of Titian's late paintings, in which distant figures and landscape details are broken and fused.

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Thereby his mortall blade full comely hong
In ivory sheath, ycarv'd with curious slights;
Whose hilts were burnisht gold, and handle strong
Of mother pearle, and buckled with a golden tong.

Detail increases as Arthur draws nearer, until Spenser focuses:

His haughtie helmet, horrid all with gold,
Both glorious brightnesse, and great terror bred;
For all the crest a Dragon did enfold. . . ⁵⁰

By visualizing Arthur first as he appears in distant generalized brilliance, then in closer and closer detail, Spenser gives a unique impression of the figure's moving forward. The pictorial becomes kinetic as only the camera, with its rapid succession of pictures, can capture pictorial movement; and this is accomplished not by saying in narrative that Arthur rides forward, but rather by shift of focus in visual imagery. Spenser may have hit upon this rare close-up by accident. Not till the nineteenth century is visual imagery consciously controlled in this specific way, though the technique is inherent in the medium of poetry and in our day has become a commonplace of poets and novelists who prefer imagistic progression to narrative statement.

5.

Ut pictura poesis, this kinship between two media of expression which fascinated poets and painters from the beginning and which became articulate in the critics of Greek and Roman days, blurred distinctions until Lessing divided the spatial from the temporal arts; unfortunately, his division is too categorical to stand unqualified. He chose as a horrible example of poetry's trespassing on the spatial Ariosto's elaborately detailed portrait of Alcina; Spenser's Belpheobe, partly patterned after Alcina, illustrates equally well what in Lessing's opinion poetry should not attempt. Lessing's point that what in painting can be taken in at a glance, in poetry becomes a minute, time-consuming catalogue is apposite.* Yet few great paintings lack time-sense, however secondary; few poems of any stature rigorously exclude space:

* My own illustrations from Spenser have already shown how his pictorial effects are often drawn out over too many stanzas. They are sometimes dissipated.

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there is more common ground between the two arts than Lessing allows.⁵¹ Art is a matter of illusion, and illusion of time is created in space, just as illusion of depth is created on a perfectly flat surface. Both line and color lead the eye through planes back into illusory distance: where such wandering is essential to encompass the full complexities of the canvas, it can no longer be considered a single space image taken in between two blinks of the eyelids, for the experience is physiological as well as psychological. This is notably true of the Sistine Ceiling and the Resurrection on the end wall; time is as necessary for the absorption of epic painting as of epic poetry. Conversely, even when read and not staged, *Antony and Cleopatra* creates a geographical sense of the expanse of the Roman Empire merely by juxtaposition of scenes in Rome, on the shores of Greece, in Egypt and Parthia. And in *Paradise Lost* we get a sense of Universal Space which, though circumscribed by the Ptolemaic system, surpasses in vastness any produced by painting.

Words give only an approximation of the actual sensations made on the retina by pigment, and what visual images they stimulate are originally dependent on the ear. Words tend rapidly to lose concreteness, especially of color; the poet's main task is constant restoration of concreteness by all the skill at his command. Furthermore, words seldom achieve purity of visual image, since they are too much bound up with other associations. Yet the kinship between language and painting is not limited to the visual; in each, secondary sensory impressions, such as tactile, can be remarkably concrete, and a wide range of sensuous effects they hold in common, those which are secondary in one being primary in the other. Painting can be literary—narrative or drama—just as poetry can be pictorial. Whether or not one theoretically approves, Tiepolo's illustrations of Tasso, Watteau's "Voyage to Cytharea," and Hogarth's satires, among their best works, are literary, like almost all murals. As a corrective to the literary trend, abstract painting has been fertile; sterile as an end in itself.

Partly as a painter would, Spenser and Tasso give an illusion of brilliant light through visual imagery. They have the advantage of preempting the actual sun, and their range of color values, if less sharply concrete, is much wider. They depend on rich associations: on sun reflected from natural objects, but also on

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sun as a god and father of Phaeton. And Spenser, to whom all this brilliance is only a concrete means of presenting the dazzling beauty but devastating effect of Pride, can simultaneously indicate deeper meaning by the flaming, fatal presumption of Phaeton, and by the self-worship of Lucifera in a mirror multiplying brilliance.

Poetry, so much weaker in intensity and purity of visual imagery than painting, has a compensating power which painting can only approach. Its pictorial effects in time sequence can be made to dissolve so rapidly into others that the actual series, unlike narrative panels in a triptych or mural, is lost in an illusion of movement which has no analogy until the discovery of movie fade-outs. In the familiar stanza which begins as a picture of another close-up detail of Arthur's armor, we find the original image dissolving rapidly through disparate images, which carry us in seconds from England to Mount Selinis in distant Sicily:

Upon the top of all his loftie crest,
A bunch of haire discolour'd diversly,
With sprinkled pearle, and gold full richly drest,
Did shake, and seem'd to daunce for jollity,
Like to an Almond tree ymounted hye
On top of greene Selinis all alone,
With blossomes brave bedecked daintily;
Whose tender locks do tremble every one
At every little breath, that under heaven is blowne.⁵²

Furthermore, in poetry we are not at all disconcerted to find that, in between the original image of the jeweled hairs atop the helmet waving with the motion of the horse and the blossoming almond tree waving in the Sicilian breeze, we fleetingly glimpse a woman's tossing hair bedecked with blossoms or jewels. Reduced to painting, where is the nearest analogy except in the totally different conceptions of the surrealists, some of whose landscapes can be seen simultaneously as a human face? What is the very nature of poetry becomes in painting eccentricity.

That we have to include movies in order to approximate poetic pictorial effect is, of course, another indication of the range and freedom of poetry as a medium; for this technique in Spenser is not unique but inherent in the nature of words, few possibilities

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of which he leaves unexploited. We find these movie effects at least two centuries before Spenser. Chaucer, antedating the full flowering of Italian painting, is, along with Ovid, Ariosto and Tasso, one of Spenser's pictorial masters; in fact, some of the instances of Botticelli-like coloring—glassy, translucent water half revealing nude figures—probably come from Chaucer, since Spenser never saw a Botticelli. In his many Houses and Temples Spenser by no means neglects the House of Fame, a pictorial as well as allegorical model; and he was especially drawn to the most brightly colored of all Chaucer's poems, *The Knight's Tale*. The theater of Theseus, with its elaborate architecture, its combat lists, its temples full of murals and statuary rivals Spenser in richness of detail:

The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
Was naked, fletyng in the large see,
And fro the navelc down al covered was
With wawes grene, and bright as any glas.
A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge,
Above hir heed hir dowvcs flikerynge.
Biforn hire stood hir sone Cupido,
Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,
And blind he was, as it is often scene;
A bowe he bar and arwes brighte and kenc.⁵³

Chaucer is far more influenced by sculpture than Spenser is, and like the church figurines which he knew at first hand and the archaic sculpture with which he was familiar from classic art books and Italian poetry, his statues are usually colored.⁵⁴

More germane to Spenser are the murals in the Temple of Mars, because Chaucer, motivated by the same awareness of intense life and movement and by the desire to secure heightened reality, steps inside his murals. The "frame" dissolves in dramatization:

First, on the wal was peynted a forest,
In which there dwelleth neither man nor best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde
Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,

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In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough,
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough;

.
And ther out came a rage, and such a veze
That it made all the gates for to rese.
The northern lyght in at the dores shoon,—
For windowe on the wal ne was there noon
Through which men mighten any light discerne. .. ⁵⁵

The painted figures assume for the moment as much vitality as the actual characters. This device innate in poetry is comparable to a movie "still"⁷ which is allowed to dissolve into the normal action of the camera's picturization of a story.

We have seen earlier in *Duessa* and *old Night* an instance of movement which in terms of the camera would be deliberate slow motion. The most brilliant of Spenser's movie effects, in which color and chiaroscuro are used with virtuosity both pictorially and symbolically, is the canto describing the Cave of Mammon:

At last he came unto a gloomy glade,
Covered with boughes and shrubs from heavens light,
Whereas he sitting found in secret shade
An uncouth, salvage, and uncivile wight,
Of griesly hew, and fowle ill favoured sight;
His face with smoke was tand, and eyes were blcard,
His head and beard with sout were ill bedight,
His cole-blade hands did sceme to have been seard
In smithes *fire-spitting forge*, and nayles like clawcs apeard.

His iron coate all overgrown with rust,
Was underneath enveloped with gold,
Whose glistring glosse darkncd with filthy dust,
Well yet appeared, to have bcene of old
A worlce of rich entayle, and curious mould,
Woven with antickcs and wild Imagery:
And in his lap a masse of coyne he told,
And *turned* upsidowne, to fcede his eye
A covetous desire with his huge treasury.⁵⁰

Startled by Guyon's approach, Mammon tries to pour his treasure back into the cave and follow it, but Guyon arrests him.

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Mammon persuades Guyon to visit the Cave, and Spenser visualizes their entrance precisely as a camera might:

Come thou (quothe he) and see. So by and by
Through that thicke covert he him led, and found
A darkesome way, which no man could descry,
That dcepe descended through the hollow ground,
And was with dread and horreur compassed around.

The camera "pans":

At length they came into a larger space,
That stretcht it selfe into an ample plaine,
Through which a beaten broad high way did trace. . . ,⁵⁷

Then, with a camera's freedom of movement and rapid shift of focus we see a number of dramatic scenes in this underworld, mainly chiaroscuro of gold metal and forges gleaming through the murk, with swarthy workers sharply highlighted. Each scene fades into another. After the brilliance of Philotime (comparable to that of Lucifera) we pass through "griesly shadowes by a beaten path" into a garden surrounded by forbidding and symbolic trees, with a silver bench and golden apples glistening in deep shade; then in one glance, with a camera's ease, we look into another world:

The warlike Elfe much wondred at this tree,
So faire and great, that shadowed all the ground,
And his broad braunches, laden with rich fee,
Did stretch themselves without the utmost bound
Of this great gardin, compast with a mound,
Which over-hanging, they themselves did steepe,
In a black flood which flow'd about *it* round;
That is the river of Cocytus deepe,

In which full many soules do endlesse waile and weepe.⁵⁸

Suddenly, quietly, as if by the natural movement of our curious, searching eyes, peering down over the brink of hell we are face to face with Tantalus and Pilate.

The Cave of Mammon is perhaps the best instance in the Faerie Oueene of a sustained use of the pictorial, not for itself (though the decorative effect is conscious), but to embody the immense significance of Guyon's victory over materialism. Here

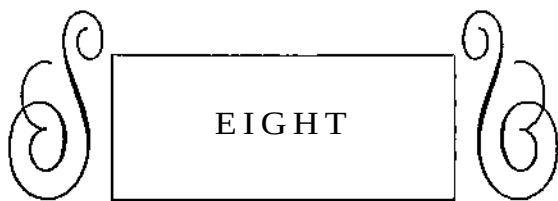
SPENSER'S PALACE OF ART

the use of color—gold, black, flame red—the contrast of gloom and brilliant light, all fuse so naturally into the symbolism that the atmosphere of hell on earth as well as after death permeates the whole canto. The black is coal, soot, jet, but more frequently iron, constant repetition of which finally conveys a metallic ring and an emotional quality. In this context when

Over them sad Horrour with grim hew,
Did always sore, beating his iron wings;
And after him Owles and Night-ravens flew,⁵⁸

the ravens add their suggestion of glossy black; and though blood in this canto, considered analytically, seldom has specific color, the constant reference in the verbal fencing between Mammon and Guyon to bloodshed, blood guilt, bloody knife is not only symbolic but to the visual imagination incarnadines the walls of the Cave.

Such lines of Spenser's as these last quoted were to have an unfortunate effect on eighteenth century poetry, in which "sad Horrour" with her owls and ravens become mere stage properties used for a calculated graveyard chill. *Ut pictura poesis* was to license uninhibited nature description, unredeemed by Spenser's freshness of vision, until finally, restrained by Wordsworth, it became poetry of a new order. And a nineteenth century Spenserian seeks to overpass his master's picture galleries in his Palace of Art, with its skeleton of allegorical idea. But the House of Busyrane has allegorical vitality and organic relation to the Faerie Queene that Tennyson, with all his gift of precise imagery and his greater acquaintance with works of art, cannot rival.



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SPENSER, so counter to present taste, might appear in the stocks more often if he seemed to our critics important enough.* Only Mr. William Van O'Connor has recently troubled to pillory him:

"In the first four lines Spenser presents the theme:

"Oft when my spirit doth spred her bolder winges
In mind to mount up to the purest sky,
It down is weighd with thought of earthly things,
And clogd with burden of mortality:

"In the next four lines the reader expects to find some exploration of the theme, but finds, instead, simply further statement:

"Where, when that soverayne beauty it doth spy,
Resembling heavens glory in her light,
Drawne with sweet pleasures bayt, it back doth fly,
And unto heaven forgets her former flight.

"In the well-constructed lyric one would expect in the last lines to discover the intellectual resolution. Here, however, there is no dramatic emotional situation to be resolved. There is merely further explanation couched in terms of graceful tribute:

"There my fraile fancy, fed with full delight,
Doth bath in blisse, and mantleth most at ease;
Ne thinks of other heaven, but how it might
Her harts desire with most contentment please.
Hart need not wish none other happinesse,
But here on earth to have such hevens blisse.

* An exception is the perceptive appreciation of Spenser in Mr. Donald Stauffer's *Nature of Poetry*.

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"The difference between the poems of Herrick and Stevens and Spenser is the distinction between the poetry of exploration and the poetry of exposition. Herrick and Stevens present material for the reader to work through; Spenser presents an imagined experience unequivocally stated. There is in the first two poems an intellectual and emotional problem to be settled in terms of the materials presented. Spenser, as a Christian, represents and illustrates a Christian attitude; he does not re-experience it. He does not earn his attitude/'¹

This does not arouse spirited defense of the *Amorctti*, of all Spenser's mature poems the least exciting, especially if one agrees that Herrick's *Mad Maid's Song* and Stevens' *Peter Quince at the Clavier* are finer poems than this particular sonnet. The sonnet, however, is in its way well-constructed and contains more of the qualities which Mr. O'Connor demands than he seems to realize. It is not dramatic, yet there is more sinew in the convolutions of its neo-Platonic thought than casually appears; there is even some surprise and tension, since underlying the whole sonnet is the pull between heaven and earth. The first four lines express the soul's aspirations heavenward defeated by mortality; the next four are statement, but "exploratory statement" essential to particularize "mortality," showing the soul, snared by desire, accepting a substitute heaven. The octave leaves us with a sense of true heaven forgotten in earthly illusion. The opening lines of the sestet, expatiating on this earthly bliss, are the only part of the poem which can be dismissed as merely "further explanation," since the concluding couplet suddenly reverses the neo-Platonism and the *substitute* nature of earthly love, proclaiming the paradox of heaven on earth. In thus forcing a system of philosophy to bow to his mistress, Spenser reveals no intense spiritual conflict; he stays, as he intends to stay, within the bounds of graceful, playful tribute. Is there no room in poetry for this?

But the implications of Mr. O'Connor's complaint, reaching beyond a casually chosen sonnet, disturb me more than his disparaging Spenser—particularly certain basic assumptions: the "well-constructed lyric," a formula reminiscent of the "well-made play"; the necessity for an "intellectual resolution" to a "dramatic emotional situation." The lyric, seemingly, not only must

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be dramatic; it should be "an intellectual and emotional problem" to be solved, "an attitude to be earned/"

Mr. O'Connor's is indisputably a voice of our time and his preferences speak at least in part for many of us. In rejecting poetry like this sonnet because it lacks intensity, compression, drama, he is doing very much what Shakespeare and his fellow poets did. But if most of the Elizabethans forsook the Amoretti vein (Spenser with them), they by no means forsook all that Spenser accomplished and stood for in poetry, nor did they define drama so narrowly. The danger of present-day criticism, which has done so much to vindicate "inclusive"⁷ poetry, is of slipping unaware into an exclusive view, a new absolutism. Dr. Johnson sitting in judgment on the Metaphysicals is having the tables turned, while we risk freezing our own poetic taste into a set of neo-Metaphysical rules. Greatly preferring the dramatic, we are likely to ignore not only narrative, which the poets have surrendered to the novelists, but the interdependence of narrative and drama.

A greater poetic passage than this sonnet of Spenser's is also "unequivocally stated":

Nature that fram'd us of foure Elements,
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspyring minds:
Oure soules, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous Architecture of the world;
And measure every wandring plannets course,
Still climing after knowledge infinite,
And alwaies moving as the restlcs Spheares,
Wills us to wcare our selves and never rest,
Untill we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect blisse and sole felicitie,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crowne.²

Marlowe, not yet himself mature, is writing in a still immature form—English drama, and with such shackled grandeur that no one wishes the passage edited by a Bentley. Marlowe's weakness is not exposition and statement, which he never abandons, though he develops in the direction of drama; his weakness is imperfect articulation, since the potentially fine structure of the

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passage is faulty. As in Spenser's sonnet, the aspiring soul stoops to earthly fruition; but heaven and earth are not in balance. While in this instance we prefer Marlowe's failure to Spenser's success, Spenser at least achieves his end; it is the end which leaves us cold.

We have lost pleasure in the purely formal; and it is precisely the formal statement of three themes one after the other, then combined at the end, which gives the opening sonnet of the Amoretti (a simpler, more uncompromising example than Mr. O'Connor's choice) the effect of a thematic musical exercise:

Happy ye leaves when as those lilly hands,
 which hold my life in their dead doing might,
 shall handle you and hold in loves soft bands,
 lyke captives trembling at the victors sight.
And happy lines, on which with starry light,
 those lamping eyes will deigne sometimes to look
 and reade the sorrowes of my dying spright,
 written with tcares in harts close bleeding book.
And happy rymes bath'd in the sacred brooke,
 of Helicon whence she derived is,
 when ye behold that Angels blessed looke,
 my soules long lacked foodc, my heavens blis,
Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone,
 whom if ye please, I care for other none.

This is low in emotional key, not intense, not exciting. Yet this is all that Spenser set out to accomplish—simple but expert statement, contrived in a pattern of intricate verbal sounds so skillful that only careful analysis would reveal it. The balance of meaning and sound is maintained, however; internal and external rhymes, alliteration, assonance do not blur the statement, or, as with Swinburne, hypnotize us so that meaning seems not to matter.

This kind of formality, with its description and exposition, lends itself to drama better than one might suppose. I have earlier considered the realistic and symbolical techniques in Richard II, in which Shakespeare's poetic style, still under the influence of Marlowe's blank verse, is in its frequent formality also reminiscent of Spenser. In Richard's last soliloquy is a conceit latently meta-

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physical;⁸ but sighs and tears and groans are used as formal elements of structure:

For now hath time made me his numbering clock:
My thoughts are minutes; and with sighs they jar
Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,
Whereto my finger, like a dial's point,
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears.
Now sir, the sound that tells what hour it is
Are clamorous groans, which strike upon my heart,
Which is the bell: so sighs and tears and groans
Show minutes, times, and hours: but my time
Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy,
While I stand fooling here, his Jack o'the clock.⁴

Though like Marlowe Shakespeare shortly moves away from Spenser toward more dramatic condensation of thought and feeling, he never abandons the formal, which we have seen metamorphosed in the technique of *King Lear*.

Richard's transitional soliloquies are predominantly Iyric statement, though especially in this instance the intellectual element (itself formal) is prominent. The kinship to Spenser and the difference from him are highlighted if we compare a stanza from Arthur's soliloquy to Night* after fruitless pursuit of Florimell and sleep:

But well I wote, that to an heavy hart
Thou art the root and nurse of bitter cares,
Breeder of new, renewer of old smarts:
In stead of rest thou lendest rayling teares,
In stead of sleepe thou sendest troublous feares,
And dreadfull visions, in the which alive
The drearie image of sad death appeares:
So from the wearie spirit thou doest drive
Desired rest, and men of happinesse deprive.⁵

Both soliloquies are reflective, but Richard's is introspective and analytical to a degree not true of Arthur's, which is of course more

* This stanza from the *Faerie Queene* (1590) is closer to the Elizabethan sonnet sequences of the nineties, especially Daniel's, than Spenser's own *Amoretti*.

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stylized. Richard's conceits forecast metaphysical wit; Arthur's play on words is not the kind of verbal extravagance typical at this period of Shakespeare, but closer to the felicity of phrase admired by Jonson, later by Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. Not by paradox, but by placement and natural emphasis in the line, new and old are contrasted and assimilated to smarts; old and new are reconciled in renew.

This stanza reveals two of Spenser's primary technical faults, which he must share the responsibility of propagating among his followers through the centuries: the loosening of structure by excessive particles and auxiliaries, and the weak epithet. "Drearie image" and "wearie spirit" rely too much on the adjective, though Spenser is more justified than many of his followers because he is clearly composing for the ear: besides the double alliteration (dreadfull-drearie) drean'e and wearie contribute an internal rhyme to an elaborate sound pattern. On the credit side is a mastery of words which this adjectival weakness may obscure, and a control of syntax which Marlowe and even Shakespeare were some time in rivaling. Spenser's sentence unfolds with ease in the confines of his complex stanza.

Rather than defend Spenser from specific charges, some of which he merits, I think it will be more profitable to explore a few primary elements of his poetic craftsmanship, considered in relation to Shakespeare's. Like Shakespeare, he has range and variety; he is master of more than one style. Heretofore, no one—not even Shakespeare—has had a more catholic appeal to the profession. Besides shoals of minor poets, among Spenser's debtors are Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Burns, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, Yeats. In bearing the responsibilities of this eminence (several of these poets show up his weaknesses), it is fitting that he be judged with perspective.

2.

The Shepheardes Calender is an aqueduct flung back across the morass of Tudor poetry to Chaucer, the "well of English undefyled." In that morass are several streams of fine poetry—Dunbar, Skelton, Wyatt, Surrey, Sackville. Some lost themselves. Skelton wandered merrily into the rushes. A few found their way back into

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the main current—Surrey and Sackville through Spenser; Wyatt through Sidney's sonnets, Shakespeare, and Donne. Though in his Induction Sackville demonstrated an astonishing mastery, which he could not repeat, and Wyatt left a handful of first-rate poems, on the whole the Tudor efforts at reclamation were premature. Wyatt had the originality and power, but lacked the skill; Surrey had the skill, but lacked the originality and power. Spenser had all three, plus faith and audacity and will.

Five editions in Spenser's lifetime indicate that the poets read the Shepheardes Calender even if they did not always know the author's identity, and profited even when they did not altogether approve. To recognize Spenser's influence only among the so-called Spenserians—Drayton, the Fletchers, Drummond—is myopic; it has never been limited to kindred spirits nor to mere imitation. Spenser's intense concern with the craft and medium of poetry makes him a focal figure; to ignore or neglect him is to distort the whole tradition.

This problem of words—not just vocabulary, but syntax, words in meaningful patterns—occupied Spenser even when he was in the Merchant Taylors' School, where the admirable and lively Mulcaster spread joy in his native tongue. Earlier humanists, if they did not, like More, write primarily in Latin, deplored the poverty of English. Poetry (or those who felt responsible for it) was scrambling after classic prosody from a real sense of the inadequacy of poulter's measure, and from a false scorn of barbaric rhyme and beat. Spenser was sufficiently impressed to quibble with Harvey and Dyer over the quantitative values of homely English syllables, over troublesome vowels already dissolving into diphthongs or virtually disappearing into a common sound. In September he makes Diggon complain:

Then playnely to speak of shepheards most what
Badde is the best (this *English is fiatt*).

But this conventional protest is off-key in a poem which is a proclamation of emancipation. "Why, a God's name may we not have the kingdom of our language?" Spenser explodes to Harvey in 1581.

He met Harvey's objection by pointing to Marot and Bellav, who had determinedly caught up with the Italians, and to Chau-

cer, who had made the English of his day sufficient for great poetry. None could complain of the expressiveness of Chaucer, however rough his meter in a faulty text and wrongly read. Though so fine a critic as Mr. Lewis, somewhat overwhelmed by Ariosto, still maintains that "his discipleship to Chaucer exists only in profession, not in practice"⁰ Spenser's tributes to Chaucer are more than nationalistic bravura. The poet who had already mastered a slightly artificial but thoroughly English style (in contrast to Milton) in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, where continental influences are classical and French, not Italian, and in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* before he progressed very far on the first draft of the *Faerie Queene*, learns many new devices of narration and transition from Ariosto, but does not unlearn his language.

Even in his archaisms, paralleling the procedure of Bellay, Spenser follows Chaucer's example in selecting from contemporary dialects outside London more than he pillages Chaucer's Middle English. These archaisms Sidney in a neo-classical moment censures long before Jonson; even E. K. (Spenser or Spenser conniving) is conciliatory. Like most innovators, Spenser goes too far. But he is consciously seeking words, homely as well as elevated, of fresher and more precise meaning. Many of his resurrections are abortive; others survive till later poets strangle them. He abandons his extreme archaism, just as he repeats only three of the thirteen metrical forms, ten of which were first introduced to the Elizabethans in the *Calendar*.

Spenser learns more from Chaucer than judicious selection of current dialects—the importance of skillfully handled syntax, the metrical value of the short syllable, effective for melodic purposes and for swift-moving, effortless narrative. With an equal predilection for description and meditation, like Chaucer he is capable also of dramatic narration when it suits his purpose. As he matures Spenser becomes more restrained in his borrowings, more skillful in adaptation, in taking over language principles rather than special practices. And with a swiftness more remarkable, though less famous, than Marlowe's lightning development of blank verse, Spenser molds a style that is rich, varied, fluid, adaptable to racy, homely satire and to conversational directness, as well as to the elegant formality of the Amoretti or the lofty idealism of the *Faerie Queene*. Since drama evolves from narrative, it is not sur-

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prising to find in Spenser's early poetry, if we trouble to look, a mastery of colloquial verse and dialogue unsurpassed in the drama for another fifteen years.

These bold borrowings, adaptations, innovations in language and metrical form point the way for the rest of the Elizabethans. His successes justify his failures. Shakespeare has as many faults of abuse and excess. Othello asks that Desdemona be sent to him,

With such accommodation and besort
As levels with her breeding.⁷

When Prospero wants Miranda to see Ferdinand approaching, he says:

The fringed curtains of thine eyes advance
And say what thou seest yond.⁸

Isolated, these speeches are slightly ridiculous. In their context they create a deliberate remoteness—Othello, noble, exotic; Prospero, long-exiled from his kind, stately master of his own rare world. Similarly, Spenser's language is adapted to the creation of the special world of the Faerie Queenc, though even there and everywhere in his minor poems he introduces colloquialism as daringly as Shakespeare, or Mr. Eliot, or Mr. Auden. Abstractions and personifications are frequent in Shakespeare,⁹ as they are in Spenser and neither hesitates to make up words or twist old words to new meanings.

Spenser's language is more consistent than Shakespeare's, but each poet alters diction and syntax according to the effect he desires. In the considerable exposition of thought and action in his plays Shakespeare resorts to direct statement; few maintain, except by implication, that on these occasions poetry flies out the window. In his complex allegory Spenser not only writes most of the time in elaborate metaphor; he also uses language dramatically at crucial points in his story, and repetitive imagery is as essential to his symbolism as to Shakespeare's mature plays. There is a large area in the use of language where they overlap. But in general we may say that Spenser exemplifies the direct, logical statement of the narrative tradition going back to Chaucer and enriched by Ariosto and Tasso; Shakespeare the oblique statement, the double or triple meaning, the elliptical phrase of drama. Spenser

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ser secures a cumulative effect by slow elaboration; Shakespeare intensity by the greatest possible compression.

The direct statement, the denotative use of language, has been in ill repute among poets and critics, except for a few like Mr. Eliot, since the end of the nineteenth century; the explicit has been abandoned to prose. In using *implicit* and explicit, as Miss Josephine Miles remarks,¹⁰ we should remember that what becomes through familiarity explicit was less so perhaps when it was first written. The terms are slippery and will remain so until the semanticists lead us out of the wilderness. In distinguishing so far as one can in brief space these two uses of language, I shall limit myself primarily, not systematically, to diction, syntax, figure, and imagery. The first two bring us at once to "the qualities which good verse shares with good prose/¹¹ Syntax provides an index not only to the logical processes of the mind but to the structure of the sensibility.*

Chaucer's effect on Spenser's syntax and narrative style is evident in such fables as the Oak and the Briar in Februarie, the Kid and the Fox in May; but is most readily demonstrable in Mother Hubberds Tale, written about 1580 though unpublished for ten years. Spenser promises a plain, unvarnished tale:

No Muses aide me needes hereto to call;

Base is the style, and matter meane withall.

It is a fabliau, supposedly told by a "plain, good woman." Spenser makes no pretense of capturing in the telling the psychology of the narrator, as Wordsworth, with only partial success, was to do later in poems like *The Thorn*. Mother Hubbard is used merely for a certain flavor, and skillfully Chaucerianized Elizabethan for the purportedly "base" style:

It was the month, in which the righteous Maide,
That for disdaine of *sinfull* worlds upbraide,
Fled back to heaven, whence she was first conceived,
Into her silver bowre the Sunne received;
And the hot Syrian Dog on him awayting,
After the chased Lyons cruell bayting,

* In a short poem like a sonnet, structure is frequently only the syntax of a sentence adjusted to the form; the quality of the sentence is the quality of the poem.

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Corrupted had th'ayre with his noysome breath,
And powr'd on th'earth plague, pestilence, and death.
Amongst the rest a wicked maladie
Raign'd amongst men, that manie did to die,
Deprived of sense and ordinarie reason;
That it to Leaches seemed strange and geason.
My fortune was mongst manie others moe,
To be partakers of their common woe;
And my weake bodie set on fire with griefe,
Was rob'd of rest, and naturall reliefe.
In this ill plight, there came to visite mee
Some friends, who sorie my sad case to see,
Began to comfort me in chearfull wise,
And meanes of gladsome solace to devise.
But seeing kindly sleep refuse to doe
His office, and my feeble eyes forgoe,
They sought my troubled sense how to deceive
With talke, that might unquiet fancies reave
And sitting all in seates about me round,
With pleasant tales (fit for that idle stound)
They cast in course to waste the wearie howres. . . .

In this simple magic of straightforward, unpretentious storytelling in verse Spenser recaptures a power lost since Chaucer, a style as old as poetry, as new as any present. The unobtrusive intimacy and personal tone, so different from the Romantics, of the opening device is at once that of the folk tale of common origin and of the highly sophisticated frame of the Platonic dialogues, to which Tudor and early Elizabethan prose pieces like the *Utopia*, the *Schoolmaster*, the *Defense of Poesy*, also owe their peculiar charm. For if Chaucer is in the immediate background, one feels in *Mother Hubberds Tale* the interfusion of centuries of tradition in folklore and philosophic meditation.

Spenser gets on with his story:

Whilome (said she) before the world was civill,
The Foxe and th'Ape disliking of their evill
And hard estate, determined to seeke
Their fortunes farre abroad, lyeke with his lyeke:
For both were craftie and unhappie witted;

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Two fellowes might no where be better fitted.
The Foxe, that first this cause of griefe did finde,
Gan first thus plaine his case with words unkinde,
Neighbour Ape, and my Gossip eke beside,
(Both two sure bands in friendship to be tide,)
To whom may I more trustely complaine
The evill plight, that doth me sore constraîne,
And hope thereof to finde due remedie?
Heare then my paine and inward agonie.
Thus manie yeares I now have spent and worne,
In meane regard, and basest fortunes scorne,
Doing my Country service as I might,
No lesse I dare saie than the prowdest wight;
And still I hoped to be up advanced,
For my good parts; but still it hath mischaunced.
Now therefore that no lenger hope I see,
But froward *fortune still to follow* mee,
And losels lifted high, where I did looke,
I meane to turne the next leafe of the booke.

The verse flows into the crannies of character and the vagaries of dialogue with undiminished ease. We hardly notice that our simple story has now assumed two simultaneous levels—beast and human—and is beginning to develop overtones of social and political satire. The ridicule of the self-righteous, envious grumbler, determined no longer to acquiesce, is so timeless that topical reference can be either ignored or supplied from any contemporary scene.

These couplets are free-flowing. There is no sign of strain in the adjustment of the sentence to metrical pattern; and while the sentences are frequently complex, they are clear and straightforward. That they are not more closely knit is attributable to the deliberately colloquial style rather than to any failure in structural sense. Speech rhythms are adjusted to the meter with skill and variety, producing considerable variation in the beats of the line (trochees for iambs)* without destroying the fundamental

* Conventional scansion leaves much to be desired; but musical scansion, besides being less familiar and more complex, is not so satisfactory for colloquial as for lyric poetry.

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rhythmic pattern. The frequent enjambment is chiefly on unaccented syllables, but occasionally on accented:

Amongst the rest a wicked maladie
Raign'd amongst men, that manie did to die.

But Spenser does not depend too much on enjambment for fluidity. The syntax of the Fox's speech shows that it is not built up line by line, but conceived as a whole; we are carried through the passage by the structure of thought more than by mechanical devices. Even the alliterative pattern here—no mere decorative "searching the letter"—seems a characteristic rhetorical trick of speech in the glib Fox; "froward fortune" and "losels lifted high" are the stock proverbial phrases of the demagogue, and the homely figure of the last line, as abrupt as his decision, is individual flavor. Colloquial rhythm pervades the narrative as well as the dialogue and is apparent from the beginning. The very first beat is most satisfactory as a havoring accent:

It was the month, in which the righteous Maide,
That for disdain of sinfull worlds upbraide,
Fled^w back to heaven, whence she was first conceived.

And a line like the following may be read several ways, none strictly conforming to pattern:

And powr'd on th'earth plague, pestilence, and death
 or
 And powr'd on th'earth plague, pestilence, ^(l) and death

Many of the qualities which we associate with dramatic verse are equally the property of narrative, and Spenser had fully mastered those qualities in the couplet long before the dramatists learned to loosen the bonds of blank verse. This gift of poetic speech so admirably adapted to drama Spenser uses sparingly in the *Faerie Queene*; but in a few instances* he evolves ten years before King Lear a terse poetic dialogue not unlike Goneril's. And his colloquial rhythms from 1579 on are taken up at once

* For one example, see above, pp. 140-41.

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by the sonneteers beginning with Sidney, partly through them passing on to the dramatists.*

Spenser's master in this familiar style, so far as he needed one, is clear from this portrait in a consciously Chaucerian manner:

Yee shall our pasport at your pleasure see,
And then ye will (I hope) well moved bee.
Which when the Priest beheld, he vew'd it nere,
As if therein some text he studying were,
But little else (God wote) could thereof skill:
For read he could not evidence, nor will,
Ne tell a written word, ne write a letter,
Ne make one title worse, ne make one better:
Of such deep learning little had he neede,
Ne yet of Latine, ne of Greeke, that breede
Doubts mongst Divines, and difference of texts,
From which arise diversitie of sects,
And hatefull heresies, of God abhor'd:
But this good Sir did follow the plaine word,
Ne medled with their controversies vaine,
All his care was, his service well to saine,
And to read Homelies upon holidayes:
When that was done, he might attend his playes.

The shifts of pace and variety of pauses here are admirable, playing speech rhythm against metrical beat or making them skillfully coincide:

* E. K. (Spenser's mouthpiece) remarks, though no one seems to be impressed, upon a dramatic device of speech in the *Shepheardes Calender*. In *Februarie* old *Thenot* is rudely interrupted by the impatient *Cuddie*:

Such was thend of this Ambitious brere,
For scorning Eld

Cuddie

Now I pray thee shepheard, tel it not forth:
Here is a long tale, and little worth.

E. K.: "And minding (as shoulde seme) to have made ryme to the former verse he is conningly cutte of by Cuddye, as disdayning to here any more."

The dramatic effect of this is slight; but it shows sensitivity to technical possibilities of a kind not usually recognized in Spenser, possibilities which might have hastened the development of drama if Spenser had not chosen narrative, with the result that his influence was delayed and indirect.

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Al' his care was / his service wél' to saíne.

This satirical analysis of the priest's ignorance is a rationalization in semi-soliloquy, with its bewilderment, its slight hesitations followed by rush of words. The satire is all the better for being equivocal, poised between self-righteousness and discomfort; the priest is undermined by his inability to "follow the plaine word" except so far as he has learned his text and homilies by rote. Indignation is softened by sly humor. At other times Spenser's scorn is full of sheer animal spirits, anticipating Samuel Butler:

The Pasport ended, both they forward went,
The Ape clad Souldierlike, fit for th'intent,
In a blew jacket / with a crosse of redd
And manie slits, as if that he had shedd
Much blood through many wounds therein receaved,
Which had the use of his right arme bereaved;
Upon his head an old Scotch cap he wore,
With a plume feather all to peeces tore:
His breeches were made after the new cut,
AI Portugese, loose like an emptie gut.

But most of all, Spenser as a satirist is the Elizabethan Dryden, for Dryden is closer in temper to Spenser than to his great follower, Pope. The kinship is in basic humanity and generosity, largeness of view, vigor and verve. Occasionally Spenser, whom we have already found to be playful (sometimes disconcertingly), strikes the very quality which Dryden preempts as "raillery"; good nature tempers satire which is not so much wit as a kind of exuberant fun:

Be you the Souldier, for you likest are
For manly semblance, and small skill in warre.

Yet Mr. Eliot calls Dryden "a successor of Jonson, and therefore the descendant of Marlowe."¹² In the fifteen nineties English poets reintroduce a more consciously Latin type of satire which has caused us to neglect the older tradition to which Spenser belongs; yet Dryden in *Absalom* and *Achitophel* and *The Hind and the Panther* owes as much to the satirical allegory and animal fable perfected by Chaucer and Spenser as to Horace. And

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Spenser is frequently more Horatian in tone and manner than those disciples of Juvenal and Persius, Hall and Marston, who paradoxically echo the grotesque invective of the old flying matches. Outside the drama, no Elizabethan satirist, not even Donne, is greater than Spenser, who also happens to be one of the few masters of the familiar style in English poetry.*

Spenser is equally fluent when he lays aside the couplet for ottava rima in *Muiopotmos*: the *Fate of the Butterflie*, which also deserves rescue from the dreary *Complaints*. The changes in diction and style are determined not by the stanza, but by the demands of mock-heroic, as delicate and skillful as the *Rape of the Lock*, another poem in debt to Spenser, who himself never forgot Sir Thopas. Such phrases as "deadly dolorous debate" are partly self-satire in this burlesque of epic and the heroic style:

I sing of deadly dolorous debate,
Stir'd up through wrathfull Nemesis despight,
Betwixt two mightie ones of great estate,
Drawne into armes, and prooffe of mortall fight,
Through prowde ambition, and hart swelling hate,
Whilest neither could the others greater might
And sdeignfull scorne endure; that from small jarre
Their wraths at length broke into open warre.

The roote whereof and tragicall effect,
Vouchsafe, O thou the mournfulst Muse of nyne.
That wontst the tragick stage for to direct,
In funerall complaints and wayfull tyne,
Reveale to me, and all the meanes detect,
Through which sad Clarion did at last declyne
To lowest wretchednes; and is there then
Such rancour in the harts of mightie men?f

These two opening stanzas are a triumph of "straight-face" comedy. They are fine enough to be taken as serious poetry, and,

* Colin Clout is at its best superior in style to *Mother Hubberds Tale*, varying from passages of exquisite delicacy to savage invective. But its style is less of a piece, is occasionally marred by verbal horseplay and by seemingly aimless experimentation. None the less, it is the peer of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbufhnot* and deserves an equal hearing.

t The composition of this poem is generally assigned to 1590, the year Spenser came to London to publish the first part of the *Faerie Queene*.

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as in all great mock-heroic, this serious poetic quality is essential to the complex effect. The next stanza, by giving away the heroes, announces the parody, already caught by the subtle ear.

At first glance, the opening six lines of *Muiopotmos* seem to be composed line by line like *Tamburlaine*, until the sudden overflow into the seventh and eighth. But Elizabethan punctuation is misleading. While such devices as the strong initial beat of the fourth line modify the rhythm and prevent monotony, it is the syntax which prevents looseness and the deadliness of end-stopped verses. The whole structure of the sentence secures a unity which seems to coincide with, rather than depend on the length and metrical pattern of the stanza. This structural unity is clearer in the second stanza, where the more convoluted sentence shows careful arrangement of primary and subordinate clauses and postponement of verbs. Placement of vouchsafe and reveal and reliance on grammatical logic (instead of repeating subject of the second verb) show that condensation is to Spenser more a means to secure structure than intensity. Furthermore, the position of the opening phrase (whereof ties in directly with wane) and the inversion make the sense continuous, so that the two stanzas are really one. Such technical virtuosity was certainly not lost on Milton, who, together with Spenser, teaches Pope* the even more difficult art of weaving self-contained heroic couplets into "paragraphs."

This organic unity differs from the almost mathematically

* That Pope was early drawn to Spenser we know from himself, his work, as well as from Spence. I am not concerned with imitations or echoes; a real affinity—partly a rare sweetness and purity of style—is evident in Pope's romantic poems. Compare from the second *Muiopotmos* stanza quoted above:

And is there then
Such rancour in the harts of mightie men?

and *Faerie Queene* 2.8.1:

And is there care in heaven? and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures bace,
That may compassion of their evils move?

with *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, one of the few occasions when Pope is moved not to satire but to a tender, Spenserian pity of woman:

Is there no bright reversion in the sky
For those who greatly think, or bravely die?

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formal structure of the first Amoretti sonnet. Both types of structure are found in the *Faerie Queene*, where the verse ranges from elaboration to simplicity. Any of Spenser's direct addresses to the reader, so frequent at the opening of a canto, illustrates a mastery of simple statement as marked as Mother Hubberds Tale, though completely different in tempo and quality:

The noble hart, that harbours vertuous thought,
And is with child of glorious great intent,
Can never rest, untill it forth have brought,
TVeternall brood of glorie excellent:
Such restlesse passion did all night torment
The flaming corage of that Faery knight,
Devizng, how that doughtie turnament
With greatest honour he atchieven might;
Still did he wake, and still did watch for dawning light.¹³

This is equally admirable as prose or poetry. With the exception of the inversion in the eighth line, there is nothing unnatural or forced in syntax perfectly fitted into the confines of an exacting stanza; there is no conflict between metrical demands and meaning, but the poise of reconciliation.

We are no longer geared to the leisurely unfolding of the *Faerie Queene*. We read it too rapidly, partly under the psychological oppression of its length; consequently to most it has a monotony which more careful, better spaced reading dissipates. Spenser is to be read aloud for delight as well as profit; only when approached thus does the richness and variety of his art unfold. And if we turn from the first six books to the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, we find a change in his style so great as to make it difficult to see how these two cantos, supposedly the core of a Seventh Book, could have been successfully brought into focus with the rest.

In the *Mutabilitie Cantos* echoes of Ariosto or Tasso are faint, for romance-epic shifts from romance to epic. Diction and style have greater simplicity and an authority as fine in its way as Milton's—close to what Keats was attempting when, in painstaking revision of *Hyperion*, he turned from Milton to Dante. Always aware of what he is doing, Spenser calls it "sternenesse" of style: syntax becomes simpler, nearer to the metrical pattern, and the more sparing inversions and indirections have too much

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justification to seem tours de force. Meter and sentence beat almost in unison:

Ah! whither dost thou now thou greater Muse
Me from these woods and pleasing forrests bring?
And my fraile spirit (that doth oft refuse
This too high flight, unfit for her weake wing)
Lift up aloft, to tell of heavens King
(Thy souveraine Sire) his fortunate successe,
And victory, in bigger notes to sing,
Which he obtained against that Titanesse,
That him of heavens Empire sought to dispossesse.

Yet sith I needs must follow thy behest,
Do thou my weaker wit with skill inspire,
Fit for this turne; and in my feeble brst
Kindle fresh sparks of that immortall fire,
Which learned minds inflameth with desire
Of heavenly things: for, who but thou alone,
That art yborne of heaven and heavenly Sire,
Can tell things doen in heaven so long ygone;
So farre past memory of man that may be knowne.¹⁴

Spenser still flavors his style with the antique—sith, yborne, ygone—which are at the same time slight metrical helps; but he no longer needs easy aids, and there is no suspicion of quaintness in this slight, deliberate resort to archaism.

If in his last period he strikes out on the one hand in the direction of a sterner heroic style, on the other he carries his mastery of metrical complexity to heights unsurpassed in English. In the opening stanza of *ProthaJamion* the elaborate canzone is sustained by the structure of the sentence:

Calme was the day, and through the trembling ayre,
Sweete breathing Zephyrus did softly play
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
Hot Titans beames, which then did glyster fayre:
When I whom sullen care,
Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay
In Princes Court, and expectation vayne
Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away,

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Like empty shaddowes, did afflict my brayne,
Walkt forth to ease my payne
Along the shoare of silver streaming Themmes,
Whose rutty Bancke, the which his River hemmes,
Was paynted all with variable flowers.
And all the meades adornd with daintie gemmes,
Fit to decke maydens bowrcs,
And crowne their Paramours,
Against the Brydale day, which is not long:
 Sweete Themmes runne softly, till I end my Song.

The skeletal statement may be transposed thus: Calm was the betrothal day when I walked forth to ease my pain *along the* Thames. The elaboration is contrived by development of four elements in the sentence: the calmness of the day, the personal pain, the easing of pain by the river's beauty, the coming ceremony. But these are not formally treated as in the Amoretti. Suspense is built up by what was to become Milton's favorite device—postponement of the main idea—though, grammatically speaking, Spenser begins with an inversion of the main clause. Calm, the mood of the whole poem, is first established in nature, then contrasted with a discordant personal mood with its equally discordant artificial background (the Court), then offered as a solace; and this seeming resolution is modified by the sudden introduction of the fourth element (harmonious with the day) in the manner of a musical coda.

We have already seen in *Mother Plubberds Tale* that Spenser early learned the structural potentialities of relatives used often with deliberate looseness, and of carefully placed subordinate clauses. Now he no longer bothers to maintain exact balance between importance of substance and grammatical logic; and in this stanza is guilty of solecism:

When I whom sullein care

· · · · ·
· · · · · did afflict my brayne. . . .

This may be oversight; especially in an Elizabethan poet, it may be conscious flouting of grammar. We can be certain only, on the abundant evidence of his poetry, that in Spenser it is not inability to handle complex syntax; also that the shifting rhythms here, the

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beautiful unfolding of the stanza, are dependent on the arrangement of the sentence. Furthermore, the solecism does not cloud the meaning of the stanza, nor does the structural ambiguity, in my opinion deliberate, of the next to last line, which applies both to what precedes and to what follows. The main theme, the betrothal, is relegated to the coda, coming almost like an afterthought. This kind of intentional structural ambiguity is typical of the later Shakespeare.

In Prothalamion diction is for the most part simple, almost plain. Mead and paramours are the only obvious poeticisms, though we may include such words as glister, ruddy, adorned, variable, which were subsequently worked into a poetic diction and squandered. Description of nature is beautifully poised between artifice and reality; yet the pictorial is not only subordinated to emotional complexity, to the deliberate clash of moods; it is also no more important than the modulation of sound. Art is consummate here and less obtrusive than in Tennyson's lyric beginning:

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only through the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground.¹⁵

Spenser and Tennyson are frequently berated for describing rather than dramatizing emotion. Such direct statement as theirs seems to us often less truly direct than the half-articulate cry, the ellipsis, the psychologically revealing surprise. We prefer one kind of artifice to another.

3.

One manifestation of explicit as distinct from implicit use of language is preference for simile over metaphor. We cannot say that Spenser is a poet of the simile, Shakespeare of the metaphor, for neither confines himself to one exclusively. Their range is too wide, their use of language too rich and varied to distinguish more than general tendencies. A few examples will indicate the divergence.

My first choice is not fair, the poetic advantage being too

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clearly Shakespeare's; its value is similarity in the elements of comparison. Spenser writes in /anuarie:

You naked trees, whose shady leaves are lost,
Wherein the byrds were wont to build their bowre:
And now are clothd with mosse and hoary frost,
Instede of blossomes, wherewith your buds did flowre:
I see your teares, that from your boughes doe raine,
Whose drops in dreary isicles remaine.

All so my lustfull leafe is drye and sere,
My timely buds with wayling all are wasted:
The blossome, which my braunch of youth did beare,
With breathed sighs is blowne away, and blasted
And from mine eyes the drizzling teares descend,
As on your boughes the isicles depend.

Shakespeare may be partially indebted to this passage in his familiar Sonnet 73:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

He condenses into four lines as much as Spenser says in twelve—even more. His fourth line, ostensibly in simple apposition, actually carries much of the poetic meaning. He is using a form which demands compression, whereas Spenser's form allows him to set his own limit; but primarily Shakespeare achieves compression by metaphor and by exploiting to the full the multiple meanings of certain key words. Bare is made to work on several levels of meaning simultaneously:

- 1) My middle age is bare.
- 2) The boughs are bare of leaves.
- 3) The trees are bare of birds.
- 4) The choirs are bare of singers.

Thus the barrenness of middle age is made visual and audible. Mr. Empson's ingenuity goes further.¹⁶ Only the fourth meaning is directly stated; the rest are implicit, made valid by stressing one point of similarity in middle age, boughs in winter, deserted choirs

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—the last two literal (birds and singers with actual voices), the first metaphorical. In these lines Shakespeare exhausts the associations and correspondences in the figure; later he strips these away to its essence when Macbeth complains:

My way of life
Is falVn into the sear, the yellow leaf.¹⁷

In each case, though metaphor is used, emotion is frankly stated; the statement becomes oblique through multiplicity of implications. Incidentally, the adjective is paramount in Macbeth's condensation; sear, with its latent pun, carries most weight.

Spenser's comparison between a tree in winter and approaching age is explicit, carefully elaborated in each detail of correspondence, like Richard's soliloquy on time. First we have the visualization of the naked trees, then the comparison—a method which strikes us as naive, even archaic, as lacking economy, since it involves repeating all the elements compared, first stated in connection with trees, then recapitulated in terms of human aging. The second stanza contains the substance of the figure and can stand alone; if we omit the simile bridge—"all so"—the first four lines of this stanza, already half-metaphor,* can as metaphor carry the central meaning in terms close to Shakespeare's:

. . . my lustfull leafe is drye and sere,
My timely buds with wayling all are wasted:
The blossome, which my braunch of youth did beare,
With breathed sighes is blowne away, and blasted.

Spenser's are youthful verse, written at a time when English poetry was in a bad way—gauche, verbose, almost inarticulate. The redundancy is in part a fault of inexperience; but when we make due allowance for this and check against his mature work, we are struck by two things: to some extent Spenser seems to be pulled half-consciously into metaphor by the very nature of the language; the recapitulation is certainly intentional. Perhaps it helps to point to the device in music, though Spenser's repetition is not only with variation, it is with alteration of meaning. He is not trying to do what Shakespeare does; he is not interested in economy but in elaboration. His poem is an eclogue to winter

* Metaphor has crept in with "teares" in the first stanza.

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rather than a sonnet using natural imagery to portray a mental and emotional state. The sense of loss in these two stanzas expresses a different relation between personal and objective. Shakespeare suborns nature to personal ends; Spenser simply puts man and nature in the same key. The metaphorical condensation which I made above actually destroys this balance. On any count Shakespeare's lines are superior to this studio work of Spenser's, but the fundamental difference is between two kinds of poetry.

The simile is not just a metaphor trailing its umbilical cord. Nor does it merely "add/" never develop. Often the epic simile attracts attention to itself rather than to the object which it is supposed to illuminate, but not always.* The very elaboration in Spenser, whose effects are built up by accumulation, at times acquires a certain symbolism from the general context and a metaphorical dimension quite different from metaphorical framework. Though the end result is not unlike, the method differs from Shakespeare's.

Shakespeare by no means neglects the simile even in his mature plays, especially when he seeks a formal effect:

/ago. Patience, I say; your mind perhaps may change.

Othello. Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea,
Whose icy currents and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up.¹⁸

Othello's character is epic, his associations not with familiar English streams, but with exotic tides which literally defy nature's law. Shakespeare, though not engaged in a psychological study of a Moor, contrives a specific way of thinking and feeling for Othello which goes beyond a sprinkling of exotic words; except in those psychologically realistic moments of the play when a broken

* We incline to assume that Spenser, with his structural faults is incapable of the close-knit epic simile as developed by Milton. For proof that he can when he wants control elaborate simile with equal skill, see the example quoted above, pp. 250.

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phrase—little more than an ejaculation—becomes the shorthand of his torment, in all Othello's speeches there is a suggestion of the grandiloquent artifice used earlier for Richard the Second and on occasion for Hotspur.

Spenser describes the ebb and flow of battle between Cambello and Triamond:

Like as the tide that comes from th'Ocean mayne,
Flowes up the Shenan with contrarie forse,
And overruling him in his owne rayne,
Drives backe the current of his kindly course,
And makes it secme to have some other sourse:
But when the floud is spent, then backe againe
His borrowed waters forst to redisbourse,
He sends the sea his owne with *double* gaine,
And *tribute* eke withall, as to his Soveraine.

Thus did the battell varie to and fro,
With diverse fortune doubtfull to be deemed. . . ,¹⁹

At first glance the last four lines of the simile seem to elaborate beyond the point of comparison, for its own sake or to fill out the stanza. The tide is not subordinated to the fight so definitely as the Pontic tide is subordinated to Othello's anger. Spenser's simile, indeed, almost halts the struggle. Yet the simile presents the whole nature of that struggle better than his account of the action. And while it does not show the careful, logical expansion of detail of the Jaiuiarie simile, it represents the same kind of sensibility, the same balance between man and nature. Later, in the second stanza broken off above, Spenser introduces a secondary simile:

And all the while the disentrayl'd blood
Adowne their sides like litle rivers stremed,
That with the wasting of his vitall flood,
Sir Triamond at last full faint and feeble stood.

Imaginatively, this agrees perfectly with the "tribute" drawn back into the sea by the retreating tide.

If we look again at the first stanza we can see what happens. By the time he reaches the third line Spenser slips into metaphor with "overruling him in his owne rayne"; yet while the fight

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between the tide and the river is the simile of battle, Ocean and Shannon do not strictly correspond with Cambello and Triamond. The metaphor within the simile rises to a larger, though related, significance; and "floud is spent" suggests to Spenser, already metaphorical in the midst of his simile's flight, a secondary meaning, which he develops spontaneously without pausing. The waters of the sea are not really "spent/" but "borrowed" to be "redisboursed" with "double gaine" in "tribute" owed the sea as sovereign. Finally, some lines later the same simile with the same metaphorical expansion is repeated, and the particular wasting of one man's life through little rivers of blood is related to the elemental mystery of the demands of the sea upon the land, and to the life-giving (or life-lending), death-bringing force of earth and water. Epic simile is not always ornamental excrescence in the Faerie Queene.

If Spenser seldom creates the tension of Shakespeare's dramatic compression, he sets up a kind of vibration of interrelated meanings among various seemingly simple, direct statements. The centers of radiation in the broadest sense are usually the allegorical cores of the books; in a manner impossible to explain, seemingly disconnected and widely separated passages acquire from the context an additional vitality. Even passages isolated from the poem sometimes retain this cumulative energy.

Besides the almond-tree type, where simile flashes through metaphor, and the expanded simile, like the Shannon tides which develop inside themselves related metaphor, there is a further qualification of Spenser's preference for similes. His metaphors are less obtrusive. Often he casts a whole stanza in a metaphor so simple that it may pass unobserved like this one—another river:

God of the world and worldlings I me call,
Great Mammon, greatest god below the skye,
That of my *plenty* poure out unto all,
And unto none my graces do envye:
Riches, renowne, and principality,
Honour, estate, and all this worldes good,
For which men swinke and sweat incessantly,
From me clo flow into an *ample* flood,
And in the hollow earth have their eternall brood.²⁰

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In the context of its underworld canto, this simple metaphor, this direct statement, has a compression and complexity of its own. The river of materialism pours out its "graces" with ironical impartiality, breeding forms of life ("eternall brood") like the fertile Nile; only, along with Cocytus and Acheron and Styx, it is a river of hell.

4.

All things considered, we should take Mr. Herbert Read with a grain of reservation: "Spenser, in spite of his continual use of allegory, kept to the visual significance of words; each word distinct and separate, pebbles in the stream. But now [with Shakespeare] words were to flash with interverbal meanings; they no longer reflect an equivalent and logical meaning; they become mere sounds and symbols suggesting a meaning beyond the compass of words, clear only to the intuitive vision of the poet. Words dissolve and lose their outlines in such a fierce glory/"²¹ Spenser and Shakespeare cannot be completely separated in this way, not only because Shakespeare often uses language in the direct fashion of Spenser, but also because Spenser's allegory is not strictly continuous, as we have seen, and his words often have interverbal meanings acquired in a different way from Shakespeare's. But Mr. Read rightly grants to Shakespeare rather than Spenser the final consummation of all the potentialities of English, which, as Mr. Empson says, is "full of metaphors which are not dead but sleeping, and, while making a direct statement, colour it with an implied comparison."²² This essential difference between English and French explains why symbolism, a new and exciting poetic development in France in the nineteenth century, characterizes English poetry almost from the beginning and without conscious effort.

As has already been apparent, the two ways of using language, explicit and implicit, direct and oblique, are reflected not only in the proportion of simile to metaphor, but also in the nature of the imagery involved. What Mr. Read calls Spenser's "visual use of words" is to some extent borne out by his predominantly visual imagery. Mr. Read ignores, and I have slighted, Spenser's auditory imagery and his unfailing sense of the sound value of words. Not even Milton and Tennyson surpass Spenser in delicacy of ear. The

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"interverbal flashes," which Mr. Read attributes to Shakespeare and denies to Spenser, are inevitable in a poet so attuned to the sound of words. In Shakespeare such sound relations are most characteristically manifested in highly imaginative puns; in Spenser most often as internal rhymes, but also, as we have seen earlier, in a different kind of wit:

Breeder of new, renewer of old smarts.

Here sound pattern is important—especially *r* in shifting positions and in combination with various vowel shadings (most obviously, *Breeder—renewer*)—but sound is used not just for itself; without being puns, the very words establish complex interrelationships of meaning.*

When we examined Spenser's visual imagery in his pictorial effects, we discovered that Spenser's sensitivity to texture is as remarkable as Shakespeare's, that the enmeshing of sensuous imagery considered almost the special province of Keats, or among the Elizabethans of Shakespeare, is characteristic of Spenser. Furthermore, interverbal meanings flash through the almond-

* Sensitivity to sound values is so instinctive in Spenser that some of his effects which we have been taught to explain by such devices as alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme rather seem to develop meaning through sound relationships, just as in the process of creation selection of imagery at the start seems to beget subsequent images and in part control the development of the poem. For example:

Sleepe after toylc, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.
[*Faerie Queene*, 1.9.40]

And in *Richard II*, the Shakespearean play nearest to Spenser as well as to Marlowe, we find not only similar structural balance, but also this special sound relationship, which cannot be satisfactorily explained either by "internal rhyme" or "pun":

But whatever I be,
Nor I nor any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing. [*Richard II*, 5.5.38-41]

Here the rhyme really represents a common clement of meaning in the two words. Even here Shakespeare makes Spenser's simple statement (*ease docs please*) sharper and more causal (*nothing doth please till case*); the intellectual, soon to precipitate metaphysical wit, enters.

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tree stanza, where the images (partly self-begotten) are hardly pebbles in a stream, like a fuse to powder.

Mr. Eliot provides a significant contrast between Dante's and Shakespeare's visual imagery. Dante speaks of the crowd in Hell peering at him and Virgil in the dim light: " 'and sharpened their vision (knitted their brows) at us, like an old tailor peering at the eye of his needle/ The purpose of this type of simile is solely to make us see more definitely the scene which Dante has put before us in the preceding lines.

she looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace.

The image of Shakespeare's is much more complicated than Dante's, and more complicated than it looks. It has the grammatical form of a kind of simile (the 'as if form), but of course 'catch in her toil' is a metaphor. But whereas the simile of Dante is merely to make you see more clearly how the people looked, and is explanatory, the figure of Shakespeare is expansive rather than intensive; its purpose is to add to what you see (either on the stage or in your imagination), a reminder of that fascination of Cleopatra which shaped her history and that of the world, and of that fascination being so strong that it prevails even in death. It is more elusive. . . ,"²³

This distinction between two types of imagery, involving two ways of using language, is clear-cut. Expansive imagery, like Mr. Read's "interverbal meanings," is characteristic of Shakespeare, but not exclusively. When he speaks of Coriolanus wiping his bloody brow and going forth to fight again,

Like to a harvestman that's task'd to mow
Or all or lose his hire,²⁴

he is concerned with more than visualization, yet he is closer to the intensive quality of Dante's simile; he is closer still when Volumnia protests of her son,

yet here he lets me prate
Like one in the stocks.

After this direct simile, however, Shakespeare immediately slips into metaphor as she continues:

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Thou has never in thy life
Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
Has clucked thee to the wars.²⁵

With the metaphor a certain expansiveness enters; there is slight loss in clarity and gain in suggestion, which is true also of Spenser's almond-tree simile, expanding through intermittent metaphor. Both Volumnia images are auditory as well as visual. It is important to realize that Shakespeare on occasion is capable of directness, though he rarely loses, or wishes to lose, the associative potentialities of English words. His whole method in *Coriolanus* differs from that in *Antony and Cleopatra*; the greater simplicity and directness of language, as much as its classic construction, explain why it has been more readily translated into French.

Shakespeare's imagery of this type is by no means limited to *Coriolanus*, but is found throughout his plays, depending on the effect which he seeks. Spenser is closer to Dante in that he, too, inclines to the "explanatory"; yet in his mature poetry he rarely develops a simile of any length without sliding in and out of metaphor en route. And Spenser, whose allegory is seldom the logically coherent allegory of Dante, creates expansive imagery on occasion, one feels, simply by allowing his imagination free rein and by surrendering to the metaphorical nature of his language; I say "surrendering" because Spenser seldom seems deliberately to exploit this quality of English as Shakespeare conspicuously does. Even Shakespeare's homeliest imagery is often kindled by the prodigal magic of Elizabethan English into Mr. Read's "fierce glory," which Dante reserves only for the most intense spiritual vision. Antony's death reveals to Cleopatra that she is

No more, but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks
And does the meanest chares.²⁶

Visualization here is incidental; the comparison is complicated by intellectual as well as imaginative suggestion. Instead of reducing Cleopatra momentarily to the milk-maid, Shakespeare, whether consciously or not, elevates the milk-maid to golden pastoral.

A less difficult example is in *Twelfth Night*:

THE KINGDOM OF OUR LANGUAGE

O, fellow, come, the song we had last night.
Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain;
The spinsters and *the knitters* in the sun
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones
Do use to chant it.²⁷

"Old and plain" this image may claim to be, but is not; it "seeks to add rather than explain." All sorts of interverbal meanings come into play, glorifying what may have been a homely memory from Stratford days into something almost as portentous, though without great consequence, as the Fates weaving. There is no need to analyze too closely (it defies analysis) the source of the aura: chant is the most obvious and most intentionally vibrating word; bones used here specifically of knitting needles (Dante would have said bone needle) suggest inevitably vague, wider connotations, and knitters in the sun conveys both more and less than Dante, who would have given a clear, uncomplicated visualization. By this sea-change, so frequent in Shakespeare, the homeliest things are transmuted like kitchen utensils under the brush of Vermeer. Even when closest to the direct method, he gives us something altogether different from Dante; his images are seldom completely objectified, coming to their full richness only in the mind.

King Lear provides an image even more remarkable in contrast to Dante's tailor than Mr. Eliot's choice, for it is also concerned with threading a needle and shows the extreme compression which Shakespeare achieves at his height:

CORNWALL. You know not why we came to visit you—

REGAN. Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night.²⁸

In Dante we have really two separate images compared by the simile: the concentrated stare of the throng and the frowning concentration of a tailor threading a needle in dim light. In Shakespeare there are several images superimposed: (1) threading a needle; (2) journeying through the night; (3) the dark eye of the needle; (4) the darkness of the night. By thus coalescing images, Shakespeare secures extraordinary complexity of suggestion. The needle, which is definitely there and mentioned by name in Dante, is not mentioned at all by Shakespeare. It is implied, suggested by two things connected with it—*threading* and

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eye. Unlike the bones in *Twelfth Night*, this does not cause ambiguity. He wants only these two qualities; omission of the word needle is economical; more to the point, it is essential. The multiple application of threading and eye would be impossible without the omission; for the overlapping similarities here are not susceptible to the analytical expansion of Richard the Second's elaborate conceit on time, tears, sighs, groans. This compression means a certain loss of clarity; but the omission indicates how Shakespeare takes the needle from the objective plane and makes it subjective, an important element, but merely in one of its properties, of his image. This coalescing is of a different order from Spenser's coalescing in the almond-tree stanza, and is one reason why Shakespeare rather than Spenser develops—or exhausts—the full potentialities of the language.

Shakespeare's interverbal meanings have been too well explored in recent criticism to detain us further. But we may profitably pause a moment over a danger which Mr. Read, without himself falling into, suggests when he remarks that with Shakespeare words "no longer reflect an equivalent and logical meaning; they become mere sounds and symbols suggesting a meaning beyond the compass of words/' Mr. I. A. Richards' ingenious demonstration in his "sound" version of Milton's Nativity Hymn²⁹ has not entirely scotched the tendency to regard words in poetry as mere sound and symbols. Poets have many devices for making words say more than they logically mean, but complete abolition of meaning is not one of them.

Sidney, turning the very limitation of words to advantage, voices the constant feeling of the sonneteers:

What may words say, or what may words not say
Where truth itself must speak like flattery?

Simple hyperbole becomes an Elizabethan trademark; Spenser and the rest bankrupt vocabulary in praise of Eliza. Drayton in a sonnet strikes off one hyperbole which Shakespeare himself could not better:

And queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise.

And Shakespeare's

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Who's born that day
When I forget to send to Antony
Shall die a beggar/⁰

is, in the words of Dr. Johnson, logically absurd, yet poetically true. In these instances the defiance of logic, however, is open and calculated. The Elizabethans would be the last poets to throw meaning overboard; without the norm the distortions are impossible. And even when breaking its rules they rely more than we suspect on the logic of grammar to articulate the illogic of poetic truth.

We have already noticed how much the structure of Spenser's verse depends on the placement of relative clauses and appositional phrases. Though predominantly direct in his statement and usually crystal-clear, in complex passages in *Prothalamion*, even so early as *Mother Hubberds Talc*, his sentences are often indirect. By relying on the logic of the sentence he saves a repetition (smarts):

Breeder of new, renewer of old smarts,
a technique carried to its ultimate by Pope:

Alive, ridiculous, and dead, forgot.³¹

In Shakespeare's syntax relative and appositional clauses show even greater economy, and ellipsis becomes almost the rule:

You know not why we came to visit you—
Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night.

This essentially simple statement is complicated only by an adverbial phrase and one in apposition; but the appositional phrase is so loose that only its logical relation to the rest of the sentence saves it from enigma. Instead of using the maximum of logic like Pope, Shakespeare uses the minimum; still, that minimum makes all the difference between meaning and no meaning.

What precisely does Housman mean when he remarks that "even Shakespeare, who had so much to say, would sometimes pour out his loveliest poetry in saying nothing. . . .

Take, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;

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And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn!
But my kisses bring again,
Seals of love, but .seal'd in vain.

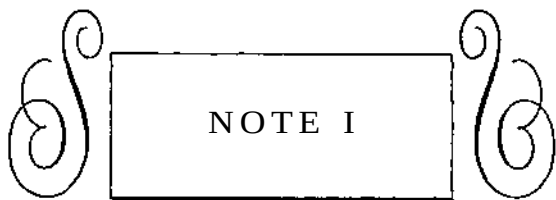
That is nonsense, but it is ravishing poetry/³²

He is right if he means what Johnson meant—content only, but one suspects that he did not realize "break of day" and "lights that do mislead the morn" are metaphors in simple apposition to "eyes": only the metaphor is not logical. The song makes perfectly good poetic sense divorced from its context in *Measure for Measure*; restored, it makes even more. And that rarer song from the *Tempest*, "Full fathom five," though scarcely scientific in substance, depends for its effect on logical statement. I cheerfully agree that such songs as these bring critical analysis up short with the jerk of its tether; but syntax is always there, no matter how much elided or contorted, and with syntax is always the meaning of words, never diminished to vanishing or with it would vanish the medium of poetry.

5.

Spenser never sings in this way; his lyrics, when they are not dramatic like *Epithalamion*, are more formal and intricate, shedding their benison on Jonson, who in an unfilial moment, and thinking perhaps primarily of the *Shepherd's Calendar*, complained that Spenser "writ no language." Jonson brings to song the artful felicity and pellucid clarity of Spenser used in a new way well worth the attention of a generation like ours, whose poetic language is frayed. Another neglected "son" of Spenser who has relevance to us is Samuel Daniel, whose contemporaries thought him prosaic but "well-linguaged"—a considerable tribute. Coleridge calls Daniel's "that style which, as the neutral ground of prose and verse, is common to both," anticipating Mr. Eliot's fine remarks on Johnson. Above all, no poet can fail to profit by a study of Spenser's prosody in all its range.

Poetry should reclaim her lost provinces.



SPENSER'S HIGH COMEDY

(FAERIE QUEENE 2.3)

AFTER remarking that Braggadochio and Trompart remind him of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Schofield hastily retracts: "Even if Spenser had so desired, he had not humour enough to write a good burlesque. In truth, there is ground to suspect that he took Sir Thopas seriously"¹ This is only an extreme instance of a persistent and inexplicable deafness to Spenser's playful, humorous, and witty inflections, which sometimes come close to undermining his most serious scenes. Of course Mother Hubberds Tale, in which satire ranges from animal spirits to sulphurous indignation, and Muiopotnios: or the Fate of the Butterfly, which lifts pure fun to high poetry, completely refute Schofield; Muiopotmos alone proves conclusively that if Spenser ever made serious use of Chaucer's Sir Thopas (and this has confused more perceptive critics than Schofield) the explanation is not lack of humor. Muiopotmos is the poetic peer of the Nun's Priest's Tale and the Rape of the Lock; and Spenser's genius for comedy and burlesque, far from being confined to his minor poems, recurs throughout the Faerie Queene—nowhere more triumphantly than in the third canto of the Second Book, a comedy complete in itself though continued in later books. Long ago Todd noted a resemblance between Braggadochio and Falstaff; but Braggadochio and Trompart are closer to Stephano and Trinculo; and the complex tone of this canto suggests the Tempest in its blend of the serious, the

¹ Quoted Variorum Spenser 2.208. My attention has been called to The Nine" English Comedies Again, an unpublished paper read before the Spenser Group of the Modern Language Association, 1931, by Mr. Charles B. Burke, who has partly completed a larger work on The Comic Element in Spenser.

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comic, and lyric beauty—even in its use of magic. When Arcliimago without warning spreads his wings and vanishes, he terrifies Spenser's two buffoons as Ariel terrifies Shakespeare's.

The canto is conceived as dramatically as a scene from Shakespearean comedy; except for the long description of Belpheobe and what amounts to stage direction, it is all comic action and first-rate dialogue—the most sustained conversation in the *Faerie Queene*. And, besides creating comic situation and two excellent comic characters,² Spenser satirizes false chivalry, counterpoints two opposed views of the courtier (just as Shakespeare counterpoints the theme of honor in *Falstaff* and *Hotspur*), brilliantly yet affectionately parodies the classics, and, with his setting in a magic wood and his Diana-like Belpheobe, interfuses the whole canto with lyrical beauty.

Concentrating on topical identification of Braggadochio, Trompart, and Belpheobe with the Duke of Alengon, Simier, and Elizabeth, too many scholars and critics have been heavy-handed here; they forget that this is not another Mother Hubberds Tale written when the disturbing prospect of Elizabeth's French marriage seemed imminent. When Spenser wrote this canto that danger was long past, and his retrospective gibe, if barbed, is playful. The tone is so skillfully controlled that Elizabeth, among other things a fun-loving soul, could certainly enjoy even the sly humor that brushes the super-serious portrait of herself; and she was sufficiently tried by the upstarts infesting her Court to laugh at them with Spenser. The Court was already by 1590 a favorite target of Elizabethan satirists, and no one was more responsible for making it so than Spenser; the neglect of his verse satire is all the more unaccountable when we realize that he is not only one

² Mr. C. G. Osgood demonstrates beyond question that Braggadochio is an independent, fully rounded characterization, a familiar type, but with as much individuality as Shakespeare himself gives such types. His views are quoted in part *Variorum Spenser* 2.210.

Though Spenser unquestionably owes something to Ariosto's Martano, Cory is right (*ibid.*, 2.207-8) in questioning Dodge's superficial diagnosis of Braggadochio as merely a mixture of Martano and Mandricardo, and in pointing out that if Spenser imitates Mandricardo it is in *Pyrochles*. One has only to read the relevant passages in *Orlando Furioso* to discover that Dodge's early essay on Ariosto parallels does not live up to his later wise "Sermon on Source-Hunting" *MP*, 9, 1911-12.

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of the greatest but a pioneer among Elizabethan satirists.⁸ He also differs from the rest in his serious basic concern: if Elizabeth's "nobility," excepting the few families which survived the feudal butchery of the fifteenth century, were of origin somewhat obscure, all the more reason for selecting the best of them as foundation for future aristocracy; all the more need for weeding out the base pretenders.

Ascham and Sidney had already agreed that horsemanship is essential to the Elizabethan ideal gentleman; when he uses Braggadochio's theft of a brave and noble steed for satirical contrast with a craven "losell" Spenser anticipates, however faintly and playfully, Swift's devastating symbolism:

One that to bountie never cast his mind,
Ne thought of honour ever did assay
His baser brest, but in his kestrell kind
A pleasing vaine of glory vaine did find,
To which his flowing tounge, and troublous spright
Gave him great ayd, and made him more inclind:
He that brave steed there finding ready dight,
Purloynd both steed and speare, and ran away full light.

At the end of the canto, after accepting Trompart's advice to make themselves scarce, Braggadochio awkwardly mounts his stolen horse—that noble, inseparable true knight's companion—which easily pierces his pathetic pretensions:

For he despyd to tread in dew degree,
But chaufd and fom'd, with courage fierce and sterne,
And to be easd of that base burden still did yerne.

The horse is not only the test; in this strange company he is the gentleman.

The trouble with Braggadochio—and it troubles while amusing and revolting Spenser—is his complete moral deficiency. He steals Guyon's horse and spear because he wants to rise in the world; not his ambition, which was also Spenser's, but his false glory

³ Mr. Oscar Campbell, as we have seen, ignores Spenser's satire entirely. Among those who have in some form recognized Spenser's humor Mr. Burke mentions J. Hughes, Upton, Todd, Craik, Kitchin, R. C. Church, Hales, Grosart, Percival, Herford, de Sélincourt, Gough, Warren, Winstanley.

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Spenser objects to. Like Shakespeare later, Spenser is for a moment aware of a certain pathos in this fool for whom he has no use:

He gan to hope, of men to be received
For such, as he him thought, or faine would bee:

and the very process of characterizing to distribute the blame enables Spenser to get in some sly digs at the false emphases of the Court, where too much base coinage is current:

But for in court gay portauunce he perceiv'd,
And gallant shew to be in greatest gree,
Eftsoones to court he cast t'avaunce his first degree.

Suddenly the serious note fades before pure burlesque, all the more spirited for Spenser's making fun, as we have seen earlier in *Muiopotmos*, of his own heroic vein. Braggadochio, equipped now with horse and spear, assumes the "manner" along with the accoutrements of knighthood when he comes upon Trompart:

To whom avaunting in great bravery,
As Peacocke, that his painted plumes doth prancke,
He smote his courser in the trembling flancke,
And to him threatned his hart-thrilling speare:
The seely man seeing him ryde so rancke,
And ayme at him, fell flat to ground for feare,
And crying, "Mercy," lowd, his pitious hands gan reare.

Whereupon Braggadochio demonstrates his "flowing tounge"—both he and Trompart are loud-mouthed—in what he conceives to be the lofty style, and Trompart answers in kind:

And with big thundring voyce revyld him lowd;
"Vile Caytive, vassall of dread and despaire,
Unworthie of the commune breathed aire,
Why livest thou, dead dog, a lender day,
And doest not unto death thy selfe prepaire.
Dye, or thy selfe my captive yield for ay;
Great favour I thee graunt, for aunswere thus to stay."

"Hold, O deare Lord, hold your dead-doing hand,"
Then loud he cryde, "I am your humble thrall."
"Ah wretch," quoth he, "thy destinies withstand
My wrathfull will, and do for mercy call."

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Then this parody of magnanimity:

"I give thee life: therefore prostrated fall,
And kisse my stirrup; that thy homage bee"
The Miser threw him selfe, as an Offfall,
Streight at his foot in base humilitee,
And cleeped him his liege, to hold of him in fee.

The last line is one of the surprisingly few instances of indirect discourse in the canto.

Trompart, who is "wylie witted," at once perceives the folly of this imitation knight to whom he has sworn fealty, and establishes over him through flattery and cunning an ascendancy like that of the Fox over the Ape in Mother *Hubbcrds Tale*; he determines to play iago to Braggadochio's Roderigo. Before his scheming can take direction, however, they run across Archimago, as usual trouble-bent. By a trumped-up charge against Guyon and Redcross Archimago incites hair-trigger Braggadochio to righteous fulmination, but makes the mistake of prudently recommending a sword to supplement the stolen spear. Even good sense from an oldster is unpalatable to one who must prove his courage with every breath:

"Dotard," said he, "let be thy deepe advise;
Seemcs that through many ycares thy wits thee faile,
And that weakc eld hath left thee nothing wise,
Else never should thy judgement be so fraile,
To measure manhood by the sword or maile.
Is not enough foure quarters of a man,
Withouten sword or shield, an host to quaille?
Thou little wotest, what this right hand can;
Spcake they, which have beheld the batailles, which it wan/'

Kindling to the subject with Falstaffian fervor (though minus Falstaff's self-awareness), Braggadochio cites chapter and verse, now hypnotized by his own creative legend, his own Gadshill:

"Once I did sweare,
When with one sword seven knights I brought to end,
Thence forth in battell never sword to beare,
But it were that, which noblest knight on earth doth weare/'

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Taking him at his word, Archimago promises to fetch for Bragadochio the sword of peerless Arthur:

"The same by my device I undertake
 Shall by to morrow by thy side be fond."
 At which bold word that boaster gan to quake,
 And wondred in his mind, what mote that monster make.

He stayd not for more bidding, but away
 Was suddein vanished out of his sight:
 The Northerne wind his wings did broad display
 At his commaund, and reared him up light
 From off the earth to take his aerie flight.
 They lookt about, but no where could espie
 Tract of his foot: then dead through great affright
 They both nigh were, and each bad other flie:
 Both fled attonce, ne ever backe returned eic.

.
 Yet feare them followes still, where so they beene,
 Each trembling leafe, and whistling wind they heare,
 As ghastly bug their haire on end does reare;
 Yet both do strive their fearefulnessse to faine. . . .

This, in terms of the theater, is stage direction and pantomime.
 And the tension is stretched even tauter by the sudden blast of
 a horn

that shrilled cleare
 Throughout the wood, that ecchoed againe,
 And made the forrest ring, as it would rive in twaine.

Eft through the thicket they heard one rudely rush;
 With noyse whereof he from his loftie steed
 Down fell to ground, and crept into a bush,
 To hide his coward head from dying dreed.

But Trompart, if not of sterner stuff, more curious, waits to see:

Eftsoone there stepped forth
 A goodly Ladie clad in hunters weed,
 That seemd to be a woman of great worth,
 And by her stately portance, borne of heavenly birth.

NOTE 1: SPENSER'S HIGH COMEDY

Having with consummate artistry built up dramatic suspense for this entrance of Belpheobe, Spenser now deliberately halts the action for a different kind of comedy—sophisticated literary parody.

2.

A goodly Ladie clad in hunters weed,
That seemd to be a woman of great worth,
And by her stately portance, borne of heavenly birth.

The small educated public for whom Spenser wrote would no more miss the direct allusion in the last line to the Aeneid than we today would miss a burlesque of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be"; yet Spenser's elaborate description has been perfunctorily admired by some critics and deplored by others who consider it a tedious throw-back to the old device of portraiture by itemized catalogue. Scholars have been too much overwhelmed by the extraordinary concentration of sources and "imitations"⁴ in this passage to realize that, like the ingenious Dr. Ferriar in his compilation of Sterne's plagiarisms, they have really supplied the

⁴ The important thing to remember about all these sources is their complete familiarity to the educated Elizabethan, who learned several of them by heart in grammar school: such are details from Virgil's Venus, Dido, perhaps Camilla; from the Song of Solomon; from Marot's version of Musaeus' Hero and Leander and possibly from Musaeus himself; perhaps a glancing reference to Ovid's Apollo and Daphne; last of all, and by no means of paramount importance, allusion to Ariosto's Alcina, who herself owes much to the classics.

Mr. M. Y. Hughes thinks that Spenser got from a commonplace-book the tags which he used as emblems for Thcnot and Hobbinal in the April Eclogue: O quam te memorem virgo; O dea certe. He also explains elaborately how Spenser may have confused Virgil's Venus and Dido in this canto (Variorum Spenser, 2.218). Why suppose that Spenser needs a commonplace-book or that he confuses passages so utterly familiar to him and to his public? Indeed, the April emblems prove that he had early thought of Elizabeth in connection with apposite Virgilian passages. In a literary pastiche such as this third canto it is more likely that he intentionally combines Virgil's Venus and Dido. Belpheobe portrays Elizabeth, and in one of the passages of the Aeneid (i, 496-504) which Spenser has in mind here Dido, like Hero and Belpheobe after her, is Diana-like; she is also a mortal queen occupied *with affairs of state*. And since he places Belpheobe in a series of Virgilian contexts, whether he intends it or not, her nimble swiftness (stanza 28) recalls Virgil's Camilla, as familiar a reference in Spenser's as in Pope's day.

NOTE 1: SPENSER'S HIGH COMEDY

proper richness of context; all the "imitations" here are intentional allusions and key to burlesque. Few critics have gone so badly astray as Schofield on the comedy of Braggadochio; but the fundamentally serious nature of Belpheobe and of her role in the poem has blinded us to playful overtones in this first introduction to her, which is a remarkable blend of highly wrought, artificial beauty, simplicity, naive and passionate seriousness, and subdued humor. She represents a sophisticated complexity similar in some ways to Marlowe's portrait of Hero.

Especially when taken in the undeniably humorous connotations of the whole episode of the third canto, the ten stanzas devoted to ticking off Belpheobe's beauties attain a certain comic effect from sheer multiplicity of detail; context alone differentiates this from similarly elaborate yet completely serious description in *Epithalamion*. Spenser here uses hyperbole with typical Elizabethan exuberance and delight, but with humorous awareness; the best evidence of conscious humor latent in the highly wrought artifice is in these lines:

And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
Like roses in a bed of lillies shed,
The which ambrosiall odours from them threw,
And gazers sense with double pleasure fed,
Hable to heale the sicke, and to revive the ded.

This is precisely the tone of Marlowe's humorous exaggeration:

And many seeing great princes were denied,
Pyn'd as they went, and thinking on her died.

The essential difference between Marlowe's Hero and Belpheobe is, of course, that Belpheobe is seductive but chaste, while Hero's chastity and innocence are skin-deep artifice. I have remarked elsewhere that Belpheobe is in many respects closer to Musaeus's Hero, and Marlowe's Hero closer to Ariosto's Alcina.⁵

Unless we realize this literary sophistication and latent humor in Belpheobe, who is mock-serious as well as serious, we miss entirely Spenser's audacity in introducing her in the midst of a complex comic interlude. Mr. M. Y. Hughes, for instance, who knows that Belpheobe's sudden advent is patterned upon Venus'

⁵ "The Plagiarist: Spenser or Marlowe?" *Journal of English Literary History*, Johns Hopkins, December, 1944.

NOTE I: SPENSER'S HIGH COMEDY

appearance to Aeneas, is a little uncomfortable and apologetic when he points out that the replies of Trompart to Belpheobe have too much in common with those of Aeneas to Venus to be accident: "It may seem absurd to compare Trompart, who is traditionally identified with the mischief-making valet of Elizabeth's unpopular suitor, the Due d'Alençon, to Aeneas."⁶ Once we accept Spenser's clear intention throughout of semi-serious parody, it ceases to be absurd—rather, it becomes absurd in Spenser's sense, just as later Braggadochio in his designs on Belpheobe unconsciously apes Apollo's lust for Daphne.

3.

After the elaborate close-up of Belpheobe, the canto again dissolves into action and dialogue (still for the moment Virgilian):

When she at last him spying thus bespake;
 "Hayle Groom; didst not thou see a bleeding Hind,
 Whose right haunch earst my stedfast arrow strake?
 If thou didst, tell me, that I may her overtake."

Wherewith reviv'd, this answer forth he threw;
 "O Goddess, (for such I thee take to bee)
 For neither doth thy face terrestriall shew,
 Nor voyce sound mortall; I avow to thee,
 Such wounded beast, as that, I did not see,
 Sith carst into this forrest wild I came.
 But mote thy goodlyhd forgive it mee,
 To wcet, which of the Gods I shall thee name,
 That unto thee due worship I may rightly frame."

But this Virgilian interlude is interrupted by Braggadochio's coming to life:

To whom she thus; but ere her words enswcd,
 Unto the bush her eye did suddein glaunce,
 In which vaine Braggadocchio was mewcd,
 And saw it stirre: she left her percing launce,
 And towards gan a deadly shaft advaunce,
 In mind to marke the beast. At which sad stowre,
 Trompart forth stept, to stay the mortall chaunce,

•Variorum Spenser, 2.219.

NOTE I: SPENSER'S *HIGH COMEDY*

Out crying, "O what ever heavenly powre
Or earthly wight thou be, withhold this deadly howre.

O stay thy hand, for yonder is no game
For thy fierce arrowes, them to exercize,
But loe my Lord, my liege, whose warlike name
Is farre renownd through many bold emprise;
And now in shade he shrowded yonder lies"

Belphoebe stays her hand, curious to see this paragon thus euphemistically shrouded in shade and putting the best face on his ignominy:

with that he crauld out of his nest,
Forth creeping in his caitive hands and thies,
And standing stoutly up, his loftie crest
Did fiercely shake, and rowze, as coming late from rest.

Immediately Spenser embarks on a mock-epic simile, comparing Braggadochio to a "fearefull fowle" ruffling its feathers after the hawk has passed over. Herself so excessively courageous that she never suspects cowardice in others, Belphoebe takes him at his word; whereupon Braggadochio, recovering aplomb, is amazed that so beautiful a lady is not at court, in his opinion the acme of desire, since

There thou maist love, and dearely loved bee,
And swim in pleasure, which thou here doest mis;
There maist thou best be scene, and best maist sec:
The wood is fit for beasts, the court is fit for thee.

This is of course the very "courtly" conception which Spenser later savagely skewers in *Colin Clout*; here the satire is sly, the fun predominates. Belphoebe's answer is as dramatic a juxtaposition of opposing views as if Hotspur were to argue honor with Falstaff. She is spirited and austere, and sharply paradoxical in equating the court with oblivion rather than fame. In contrast with the passionate earnestness of Shakespeare's Adonis when he suddenly turns to lecture Venus on chastity, Spenser deliberately makes Belphoebe (with whom he agrees) as extravagant as Hotspur plucking bright honor from the moon; and it is at once clear that he has planned the whole complex canto as setting for this speech:

NOTE I; SPENSER'S HIGH COMEDY

"Who so in pompe of proud estate," quoth she,
 "Does swim, and bathes himselfe in courtly blis,
 Does waste his dayes in darke obscuritee,
 And in oblivion ever buried is:

Abroad in armes, at home in studious kind
 Who seekes with painful toile, shall honor soonest find.

Before her gate high God did Sweat ordaine,
 And wakefull watches ever to abide:
 But easie is the way, and passage plaine
 To pleasures pallace; it may soone be spide,
 And day and night her dores to all stand open wide/

Her lofty sentiments, which I have here condensed, are what we expect of a virgin (and Virgin Queen) representing Continnence, the subject of the whole book, and what we expect of Spenser himself. Courthope, Miss Winstanley, Greenlaw, all unite in tribute to this passage; and Greenlaw by quoting Chapman⁷ serves to correct any impression that Spenser means the line—"Before her gate high God did Sweat ordaine"—humorously. Still, none of them recognizes that Belpheobe's speech, without losing its serious import, is inevitably modified by its comic context. Spenser I am sure recognizes that such a flood of eloquence, while he hopes it is not wasted on the reader, is wasted on such an audience as Braggadochio and Trompart, and with sly humor he indicates that Belpheobe, once launched, is almost as reluctant to be interrupted as is Falstaff in his self-defense. Ironically, her speech has the opposite effect from her intention; throughout the scene she is completely oblivious of the reality before her:

"In Princes court/"—the rest she would have said,
 But that the foolish man, fild with delight
 Of her sweet words, that all his sence dismaid,
 And with her wondrous beautie ravisht quight,
 Gan burne in filthy lust, and leaping light,

⁷ Chapman, quoted by Greenlaw, paraphrasing Hesiod—Variorum Spenser, 2.222:

But before Virtue do the Gods rain sweat,
 Through which, with toil and half-dissolved feet,
 You must wade to her.

NOTE I: SPENSER'S HIGH COMEDY

Thought in his bastard arms her to embrace.
With that she swarving backe, her Javelin bright
Against him bent, and fiercely did menace
So turned her about, and fled away apace.

"What foile blot,"
fumes Braggadochio, once more frustrated in his "knightly aims/"

"Is this to knight, that Ladie should againe
Depart to woods untoucht, and leave so proud disdaine?"
The comedy is light and playful; the satiric stroke is deadly.

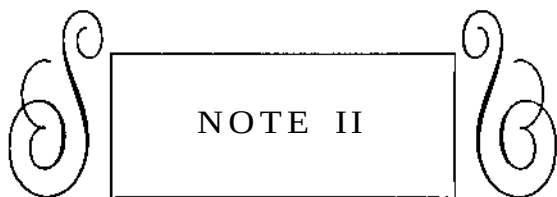
Trompart argues that they are well rid of Belpheobe. He frankly confesses his fear of her, thus enabling Braggadochio to admit and to rationalize delectably his own terror:

"For whiles she spake, her great words did apall
My feeble courage, and my hart oppresse,
That yet I quake and tremble over all."

"And I," said Braggadocchio, "thought no lesse,
When first I heard her home sound with such ghastlinesse.

"For from my mothers wombe, this grace I have
Me given by eternall destinie,
That earthly thing may not my courage brave
Dismay with feare, or cause one foot to flie.
But either hellish feends, or powres on high:
Which was the cause, when earst that home I heard,
Weening it had beene thunder in the skie,
I hid myselfe from it, as one affeard;
But when I other knew, my selfe I boldly reard."

Though Todd's comparison with Falstaff is suggestive up to a point, Braggadochio cannot compete in comic stature; but Spenser's human comedy surpasses Stephano and Trinculo and deserves to rank with Shakespeare's Don Adriano de Armado and Malvolio. In the urbane sophistication of Hero and Leander Marlowe remains supreme, yet Spenser anticipates even that vein in his Belpheobe; and among the Elizabethans only Lyly tries and only Shakespeare and Ben Jonson surpass such complex comedy-serious, playful, satirical, interfused with lyric beauty—as is found in this canto and elsewhere in Spenser.



SPENSER'S PALETTE

THIS list of colors in Spenser's poetry, begun out of idle curiosity, is not based on scientific principles; it is merely an approximation. I have tried to limit it to words which specifically suggest color—a variable quantity—in themselves and in their context. For instance, I have usually omitted green in the conventional combination greenwood, blood when used figuratively or when it does not occur in pictorial contexts.

Also, I should like to point out that Spenser secures rich color effects by phrases which are not included in this list—"divers colours," "gay-carpeted with flowers," "Peacock's spotted train," etc.

I. MINOR POEMS—409

1. Gold—90	4. Green—48
2. Red—73	green—31
red—9	grass green—7
blood red—26	ivy green—3
rose—12	gaudy green—i (SC)
crimson—3	emerald green—2 (VB;
ruddy red—2	Theatre)
flame red—10	jasper green—2 (VB;
scarlet—4 (SC; VGn.;	Theatre)
Theatre)	lusty green—i (SC)
vermilion—2	gourd green—i (VGn.)
ruby red—2 (Am.)	5. Silver—31
wine red—2 (Oct.; Epith.)	6. Crystal—23
cherry red—i (Epith.)	7. Blue—19
3. White—64	blue—7
white—23	violet blue—6
lily white—14	azure—3 (RT; MHT; Mu.)
snow white—10	sapphire—2 (Epith.; Am.)
ivory white—13	cerulean—i (VGn.)
alabaster white—2	8. Black—17
milk white—1 (RT)	black—11
ermine white—1 (April)	pitch—1

NOTE 11: SPENSER'S PALETTE

ebony—3 (RT; VP; Theatre)	11. Yellow—8 yellow—6
sable—2 (RT; Epith.)	daffodil yellow—i orichalche yellow—1 (Mu.)
9. Pearl—10	12. Gray—8
10. Purple—9 purple—7	13. Brass—6
Assyrian dye—i (VGn.)	14. Orange—i (Theatre)
hyacinth—i (VGn.)	15. Pink—i (April)
	16. Brown—i (October)

DISTRIBUTION OF COLOR IN MINOR POEMS

Shepherdess Calender	60
(Green, red, crimson, scarlet, wine, gold, white, silver, blue, violet blue, gray, purple, crystal, pink, yellow, brown, black)	
Theatre of Voluptuous Worldlings	43*
(Gold, white, blood red, red, scarlet, flame, green, emerald, jasper, crystal, black, ebony black, pearl, purple, yellow, orange)	
Virgil's Gnat	42
(Green, red, blood red, flame, rose, scarlet, gold, purple, black, white, crystal, pearl, blue, cerulean, violet, silver)	
Amoretti	35
(Red, blood red, flame, ruddy, rose, ruby, gold, white, silver, pearl, crystal, sapphire blue)	
Epithalamion	32
(Ruddy red, red, white, gold, blue, violet blue, sapphire, green, silver, rose, flame, wine, cherry, vermilion, crystal, pearl, yellow, sable black)	
Ruines of Time	28
(Gold, white, silver, red, ebony and sable black, brass, yellow, crystal, azure, green)	
Astrophel	26
(Rose, blood red, crystal, white, blue, violet blue, gold, silver, yellow, purple, pearl)	
Visions of JBellay	24
(Gold, white, jasper, emerald, green, red, crystal, silver, black)	
Prorha/amion	iyt
(White, silver, greenish, pallid blue, vermilion, crystal, gold)	

* The *Theatre* (291 lines) represents the highest concentration of color in Spenser's minor poems, and also has his only use of orange. The influence of Marot and Bellay through this translation and the *Shepherdess Calender*, as well as some of the *Complaints*, on Spenser's color sense, which is highly developed by 1579, is consequently greater than that of either Ariosto or Tasso. Of course other influences are operative—the Bible, the classics, Chaucer, etc.—and Spenser may be presumed to have **some color sense of his own.**

Color concentration in *Prothalamion* (17 in 180 lines) is actually far greater than in *Epithalamion* (32 in 433 lines).

The color in *Prothalamion* is the most subtle and probably the most consciously selected of any of Spenser's poems.

NOTE 11: SPENSER'S PALETTE

<i>Colin Clout</i>	14
(Gold, white, pearl, yellow, silver, green, gray)	
<i>Muiopotmos</i>	12
(Silver, green, azure blue, gold, crystal, gray, white, red, brass, yellow)	
<i>Mother Hubberds Tale</i>	11
(Red, gold, blue, azure, silver, gray, white, black)	
<i>Visions of Petrarch</i>	11
(White, gold, black, ebony, green, purple)	
<i>Daphnaida</i>	10
(Rose, blood red, white, silver, green, black, gray)	
<i>Tearcs of the Muses</i>	9
(Gold, silver, crystal)	
<i>Visions of the Worlds Vanitie</i>	8
(Gold, red, white, brass, black)	
<i>Hymne of Love</i>	7
(White, rose, blood red, gold, silver)	
<i>Hymne of Beautie</i>	7
(Rose, red, white, gold)	
<i>Hymne of Heavenly Beautie</i>	6
(Gold, brass, flame red, crystal)	
<i>Ruines of Rome</i>	5
(Green, gold, red, yellow)	
<i>Hymne of Heavenly Love</i>	2
(Gold)	

II. THE FAERIE QUEENE—606

1. Gold (golden, gilden)—153
2. Red—117

red—9	ruby—3
blood red—51	scarlet—5 (FQ1 & 5)
rose—12	rust red—3
flame—18	crimson—1 (FQ1)
ruddy red—4	castory—1 (FQ2)
vermilion—8	carnation—1 (FQ3)
vermilion rose—1 (FQ5)	
3. White—89

white—11	alabaster white—4
snow—30	bone white—1 (FQ3)
ivory—21	chalk white—1 (FQ4)
lily—15	silver white—1 (FQ5)
milk white—5	
4. Black—50 (FQ1 21; FQz 15)

black—25	ebony—1 (FQ1)
coal black—6	jet black—2 (FQ2)
iron black—7	soot black—1 (FQz)
pitch black—3	raven black—1 (FQ2)
ink black—1 (FQ1)	sable—2 (FQ3)
tar black—1 (FQ1)	

NOTE II: SPENSER'S PALETTE

5. Green—45		
green—36		ivy—2
grass green—2		emerald—1 (FQ2)
moss green—3		Lincoln—1 (FQ6)
6. Purple—30		
purple—13		Hyacinth—1 (FQz)
blood purple—16		
7. Silver—40		
8. Brass (brazen)—17		
9. Pearl—16		
10. Crystal—13		
11. Blue—11		
blue—5		watchet (pale)—1 (FQ4)
azure—3 (FQ3; FQ6)		jay blue—1. (FQz)
sky blue—1 (FQ3)		
12. Gray (<i>steel, ash gray</i>)—9		
13. Yellow—6		
14. Brown—3 (FQ1; FQ5; FQy)		
15. Tawny—2 (FQ2; FQ3)		
16. Tan—2 (FQ1; FQ2)		
17. Saffron—1 (FQ1)		
18. Copper—1 (FQ2)		
19. Amber—1 (~~FQ3~~)		

Distribution of Color in "Faerie Queene"

1. Book Two—133 (57 in Cantos 7 and 12; 105 in Cantos i, 3, 7, 9, 12)
2. Book Three—120 (67 in Cantos 1, 4, 11, 12)
3. Book One—109 (69 in Cantos 1, 2, 4, 7)
4. Book Four—89 (41 in Cantos 10, 11)
5. Book Five—72 (42 in Cantos 3, 5, 7, 9)
6. Book Six—56 (34 in Cantos 2, 8, 10, 12)
7. Mutabilitie Cantos—27

III. ARIOSTO'S "ORLANDO FURIOSO"

For the sake of comparison I give below table of colors arrived at in the same way from the first seven cantos of Orlando Furioso and from the next six cantos—each group in number of lines approximating a book of the Faerie Queene.

CANTOS 1-7 OF "ORLANDO FURIOSO"—103

1. Red—29		
red—7	vermilion—3	rose—3
blood red—6	rust	red—1
carbuncle red—1	crimson—3	flame—4
		ruby—1
2. White—18		
white—7	ivory—2	milk—1
snow white—3	alabaster white—1	
lily white—3	ermine—1	

NOTE II: SPENSER'S PALETTE

3. Gold—14			
4. Green—13			
green—9	ivy—i		
moss—i	emerald—2		
5. Black—8			
black—6	pitch	black—1	sable—1
6. <i>Crystal</i> —4			
7. Yellow—4			
yellow—2	golden	yellow—1	chrysolite—1
8. Blue—2			
blue—1	sapphire—1		
9. Tawny—2			
10. Pearl—2			
11. Gray—2			
12. Purple—1			
13. Silver—1			
14. Amber—1			
15. Sorrel—1			
16. Dun—1			

CANTOS 8-13 OF "ORLANDO FURIOSO"—102

L	Red—25		
	red—5	wine—1	rose—2
	crimson—3	carbuncle—1	coral—1
	flame—2	vermilion—1	
	blood red—8		
2.	White—22		
	white—9	chalk white—2	lily—3
	ivory—3	snow—4	milk—i
3.	Gold—15		
4.	Green—10		
5.	Black—7		
6.	Blue—5		
	blue—4	azure—1	
7.	Yellow—5		
8.	<i>Crystal</i> —4		
9.	Brown—2		
10.	Silver—2		
11.	Gray—2		
12.	Pearl—1		
13.	Purple—1		
14.	Brass—1		

REFERENCES AND COMMENTS

(1) SHAKESPEARE'S BANQUET OF SENSE

1. Hamlet, 2.2.525-34.
2. R. K. Root, Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, Yale Studies in English, xix, p. 100.
3. A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, Macmillan, 1905, Note F, p. 413.
4. H. J. C. Grierson, Cross Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century, Chatto and Windus, 1929, note, p. 102. Mr. Dover Wilson has contributed much perception and ingenuity to the debate.
5. R. K. Root, Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, p. 3.
6. Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance *Tradition in English Poetry*, University of Minnesota Press, 1932, p. 124.
7. R. K. Root, Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, pp. 31-32. Adonis* reluctance is not explicitly stated in any Continental version of the story, classical or Renaissance. It is transferred from Salmacis and Hermaphrodite, possibly at the suggestion of Lodge, who also uses the same verse form employed by Shakespeare in Venus and Adonis.
8. U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe, Methuen, 1927, p. 123.
9. Faerie *Queene*, 3.11.32.
10. *ibid.*, 2.5.34.
11. U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe, p. 127.
12. G. Wilson Knight, The Burning Oracle, Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 31.
13. *ibid.*, pp. 30-31. Mr. Knight has a tendency, curious in a critic so imaginative and sensitive to poetry, to abstract a mass of images from their context and to re-create from them, partly by rationalization, a luminous but sometimes baseless fabric.
14. *ibid.*, p. 34.
15. Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, G. Richards, 1927, p. 153.
16. H. McC. Young, The Sonnets of Shakespeare, a Psycho-Sexual Analysis, Banta, Menasha, Wisconsin, 1937.
17. E. L. Hubler, Shakespeare, Twenty-three Plays and the Sonnets, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938, pp. 1086-87. Mr. Hubler is preparing an edition of the sonnets.
18. Romeo and Juliet, 3.2.10-16.
19. John Donne, Elegie VIII, The Comparison.
20. Aldous Huxley, "Frascati's," Leda, Chatto and Windus, 1920.
21. G. Wilson Knight, The turning Oracle, pp. 31-32.

REFERENCES AND COMMENTS

22. *Hamlet*, 3.4.182-86.
23. *Othello*, 3.3.421-26.
24. J. W. Hcbel, *Endimion and Phoebe*, Shakespeare Head Press, 1925, p. xiii.
25. *Othello*, 3.3.90-92; 4.2.67-69.
26. *Troilus and Cressida*, 3.2.19-26.
27. Ovid, *Amores*, 2.19.
28. *ibid.*, 2.4.
29. E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare's Young Lovers*, Oxford University Press, 1937, pp. 45^{and} 47.
30. *ibid.*, pp. 4, 5, 7, 13, 24, 98, 108, etc.
31. *Troilus and Cressida*, 3.2.165-77.
32. *ibid.*, 4.4.103 ff.
33. G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 69.
34. Oscar Campbell, *Comical! Satyre and Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"* Huntington Library, 1938, pp. 209-13.
35. E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare's Young Lovers*, p. 2.
36. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.5.20-21.
37. *ibid.*, 3.7.7-9.
38. *ibid.*, 1.5.9-10.
39. *ibid.*, 1.4.16-21.
40. *Troilus and Cressida*, 5.2.137-42.
41. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.13.105 ff.
42. *Othello*, 3.3.190-92; 177-80.
43. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.11.69 & 70.
44. *ibid.*, 2.5.1 & 2; 1.3.2-5, 10.
45. *ibid.*, 3.13.157.
46. Miss Elizabeth Holmes, *Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery*, Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 57, I find, also makes this comparison.
47. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 4.15.86-88.
48. Any writer of tragedies is likely to repeat to some extent in death scenes; but the parallelism between these two is deliberate—a combination of formal art and psychological characterization (showing both kinship and differentiation).
The same desire to live which makes Cleopatra procrastinate causes Antony to botch his suicide; each uses the humiliation of an Octavian triumph to strengthen courage. Thinking Cleopatra dead, Antony wishes to follow her, but finding her alive he seeks with his last breath her safety in advice (to trust only Proculcius) that turns out to be ironic. Also ironic and showing that loss of touch with reality which finally alienated Enobarbus is Antony's:

I would they'd fight i' the fire or i' the air;
We'd fight there too. [4.10.3 & 4.]

Cleopatra superbly expresses transcendence:

I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. [5.2.292 & 293.]

REFERENCES AND COMMENTS

Antony's bridegroom figure and Cleopatra's "Husband, I come" are considered in the text. Another parallel:

Antony.	Dead, then?	
Mardian.		Dead.
Antony.	Unarm, Eros; the long day's task is done And we must sleep. [4.14.34-36.]	
Iras.	. . . the bright day is done And we are for the dark. [5.2.193 & 194-]	

49. See, for instance, S. L. Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, Duke University Press, 1944, pp. 144-62. The chief exponent of this view is Wilson Knight, under the sway of D. II. Lawrence.

"Shakespeare's Banquet of Sense" was originally published in the *Southern Review*, Spring, 1942. In revision of the end, however, I have taken into account some views of Mr. Bethell and others.

(2) AGAINST TIME'S RUIN

1. *Faerie Queene*, 2.Proem.1,3,4.
2. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 14.
3. *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.120 & 121; *Cymbeline*, 4.2.222.
4. *Faerie Queene*, 3.6.17.
5. *ibid.*, 7.6.48.
6. *ibid.*, 7.6.28.
7. *ibid.*, 3.12.47 (1590).
8. R. W. Chambers, "The Jacobean Shakespeare and 'Measure for Measure'" *British Academy Lecture*, 1937, p. 44.
9. *Faerie Queene*, 3.2.11.
10. *ibid.*, 1.12.11.
11. *ibid.*, 6.4.37.
12. *Pericles*, 5.1.
13. *Faerie Queene*, 6.12.19. Greenlaw, Cory, and others compare Pastorella to Perdita of *The Winter's Tale*. See Alwin Thaler, "Shakespeare and Spenser," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 1935, p. 204.
14. The most important studies of the relation of Shakespeare to Spenser are: Edwin Greenlaw, "Shakespeare's Pastorals," *Studies in Philology*, 13, 1916, pp. 122-54; Alwin Thaler, "Shakespeare and Spenser," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 10, 1935, pp. 192-211; Alwin Thaler, "The Epithalamion," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 11, 1936, pp. 33-40; Alwin Thaler, "Mercutio and Spenser's Phantastes," *Philological Quarterly*, 37, 1940, pp. 222-35; T. P. Harrison, Jr., "Aspects of Primitivism in Shakespeare and Spenser," *University of Texas Publications*, 4026, 1940, pp. 39-71.

Of these Greenlaw is fully represented by abstracts in the *Variorum Spenser*. Mr. Alwin Thaler's method is so gradual and piecemeal an accumulation of parallels (some of which are dubious) that it is of small help. He gives this list from H. R. D. Anders and others of traditional Shakespearean allusions to Spenser: (i) *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.52; (2) Cordelia's name, *Faerie Queene* 2.10, in *King Lear*;

REFERENCES AND COMMENTS

- Cordelia hanging; (3) a metaphor in *Julius Caesar* (leadon mace) 4.3.267—cf. *Faerie Queene* 1.4.44.
15. Upton and Padelford, *Variorum Spenser*, 1.306.
 16. G. Wilson Knight, *The Burning Oracle*, Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 35.
 17. *Faerie Queene*, 5.8.1.
 18. Colin Clouts Come Home Againc, 11.775-82.
 19. *Faerie Queene*, 3.7.56 & 57.
 20. *ibid.*, 3.7.48 & 49.
 21. R. E. N. Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," *PMLA*, 12, pp. 167 and 168. Dodge, who cites ample evidence of Spenser's alteration of tone in other borrowings from Ariosto, for some reason chooses the Squire of Dames, "manifestly worked up for comic effect/" as evidence that Spenser "never quite lost sympathy with Ariosto's scandalous verve," though with maturity "an element of Puritanic coldness and strength tempered his sensuous nature," Mrs. Bennett agrees with this identity of comic tone—Josephine Waters Bennett, *Evolution of the "Faerie Queene,"* pp. 22 and 23—while explaining it differently.
 - Spenser's borrowings are invariably modified by his own temperament, taste, purpose, experience. The moral tone of Elizabeth's court was, if anything, more deplorable in the seventies (reflected in *Mother Hubberds Tale*; first installment of the *Faerie Queene*) than in the nineties (reflected in *Colin Clout*).
 22. *Faerie Queene*, 3.10.48.
 23. R. E. N. Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," *PMLA*, 12, pp. 201 and 202.
 24. *Faerie Queene*, 4.5.18 & 19.
 25. *ibid.*, 3.7.60.
 26. *Measure for Measure*, 2.1.8-15.
 27. F. M. Padelford, "The Women in Spenser's Allegory of Love," *JEGP*, 16.76.
 28. *Measure for Measure*, 3.2; 2.1.
 29. *Faerie Queene*, 1.5.1.
 30. E. de Selincourt, *Spenser*, Oxford University Press, 1926, p. xxiv.
 31. Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion*, Longmans, Green, 1935, pp. 40 and 41.
 32. Nichomachcan *Ethics*, 5. The two instances where Spenser relies extensively on Aristotle, the Second and Fifth Books, show that what appealed to him most was the doctrine of the mean and "virtue in relation to one's neighbours."
 33. *Faerie Queene*, 5.1.27; 5.2.47.
 34. *Hamlet*, 2.2.552-56.
 35. *Faerie Queene*, 5.2.26.
 36. *ibid.*, 5.7.22.
 37. *ibid.*, 5.6.1.
 38. *ibid.*, 5.10.1.
 39. *ibid.*, 6.1.26.
 40. *ibid.*, 6.1.41 & 42.
 41. *Hamlet*, 3.1.159-61.
 42. *Measure for Measure*, 3.2.152-55.

REFERENCES AND COMMENTS

43. Othello, 3.3.270-73; 4.2.47-62.
44. Mr. Theodore Spencer in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, 1942, stresses appearance and reality in Shakespeare; he is concerned primarily with intellectual background. Since *Against Time's Ruin*, along with my first and third essays, was written originally (unlike those not published) in 1942, I merely point the parallel.
45. F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, Macmillan, 1902, Introduction.
46. *Faerie Queene*, 5.1.12.
47. *ibid.*, 3.12.1-3.
48. *ibid.*, 3.12.42.
49. F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 186.
50. *Hamlet*, 2.2.256 & 257.
51. *Tempest*, 4.1.148-58.
52. F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 485.
53. "The self is no doubt the highest form of experience which we have, but, for all that, is not a true form. It does not give us the facts as they are in reality; and, as it gives them, they are appearance, appearance and error." *ibid.*, p. 119.
54. *Faerie Queene*, 4.2.32 & 33.

But wicked Time that all good thoughts doth waste,
 And workes of noblest wits to nought out wcarc,
 That famous moniment hath quite defaste,
 And robd the world of threasure endlesse deare,
 The which mote have enriched all us heare.
 O cursed Eld the cankerworme of writs,
 How may these rimes, so rude as doth appeare,
 Hope to endure, sith workes of heavenly wits
 Are quite devourd, and brought to nought by little bits.
- See also *Faerie Queene* 4.3.1; *Ruines of Time*, 11.400-6; etc.
55. *Measure for Measure*, 3.1.32-34.
56. *Troilus and Cressida*, 3.3.145-74.
57. *Faerie Queene*, 3.6.40.
58. *ibid.*, 3.6.47.
59. *ibid.*, 7.7.49.
60. *ibid.*, 7.7.58 & 59.
61. H. S. V. Jones, *A Spenser Handbook*, F. S. Crofts, 1930, p. 307.
62. *Faerie Queene*, 1.1.41.
63. *ibid.*, 2.12.32.
64. *Henry IV—2*, 3.1.5-29.
65. *Faerie Queene*, 1.9.40.

(3) "KING LEAR" IN THE CONTEXT OF SHAKESPEARE

1. J. Middleton Murry, *Shakespeare*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936, p. 282.
2. *ibid.*, pp. 282, 284, 287.
3. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Macmillan, 1905, pp. 254-55, 260. See also pp. 71 and 72.
4. For example: "It is singular that there is not a battle, not even a single broad-sword contest, represented on the stage in a play [*Henry V*] which

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- purports to tell the tale of England's last great victory upon the Continent. It is interesting to note that in the plays which immediately follow Henry V, Julius Caesar, and Hamlet, Shakespeare shifts from the external to the internal, from historic to psychologic tragedy. In more ways than one Henry V marks a turning point in the evolution of Shakespeare's art." T. M. Parrott, *Shakespeare*, Scribner's, 1938, p. 434. This should be qualified, however, by some penetrating remarks on Richard II, pp. 301 ff.
5. *Richard II*, 1.3.213!?
 6. *ibid.*, 3.2.69 and 85.
 7. *ibid.*, 5.2.23 ff.
 8. *Hamlet*, 3.4.53.
 9. See, for instance, S. L. Bcthell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, Duke University Press, 1944, pp. 3-27. I do not point out several similarities, which are independent, since the original version of my essay was published in *The Review of English Studies*, 1942, under the title: "The Two Techniques in 'King Lear' "
 10. *Richard II*, 3.2.129 ff.
 11. *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.73 ff.
 12. *ibid.*, 2.2.
 13. J. M. Robertson, *The Problem of "Hamlet"*; L. L. Schiicking, *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays*; E. E. Stoll, *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*; F. T. Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*.
 14. T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet," *Selected Essays*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932, pp. 124 and 125.
 15. T. S. Eliot, "Four Elizabethan Dramatists," *Selected Essays*, p. 93.
 16. *King Lear*, 1.4.8.
 17. *ibid.*, 1.4.72-83.
 18. *ibid.*, 2.4.105 & 106.
 19. *ibid.*, 1.1.134 ff.
 20. *ibid.*, 1.3.6. ff.
 21. *ibid.*, 1.4.268 ff.
 22. *ibid.*, 1.4.297-311.
 23. *ibid.*, 1.4.345, 347, 355-
 24. *ibid.*, 2.1.96 ff.
 25. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 312.
 26. *King Lear*, 1.4.124.
 27. *ibid.*, 5.3.261-63.
 28. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 5.2.311, 314.
 29. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 263-65.
 30. *King Lear*, 4.2.21-24.
 31. *ibid.*, 5.3.89.
 32. *Richard II*, 3.3.140.
 33. *ibid.*, 4.1.294-97.
 34. *ibid.*, 5.5.104.
 35. *ibid.*, 5.5.385.
 36. *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.1.24.
 37. T. S. Eliot, "The Stoicism of Seneca," *Selected Essays*, p. 111.
 38. *Henry IV*—i, 4.1.97 ff.

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39. King Lear, 3.2.165.
40. *ibid.*, 3.6.65 & 66.
41. *ibid.*, 4.7.45 ff.
42. *ibid.*, 5.3.22-25; 8 ff.
43. Wyndham Lewis, *The Lion and the Fox*, G. Richards, 1927, pp. 177-80.
44. Hamlet, 3.1.78-80.
45. Marlowe, Edward II, 11.2632-34.
46. Measure for Measure, 3.1.118 ff.
47. T. S. Eliot, *"The Stoicism of Seneca"* Selected Essays, 114.
48. G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 196.
49. King Lear, 4.2.46-50.
50. *ibid.*, 5.2.9-11.
51. Richard II, 3.2.217 & 218.
52. King Lear, 1.1.253 & 254-
53. *ibid.*, 2.3.6-9.
54. *ibid.*, 3.4.33 & 34-
55. *ibid.*, 3.6.83 ff.
56. *ibid.*, 4.6.169.
57. *ibid.*, 3.2.51-53.
58. *ibid.*, 3.6.80-81.
59. *ibid.*, 4.2.62 ff.
60. *ibid.*, 4.1.27.

(4) THE PAINTED DRAGON: ALLEGORY AND CHARACTERIZATION

1. W. M. Hazlitt, "Lectures on the English Poets," Works, J. M. Dent, 1930, v, p. 38.
2. Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, University of Minnesota Press, 1932, p. 24.
3. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Works*, Shakespeare Head Press, 1908, viii, p. 69.
4. Susannah J. McMurphy, *Spenser's Use of Ariosto for Allegory*, University of Washington Publications, 2, 1924, makes out the best case for Ariosto's influence.
5. Spenser, Letter to Raleigh.
6. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, Clarendon Press, 1936, pp. 44-45.
7. *Faerie Queene*, 2.9.25 ff.; 22.
8. See V. F. Hopper, "Spenser's 'House of Temperance/' " PMLA 55.4; *Variorum Spenser*, 2.472 ff.
9. Wordsworth, *Prelude*, 11.418-27.
10. Dante, *Convito*, First Treatise.
11. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Works*, viii, p. 68.
12. C. H. Grandgent, *Divina Commedia*, D. C. Heath and Co., 1933, p. xxxii.
13. Dante, *Convito*, Second Treatise.
14. *ibid.*

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15. T. M. Greene, *The Arts and the Art of Criticism*, Princeton University Press, 1940, p. 111.
16. *ibid.*, p. 193. For Mr. Greene's complete awareness of the danger of rigid definition in complex literary forms, see p. 192, and elsewhere.
17. *ibid.*, p. 109 fL; p. 109, note 11.
18. Dante, *Convito*, Second Treatise.
19. *Faerie Queene*, 2.9.43.
20. This effective, but limited, device of the two magnetic poles I take over from Mr. T. M. Greene and his friends in *The Arts and the Art of Criticism*.
21. Langland, *Piers the Ploughman*, 5.196-211.
22. *Faerie Queene*, 1.4.21.
23. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 11.1341-47.
24. *Faerie Queene*, 1.3.1.
25. *ibid.*, 3.6.23 & 24.
26. *ibid.*, 3.10.57-60.
27. *ibid.*, 1.1.4.
28. *ibid.*, 1.3.4.
29. *ibid.*, 1.3.27.
30. *ibid.*, 1.3.30.
31. *ibid.*, 1.8.28.
32. *ibid.*, 1.8.42 & 43.
33. *ibid.*, 1.9.16.
34. *ibid.*, 1.9.52 & 53.
35. Milton, *Comus*, 1.421.
36. *Faerie Queene*, 3.2.23.
37. *ibid.*, 3.2.27.
38. *ibid.*, 3.2.47.
39. *ibid.*, 5.6.4 & 5.
40. *ibid.*, 5.6.6.
41. *ibid.*, 5.6.13 & 14.
42. H. S. V. Jones, *A Spenser Handbook*, F. S. Crofts, 1930, p. 275.
43. The two narratives are manipulated so differently that exact counting is difficult. In each case I count from the beginning of the jealousy to the final determination to take action: this means Orlando Furioso 30.76-89; 32.10-46; *Faerie Queene* 5.6.3-18. Bradamante's first soliloquy is 32.18-25; her second 32.37-46 (artfully interrupted toward the end).
I do not mean to belittle Ariosto while indicating how completely different in this instance is the aim and effect of two similar stories. Ariosto is superior in handling cross-threads of his complicated narrative groups—in this instance, I think, with a loss of dramatic effect. Incidentally, Ariosto, besides her soliloquies, describes at length Bradamante's state.
44. *Faerie Queene*, 5.6.9-11. Traces of Bradamante's soliloquies are found in 5.6.5 and parts of 12 and 13. 5.6.5 is the strict "complaint" with its formal balance of thought and language. An even better example is 5.6.25.
45. *ibid.*, 4.6.19 & 21.
46. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Works*, vm, pp. 68 and 69.
47. C. H. Grandgent, *Divina Commedia*, p. xxviii.

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(5) THE RED CROSS AND THE HEAVENLY MAID

1. W. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser, E. Arnold and Company, 1925, p. 5.
2. E. Legouis, Edmund Spenser, E. P. Dutton, 1926, p. 46.
3. My comparison of Spenser and Milton has in many respects been anticipated by Greenlaw ("A Better Teacher than Aquinas" SP, 14, 1917). Differences are as important as similarities; the similarities themselves, being independent, form a kind of corroboration. Greenlaw came to his conclusions by looking at Milton through Spenser, I to mine by looking at Spenser through Milton. His concern is primarily a comparison between Book II (though he touches at one point on Book I) of the *Faerie Queene* with Milton.
4. Neither a play like *Oedipus Rex*, where the story is familiar to the audience, nor a play like *Romeo and Juliet*, where the story is not only familiar but deliberately given away in the Prologue, is a correct parallel with the double-dramatization of a familiar story.

The death and resurrection of Christ, the only events which could balance the significance of the opening, are presented in dramatic form in Book III as something still to come, and repeated at the end in the form of prophetic vision, where the effect seems in its actual context to be close to the reconciliation which one feels in great tragedy. One must admit that Milton is restricted by the conditions of a story which he could not alter; but he chose the point of attack and the emphasis.

5. Kitchin observes that the first book "is really the triumph of Faith and Truth, and is far more intellectual and spiritual than moral; while the second covers almost the whole ground of the Aristotelian moral virtues" (*Variorum Spenser*, 2.197). Mr. Harrison and Miss Winstanley attribute the difference between the first two books (she includes the third) and the rest of the poem to Spenser's having exhausted the ethical teachings of Plato (*J. S. Harrison, Phtonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Columbia University Press, 1903, pp. 26 and 27. Lilian Winstanley, *The Fowre Hymnes*, Cambridge University Press, 1907, p. xix). Dodge calls the Artegal-Britomart love story "the real center of interest in the poem" (*R. E. N. Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," PMLA*, 12, 1897, p. 175).
6. See Amoretti 80. There is the story of the lost six books; but all that has come down to us is the fragment, *MutebiJirie Cantos*, just as different in style and treatment from the Sixth as from the First Book.
7. Guyon's explanation of the device (2.9.3) is really directed to the reader rather than Arthur; Spenser takes the opportunity to celebrate the transcendence and multiple significance of the Heavenly Maid (Gloriana, Elizabeth), who in her particular association with Guyon represents Temperance or Continence. Greenlaw has cited historical evidence for the special identification of Temperance with Elizabeth, whom her brother, Edward Sixth, referred to as "sweet sister Temperance"; and has called attention to the parallels in contemporary masques for this identification, which was probably familiar to contemporaries. (*E. Greenlaw, Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory*, Johns Hopkins Press, 1932, pp. 89 ff.; 203-4.)

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8. The importance of Revelation to the First Book of the Faerie Queene has been amply demonstrated, but Ephesians has been neglected. Since in his letter to Raleigh published with the first three books of the Faerie jQueene in 1590 Spenser himself calls attention to the significance of Redcross' armor—"that is the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes."—commentators have been generally content to point to the sixth chapter, in which the armor of salvation is described. There is little difference in the slight attention paid it between F. M. Padelford's "Spenser and the Theology of Calvin" (MP, 12, p. 12) in 1914 and Josephine Waters Bennett's *Evolution of the "Faerie Queene"* (Chicago University Press) in 1942, though in 1929 Evelyn Boatwright (MLN, 44, p. 159) pointed out that Spenser intends by "v" not the Roman numeral for 5 but an abbreviation for the Latin "vide," and that Spenser refers the reader to the whole of Ephesians. The Editor of *Variorum* i includes Miss Boatwright's note, remarking wearily: "The poet identified this obvious armor in the Letter of the Authors, 'the armour of a Christian man specified by St. Paul' (Ephesians 6: 11-17). Craund Amour in Hawcs's *The Passetyme of Pleasure and Youth in The Example of Vertu* wear the same armour, and in each instance allusion is made to Ephesians." None the less, a glance through the commentary of *Variorum* n adds at least four allusions (pp. 254, 260, 281, 286) to the four given by Miss Landrum; other allusions have been overlooked.

Mr. E. F. Scott, though he is not thinking of the Faerie Queene, makes clear Spenser's reason for specifying Ephesians as an important key to his First Book:

"More than any other of Paul's writings, Ephesians bears the character of a theological tract, or rather of a religious meditation. For once, the Apostle seems to forget the quarrels and difficulties of his churches and to occupy himself solely with the timeless things of religion. . . . Paul tries to discover the ultimate meaning of the work of Christ, in order that he may apprehend more fully the significance of the church. . . . Paul believed, with the whole force of his being, that the world exists for a spiritual end, and that this end must somehow be the same as that which is revealed in Christ. The things which Christ stood for—love, truth, goodness—are of absolute worth. . . . Ever and again in Ephesians, emphasis is laid on 'knowledge' as the chief end of the Christian life. It might almost appear as if the writer was in sympathy with the Gnostic view that the one means of attaining true fellowship with God is intellectual enlightenment. . . . But when we look deeper, it becomes evident that the 'knowledge' contemplated in Ephesians is not of an intellectual kind. Its real character is set forth in the great prayer which concludes the first part of the Epistle, and gathers up its teaching (3: 14-19). . . . The highest knowledge is not a matter of intellect. To share, however imperfectly, in the love of Christ is to know Christ, and through knowledge of him to know God." (E. F. Scott, *The Literature of the New Testament*, Columbia, 1932. Volume 15 in the *Records of Civilization*, Chapter 18.) Italics my own.

9. When one considers what has gone into the crucible of Spenser's imagination in creating this book—incidents and details from Ariosto,

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neo-Platonic conceptions and imagery, part of the history of the English Reformation, extensive Biblical knowledge, especially of Ephesians and Revelation, some form of the St. George Legend, as well as of the medieval pilgrimage of the life of man—one is more struck by the immediate, complex interplay of relationships and their cogency for Spenser's purpose than worried about the amount of borrowing. The least integral element, Orlando Furioso, has kinship with the romance origin of the Legend of St. George, to which it lends richness of incident and detail. The pilgrimage of man broadens to universal allegory the story of a Christian Knight, whom Ephesians lends the significance of holiness and arms specifically in the armor of salvation. Already patron of England, St. George is easily conceived as champion of the English Reformation, with political as well as ecclesiastical overtones, and the lady whom he rescues as the Queen of England and the Head of the Reformed Church, The prophetic visions in Revelation are readily interpreted by a militant sixteenth century Protestant as the triumph of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism, identified with the Scarlet Whore and materialism and a turning from God. The true Church suggests the quality of truth itself; the special affinity of Paul and certain aspects of Platonism Spenser would hardly miss. (This is only one set of natural relationships, not a hypothetical creative synthesis of Spenser's.)

10. With the details of the historical, political, ecclesiastical allegory I am not concerned (I do not think the contemporary reader is) beyond indicating their presence. Topical allusion is a controversial subject with which only specialists can deal. Spenser is interested in the political and religious history of the Reformation particularly as it concerned Elizabeth during the reign of her sister, Mary Tudor, and during her later relations with Mary of Scotland; both Marys, being Catholic and entangled abroad (the first with Spain, the second with France and Spain), symbolize to Spenser not only threats to Protestantism, but also to England's national welfare. Duessa, among less particular meanings, probably represents at the beginning of the poem Mary Tudor, later definitely Mary of Scotland. Una, deserted by her Knight, may shadow forth Elizabeth's personal dangers during the reign of Mary and Philip; and Redcross, England separated from true worship. The captivity of Redcross at the Castle of Orgoglio represents the height of the Marian Persecution; and the final betrothal of Redcross and Una, the re-establishment of the Church of England.
11. J. S. Harrison, *Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. vii.
12. B. E. C. Davis, *Edmund Spenser*, Cambridge, 1932, p. 112.
13. *Faerie Queene*, 1.3.6.
14. *ibid.*, 1.6.7.
15. E. Legouis, *Spenser*, pp. 38 and 39; *passim*.
16. *Faerie Queene*, 1.9.17.
17. *ibid.*, 1.10.63.
18. *ibid.*, 1.10.64.

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19. *ibid.*, 1.12.40 & 41:

Thrise happy man the knight himselfe did hold,
Possessed of his Ladies hart and hand.
And ever, when his eye did her behold,
His heart did seeme to melt in pleasures manifold.

Her joyous presence and sweet company
In full content he there did long en'oy,
Ne wicked envie, ne vile gealosy
His dear delights were able to annoy:
Yet *swimming in that sea of blisfull /oy*,
He nought forgot, how he whilome had sworne,
In case he could that monstrous beast destroy,
Unto his Faerie Queene backe to returne.

20. *ibid.*, 1.3.26 & 27; 1.3.40.
21. *ibid.*, 1.6.38.
22. *ibid.*, 1.12.34.
23. *ibid.*, 1.7.20.
24. *ibid.*, 1.7.28.
25. This interpretation is the best—Variorum Spenser, 1.301 & 302.
26. Faerie Queene, 1.10, 18 & 19.
27. C. G. Osgood, "Spenser's Sapience." SP, 14, 1917, p. 168. The quotation is Wisdom 8.4.
28. J. S. Harrison, *Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 10.
29. Ephesians 1.4; 4.15. All quotations in this essay are from the Geneva Bible (London, 1579—slightly modernized), one of the versions with which Spenser was most familiar.
30. Faerie Queene, 1.10.1.
31. *ibid.*, 2.1.33.
32. Ephesians 2.9.
33. *ibid.*, 5.11; 5.13.
34. Faerie Queene, 1.10.10.
35. Miss Janet Spens (Spenser's "*Faerie Queene*," E. Arnold and Company, 1934, Chapter i), suggests an identification of despair with accidie. There is at least a close relation.
36. Faerie Queene, 1.10.22.
37. *ibid.*, 1.7.45 & 47.
38. G. M. Hopkins, *The Bugler's First Communion*.
39. Faerie Queene, 1.1.2.
40. B. E. C. Davis, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 90.
41. Faerie Queene, 1.1.27.
42. *ibid.*, 1.6.39.
43. Ephesians 4.22.
44. Faerie Queene, 1.1.55.
45. *ibid.*, 1.2.12.
46. *ibid.*, 1.2.25.
47. *ibid.*, 1.2.26.
48. *ibid.*, 1.2.45.
49. Ephesians, 2.2; 2.3; 2.12.

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50. J. H. Walter, "The Faerie Queene': Alterations and Structure." *Modern Language Review*, 36, 1941, p. 41; Editor, Variorum Spenser, 1.436.
51. Faerie Queene, 1.7.7.
52. *ibid.*, 1.9.46.
53. C. G. Osgood, Variorum Spenser, 1.442 ff.
54. H. S. V. Jones, A Spenser Handbook, F. S. Crofts, 1930, pp. 173 and 174.
55. Padelford and C. G. Osgood, Variorum Spenser, 2.422. Mr. Osgood suggests a most probable source of some of Spenser's ideas on Continence, Castiglione's Courtier, which happens to be one of the books we know Spenser read.
56. Faerie Queene, 2.6.26.
57. *ibid.*, 2.6.37.
58. *ibid.*, 2.7.2.
59. *ibid.*, 2.1.57.
60. Compare with Una's story 2.1.54:

Him so I sought, and so at last I found,
 Where him that witch had thrall'd to her will,
 In chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound,
 And so transformed from his former skill,
 That me he knew not, neither his owne ill;
 Till through wise handling and faire governance,
 I him recured to a better will,
 Purged from drugs of foulc intemperance:
 Then means I gan devise for his deliverance.

We can accept Mrs. Bennett's explanation of Amavia's inconsistencies (Evolution of the "*Faerie Queene*," p. 127), though her solution is perhaps more ingenious than convincing. The two versions of Amavia in cantos i and 2 are not surprising in an incompletely revised poem.
61. Faerie Queene, 2.6.1.
62. *ibid.*, 1.2.5.
63. *ibid.*, 2.1.58.
64. *ibid.*, 2.2.13.
65. W. D. Ross, Aristotle, Methuen, 1930 (revised), pp. 195-97, gives an analysis of the mean, pointing out that its quantitative aspect has limitations as well as advantages and does not really express Aristotle's true intention. W. J. Gates, "*The Doctrine of the Mean*," *The Philosophical Review*, July, 1936, pp. 390-93, demonstrates convincingly that the mean with Aristotle, though never entirely clarified, has more than mathematical significance: "In general, Aristotle's ethical mean amounts to a convenient code of conduct, a criterion to which an individual may subject his action in any situation involving the use of moral characteristics" (p. 392).
66. H. S. V. Jones, A Spenser Handbook, pp. 172-76; J. W. Bennett, Evolution of the "*Faerie Queene*" Chapter 10; E. A. Strathmann, Variorum Spenser, 2.467-71.
67. The House of Medina is an independent unit, like the House of Pride and the House of Holiness in the First Book; but this is not true

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(as Mr. Strathmann recognizes) of the House of Alma, which continues through cantos nine, ten, and eleven, though the poetic chronicle of canto ten is little more than framed by it and in canto eleven we are concerned mainly with the battle for its salvation.

The House of Pride and the House of Holiness are a contrast between the Worldly and the Spiritual Life; whereas the two houses in the Second Book, though a contrast in method of allegory, both present the theme of Temperance. When Guyon is separated from the Palmer Spenser does not divide the narrative as on the separation of Redcross and Una; but Arthur accompanies Guyon to the House of Alma, where Arthur is equally prominent—momentarily is of greater importance, since the tenth canto devotes scant space to Guyon and the role of Arthur in defeating Maleger definitely, though not to the extent of the First Book, bifurcates the plot. Arthur's victory over Maleger is too close to the central meaning of the book to be called incidental.

Arthur's providential appearance to save the hero occurs at approximately the same point in each book and has the same primary meaning. Yet, whereas in the First Book Arthur rescues Redcross from the dungeon by killing Orgoglio; in the Second he does not kill Mammon, since the conditions of the allegory make assistance from him unnecessary until after Guyon has escaped from Mammon by his own reason and will. This reveals one explanation of the swifter pace at the beginning of the Second Book; for the correspondence, such as there is, with canto eight of the First Book is cantos seven and eight of the Second. And though the subjugation of Pyrochles and Cymochles is again more than incidental narrative, the parallel with Arthur's slaying Orgoglio is his laborious victory over Maleger in the eleventh canto of the Second Book. Arthur has two great victories in the Second Book. Furthermore, the Castle of Orgoglio is closely related to the House of Pride and equally opposed to the House of Holiness; the Cave of Mammon is opposed to both the House of Medina and the House of Alma, and allegorically related to Maleger and the Bower of Bliss.

68. Upton reminds us that even the rather literal allegory of the body is to be found in the Bible and in Plato's *Timaeus*, and elsewhere—*Variorum Spenser*, 2.284. Appendix 9, *Variorum Spenser* 2, is devoted to Elizabethan psychology.

69. *Faerie Queene*, 2.9.1.

70. Suddenly remembering the Bible and the old legends of the sun breeding life from slime of the Nile, he says that slime is the material of the castle—"not built of bricke, ne yet of stone and lime":

But O great pittie, that no lenger time

So goodly workemanship should not endure:

Soone it must turne to earth; no earthly thing is sure.

Tlien abruptly he launches into the famous enigmatic stanza 22, which has occupied Spenserians since Sir Kenelm Digby's day. Perhaps Spenser had this stanza by him; it resembles as it stands a sort of literary exercise. Perhaps there is patchwork here. But Spenser, never much bothered by minor inconsistencies and having had his attention deflected, may simply have forgotten "thing like to that Aegyption slime"

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of two stanzas before when he describes the gates of the castle as being of more worthy substance than wood or enduring brass, and the porch of "hewen stone."

71. I am relying on the evidence of Miss Harper, Greenlaw, Millican, and others that Spenser really accepted this mixture as true history.
72. *Faerie Queene*, 2.11.1 & 2.
73. *ibid.*, 2.11.48.
74. *ibid.*, 2.11.39.
75. Compare Ariosto's different and less imaginative use of Antaeus, *Orlando Furioso*, 9.77 ff.
76. This is Child's interpretation, as amended and expounded by Mr. Osgood—*Variorum Spenser*, 2.343. Mr. Walter adds some interesting new evidence for this interpretation (J. H. Walter, "The Faerie Queene": Alterations and Structure," p. 55).
77. *Faerie Queene*, 1.7.7.
78. *ibid.*, 1.8.41.
79. *Variorum Spenser*, 2.339; 2.348.
80. Miss Janet Spens (*Spenser's "Faerie Queene" Chapter i*)_T over-emphasizes the role of the Seven Deadly Sins, but their importance is great.
81. Mrs. Bennett (Evolution of the "Faerie Queene," p. 124), is misleading when she says that "Acrasia is the antagonist, in place of Duessa, but she has a much smaller part." Acrasia's role is parallel to the Dragon's, object of the quest, rather than to Duessa, who is an antagonist at the beginning of the Second Book also. And while Acrasia is not too active, her Bower of Bliss is much more carefully interwoven into the book than Mrs. Bennett indicates; in fact, it is distributed, like the House of Alma, over at least two cantos.

We have a full picture of her Bower as early as the fifth canto (27-38), when Atin goes there to seek Cymochles, whose "Dearest Dame is that Enchaunteresse, Acrasia." And the resemblance in the following canto between Phaedria's bower in the Idle Lake and Acrasia's is intentional. Phaedria chides Cymochles for not recognizing her:

Vaine man (said she) that wouldest be reckoned
A straunger in thy home, and ignoraunt
Of Phaedria (for so my name is red)
Of Phaedria, thine owne fellow servaunt;

For thou to serve Acrasia, thy selfe doest vaunt. [2.6.9]

Acrasia combines in one the roles of Duessa and the Dragon in the First Book.

82. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, Oxford University Press, 1933, Chapter i.
83. *Faerie Queene*, 2.12.61.
84. *ibid.*, 2.12.53.
85. *ibid.*, 2.12.68 & 69.
86. *ibid.*, 1.9.9, 11 & 12.
87. *ibid.*, 2.12.87.
88. This view is strongly stated by Grierson (*Cross Currents in English*

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- Literature of the Seventeenth Century, Chatto and Windus, 1929, pp. 53-55). Being uniformly hostile to allegory and partial to Legouis, he is not at his best on Spenser.
89. *Faerie Queene*, 2.7.45.
 90. *ibid.*, 2.7.8 & 9.
 91. *Variorum Spenser*, 2.254.
 92. *Faerie Queene*, 2.7.64; 2.7.65.
 93. J. S. Harrison, *Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, pp. 62 and 63, quoted by J. W. Bennett, *Evolution of the "Faerie Queene,"* p. 133.
 94. Quoted from Georgias, by J. S. Harrison, *Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 24.
 95. *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.1. & 2.
 96. *ibid.*, 2.8.7.
 97. J. W. Bennett, *Evolution of the "Faerie Queene/"* p. 133. That Sir Guyon in the 1590 edition appears instead of Prince Arthur (2.8.48) may indicate revision or mere carelessness. This was corrected in some, not all, copies in 1596.
 98. *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.8.
 99. *Variorum Spenser*, 2.272 & 273.
 100. *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.9.
 101. Both Mr. Strathmann and Mrs. Bennett find it anticlimactic that, instead of conquering a great enemy like Orgoglio, Arthur merely saves the sleeping Guyon from two enemies whom Guyon himself has previously subdued—E. A. Strathmann, *Variorum Spenser*, 2.471; J. W. Bennett, *Evolution of the "Faerie Queene/"* p. 133 and note 16. For exactness of parallel we should have here Arthur's fight with Maleger, for which some justification might be made on the score that Guyon, while not suffering from disease, is helpless because of bodily failure. But the whole character of Redcross' and Guyon's adventures, while intimately related, is different and cannot be fitted into one rigid pattern.
 102. *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.29.
 103. Kitchin, *Variorum Spenser*, 2.276.
 104. Mrs. Bennett's parallel with the "Sans brothers" is forced. Redcross never meets Sansloy; kills only Sansfoy, since Sansjoy is whisked away under cover of Duessa's magic cloud, and Redcross is subsequently joyless. The only important element in the "parallel" then is that Guyon, while attaining temporary mastery over Pyrochles, as Redcross did over Sansjoy, does not achieve definitive victory.
The genealogy of Pyrochles and Cymochlcs, "sonnes of old Aerates and Despight," was ingeniously worked out by Upton and linked with that of Sansfoy, Sansloy, Sansjoy (*Variorum Spenser*, 1.229-30). But Spenser's allegorical figures, especially the minor ones, do not always sustain a logical and consistent meaning.
 105. *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.21.
 106. *ibid.*, 2.8.31.
 107. *ibid.*, 1.2.18.
 108. *ibid.*, 2.8.37.
 109. *ibid.*, 2.8.52.

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(6) MARRIAGE SONG: A CODA

1. Spenser to Harvey, Three Proper and Wittie Familiar Letters, Oxford Spenser, p. 612.
2. Faerie Queene, 3.3.49.
3. *ibid.*, 4.8.33.
4. Among others, by Mr. C. W. Lemmi and Mr. B. E. C. Davis. Mr. Lemmi oddly compares Amoret to Beatrice. See *Variorum Spenser*, 4.321.
5. Colin Clour, 11.927-51.
6. I Corinthians 7.6 & 7.
7. Faerie Queene, 1.10.30.
8. *ibid.*, 4.8.17 & 18. Also, *ibid.*, 6.5.12.
9. Hamlet, 3.4.40 ff.
10. Mr. William and Mrs. Mallevillc Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love/" *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 5.2.235-73. Spenser's influence is, I think, deeper and more specific than they imply, p. 236.
11. All's Well *that Ends Well*, 2.3.128 ff.
12. For instance, when Scudamour complains (Faerie Queene, 4.10.1):

True be it said, what ever man it sayd,
That love with gall and hony doth abound,
But if the one be with the other wayd,
For every dram of hony therein found,
A pound of gall doth over it redound,

he is intentionally echoing the emblems of the March eclogue:

Wyllyes Embleme.
To be wise and eke to love,
Is graunted scarce to God above.
Thomalin's Embleme.
Of Hony and of Gaule in love there is store:
The Honye is much, but the Gaule is more.

13. For a full discussion of friendship in the Faerie Queene, see *Variorum Spenser*, 4.281-313.
14. Faerie Queene, 4.9.1-3.
15. *ibid.*, 4.9.15 & 16.
16. For this note and the quotation from Neale I am indebted to an unpublished thesis deposited in the Princeton University Library: Mr. Lyndon Shanley, *Spenser and the Gentleman*, pp. 21-24.
17. Faerie Queene, 1.8.42.
18. *ibid.*, 5.7.38.
19. *ibid.*, 5.7.42.
20. *ibid.*, 4.6.19 & 21.
21. *ibid.*, 5.5.12 & 13.
22. *ibid.*, 3.1.
23. *ibid.*, 4.7.
24. *ibid.*, 4.12.1 & 2.
25. *ibid.*, 3.6.7 & 8, etc.
26. *ibid.*, 3.6.29-52.

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27. *Colin Clout*, 11. 835-48.
28. *Faerie Queene*, 4.9.21.
29. *ibid.*, 4.12.9.
30. *ibid.*, 4.7.35-38.
31. *ibid.*, 4.10.52.
32. *ibid.*, 3.11.54.
33. *ibid.*, 4.10.54 & 56.
34. *ibid.*, 4.10.34-36.
35. *ibid.*, 4.8.30 & 32.
36. *Othello*, 1.3.262-66.
37. *Faerie Queene*, 6.10.12-17.
38. *ibid.*, 1.1.48.
39. *ibid.*, 1.12.21-24, 37-41.
40. *ibid.*, 6.8.42 & 43.
41. *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.1-16.
42. *Ruines of Time*, 11. 589-606.
43. *Faerie Queene*, 4.4.12.

(7) SPENSER'S "PALACE OF ART"

1. Besides Ovid, Spenser draws on Boccaccio, Marie de France, Alanus, Chaucer, Lydgate. See Mr. Frederick Hard, "Spenser's Clothes of Arras and of Tours," extracted *Variorum Spenser*, 3.394.
2. *Faerie Queene*, 3.11.28. Ovid (*Metamorphosis* 6.21) does speak of wool fleecy as a cloud, and his coloring (6.61-68) is more delicate than Spenser's.
3. *ibid.*, 5.9.28.
4. *ibid.*, 3.11.51.
5. *Variorum Spenser*, 3.398 & 9. Mr. Hard's point (p. 395) that Spenser's insistence on the reality of the tapestries described affords convincing evidence that he was writing with his mind's eye upon examples which he had actually seen makes Spenser a literalist of so extreme a kind that I cannot agree—especially when, as I try to show in the text—the "realism" is entirely different in purpose and is derived straight from Ovid.
 Mr. Hard's best evidence is the actual tapestries which he mentions as being in Leicester's gallery—"Cupid and Venus," "Diana bathyng hirselfe with hir nymphes," and "A picture of Diana and Acteon"; the items from the inventory of Henry VIII; and the many engravings after Ovid. Tapestries at Fontainebleau and elsewhere on the Continent prove little.
6. *Muiopotmos*, 11. 329 ff.
7. *Faerie Queene*, 2.12.77.
8. *ibid.*, 3.Proem.2.
9. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, Clarendon Press, 1936, pp. 326 and 327. Mr. Lewis might have cited the witch's creation of false Florimel (*Faerie Queene*, 3.8.7):

In stead of yellow lockes she did devise
 With golden wire to weave her curled head.

10. *Faerie Queene*, 7.7.10.

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11. *Faerie Queene*, 3.11.32.
12. During his life, except for a hypothetical trip to France, Spenser left England only for Ireland. So far as he goes, Fletcher is sound when he remarks: "Spenser's eye was trained not by the great art of the continent, except indirectly through continental literary compositions, but by such pictorial compositions as were familiar in England in stained glass, tapestry, fresco, and portraits, engravings, illustrated or illuminated books, and the living pictures of pageant and procession" (*Variorum Spenser*, Fletcher quoted by Hard, 3.399).

This is well worth bearing in mind; though of the above-mentioned objects of art in England it may be said at once that Spenser shows few if any influences of stained glass (whereas stained glass is found in Ariosto O.F. 13.70), seems hardly aware of what portraits were accessible in his day (where, for instance, is there any Holbein in Spenser?). Catalogues show that collections of continental paintings on the "grand tour" had begun under the Tudors, Henry VIII vying with Francis I; but Spenser was dead before this impulse gained momentum in the seventeenth century; and the really great collections of Italian, Flemish, and other continental art treasures belong to the eighteenth century and later.

Spenser barely mentions Michelangelo in a postscript to a letter to Harvey; it is safe to assume that Michelangelo was to him little more than a great name. Otherwise, his references are to "Chian painters," Apelles and Zeuxis; to sculptors whose work he could never have seen—Praxiteles and Phidias (F.Q. 3.Proem.2; 4.10.40). These are of course purely literary references. Yet one must often seek among continental Renaissance painters for the nearest analogies, with which the only actual link can be engravings and continental literary compositions.

The kinship is far stronger than can be accounted for by actual link. We may as well admit some original genius.

13. *Faerie Queene*, 1.10.48.
14. *Variorum Spenser*, 2.216.
15. *Ruines of Rome*, 11.407 ff. Of course this poem is derivative.
16. *Muiopormos*, 11. 153 ff.
17. *ibid.*, i87ff.
18. *Faerie Queene*, 6.2.35; 6.12.7. Koeppel cites Tasso's Rinaldo.
19. *Cymbeline*, 2.2.37-39.
20. Browning, *Porphyria's Lover*.
21. See Mr. Rensselaer Lee, " 'Ut Pictura Poesis': The Humanistic Theory of Painting" *The Art Bulletin*, December, 1940, pp. 199 ff. The confusion derives from various interpretations of "imitation."
22. *Faerie Queene*, 1.4.21 & 22.
23. *Variorum Spenser*, 1.219.
24. *ibid.*, 1.212.
25. *ibid.*, 1.178.
26. *ibid.*, 1.178.
27. *Faerie Queene*, 1.1.4.
28. *ibid.*, 6.10.6-12.
29. *ibid.*, 3.6.18 & 19.
30. *Faerie Queene*, 2.12.79 & 80.

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31. Kitchin, *Variorum Spenser*, 2.217.
32. *Faerie Queene*, 2.12.77 & 78.
33. Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, Oxford University Press, 1.939, pp. 172 ff.
34. Schiicking, 'The Baroque Characters of the Elizabeth Tragic Hero/' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1938, p. 87.
35. The importance of these early Spenserian translations for the Theatre in the development of his pictorial sense (and otherwise) needs more emphasis. Petrarch, Marot, Bellay are his earliest pictorial masters; what he learned from them he never forgot.
36. *Faerie Queene*, 1.1.14.
37. *ibid.*, 6.8.45 & 48-
38. *ibid.*, 6.11.13 & 21.
39. *ibid.*, 1.5.20, 21 & 28.
40. *Macbeth*, 3.3.5-7. The pictorial quality of this passage was cited by Mr. Granville-Barker in a lecture.
41. *Variorum Spenser*, 1.223.
42. *ibid.*, 1.219.
43. *Faerie Queene*, 1.10.12-14; 30.
44. See Miss Dorothy Atkinson's comments on the three traditional portraits—"Note on Spenser and Painting," *MLN*, January, 1943, pp. 57 and 58.
45. *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.2 & 5.
46. *Variorum Spenser*, 2.272. Quoted by Upton.
47. See his translations for Van der Noodt's *Theatre* (i 569): Epigram 3; Sonets 2, 6, 9, 14, 15. Shepheardes *Calender* (1579): April, 11. 73-83; June, 11. 23-32; *July*, 11. 17 ft., etc.
48. Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, First Book.
49. *Faerie Queene*, 1.4.8-10.
50. *ibid.*, 1.7.29-31.
51. For an incisive estimate of Lessing's virtues and limitations, see Rensselacr Lee, " 'Ut Pictura Poesis': The Humanistic Theory of Painting," pp. 214-17, *passim*.
52. *Faerie Queene*, 1.7.32.
53. Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*, 11. 1955-66.
54. See Stephen Larrabee, *English Bards and Grecian Marbles*, Columbia University Press, 1944, pp. 25-29.
55. *The Knight's Tale*, 11. 1975 ff.
56. *Faerie Queene*, 2.7.3 & 4-
57. *ibid.*, 2.7.20 & 21.
58. *ibid.*, 2.7.56.
59. *ibid.*, 2.7.23.

(8) THE KINGDOM OF OUR LANGUAGE

1. William Van O'Conner, "Tension and Structure of Poetry/" *Sewanee Review*, LI, 4, 1943, p. 560.
2. Marlowe, *Tamburlaine I*, 11. 869-80.
3. For the development of metaphysical imagery in Elizabethan dramatists, see Elizabeth Holmes, *Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery*, Oxford

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- University Press, 1929. Miss Holmes traces effectively the contribution of Lyly, but ignores Spenser's influence on the dramatists, since it was not metaphysical.
4. Richard II, 5.5.50-60.
 5. Faerie Queene, 3.4.57.
 6. C. S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, Clarendon Press, 1936, p. 305. Mr. Lewis is not so cavalier as he sounds. In his understandable pique at source-hunting, he is overemphatic and errs in considering the Faerie Queene divorced from the rest of Spenser's poetry. Otherwise he could hardly remark that Spenser's debts to English medieval poetry, which he considers primarily matter for speculation, are "debts not in structure or style (which is out of the question) but in sentiment and outlook." Mr. Lewis himself confesses that the Englishman has difficulty in sensing the superiority of Ariosto to Boiardo precisely because that difference is a matter of style (p. 301), perceptible only to the Italian or the Italianate Englishman. His implication that Spenser learned this style is an unintentionally high tribute to Spenser's mastery of Italian.
 7. Othello, 1.3.232-34; 238-39.
 8. The Tempest, 1.2.408-9.
 9. See Table 3, Josephine Miles, "Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion," *University of California Publications in English*, xn, i, 1942, p. 171. Miss Miles' statistics cover only the sonnets.
 10. *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.
 11. T. S. Eliot, Introduction to Johnson's "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," Frederick Etchells & Hugh Macdonald, 1930.
 12. T. S. Eliot, "John Dryden," *Selected Essays*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932, p. 264.
 13. *Faerie Queene*, 1.5.1.
 14. *ibid.*, 7.7.1 & 2.
 15. Tennyson, In Memoriam, Section 11.
 16. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Chatto, 1930, p. 3.
 17. Macbeth, 5.3.22-23.
 18. Othello, 3.3.452-60.
 19. *Faerie Queene*, 4.3.27 & 28.
 20. *ibid.*, 2.7.8.
 21. Herbert Read, *Phases of English Poetry*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929, p. 56.
 22. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 32.
 23. T. S. Eliot, "Dante," *Selected Essays*, p. 205.
 24. Coriolanus, 1.3.39-40.
 25. *ibid.*, 5.3.159ff.
 26. Antony and Cleopatra, 4.15.72-74.
 27. *Twelfth Night*, 2.4.43-47.
 28. King Lear, 2.1.120-21.
 29. I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism*, K. Paul, French, Trubner, 1929, p. 232.
 30. Antony and Cleopatra, 1.5.63-65.
 31. Pope, *Of the Characters of Women*, 1.248.
 32. A. E. Housman, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, Macmillan, 1933.

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