“This safe retyre of life”: Spenser’s Modes of Retirement

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Table of Contents

Abstract

Edmund Spenser's poetry is keenly attentive to the operation of Elizabethan sovereignty and power. Although deeply invested in the actions, values, and priorities of the Elizabethan state, it frequently views the burgeoning development of late-Tudor political institutions with a high degree of anxiety. This study traces the ways in which Spenser employed idealized images of retirement to investigate and come to terms with the institutions of the late Elizabethan world—including but not limited to the court, the English church, the Queen, the literary patronage system, and England's colonial interests in Ireland. It argues that Spenser's increasing alienation from the Elizabethan centres of power not only fuelled his late-career attraction to the autonomy and seclusion of his Irish estate, but also provided the terms with which he articulated his ideal retirement—as a mode of existence free from the demands and contingencies of court life. In *The Shepheardes Calender*, pastoral retirement is used to critique England's church and literary patronage system. In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* pastoralism is used to idealize rustic detachment and register alienation from the Elizabethan court—a function also served by hermit characters in *The Faerie Queene*. In *The Faerie Queene*'s Book VI, however, Spenser highlights the place of panegyric address and the necessity of vigilant guardedness in his ideal retirement—an inclusion that ultimately destabilizes the possibility of total detachment and reasserts *The Faerie Queene*'s strong commitment to social and civic engagement.

Résumé

La poésie d'Edmund Spenser est vivement attentive au fonctionnement de la souveraineté et la puissance élisabéthaine. Bien que profondément investie dans les actions, les valeurs, et les priorités de l'État élisabéthaine, elle considère souvent le développement en plein essor des institutions politiques de la fin de l'époque Tudor avec anxiété. Cette étude retrace la façon dont Spencer employait des images idéalisées de la retraite afin d'analyser et de se réconcilier avec les institutions de la fin de l'époque élisabéthaine—y compris mais sans s'y limiter à la cour, l'église anglaise, la reine, le système de patronage littéraire, et les intérêts coloniaux de l'Angleterre en Irlande. Le projet soutient que l'aliénation croissante de Spenser des centres de pouvoir élisabéthaine non seulement alimentait son attraction à l'autonomie et à l'isolement de son domaine irlandais à la fin de sa carrière, mais lui fournissait aussi les termes avec lesquels il a articulé sa retraite idéale comme un mode d'existence libre des exigences et des contingences de la vie de cour. Dans *The Shepheardes Calender*, la retraite pastorale est utilisée pour critiquer l'église de l'Angleterre et le système de patronage littéraire. Dans *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, le pastoralisme est utilisé pour idéaliser le détachement rustique et pour enregistrer l'aliénation de la cour élisabéthaine—une fonction également servie par des personnages hermite dans *The Faerie Queene*. Dans Book VI de *The Faerie Queene*, cependant, Spenser souligne la place de l'adresse panégyrique et la nécessité de la circonspection vigilante dans sa retraite idéale—une inclusion qui déstabilise, en fin de compte, la possibilité d'un détachement total et qui réaffirme le dévouement de *The Faerie Queene* à l'engagement social et civique.

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Introduction

> Happie indeed (said *Colin*) I him hold,
> That may that blessed presence still enjoy,
> Of fortune and of enuy vncomptrold,
> Which still are wont most happie states t'annoy:
> But I by that which little while I proued:
> Some part of those enormities did see,
> The which in Court continually hooued,
> And followd those which happy seemd to bee.
> Therefore I silly man, whose former dayes
> Had in rude fields bene altogether spent,
> Darest not aduenture such vnknowen wayes,
> Nor trust the guile of fortunes blandishment,
> But rather chose back to my sheep to tourne. . . .
>
> (*Colin Clouts*, lines 664-72)

This speech of the titular character of Edmund Spenser's 1595 *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* encapsulates an attraction to retirement that preoccupied its author for much of his late career. Like Spenser himself, who composed the highly autobiographical poem soon after returning to Ireland from a two-year sojourn in England (Hadfield, *A Life* 242), Colin's ultimate "tourne" chooses country over court, retirement over aspirationalism, and rustic peripherality over the Elizabethan centres of power. This study will argue that much of Spenser's poetry, especially those works composed in the final decade of his life, rehearses this same "tourne" towards privacy and retirement.

Following his 1591 departure from England and the Elizabethan court, Spenser's poetry exhibits an intensified anti-courtly stance fuelled by disillusionment and a desire for world-weary withdrawal.

In order to consider rustic withdrawal as a maneuver fundamental to Spenser's philosophy and poetic self-fashioning, this project will need to investigate the relationship between his adversarial and panegyric approaches to power. Just as the above passage imagines Cynthia's "blessed presence" with panegyric nostalgia despite the dominant tone of anti-courtly disdain, Spenser's sovereign is consistently exempt from the oppositional invective that typically accompanies his idealized images of retirement. This is not, however, to compartmentalize Spenser's allegiances or accuse him of lip-service. In fact, as this study will demonstrate, Spenser's characteristic combination of panegyric and adversarial modes is neither as unique nor as paradoxical as some have insisted in the past. As a poet and political subject with an unrivaled capacity to distinguish court from sovereign—"enormities" from "that blessed presence"—Spenser consistently presents idealized images of retirement that open up new possibilities for panegyric and political expression.

Before considering Spenser's own interest in "retirement," it will prove useful to outline the conceptual scope of this term in this context. According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the word "retire" is an English derivation from the Old French "retirer," which combines the prefix "re" (originally "back") with "tirer," meaning "draw" (s.v. "retire"). *The Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the French "retirer" generally signified "to pull or withdraw (something) back" (s.v. "retire, v."). By the end of the fourteenth century, the French term gradually picked up the reflexive

senses of "to withdraw, go away" or "to go off to somewhere peaceful or secluded, to withdraw somewhere for protection"—meanings that seem to have begun appearing in English in the early sixteenth century. For instance, Thomas Starkey, whose *Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset* was written in the 1530s, was able to write of "Certayn monasterys…to the wych al such…may retyre, & from the besynes & vanyte of the world may wythdray themselfe" (3.a). In Spenser's lifetime, the word could also denote "To return to a place visited habitually or frequently, typically for rest or relaxation" (4.a), the more general "To return; to come back" (7.a.), or the martial sense of "To retreat" (1.a). As an adjective, "retired" was equally familiar to sixteenth-century English authors, and generally signified "Of a way of life, an activity, a period of time, etc.: characterized by seclusion or withdrawal from society; private, quiet" ("retired, adj. and n." 1.a). For the purposes of this study, all of the above definitions are relevant—they comprise the conceptual framework of "retirement" that will here be used, and demonstrate the term's rootedness in Spenser's own epoch. Not only does "retirement" convey the nuances of Spenser's world-weary and anti-courtly perspective, but he himself used the word in this sense, as when *The Faerie Queene's* Calidore speaks of worldly concerns as "but vaine shadowes to this safe retyre" (6.9.27), or when Bellamour and Claribell "to freedom did retyre" (6.12.10).

Of course, it must be noted that the word "retirement" also carries more specific modern connotations that were only incipient in Elizabethan England: "To leave office, employment, or service permanently, now esp. on reaching pensionable age; to stop working" ("retire" 8.a) and later, "To leave permanently one's office or employment and move *to* a certain place, esp. for quiet or seclusion" (8.b). The *Oxford English Dictionary*

cites only one instance of the former definition before 1600 (ca. 1598, in reference to "old retired soldiers" [*ibid*. 8.a]). As Joel T. Rosenthal points out, while this type of retirement is identifiable "as both an institution and a practice" in the years leading up to Elizabeth's reign, it was anything but commonplace:

> We can look back and say that retirement was an idea in search of a structure on which to rest: personal wealth, community charity, or some idea of institutional commitment and subsidization, as with some fortunate clerics and some select groups of civil and royal servants, might make it possible. But it was best applied on a limited and sporadic basis. . . .What we do not find in fifteenth-century discourse or administrative records is any priority accorded to a social synthesis or a generalized policy about the variations and idiosyncrasies of the aged and their common condition. (100-01)

Lacking reference to an unambiguous, widespread, or standardized set of social practices corresponding with modern "retirement" (withdrawal from active lives and careers), the term could accommodate and signify a broad array of actions and lifestyles in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In the case of Edmund Spenser, retirement and withdrawal must be framed dialectically, as the inverse of a poetic career deeply invested in the actions, values, and priorities of the Elizabethan state. Spenser's increasing alienation from the Elizabethan centres of power not only fuelled his late-career attraction to the autonomy and seclusion of his Irish estate, but also provided the terms with which he articulated his ideal retirement—as a mode of existence free from the demands and contingencies of court

life. Spenserian retirement must therefore be understood as a "pulling back" or "retreat" from the demands of court and the forces that delimited behaviour and expression within the larger social and political structures of Elizabethan England.

In order to consider Spenser's position vis-à-vis the court, Elizabethan society, and institutional power, this project will engage with many studies that have previously considered the same set of problems. Spenser scholarship has, especially in the past 35 years, been sharply divided over the precise nature of Spenser's relationship to Elizabethan centres of power. Perhaps the most controversial and oft-cited position in this debate comes from Stephen Greenblatt's 1980 *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*: "Even when he most bitterly criticizes its abuses or records its brutalities, Spenser loves power and attempts to link his own art ever more closely with its symbolic and literal embodiment. *The Faerie Queene* is, as he insists again and again, wholly wedded to the autocratic ruler of the English state" (173-74). Greenblatt's book has proved a generative launching point for many later historicist interpreters of Spenser's work—many of whom disagree vehemently with that critic's assumptions. Louis Adrian Montrose's work, for instance, insists on a more equivocal relationship between the author-subject and the hegemonic forces that constrain and delimit its potential oppositionality. He thus plays on the dual meanings of "subjectification": "I mean to suggest a process of subjectification that, on the one hand, shapes individuals as loci of consciousness and initiators of action; and, on the other hand, positions, motivates, and constrains them within networks of power beyond their comprehension or control" ("Elizabethan Subject" 306). Such a model not only allows for the prophetic or prescriptive authority claimed by Elizabethan writers like Spenser, but also the capacity of such writers to "reshape the Queen by the very process

of addressing and representing her" (303). David Norbrook is another scholar admittedly uneasy with New Historicism's Foucauldian or Althusserian movement toward reducing literature to a hegemonic force of the state primarily "functioning to contain resistance" (276). He begins his 1984 analysis of *The Faerie Queene's* politics by asserting that "Spenser's heroic poem is the fullest poetic embodiment of the political ideals of Sidney and his circle" (97)—a perspective that avoids Greenblatt's one-dimensional view of "power" by acknowledging Spenser's self-positioning amid the contentious political and religious factionalism of the late-Elizabethan court.

As Spenser's late works attest, the 1590s were a profoundly turbulent era in English social and political life—a period in which poets and courtiers reacted to rapid political and cultural transformation with a new sense of urgency. John Guy argues for a model of periodization that designates the final years of the century as Elizabeth I's "second reign" to highlight the all-encompassing nature of these changes—changes that include the breakout of war with Spain, the intensification of factionalism among ambitious courtiers, the political dominance of Burghley, and the increasing concentration of power among a small number of Elizabeth's closest counsellors ("Second Reign" 1-6). Guy writes that the pressures of war, bad harvests, plague, and factionalism combined to produce "an authoritarian reaction from privy counsellors and magistrates, whose emphasis on state security, the subversiveness of religious noncomformity, and the threat of 'popularity' and social revolt became obsessional" (1). Spenser's work is permeated with these same anxieties and sense of historical urgency, as when he complains of Burghley's censure at the conclusion of Book VI, derides the

courtly imperative that one must "seeke to please" (6.12.41), or compares the "state of present time" with "the image of the antique world" in the proem to Book V.

In tracing Spenser's intensified attraction to retirement, this thesis will insist on the importance of the years 1589-91—a period corresponding to both the beginning of Elizabeth's so-called "second reign" and Spenser's formative first visit to her court. Aside from enabling the publication of *The Faerie Queene's* first three-book installment, Spenser's 1589-91 trip to England brought him into his first sustained contact with the Elizabethan court, generating the opinions that would continue to inform his poetry for years to come. On the one hand, his reverential allegiance to the Queen was both rewarded and bolstered by her reaction to the *Faerie Queene's* first installment. Although Hadfield discounts as unlikely the popular image of Spenser reading his poetry aloud to Elizabeth and her court, he notes the singularity of the fifty-pound annual pension that *The Faerie Queene* brought its author (*A Life* 235-26). In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, which was ostensibly composed upon Spenser's return home in 1591 and may represent an "immediate reaction to [his first] experience of the court" (242), the generous nature of this reward is alluded to amid the poem's most panegyric passages: "Be witnesse of this bountie here aliue, / Which she to *Colin* her poore shepheard shewed" (lines 646-47).[1]

On the other hand, the disillusionment Spenser experienced at court is registered in almost all of his later poetry. Well before England's reading public saw the exhaustive

[1] Spenser's contemporaries also took note of the Queen's special generosity—the journal of Sir Thomas Tresham notes "Yt is nott yett a yeare sence he writt his booke in the prayse of the Quene, which he entitled the Fayrie Quene, and which was so well liked, that her ma:stie gave him ane hundred marks pencion for the of the Exchequer" (*sic*; quoted in Hadfield, *A Life* 267).

catalogue of court "enormities" in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, William Ponsonby published *Complaints*, a miscellany of Spenser's poems and translations loosely arranged and presented as "complaints and meditations of the worlds vanitie" (*Shorter Poems* 165). The collection, (which Spenser may or may not have had a hand in publishing[2]), includes the notorious *Prosopopeia, or Mother Hubberds Tale*, a beast fable containing thinly-disguised satirical attacks on William and Robert Cecil alongside more cataloguing of courtly abuses. Here, the state of a court "Suter" (a position analogous to Spenser's own in 1590) is lamented and contrasted with private self-sufficiency:

> Who euer leaues sweete home, where meane estate
> In safe assurance, without strife or hate,
> Findes all things needfull for contentment meek;
> And will to Court for shadowes vaine to seeke,
> Or hope to gaine, himself will a daw trie:
> That curse God send vnto mine enemie. (*Mother Hubberds*, lines 909-14)

As Bruce Danner notes, the ideal "braue Courtier" that the poem favourably contrasts with the obsequious "Sutor" is also a figure of withdrawal and self-sufficiency—he "bites his lip" (line 711), silently observes the follies of others (lines 725-26), and "[withdrawes] His minde vnto the Muses" (line 760; Danner 181-83).

Complaints was published in 1591, the first copies appearing for sale as Spenser was either returning or preparing to return to Ireland (*A Life* 265). By 19 March 1591,

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[2] Hadfield cites the carefully curated arrangement of dedicatory letters and thematic unity as evidence of Spenser's involvement in publication. He also argues that "Ponsonby's prefatory letter seems designed to protect the author from the possible malign attention of the authorities, perhaps with the example of Stubbe's *Gaping Gulf* in mind, the work published alongside the *Calender*, which had seen the author mutilated and the publisher, Singleton, pardoned only at the last minute" (*A Life* 273-74).

less than a month after the awarding of his pension, the collection had been called in and judged seditious by authorities—almost certainly due to the inclusion of *Mother Hubberds Tale* and its lampooning of Lord Burghley (265). The early months of 1591 thus find Spenser making his most adversarial and explicit anti-courtly statements while personally enacting the radical anti-courtly gesture of rustic retirement—all of this closely following the apotheosis of his public literary career. Danner argues that this withdrawal represents an attempted reification of the ideal courtier's "single-minded pursuit of honour" in *Mother Hubberds Tale* (180), and reads the entire series of events as a "virtuous withdrawal that deflects the shame of ambition in favour of sacrificial duty" (181). Whether or not Spenser's formative turn to Ireland was as politically calculated as Danner suggests, it is clear from both *Complaints* and later works that the poet viewed the Elizabethan court with profound alienation and contempt, and contrasted this with idealized images of retirement and self-sufficiency. That he maintained such an adversarial position in spite of public recognition, generous remuneration, and laureate ambitions is only a testament to its deep-seated nature.[3]

One of the most prominent and recurring targets of Spenser's anti-courtly invective is the nature of Elizabethan courtly subservience—its performative rituals of praise, imposed dependencies, and what Spenser himself refers to as "faire dissembling curtesie" (*CCCHA*, line 700). To argue, as Greenblatt does, that Spenser's politics can be reduced to the "ardent worship of power" (179) is to overlook this profound scorn for obsequious display. Colin Clout, in his eponymous poem, complains that the court lacks "place for any gentle wit / Vnlesse to please, it selfe it can apply" (lines 707-08); Book

[3] For Spenser's ambition and self-fashioning as "laureate" poet, see Helgerson 55-96.

VI's Calidore is introduced as favouring "simple truth and stedfast honesty" over "base flattery" (6.1.3); and, as Bruce Danner notes, *Mother Hubberds Tale* exhibits a great deal of impassioned scorn for the "crouching" required for courtly interaction (180-81). Such negative valuations of court life exist even alongside Spenser's obvious panegyric reverence for the Queen, fuelling and providing contrast for his continued idealization of retired self-sufficiency.

If Spenser's most dismissive anti-courtly passages tend to reduce the Elizabethan court to a horde of obsequious flatterers, it must be noted that by the 1590s this critical perspective was no longer unique. In fact, the 1590s witnessed the growing instability of the panegyric set of ritual behaviours, symbols, and literary conventions that historians have come to designate the "Cult of Elizabeth." In part, this change represents an inevitable product of the era's gendered expectations of sovereignty—the Queen, as a female sovereign, benefited from a cultic reverence that had always, to some extent, relied upon eroticized notions of feminine youth, beauty, and sexual potential, and this symbolic order underwent increased strain in the Queen's senescence. As Louis Adrian Montrose writes, "at issue was the predicament of a ruler who—perhaps out of personal inclination, and undoubtedly out of political necessity—had exploited the charismatic potential of certain culturally constituted feminine ideals, ideals with which the accidents of nature and the ravages of time were becoming increasingly incompatible" (*Subject of Elizabeth* 244). In his own work, Montrose records numerous instances of courtiers, politicians, and commoners viewing the cult of Elizabeth cynically "in terms of statecraft" near the conclusion of her reign (77). Similarly, Richard C. McCoy draws attention to the ways in which Elizabethan court culture tended to evince "conflicts

within the ruling class" (214), and argues that late-Elizabethan writers and courtiers associated with the Earl of Essex produced works that "seem designed to undermine rather than support the Cult of Elizabeth at a point when its pretensions were increasingly doubtful" (216). This increased cynicism was only heightened by the overall contraction in literary patronage that characterized Elizabeth's final decade—a social fact for which Spenser's impatience is well-attested.[4]

While this overall disillusionment with existing panegyric forms may have fuelled Spenser's drive toward retirement, it also conversely fuelled a desire to reinvent and reinvigorate royal panegyric. The inventiveness of Spenserian praise has long been of special interest for Elizabethan scholars. However, Spenser's efforts to unite praise and withdrawal have often been overlooked—scholars have tended either to understate Spenser's alienation and distance from court or overstate his antipathy.[5] This study seeks to correct these trends by focussing on the ways in which Spenser's postures of alienation, weariness, and retirement actually fuel his panegyric impulse to celebrate Elizabeth I. In both *Colin Clouts* and *The Faerie Queene*, for instance, panegyric praise (for Cynthia and Gloriana, respectively) is heightened by physical distance and divergence from court flattery.

The first chapter of this study considers the ways in which *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* employ the pastoral mode to idealize retirement and withdrawal. Looking first at *The Calender*, which was published well before Spenser's formative 1591 departure from court, it examines the text's use of

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[4] See Fox (1995) and Kelsey and Peterson (2000)
[5] For the understatement, see Headlam Wells (1983). For the overstatement, see Cain (1978) and Gold (1993).

pastoral retirement as a tool for social and political critique—namely, the low-church condemnation of ecclesiastical corruption and the defense of poetry's value against a tightfisted courtly patronage system. The chapter then turns to *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, where it traces the effects of personal disillusionment and courtly experience on Spenser's idealized pastoral retirement. It argues that the later poem's images of retirement intensify the anti-courtly critique and oppositional stance of the earlier poem, while simultaneously strengthening and renewing pastoral's panegyric function regarding the queen.

Chapter Two focuses specifically on one often-overlooked generic character trope of medieval and early modern romance that Spenser uses to display social critique and idealize retirement: the hermit. Like the pastoral worlds of *The Calender*, *Colin Clouts*, and *The Faerie Queene*, the poet's favourable hermits represent an idealized rustic retirement apart from the contingencies of court—however, they are unique figures in the early modern discourse of retirement by virtue of their special piety, solitude, and unique relation to power. In the lyrics, romances, and progresses of the late sixteenth century, hermits typically unite solitude with submissive humility—however, the political submission implied by this posture of humility and reverence is undercut by spiritual and social independence and Christian righteousness. With the hermit of Book VI, I argue, Spenser presents an idealized image of retirement unprecedented in his poetic oeuvre by virtue of this character's solitude, security, and disengagement with Elizabethan panegyric.

The third and final chapter more broadly addresses the modes of retirement in *The Faerie Queene*, with a special emphasis on Book VI's negotiation of the tension between

retirement and the public obligations of panegyric—between, for instance, the secluded independence of Meliboe's pastoral domain and the "most mightie and magnificent empresse Elizabeth" who remains the poem's organizing principle. Panegyric is central, we find, to the idealized modes of retirement and poetic independence presented in Book VI's final cantos. However, retirement in this book is consistently troubled by external contingencies, and these often necessitate a posture of guarded vigilance that ultimately undermines the possibility of stable rustic repose and tends to privilege attentiveness to social and civic responsibilities. Likewise, the conclusion of *The Mutabilitie Cantos*, the final extant lines of Spenser's epic, condense the characteristic union of retirement, vigilance, and encomium that permeate both *The Faerie Queene* and Spenser's shorter pastorals. His final works reprise the idealized retirement, finality, and repose used to express social critique and alienation in his earlier works, but insist more than ever on the social realities and public responsibilities that make total retirement impossible.

Keenly attentive to the operation of Elizabethan sovereignty and power, Spenser's oeuvre consistently registers and responds to the burgeoning development of late-Tudor political institutions. This study traces the ways in which he employed images of retirement to investigate and come to terms with these institutions—including but not limited to the court, the English church, the Queen, the literary patronage system, and England's colonial interests in Ireland. While the images of retirement in *The Calender*, *Colin Clouts*, and *The Faerie Queene* frequently manifest discomfort and disillusionment with these forms of power, they also communicate panegyric praise, espouse vigilance, and even at times gesture toward the detachment of rustic *otium*. Spenser's modes of retirement thus exemplify the fundamental pliability of retirement discourse—the

adaptability of retirement as an ideal, an action, or a literary image to a broad range of values, even within the work of a single poet. For instance, while Spenser was busy serving in Ireland, his former classmate at the Merchant Taylor's School, Thomas Lodge, was commending the "solitarie life" in a way that overlaps significantly with Spenser's later work, yet foregrounds Catholic asceticism (*Scillaes Metamorphosis* sig. Er-E2r). The seventeenth century witnessed an explosion of English Royalist poets both celebrating and enacting rustic retirement and aristocratic self-sufficiency as a response to political alienation during and after the English Civil War—a tradition for which Alastair Fowler cites Spenser as a significant forebear (35-38).

Chapter One

"Pyping lowe in shade of lowly groue": Pastoral Retirement in *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*

As with both installments of *The Faerie* Queene, Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* opens by foregrounding the poet's own career trajectory, motivation, and reputation. In the prefatory poem "To his Booke," which precedes E. K.'s other prefatory material and is attributed to the anonymous poet himself, the book's publication is figured as the public debut of a new courtier-poet:

> Goe little booke; thy selfe present,
> As child whose parent is vnkent,
> To him that is the president
> Of noblesse and of chevalree:
> And if that Envie barke at thee,
> As sure it will, for succoure flee
> Under the shadow of his wing.
> And, asked who thee forth did bring,
> A shepheards swaine saye did thee sing,
> All as his straying flocke he fedde:
> And when his honor hath thee redde,
> Craue pardon for my hardyhedde. (lines 1-12)

Here, the personified book is aligned with the "new Poete" himself and, like its "unkent" and ostensibly rustic author-parent, relies on Sidney's patronage to overcome the challenges posed by envy and detraction. The entire *Shepheardes Calender* is thus

immediately framed against the political backdrop of the Elizabethan courtly patronage system, which, as Patrick Cheney writes (with reference to the poem's concealed avian metaphor), represented "the only training ground capable of launching a winged career" (87). Spenser was not the only "unkent" poet using pastoralism as self-promotion in this system—as Louis Adrian Montrose writes, English Renaissance pastoralism "was the medium in which well-educated but humbly born young men could gracefully advertise themselves to the courtly establishment" ("Of Gentlemen" 433). As the brief poem progresses, however, its confident aspirationalism is undercut by an anxiety surrounding public and courtly reception:

> But if that any aske thy name,
> Say thou wert base begot with blame:
> For thy thereof thou takest shame.
> And when thou art past ieopardee,
> Come tell me, what was sayd of mee,
> And I will send more after thee. (lines 13-18)

While publication implies vulnerability and potential victimization by barking "Envy," the final line adds an assertive self-confidence with retaliatory connotations—the poet vows to "send more" books in the face of criticism and censure. The outset of Spenser's pastoralist career thus finds the poet striking a tone simultaneously confident and cautious—confident enough to vow further publication regardless of his work's reception, yet cautiously aware of the "jeopardee" posed by antagonistic courtly or public audiences.

The aesthetic self-awareness of Spenser's epistle "To his Booke" is neither unique in his oeuvre nor in the pastoral tradition he inherited—as Humphrey Tonkin writes, "pastoral often has poetry itself as its subject" (284). Renaissance pastorals, with their song contests and propensity for allegorical social commentary, tend to insist on their own status as cultural artifacts in a political world. This chapter considers the ways in which Spenser's shorter pastoral works deploy the genre's conventional metapoetic awareness to examine critically the poet's role in Elizabethan society. It argues that both *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* celebrate rustic retirement as a response to forces that alienate the poet-shepherd in both court and society at large, including courtiers' scorn, lack of artistic patronage, and general social instability. It also argues that *The Shepheardes Calender* employs images of pastoral retirement as a means of criticizing high-church policy and ecclesiastical careerism in the English church. However, despite expressing alienation and dissent, Spenser's pastoral poetry has a deep-seated panegyric strain that persists in *Colin Clouts* even amidst a narrative of self-imposed pastoral exile.

As outlined in the Introduction, the broad and idealistic attraction to retirement in Spenser's poetry is consistently informed by political alienation and anti-courtly sentiment. Before considering the specific modes of retirement idealized by Spenserian pastoral, it is necessary to consider how scholarship has dealt with Renaissance pastoral's unique capacity for negotiating political issues and power-relations. In 1983, Louis Adrian Montrose began an article on the power dynamics of Renaissance pastoral by noting that "Modern theories of pastoral have a way of turning into theories of literature" ("Of Gentleman" 415). At the time, his point—that the essentialism and generalizations

of former studies of pastoral tend to efface the "historical and social specificity" of Elizabethan pastoral (415)—represented a much-needed historicist intervention into pastoral criticism. In the "rage for pastoral and pastoralization" evident in the literary criticism of the fifties, sixties, and seventies (415), the genre was frequently approached as a transhistorical aesthetic impulse that could be interpreted without reference to specific historical or material conditions. For instance, Montrose pointedly rejects the arguments of both Renato Poggioli (1969) and Laurence Lerner (1972); the former argues that pastoral necessarily works to "sublimate civilization's discontents" (415), while the latter centres his argument on the notion that "nostalgia is the basic emotion of pastoral" (41). Yet shepherds and sheep in literary pastorals carry different meanings in different cultural milieus and periods. For Montrose, the pastoralism of the Elizabethan milieu is much less implicated in transhistorical projects of nostalgia than it is engaged with defining the boundaries of the actual court and working to celebrate the definitive *otium* of England's "sociocultural elite," while providing a "symbolic means of entry into that courtly world" for aspiring and educated men (like Edmund Spenser; 448).

Another form of essentialist pastoral criticism (yet a form perspectivally very different from that of Poggioli and Lerner) is expounded in two landmark studies on the topic: William Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935) and Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973). In Empson's text, pastoralism is interpreted as a broad and transhistorical process of "putting the complex into the simple" (22), which allows him to include texts as diverse as *The Beggar's Opera* and *Alice in Wonderland*. *Some Versions* is well attuned to the pastoral mode's negotiation of class and power relationships—Empson argues that pastoral "was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and

poor" through its superimposition of rustic characters and elevated style, and thus performed the cultural work of mediating class difference and justifying social inequality (11). Writing over forty years later, Williams echoes Empson in his argument that pastoral mystifies the economic exploitation of England's agricultural production. For instance, in his reading of Jonson's "To Penshurst," Williams perceives a "magical extraction of the curse of labour" that serves to "ratify and bless the country landowner" and, by extension, the exploitative mode of production the landowner controls and embodies (32). In one sense, Empson and Williams anticipate Montrose's mode of historicism in their focus on class and power; however, Montrose's understanding of pastoral's relationship with society's economic and political bases is more complex. For instance, Empson variously reduces pastoral's economic base to dichotomies of "rich and poor," aristocracy and proletariat, or "the complex man and the simple one" (14)—categories too simplistic to describe the multifarious and overlapping forms of status and patronage operative in Elizabethan society (Montrose 417).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Raymond Williams published a series of works (including *Marxism and Literature*), that revised his theory of pastoral mystification by complicating the deterministic relation between economic base and literary superstructure. Literature, he argued, can include certain forms of "emergent" or "residual" culture that resist incorporation into the dominant culture ("Base and Superstructure" 10-12). Similarly, Montrose's own career demonstrates a continuous process of qualifying, complicating, and revising his own 1980 advocacy of a critical approach centred on the "pastoral of power" in which pastoralism "constitutes one of the 'symbolic formations' contributing to the establishment and continuity of the Elizabethan

regime in a period of religious and socio-economic upheaval" ("Eliza, Queene of shepheardes" 166). The notion of a "pastoral of power" is notably aligned with Stephen Greenblatt's reduction of Spenser's work to the ideology of Elizabethan autocratic imperialism (174), and just as much of Montrose's later work has aimed at refuting Greenblatt's claim, many recent studies of Spenserian pastoral have also reacted against it. For instance, John D. Bernard rejects the idea of a "pastoral of power" as "historical determinism" and argues for a return to the "habitual assumptions of poetic authority underlying older theories of pastoral" (5). Similarly, Richard Chamberlain has more recently argued that Spenser's work is punctuated by "moments of resistance" and "subversive logics" that manifest an "anti-totalising impulse" and defy ideological conservatism (3-4).

This chapter takes theoretical cues from Montrose, Bernard, Chamberlain, and others in its rejection of the simplistic "pastoral of power" perspective. While both *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts* manifest a deeply-felt panegyric impulse, neither text can be reduced to courtly aspirationalism or a defense of the Elizabethan regime. Instead, each text uses pastoralism to celebrate retirement as a response to social, political, and religious pressures imposed by society and the Elizabethan centres of power. This is not to suggest that Spenser uses pastoral retirement to mount a systematic critique of the Elizabethan regime or espouse radical and total social detachment—such a view is obviously undermined by the royal encomia and profound ambition of both texts (and, of course, *The Faerie Queene*). Nevertheless, both texts use pastoral retirement to mount specific and targeted critique, and gesture toward an ideal rustic independence insulated from the contingencies of life at the centre of social and political power.

Retirement in *The Shepheardes Calender*

As outlined above with reference to Spenser's epistle "To his Booke," *The Shepheardes Calender* opens by envisioning both public career and courtly life with a duality of aspiration and defensiveness. The speaker's guise of humility is simultaneously a plea for social preferment and a proleptic defence against "barking" critics, and the brief poem resolves with an image of self-composed pastoral peripherality in which the isolated ostensible rustic defiantly "sends" texts to centres of power while anticipating hostility. Before tracing the implications of *The Calender's* prefatory defiance for its broader sense of the "place of Poesy," it will be necessary to consider the poem's use of oppositionality and retirement for a different purpose—to idealize religious humility and Protestant reform. As David Norbrook points out, *The Calender's* oppositional stance is partially informed by the political context of growing low-Church disillusionment with the Elizabethan religious settlement:

> When *The Shepheardes Calender* was published the issues of ecclesiastical pride and luxury were newly controversial. A group of religious radicals had become impatient at the slow pace of reform under the Protestant queen from whom they had hoped for so much, and had begun to turn the old anti-Catholic rhetoric against the Elizabethan hierarchy. (54)

Norbrook also argues that *The Calender's* reformist position and "low-church Protestantism" (61) were more recognizable to contemporaries than they have sometimes appeared to modern critics (55-56), partially due to the immediacy of the political allusions (61). Similarly, although Katherine C. Little's recent work on the medieval

English poetry of "rural labour" understates Spenser's reformist approach to ecclesiastical politics, it reminds us of *The Calender's* profound debt to texts like *Piers Plowman* and the pseudo-Chaucerian *Plowman's Tale*—texts that, in Little's words, embody a "native" literary tradition that "always carries with it a reformist, even radical, potential" (47).[6] As David Shore notes, the figure of Piers Plowman remained highly familiar throughout the sixteenth century and was frequently revived to "set forth the theological doctrines of the reformers and . . . to expose the abuses of a clergy more interested in its own temporal aggrandizement than in the spiritual welfare of the laity" (29).

While the Palinode-Piers debate in "May" may be explicitly connected to the broad and omnipresent threat of Catholicism ("Argvment" 72), other moments, such as the braining of Algrin in "Julye," refer to more specific, immediate, and topical complaints—in this last case, Elizabeth suspending Edmund Grindal's leadership of the English Church. In the specific example of "Julye" a low-church complaint surrounding ecclesiastical politics is connected to a broader moral distrust of "proude and ambitious Pastours" ("Argvment" 95). Here, Thomalin rejects Morrel's hill-dwelling ostentation in favour of the concealed and humble security of valley pastures:

> Ah God shield, man, that I should clime,
>
> and learne to looke alofte,
>
> This reede is ryfe, that oftentime
>
> great clymbers fall vnsoft.
>
> In humble dales is footing fast,

[6] For the anti-urbanism and religious reformism central to *Piers Plowman's* cultural legacy, see Rodman Jones (2011).

the trode is not so tickle:
And though one fall through heedlesse hast,
yet is his misse not mickle. (“Julye,” lines 9-16)

As E.K.’s gloss indicates, the central metaphor of ascension is “spoken of Ambition” (“Glosse” 102). The implication of Thomalin’s speech is that when it comes to ecclesiastical politics, “ambition” must be rejected in favour of self-effacement and caution.

Although the reference to Edmund Grindal keeps the eclogue rooted in the English church’s internal politics, the controversy is haunted by spectres of Catholicism. For instance, Thomalin connects ambitious and ostentatious bishop-shepherds with elaborate Roman Catholic vestments:

Their weedes bene not so nighly wore,
such simplesse mought them shend:
They bene yclad in purple and pall,
so hath theyr god them blist,
They reigne and rulen ouer all,
and lord it, as they list:
…….
For Palinode (if thou him ken)
yode late on Pilgrimage
To Rome, (if such be Rome) and then
he sawe thilke misusage. (lines 171-84)

These lines suggest a dangerous resemblance between overly-ambitious English clergy and Catholic priests, and use this connection to condemn the strained boundary between secular and ecclesiastical power. The odious bishops "reign," "rule," and "lord it" in a way that resembles secular political sovereignty, and the precarious union of secular and spiritual power can only be countered by remaining in "lowly dales" (line 102). Thomalin's withdrawn (or "lowly") humility is thus figured as "lowly" pastoral space.

While Morrell's ambition is contrasted with the "lowly dales" of the pastoral landscape, a parallel contrast is mapped onto the poem's larger opposition between country and city. The secure character of Spenser's broader pastoral space is defined by its peripherality and distance from the real-world city of Rome, which Palinode has apparently visited and fled. Rustication and retreat are thus essential facets of spiritual and moral welfare in Spenser's pastoral world—a pattern that, as Richard A. McCabe notes, is only reinforced by the "[underlying] pastoral topos that traditionally pits a corrupt town against an innocent country" (553). Julia Reinhard Lupton argues that Renaissance poets transformed this thematic opposition into a standard narratological trope in which shepherd characters return to their fields after urban disillusionment. She terms this the "pastoral of return" (143), and argues it developed through sustained literary engagement with Virgil's first Eclogue: "Renaissance poets recast Virgil's poem of exile into a story of return by grafting Meliboeus' dispossession onto Tityrus' trip to the city and then changing the final image of hospitality from a way-station on the journey of pastoral into the scene of a country homecoming" (123). To this it must be added that late Renaissance poets like Spenser had access to more recent sources of pastoral poetry exhibiting variations of anti-urban rhetoric not necessarily prefigured by

the originary work of Virgil. Mantuan's *Adulescentia*, a work whose far-reaching literary influence looms large over Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, exhibits an aversion to cities deeply informed by the Carmelite monastic tradition and its special reverence for the wilderness asceticism of early Church fathers (Piepho xxx).

In "September," a similar movement of rustication or "pastoral of return" again counters a threat of ecclesiastical corruption. Diggon Davie returns to his pastoral home from unspecified "countryes" (line 32) where he is ruined by "loose living of Popish prelates" ("Argvment"):

> My sheepe bene wasted, (wae is me therefore)
> The iolly shepheard that was of yore,
> Is nowe nor iolloye, nor shepehearde more.
> In forrein costes, men sayd, was plentye:
> And so there is, but all of miserye.
> I dempt there much to haue eeked my store,
> But such eeking hath made my hart sore.
> In tho countryes, whereas I haue bene,
> No being for those, that truely mene,
> But for such, as of guile maken gayne,
> No such countrye, as there to remaine. (lines 25-35)

As with Thomalin (and, presumably, with Palinode) pastoral space is differentiated from corrupt spaces associated with Catholicism, ambition, and ostentation. Diggon's very identity as "iolly shepheard" is disrupted by his ill-advised sojourn to these "forrein costes," and his well-being can only be restored by a hasty retreat home, where Hobbinoll

succours him in a "cotage" (line 254). However, just as Thomalin's ire in "Julye" is simultaneously directed at both Roman Catholics and politically ambitious members of the English church, the "forrein costes" rejected by Diggon are geographically vague enough to suggest a threatening immediacy to English readers. As McCabe argues, "the setting of topical satire in a 'forraine' location is a standard device of the form: the corruption of the 'other' is found within a divided self" (553). Significantly, Diggon himself admits to once feeling "vayne desyre, and hope to be enricht" (line 75), and his comparison of foreign shepherds to a "cocke on his dunghill" (line 46) recalls the elevated and ambitious Morrell, who resides much closer to home. Spenser's text may idealize pastoral retreat in the face of worldly urban corruption, but his landscape's idyllic nature is hinged on a triple rejection of Roman Catholicism, high-church English Protestantism, and general ecclesiastical ambition—three dangers perilously unbounded by geography.

In E.K.'s original introduction to *The Shepheardes Calender*, the collection's twelve eclogues are "deuided into three formes or ranckes": plaintive, recreative, and moral. Both poems discussed above, "Julye" and "September," are stated to be "of dissolute shepheards & pastours," and are assigned to the "moral" category alongside "Februarie" ("of reuerence dewe to old age"), "Maye" ("of coloured deceipt"), and "October" ("of contempt of Poetrie & pleasaunt wits"; *Shorter Poems* 32). By organizing *The Calender's* eclogues in this way, E.K. invites us to draw connections between the various poems in each category. Regarding the "moral" eclogues, what ostensibly unites them is a general tone of social critique—each of the five poems applies critical focus to social structures and behaviours, eschewing personal complaint or the conventional

"otium" of Renaissance pastoralism in favour of a broader "Satyricall bitternesse." So far, this chapter has argued that two of *The Calender's* "moral" eclogues celebrate pastoral retirement in order to critique the ambition and affectations of the English clergy. I will now expand this argument by looking at another "moral" eclogue, "October," and its use of retirement in the critique of a different social ill, the "contempt of Poetrie & pleasaunt wits." Just as the politicized protagonists of the "moral" eclogues "Julye" and "September," Diggon Davie and Thomalin, idealize rustic escape from precarious power-centres and cutthroat ecclesiastical ambition, so Cuddie in "October" idealizes pastoral retirement as a means of questioning the poet's role in the court.

The "Argvment" to "October" establishes Cuddie as "the perfecte paterne of a Poete, which finding no maintenaunce of his state and studies, complayneth of the contempte of Poetrie, and the causes thereof" (128). The problem, as intitially framed by Cuddie, is an absence of meritocracy in the court patronage system:

> *Piers,* I haue pyped erst so long with payne,
> That all mine Oten reedes bene rent and wore:
> And my poore Muse hath spent her spared store,
> Yet little good hath got, and much lesse gayne. (lines 7-10)

Not only is the court failing to sufficiently remunerate Cuddie for his poetic contributions, but his art is suffering—he has seemingly exhausted his sources of inspiration. The frugality of Cuddie's supposed patrons has also disrupted his ideal career trajectory, which is derived from that of Virgil. In response to Piers' exhortations to adopt an epic style ("Lyft vp thy selfe out of the lowly dust: / And sing of bloody Mars, of

wars, of giusts," lines 38-39) Cuddie questions the contemporary feasibility of such an ideal:

> Indeede the Romish *Tityrus*, I heare,
> Through his *Mecœnas* left his Oaten reede,
> Whereon he earst had taught his flocks to feede,
> And laboured lands to yield the timely eare,
> And eft did sing of warres and deadly drede,
> So as the heauens did quake his verse to here.
>
> But ah *Mecœnas* is yclad in claye,
> And great *Augustus* long ygoe is dead:
> And all the worthies liggen wrapt in leade,
> That matter made for Poets on to play…. (lines 55-64).

Cuddie's point is intimately involved with pastoralism's status as a literary mode—because Virgil's pastoral *Eclogues* (and his *Georgics*) are framed as a necessary prelude to his epic *Aeneid*, pastoral's "Oaten reede" is reduced to a humble checkpoint along the poet's teleological movement toward epic. Virgil's eventual capacity to "sing of warres and deadly drede" depended on Gaius Maecenas, the prototypical patron of the arts, and Maecenas' death stands in for the current failure of the Elizabethan patronage system to allow this same progression. Ultimately, Cuddie fails to propose a viable answer to Piers' despairing rhetorical question: "O Pierlesse Poesye, where is then thy place? / If nor in Princes pallace thou doe sitt" (lines 79-80), and the two shepherds turn their cynicism into a resigned contentment with pastoral security: "For thy, content vs in

thys humble shade: / Where no such troublous tydes han vs assayde, / Here we our slender pipes may safely charme" (lines 116-18).

Jane Tylus' work on *The Shepheardes Calender* supports the idea that Cuddie's dissatisfaction with the artistic patronage system attracts him to the prospect of poetic self-sufficiency—she points out, for instance, that Cuddie's "humble shades" revise the "mighty shade" offered by the patron in Book II of Virgil's *Georgics* by removing the patron altogether (69). Similarly, Tylus notes, Cuddie's Ovidian emblem ("*Agitantes calescimus illo &c.*" or, "there is a god within us; we grow inflamed as he afflicts us") implies a vatic sense that "privileges the poet [and]… the workings of an inner god" to the patron's exclusion (70). To these observations must be added the fact that Cuddie's "humble shades" are (like Virgil's "mighty shade") natural features inextricably connected to the retired seclusion of the pastoral *locus amoenus*. Both passages idealize rustic contentment and both imagine "shades" as, first and foremost, natural features that embody retired seclusion in a rustic landscape.

For obvious reasons, Cuddie's struggle with the "contempt of Poetrie" is a problem that involves the *Calender's* author himself, as well as Colin Clout, who is typically read as Spenser's authorial persona ("Colin Clout" 452). Thus, it is unsurprising that the same critique of the "place of Poesy" is prevalent in "Januarye," one of the *Calender's* so-called "plaintive" eclogues. Like Cuddie, "Januarye's" Colin is a poet deeply concerned with the role and purpose of pastoral song—famously, the eclogue ends with him breaking his pipe in despair at his music's apparent inefficacy (lines 67-72). The ambiguous proximity of Colin's character to that of Cuddie is noted by E.K., who, in his "Glosse" to "October," "doubte[s] whether by Cuddie be specified the authour selfe,

or some other. . . .So that some doubt, that the persons be different" (133). From the very first page of the *Calender's* first eclogue, Colin is associated with rustic withdrawal and artistic frustration—not only does the woodcut accompanying "January" present the poet standing above his broken pipe, but it also presents him gazing plaintively at a distant town (35). As we soon learn, Colin has recently visited and departed this "neighbour towne," and regrets his visit insofar as it put him in contact with Rosalind and the pain of unrequited love:

> A thousand sithes I curse that carefull hower,
> Wherein I longd the neighbour towne to see:
> And eke tenne thousand sithes I blesse the stoure,
> Wherein I sawe so fayre a sight, as shee. (lines 49-52)

The broken pipe and the distant town are connected through Rosalind's urban "scorne" for Colin's "rurall musick": "Shepheards deuise she hateth as the snake, / And laughes the songes, that *Colin Clout* doth make" (lines 64-66).

Here, the snake imagery only reinforces the city's capacity to corrupt pastoral innocence—it connects Rosalind to Eve in her fallen state, whom God places in a permanent state of "enmity" with snakes (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Gen. 3.15). Later, in the "June" eclogue, Colin will more explicitly connect his lost pastoral innocence with prelapsarian Eden:

> O happy *Hobbinoll,* I blesse thy state,
> That Paradise hast found, whych *Adam* lost.
> Here wander may thy flock early or late,
> Withouten dreade of Wolues to bene ytost:

Thy louely layes here mayet thou freely boste.

But I vnhappy man, whom cruell fate,

And angry Gods pursue from coste to coste,

Can nowhere fynd, to shroude my lucklesse pate. (lines 9-16)

Like Adam after the Fall, Colin is denied the restorative, sheltering function of pastoral's *locus amoenus*, and is forced to wander and flee divine retribution, (which would presumably include, in this context, the figurative retribution of Cupid).

Notably, Colin's lost innocence is closely connected with lost artistic freedom—he envies Hobbinoll's continued ability to "freely boste" his "lovely layes." His ideal pastoral song is humble and self-sufficient, void of ambition, and located in the same aforementioned "lowly" and secure "dales" praised by Thomalin in "Julye" (lines 121-22):

I neuer lyst presume to *Parnasse* hyll,

But pyping lowe in shade of lowly groue,

I play to please my selfe, all be it ill.

Nought weigh I, who my song doth prayse or blame,

Ne striue to winne renowne, or passe the rest:

With shepheard sittes not, followe flying fame:

But feede his flocke in fields, where falls hem best. ("June," lines 70-76)

Here, Colin idealizes the independence, self-sufficiency, and contentment of pastoral poetry in a pastoral landscape. Nevertheless, the concise reflexivity of line 72 is undercut by the intrusion of Rosalind and her world, where pastoral song is disdained and total rustic independence becomes impossible.

The Calender's parallel opposition of pastoral retirement to two distinct and disparate social ills—ecclesiastical ambition and unappreciative court audiences—demonstrates the centrality of retirement to Spenser's worldview and poetic self-fashioning at this time. His ability to yoke these issues must also be read alongside the generalized anxiety with which he viewed all power and authority throughout his career, even before his first formative encounter with the Elizabethan court in 1589. In part, this anxiety is a product of the Elizabethan epoch's increasingly autocratic regulation of both ecclesiastical and patronage networks—writers like Spenser evidently had little trouble drawing connections between various careers that involved high-stakes political navigation. Poet, courtier, politician, and pastor were all equally susceptible to public disgrace and the ire of the Queen, and Spenser's oeuvre exhibits an acute awareness of this fact—for instance, Edmund Grindal ("Algrind") in "Julye," the ill-fated "Malfont" poet of *The Faerie Queene's* Book V (5.9.25-26), or Book IV's Timias, whose rejection by Belphoebe reflects Elizabeth's banishment of Sir Walter Raleigh from court in 1592.[7] Eventually, by the final book of *The Faerie Queene*, the universal risk of public disgrace will take centre stage and become allegorically embodied in the Blatant Beast, who indiscriminately threatens poets (6.12.40), clergy (6.12.23), knights, and ladies (6.1.7.9). It must be noted here that the beast's canine character (he is Cerberus-sired and frequently described as "barking" [6.1.9, 6.12.27, 6.12.40]) represents a recurring motif that first appears in *The Shepheardes Calender* in reference to both poetic and ecclesiastical disgraces: the barking "Envie" of Spenser's epistle "To his Booke" and the astrological "Dogge of noysome breath" that threatens Morrell on his hill-top perch.

[7] For discussion of this episode see p. 57.

Retirement in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*

Although *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* was composed more than ten years after *The Shepheardes Calender* first appeared in print, the two texts use pastoralism to celebrate retirement in much the same way. Both idealize pastoral retirement and favourably contrast it with the contingencies of court, including duplicity, instability, and cut-throat aspirationalism. Further, the two pastorals are united through their representations of disillusioned homecoming, a pattern epitomized by the narrative trajectories of several of *The Calender's* characters: in "Januarye," Colin's nostalgic ideal of "pyping lowe" is fuelled by his rueful encounter with the "neighbour towne," while for Diggon Davie and Palinode, pastoral homecoming represents a rejection of ecclesiastical corruption. In fact, it must be noted here that these images of rustic homecoming are complemented by an eclogue convention that had become commonplace by the 1590s: their tendency to conclude with a final homeward retreat and movement toward repose. This tradition first appears in Virgil's first and third eclogues and was later employed by Mantuan in his *Adulescentia*—a major source for *The Shepheardes Calender*. Eleven of *The Shepheardes Calender's* twelve eclogues end with some variation of this convention, eight of which do so with an exhortation to return "home" or "homeward."

As outlined in the introduction, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* is a semi-autobiographical text, and its disillusioned tone is fuelled by Spenser's own encounter with and departure from the Elizabethan court in 1590-91—when *Colin Clouts*' titular character enacts a final "tourne" from English court to Irish countryside, Spenser's own personal trajectory is involved. Obviously, the continuity of the homecoming trope in the later poem is premised by its title— "Colin Clouts Come Home Againe" not only

condenses this trope, but also closely echoes Diggon Davie's being "Driuen for neede to *come home agayne*" in the "September" eclogue (line 67, emphasis added). However, as a more sustained meditation on the act of pastoral retirement, *Colin Clouts* delves deeper into certain thematic materials only foreshadowed by *The Calender*. For instance, *Colin Clouts* deals extensively with the problem of the shepherd-poet's relation to pastoral space. This was a pressing issue for Spenser himself, whose admiration for the Irish landscape was consistently troubled by his identity as a colonial outsider—as a representative of English power amid hostile native Irish populations. Spenser would have been thrust into this position early as 1580, when he commenced his secretarial work for Lord Grey, Ireland's newly appointed Lord Deputy. Grey's deputyship was dominated by the military suppression of the second Desmond Rebellion, and Spenser's earliest experiences of Ireland would have been characterized by the extreme violence and turmoil of this conflict (Hadfield 164-65). *Colin Clouts* also foregrounds an issue that would continue to occupy Spenser for the remainder of his poetic career: the relation between royal panegyric and pastoral retirement. While *The Calender's* "October" hints at this relation through Piers' suggestion that Cuddie replace his pastoral music with carols of "fayre *Elisa*," *Colin Clouts* endorses a pastoral poetics in which Elizabethan panegyric and peripheral self-sufficiency are entirely compatible.

As with Diggon in "September," the homecoming of *Colin Clouts*' titular character is characterized by a simultaneous sense of defeat and salvation. For Spenser (and for Colin), Ireland was both a "home" and a place of exile, and this duality is exemplified by Colin's varying relationships with the pastoral landscape in this text. In *Colin Clouts'* opening lines, for instance, Hobbinol first frames homecoming as

something purely auspicious, and the homecoming poet is presented as operating in peaceful harmony with his pastoral surroundings:

> Whilest thou wast hence, all dead in dole did lye:
> The woods were heard to waile full many a sythe,
> And all their birds with silence to complaine:
> The fields with faded flowers did seem to mourne,
> And all their flocks from feeding to refraine:
> The running waters wept for thy returne,
> And all their fish with langour did lament:
> But now both woods and fields, and floods reuiue,
> Sith thou art come, their cause of meriment,
> That vs late dead, hast made againe aliue. . . . (lines 16-31)

Hobbinol's initial pastoral vision is more than just profoundly idyllic—it imagines Colin as uniquely and intimately involved in the landscape itself. Colin is described existing in an Orphic symbiosis with the natural surroundings of his "home": like Orpheus, the mythical shepherd-poet whose music possessed the power to animate nature (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.93-116), Colin's music revivifies animals, plants, and other general features of the pastoral landscape, including "running waters." In *What is Pastoral?*, Paul Alpers identifies this natural symbiosis as a generic pastoral ideal, "where man and landscape are intimately responsive to each other" (25), and traces it back to Virgil's Tityrus "teaching woods to echo *Lovely Amaryllis*" (*Eclogues*, 1.5). This Virgillian ideal reappears twice in *Colin Clouts*: once as celebration of Colin's beloved ("That woods, and hills, and valleyes thou hast made / Her name to eccho vnto heauen hie," lines 482-

83), and once as celebration of the royal Cynthia ("The speaking woods and murmuring waters fall, / Her name Ile teach in knowen termes to frame," lines 636-37). Colin thus returns to a pastoral landscape intimately connected to his own music, his own desires, and even his own political allegiances.

Nevertheless, just as Diggon's homecoming provides only minimal relief from his traumatic deprivation at Rome (he is provided a "vetchy bed, / Till fayrer Fortune shewe forth her head," lines 254-55), so too does Colin's rustication find him in less-than-ideal material conditions. Even the most idyllic landscapes of *The Shepheardes Calender* may be troubled by old age, inclement weather, and the occasional "vetchy bed," but the "hard pastoral" of the later poem's fields appears significantly more sinister than the fields of Cynthia:

> Both heauen and heauenly graces do much more
> (Quoth he) abound in that same land, then this.
> For there all happie peace and plenteous store
> Conspire in one to make contented bliss:
> No wayling there nor wretchednesse is heard,
> No bloodie issues nor no leprosies,
> No griesly famine, nor no raging sweard,
> No nightly bodrags, nor no hue and cries;
> The shepheards there abroad may safely lie,
> On hills and downes, withouten dread or daunger:
> No rauenous wolues the good mans hope destroy,
> Nor outlawes fell affray the forest raunger. (lines 308-319)

While Hobbinol's opening speech imagines a harmonious relation between poet and pastures, Colin is located here sitting precariously amid a host of hostile human and natural forces. This hostility highlights the equation between Spenser's Ireland and the titular speaker's pastoral "home"—an equation essential to the poem's semi-autobiographical nature, but one that significantly strains the idyllic nature of the pastoral setting. As Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin notes, the "griesly famine" and "nightly *bodrags*" (either from the Celtic *buaidhreamh* ["molestation"] or *buadre* ["tumult"], McCabe 654) suggest a realistic immediacy derived from Spenser's experiences on the English colonial frontier, including his witnessing of the Second Desmond Rebellion and Munster's succeeding famines (1059). Overall, the "wretchednesse" of Colin's version of pastoral cannot be divorced from the political and social precarity of Spenser's Irish existence.

The political context provided by Spenser's Irish precarity is, however, complicated by a crucial literary convention: the use of pastoral for Elizabethan panegyric. Obviously, Spenserian pastoral's panegyric function is anything but singular—works like Sidney's *The Lady of May* or George Peele's *Descensus Astraea* exemplify Louis Adrian Montrose's contention that Elizabethan pastoral constitutes a fully incorporated feature of the Cult of Elizabeth whereby subjects employed Petrarchan amatory tropes to "supplicate and inveigle their royal mistress" ("Of Gentlemen" 441). In Montrose's view, pastoral's panegyric and aspirational functions leave room for anti-courtly critique, but only in such a way as to reinforce the court's dominance and centrality:

> Renaissance pastoral takes the court as its cynosure. Although many of these works direct criticism or hostility against courtly decadence

> or the inequities of courtly reward, such anticourtliness tends to measure either the court's distance from its own high ideals or the courtier's distance from the satisfaction of his ambitions. . . . Indeed, it is one of that culture's characteristic forms—an authorized mode of discontent—rather than a critique made in terms of a consciously articulated oppositional culture. (426-27)

Montrose is certainly correct in emphasizing the ways in which pastoral's anti-courtly elements typically fall short of constituting systematic critique. This is even true regarding much of *Colin Clouts*—for instance, Colin initially frames Cynthia's court as a utopian meritocracy with only circumstantial blemishes:

> There learned arts do florish in great honor,
> And Poets wits are had in peerlesse price:
> Religion hath lay powre to rest vpon her,
> Aduauncing vertue and suppressing vice.
> For end, all good, all grace it gratefully to vse:
> For God his gifts there plenteously bestowes,
> But gracelesse men them greatly do abuse. (lines 320-327)

Here, the second line echoes and provides a strikingly optimistic answer to Piers' central complaint in *The Shepheardes Calender's* "October": "O pierlesse Poesye, where is then thy place?" (line 79). Colin will later expand the critique foreshadowed by "graceless men" into something more thorough and scathing, but at this point in the poem, there is little to suggest a systematic critique of court as an institution. What is offered instead is more aligned with what Montrose views as the dominant purpose of Renaissance

pastoral: to allow "ambitious Elizabethan gentlemen who may be alienated or excluded from the courtly society that nevertheless continues to define their existence [to] create an imaginative space within which virtue and privilege coincide" (427).

Nevertheless, Colin's ultimate response to disillusionment is neither utopian nor aspirational—his response is rustic withdrawal, not to an "imaginative space" within the court but to a space both real and geographically remote. The poem thus complicates Montrose's positioning of the court as the necessary "cynosure" of the Renaissance pastoral mode. If the court once represented a potential "cynosure" that "defined [Colin's] existence," by the opening of the poem he has already turned from it altogether—an act that requires his reluctant acceptance of two primary traumatic consequences: the physical estrangement from Cynthia and the personal abandonment of her court's utopian potentiality. The second of these traumas is best displayed by Colin's melancholy answer to Thestylis' inquiry, "Why didst thou euer leaue that happie place" (line 654):

> Happie indeed (said *Colin*) I him hold,
> That may that blessed presence still enjoy,
> Of fortune and of enuy vncomptrold,
> Which still are wont most happie states t'annoy:
> But I by that which little while I prooued:
> Some part of those enormities did see,
> The which in Court continually hooued,
> And followd those which happy seemd to bee.
> Therefore I silly man, whose former dayes

Had in rude fields bene altogether spent,
Darest not aduenture such vnknowen wayes,
Nor trust the guile of fortunes blandishment,
But rather chose back to my sheep to tourne. . . . (lines 664-72)

Here, the repetition of the word "happie" evokes Colin's sense of gradual disillusionment—in line 664, "happie" describes one who simply enjoys the presence of the Queen; in line 667, the possibility of "fortune" and "envy" disturbing "happie states" transforms the emotion to a besieged stoicism; and by line 671, only the false appearance of happiness remains in the courtly centre.

The act of "tourn[ing]" from potential happiness and from Cynthia's "blessed presence" are anything but triumphal. However, when Colin elaborates on his disillusionment in his central anti-courtly oration (lines 680-730), his mournful tone gives way to anger. Colin's traumatic "tourne" is revealed as a necessary reaction to a courtly space that represents the inverse of pastoral security and stability—a space where deceit, shifting fashion, and "haughtie words" (line 716) preclude the blunt solidity of Hobbinol's "woods and fields, and floods" (line 29). Like Diggon Davie's regret at having "lorne th[e] ground" (line 57) of his home country, Colin's oration strikes a cautionary tone:

to warne yong shepheards wandring wit,
Which through report of that liues painted blisse,
Abandon quiet home, to seeke for it,
And leaue their lambes to losse misled amisse.

For sooth to say, it is no sort of life,

For shepheard fit to lead in that same place. . . . (lines 684-89)

The bucolic life is here defined by security, and opposed to a "wandring" impulse that destroys the stable boundaries of "quiet home." The court is a "place" fundamentally unfit for shepherds, and, as Colin expands his perspective, one that lacks "place for any gentle wit" (line 707). Ultimately, the traumatic sense of displacement engendered by Colin's "turning" is revealed as an extension of the hostile displacement intrinsic to the court itself—naïve shepherds may "wander" to court, but they will only find more "wandring" upon arrival:

single Truth and simple honestie

Do wander vp and downe despys'd of all;

Their plaine attire such glorious gallantry

Disdaines so much, that none them in doth call. (lines 727-30)

Notably, this last image recalls *The Faerie Queene's* Una, who functions as an allegorical representation of both "Truth" and singleness and is left , more than once,"wandring in woods and forrests" (1.2.9). As with Una in Canto i's aptly-named "wandring wood" (1.1.13), what promises Colin both stability and "Faire harbour" (1.1.7) turns out to offer only destabilizing deception.

In *Colin Clouts*, Colin counteracts the traumatic instability of court life, where "pleasing" (line 708) operates as an organizing imperative, by maintaining the panegyric possibilities of his own peripheral position. When he offers to project his panegyric function onto "The speaking woods and murmuring waters fall," Colin is not only intensifying the pastoralization of his "great shepheardesse" (line 234) and professing his

devotion—he is also transplanting royal service ("pleasing") from the courtly "cynosure" to his own Irish pastoral landscape. In the larger passage, he adopts the generic pastoral position of love-lorn shepherd to further envision the relationship between political devotion and pastoral landscape:

> Her name in euery tree I will endosse,
> That as the trees do grow, her name may grow:
> And in the ground each where will it engrosse,
> And fill with stones, that all men may it know.
> The speaking woods and murmuring waters fall,
> Her name Ile teach in knowen termes to frame:
> And eke my lambs when for their dams they call,
> Ile teach to call for *Cynthia* by name.
> And long while after I am dead and rotten:
> Amongst the shepheards daughters dancing rownd,
> My layes made of her shall not be forgotten,
> But sung by them with flowry gyrlonds crownd. (lines 632-643)

Here, Colin voices a commitment to inscribe his political allegiance on virtually every aspect of his pastoral *locus amoenus*—trees, stones, livestock, water, and the pastoral inhabitants themselves. The pastoral landscape thus becomes an alternate courtly cynosure—its idyllic natural features take on a panegyric function, standing in for the "learned throng" (line 367) that surround Elizabeth and sing her praises at court. The Queen remains at the centre of Colin's purpose and poet vision, but her court is expelled.

The image of homecoming in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* combines a sense of joyous return with a sense of exile—a sense of regained pastoral security alongside a sense of renewed danger. If Colin eases the sorrow and anxiety of exile by transplanting the Cult of Elizabeth onto his Irish landscape, this cannot be divorced from England's colonial presence in Ireland. His reenvisioning of the landscape as a static and cultic Elizabethan utopia may, on one front, expell the odious "learned throng" of court—on the other front, however, it also expells the Irish people, whose "wayling," "wretchednesse," "bodrags," and "outlawes" appeared earlier with frightening immediacy. As Willy Maley notes (with reference to Book V's Irena), "humanizing the land whilst dehumanizing its inhabitants" (89) represents a common ideological maneuver in early modern English imaginings of Ireland. The only humans visible in Colin's ideal Irish space are "shepheards daughters," unthreatening in their youth and femininity, and more aligned with Colin's besieged (English) listeners than the (Irish) "outlawes." Instead, it is the landscape itself that is given the literal stamp of royal allegiance, and is even "taught" the power of panegyric verse by Colin himself. This fantasy of inscribing allegiance upon and "teaching" allegiance to Ireland—whether its deviant populations or its impenetrable geography—is very much aligned with Artegall's quest to "reforme that ragged common-weale" in *The Faerie Queene* (5.12.26). From a biographical perspective, this project of "reformation" is heavily informed by the anxious precarity of Spenser's own life beyond the Pale at his "*house of* Kilcolman" (*Colin Clouts*, introductory epistle) on the eve of the Tyrone Rebellion. Although it was never published during his lifetime, Spenser's *Veue of the present state of Irelande* would later expand the notion of ideological "reformation" into the eradication of Irish culture.

There is a sixteen year gap between *The Calender's* publication and that of *Colin Clouts*. When Spenser published the former in 1579, he was a relatively unknown yet highly ambitious poet and recent graduate of Cambridge University; when the latter appeared in 1595, he was a middle-aged English colonist on the Irish frontier, as well as England's de facto "laureate" poet. In the intervening gap he married twice, served as secretary for Lord Grey during his brutal Lord Deputyship of Ireland, took possession of his Kilcolman estate, presented *The Faerie Queene's* first installment at the English court, scandalized the English-speaking world with his *Complaints* anthology, and retreated home to Ireland where, in 1595, he was busy preparing *The Faerie Queene's* second installment. As this chapter has demonstrated, pastoral retirement remained a definitive poetic trope throughout Spenser's career, even amidst the enormous personal, cultural, and geographic shifts represented by his personal trajectory in the 1580s and early 1590s. While his earliest images of pastoral retirement focus on critiquing Elizabethan institutions like the English church and court patronage networks, by the time he revisited pastoralism with *Colin Clouts*, these same tropes were infused with a new disillusionment, alienation, and nostalgic reverence for the queen inextricable from his personal experiences at the centres of English political power. Eventually, Spenser's broad interest in rustic withdrawal would lead him to diversify further the modes of retirement in his poetic repertoire—to move beyond pastoralism to modes of retirement more compatible with heroic poetry and the project of *The Faerie Queene*. Nevertheless, the final reappearance of Colin Clout in *The Faerie Queene's* Book VI demonstrates that pastoralism and pastoral retirement would remain a crucial source of poetic inspiration for the remainder of Spenser's literary career.

Chapter Two

"Weary of the worlds vnquiet waies": Spenser's Hermits

In Book VI of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Arthur, Timias, Serena, and the Salvage Man are entertained and succored by the resident of a solitary hermitage "Far from all neighbourhood, the which annoy it may" (6.5.34). The hermit, the narrator claims, entertains his guests with "curt'sie," yet does so "Not with such forged showes, as fitter beene / For courting fooles, that curtesies would faine, / But with entire affection and appearaunce plaine" (6.5.38). Spenser thus invites a reevaluation of the "courtesy" he associates with "Court" at the start of Book VI—true courtesy, he suggests, can exist in a detached eremitic solitude that allows "streight obseruance of religious vow" (6.5.35). Here, Book VI's hermit takes his place among a number of rusticated, anti-courtly characters scattered throughout Spenser's poetry. Book VI's Meliboe, for instance, decries the "vaineness" (6.9.24) of court in favour of his "lowly quiet life" as a shepherd (6.9.25), just as the titular character of Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* rejects courtly duplicity and careerism by "turning backe" (line 19) to his idyllic pastoral home.

Despite Spenser's obvious commitments to England and its sovereign, characters like these work to oppose English court corruption with idealized rustic retirement. As this thesis has argued so far, even before his disillusioned "turning backe" to Ireland in 1591, the reenactment of rustic withdrawal represented a manoeuvre fundamental to Spenser's philosophy and poetic self-fashioning. In both *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* Spenser uses the retired figures on the periphery of his poetic landscapes to imagine a place for the independent individual amid Tudor political structures demanding new levels of social participation and personal submission. This

chapter will argue that Spenser's hermits represent a mode of retirement central to the iconography and pageantry of the Cult of Elizabeth—a mode that mirrors the broader political thrust of *The Faerie Queene's* final three books in its union of royal encomium and political critique. The metaphor of the knight retiring to an eremitic life is highly compatible with the humility, subservience, and antiquarian pageantry required of service and display in the Elizabethan court, yet the hermit's pious withdrawal and retirement are simultaneously a rejection of the worldly values at the centre of court power.

In Chapter One, it was noted that scholars tend to use pastoral studies as a stage for debating the subject's position in the autocratic structure of the Elizabethan court. For Spenser studies, this has translated into debating the poet's relative subservience to political power—a question that has loomed large over Spenser scholarship for the past 35 years, but on which two broad approaches have been taken. While the 1980s saw an influx of New Historicist theory that reads Spenser's pastoralism as a celebration of Elizabethan power, this has been opposed more recently by scholars who ascribe more autonomy and critical power to the pastoral mode, arguing that pastoral poets themselves saw their work as capable of political critique and self-interest.

Like shepherds, hermits are generic figures of aestheticized rustication that populate both the literature of the period as well as the "'semi-literary' world of pageants, ceremonies, and public processions" that Robert E. Stillman associates with New Historicist criticism (300). Nevertheless, despite this proximity, the hermit's relation to power has been insufficiently theorized. Frances Yates, for instance, reduces hermits to one part of a broad "chivalric formula [that] suited the aristocratic structure of Elizabethan society" (24-25). Similarly, while Donald Cheney notes the resemblance

between the hermit in *The Faerie Queene's* Book VI and certain hermits from Elizabethan court pageantry, he only emphasizes their capacity to "pay homage to [Elizabeth's] divine radiance" and lumps them in with "nymphs, wild men, and… Faery Queen[s]" (144). This chapter will, in part, seek to extend to eremitic signifiers Louis Adrian Montrose's observations about pastoral literature: that it represents an "appropriative mode of contestation" that "does not repudiate the given fictions of power but rather works within and through them, reinscribing them in the culture as the fictions of the speaking or writing subject" ("Elizabethan Subject" 331).

Despite the prevalence of eremitic signifiers in late sixteenth-century pageantry, real English hermits had been virtually nonexistent since 1570 at the latest (Bernard, "hermits" 943). Following Henry VIII's 1534 Act of Supremacy, which wrested the English Church from papal authority, Henry and his government spent the remainder of the decade engaged in the long process of dismantling England's monastic institutions. By 1540, English monasticism had been effectively eradicated, and eremitism along with it. As Rotha Mary Clay writes, "if any solitary remained in his cell after the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-9), he was almost inevitably homeless after the Suppression of the Chantries in 1546" (191). Besides the economic practicality of annexing vast monastic land-holdings and the Protestant theological mistrust of "the efficacy of works" (Smith 27-28), the coextensive eradication of monasticism and eremitism must be interpreted as part of the broad Tudor consolidation and standardization of political power that scholars have variously identified as a "Tudor Revolution" (Elton 160) or "the establishment of an English 'nation state'" (Smith 88). Monastics were suspect in their devotion to the international Catholic power of the pope; hermits (and, to some extent,

"anchorites," who practiced sedentary and enclosed religious solitude) combined this papal allegiance with a peripherality and isolation particularly impervious to the kind of religious standardization Henry and his Protestant heirs were trying to implement.

By the 1590s, England's real hermits and religious solitaries were historically remote, and were rapidly fading into the murky, pseudo-historical space occupied by Arthurian legend and faerie lore, with their Christianity taking on a correspondingly murky and archaic non-denominationality. Writers like Spenser could also draw on the conventions of a medieval romance tradition that had been presenting hermits as secularized "noble counselors and friends of the oppressed" since the thirteenth century ("hermits" 943). Overall, committed Protestant writers had little trouble finding room for this particular Catholic religious form in their poetry. Even the militantly Protestant John Milton included idealized eremitic images in his early work: for instance, the speaker of his "Il Penseroso" longs for a "peacefull hermitage" with "Hairy Gown and Mossy Cell" (lines 168-69). As early as 1621, secular eremitism passed from fiction to reality with men like Thomas Bushell, who, inspired by the "philosophical advice" of Francis Bacon, practiced ascetic vegetarianism and solitude on the Calf of Man (Campbell 18-20). By the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon to find secular "ornamental hermits" paid to perform asceticism in the gardens of aristocratic country houses (*ibid*.).

In the 1580s and 1590s, despite the gradual secularization of literary hermits, ongoing paranoia about Catholicism ensured a continued distrust of spiritual seclusion, and eremitic signifiers occasionally expressed these sentiments as well. This Protestant anxiety is precisely what Spenser evokes with Archimago's eremitic disguise in Book I, Canto i of *The Faerie Queene*. Here, a figure initially resembling the generic secular

hermit-counselor of medieval romance is gradually revealed as an evil sorcerer, whose false piety suggests clandestine religious deviance and villainy. In his first appearance, Archimago leads Redcrosse and Una to

> A litle lowly Hermitage […]
>
> Downe in a dale, hard by a forests side,
>
> Far from resort of people, that did pas
>
> In traueill to and froe (1.1.34).

In the sixteenth century, the word "lowly" had not yet acquired the modern sense of "disreputable moral character; despicable; base" (*OED* s.v. "lowly" A4); rather more common was the sense of "humble in feeling or demeanour; meek, unassuming, self-effacing; not proud or ambitious" (A1). In *The Shepheardes Calender's* "Julye" eclogue, Thomalin uses the latter definition to ennoble pastoral retirement,[8] and it obviously accords better with genuinely pious eremitism. However, the more literal definition is "situated not far above the ground" (A3), which, as A. C. Hamilton notes, highlights the dale's status as "the demonic counterpart to Contemplation's hermitage on a hill" (39). For Spenser, the false hermit would have also had a notable recent literary precedent in the lascivious hermit-magician of Book II of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso.* Like Ariosto, Spenser first suggests his hermit's duplicity with a focus on visual semblance: Ariosto's hermit presents as a "weake old man, with beard along his brest, / In shew deuout and holier then the rest" (2.12), while Spenser's is "simple in shew" (1.1.27) and "often knockt his brest, as one that did repent" (1.1.29). Here, the conjunction "as" begins to suggest Archimago's studied dissimulation—he is not necessarily "one who repents," but

[8] See above, 24.

is only described as resembling such a generic figure. A. C. Hamilton also notes that the Spenserian phrase "in shew" always carries "the implication that the reality is different" (38). Later on, the artful nature of Archimago's disguise is highlighted with a description of his conversation: "For that olde man of pleasing wordes had store, / And well could file his tongue as smooth as glas" (1.1.35).

In *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene*, James Nohrnberg argues that Archimago's artfulness forms a crucial element of his identity—he is a creator of "fantastic and deceptive" images that oppose the word of God and the truth symbolized by Una (105-07). Nohrnberg, however, downplays Archimago's specific association with the Church of Rome—an association that becomes obvious when Archimago begins speaking "of Saintes and Popes, and euermore / He strowd an *Ave-Mary* after and before" (1.1.35). If his creative deceptions work to oppose the singularity of "truth" represented by Una, they must also oppose Una's embodiment of "the theological and political dimensions of the Elizabethan church" (Brooks-Davies 1849). Archimago's Catholicism proves the pliability and adaptability of eremitic fiction in the Protestant world of Elizabethan England—despite the popular and secularized hermits of Elizabethan pageantry, actual solitary eremitic worship was fundamentally out of step with the era's religious climate.

Nine cantos later, Spenser revisits eremitic retirement with the character Contemplation, who is introduced to Redcrosse after the knight reaches a "perfect" state of "holy righteousnesse" (1.10.45). Contemplation is first presented thus:

> Thence forward by that painfull way they pas,
> Forth to an hill, that was both steepe and hy;
> On top whereof a sacred chappell was,

And eke a litle Hermitage thereby.
Wherein an aged holy man did lie,
That day and night said his devotion,
Ne other worldly busines did apply;
His name was heuenly *Contemplation*;
Of God and goodnes was his meditation. (1.10.46)

This passage echoes Archimago's earlier disguise—most conspicuously, both Archimago and Contemplation live in a "litle Hermitage." However, such parallels only reinvoke Archimago to highlight the strong moral contrast between the false hermit and the true one. Whereas both reside in desert solitude, Archimago's dwelling is "downe in a dale," while Contemplation's is at the zenith of a hill, elevated to a position closer to God and heaven. Furthermore, the spare simplicity of Contemplation's worship ("God and goodness was his meditation") revises the grandiloquent Catholicism of Archimago.

Contemplation not only counters and revises Archimago's eremitism, but also idealizes solitary piety in a way that prefigures the aforementioned hermit of Book VI. Contemplation actively promotes retirement, and represents his own eremitism as a model for Redcrosse:

But when thou famous victory hast wonne,
And high emongst all knights hast hong thy shield,
Thenceforth the suitt of earthly conquest shonne,
And wash thy hands from guilt of bloody field:
For blood can nought but sin, and wars but sorrow yield. (1.10.60)

Knight errantry is thus disparaged in favour of a pious solitude associated with holiness, Book I's titular virtue. However, unlike Book VI's hermit, Contemplation carefully frames courtly service and knight errantry as a prerequisite to retirement—only when Redcrosse's "famous victory" is accomplished is retirement a positive option for him. The violence of military service may be associated with "guilt" and "sin," but these considerations are, for the moment, outweighed by the value of serving Gloriana, for whom Contemplation has only praise.

It is also notable that the form of eremitic solitude practiced and espoused by Contemplation is oriented toward a vision of salvation that emphasizes community and service—the vision of "The new *Hierusalem*" (1.10.57). Contemplation may "grow agrieued sore" (1.10.49) at the interruptive presence of others, but the heaven he displays to Redcrosse is distinctly sociable—the angels ascend and descend the path to heaven "in gladsome companee / And with great ioy into the Citty wend, / As commonly as frend does with his frend" (1.10.56). He even accepts the resemblance between the heavenly city of the New Jerusalem and the faery Cleopolis, the capital of Gloriana and counterpart for Elizabeth's London:

> Yet is Cleopolis for earthly frame,
> The fairest peece, that eie beholden can:
> And well beseemes all knights of noble name,
> That couett in th'immortal booke of fame
> To be eternized, that same to haunt,
> And doen their seruice to that soueraigne Dame,
> That glory does to them for guerdon graunt:

For she is heuenly borne, and heauen may iustly vaunt. (1.10.59)

Here, the way in which Contemplation conceptualizes ruler, ruled, and ruling city parallels his description of the New Jerusalem two stanzas earlier, when he says "Now are they Saints all in that Citty sam, / More dear vnto their God, then younglings to their dam" (1.10.57). Like God, who rules in heaven, Gloriana is "heuenly borne," and surrounded by a city of loyal and exalted followers. Furthermore, although Contemplation's description of heavenly grace represents a more patriarchal and protective sovereignty, God is figuratively feminized as a motherly "dam"—the same word used to describe Gloriana in stanza 59.

Overall, the hermits of Book I illustrate Spenser's early reluctance to portray virtuous retirement divorced from active courtly service. With Archimago, eremitic solitude stands in for furtive Catholicism; with Contemplation, eremitism is tempered with idealized images of sociability and knighthood, as well as Elizabethan panegyric. While Chapter Three shows that the later books of *The Faerie Queene* continue Spenser's characteristic attempt at balancing panegyric praise and retired self-sufficiency, this chapter will consider the ways in which Book VI reprises this early eremitic imagery in a way that moves toward a more complete personal detachment.

However, before addressing this change in the text's approach to eremitic retirement, we should consider how the court pageantry of the early 1590s began using hermits to negotiate some of these same competing values—service versus retirement, subservience versus independence, and praise versus political ambition. The importance of considering pageantry is especially pressing on account of Spenser's own reference to his work as a "Pageaunt" ("Dedicatory Sonnets" 8.6) and the similarities between

Elizabethan pageantry and *The Faerie Queene's* structuring narrative of Gloriana and her "Annuall feaste" ("Letter to Raleigh" 717; Norbrook 97-98).

As Louis Montrose notes in *The Subject of Elizabeth*, the use of panegyric performance for the advancement of special personal or political agendas was not uncommon in the royal progresses of the late sixteenth century: "the Queen's councilors [frequently sought] to mold her will to their designs by entertaining her with political theatre, by putting on a series of shows in which she was both the privileged performer and the intended audience" (88). When Sir Henry Lee hosted and staged the Queen's 1590 Accession Day festivities, he had his own personal goals in mind—he had been serving as the Queen's principal "challenger" in all Accession Day tilts since 1575, and, at age 47, was looking to retire from the annual obligation (which, in the words of Frances Yates, "is not suitable for middle-aged knights" [*Astraea* 102]). Aside from the obvious purpose of celebrating and flattering the Queen, the 1590 event gave Lee the opportunity to dramatize his old age, stage his retirement, and choose his successor on his own terms. The entire event was recorded by George Peele in his *Polyhymnia*. Lee appears before the Queen "Having vnarmed his body, head and all," then proceeds with a "petition" that she "suffer him giue up his staffe and Armes" and "betake him to his Oraysons / And spend the remnant of his waining age, / In praiers for her endlesse happines" (Peele, unpaginated). By requesting retirement in this choreographed, dramatic, and public fashion, Lee aestheticizes his request while simultaneously framing retirement as another form of service: the service of vicarious religious devotion. These same eremitic signifiers are on display in an appended verse sung before the Queen that same day by the royal lutanist, Robert Hales (Clayton 268-69)—here, the speaker

requests to become the Queen's "Beads-man." However, the song surpasses Lee's earlier address by making the Queen herself an object of religious veneration—she becomes his "Saint" who, he projects, "is sure of his vnspotted heart." Obviously, the application of religious language to the Queen is a venerative practice of the Cult of Elizabeth particularly suited to a hermit, who is defined by piety and the function of worship. Lee's ability to script and prefigure the Queen's reaction is dependent on his calculated mastery of the performance, which took place on his own property and was certainly highly rehearsed. It also depends on the familiarity of the conventions at play—as John D. Bernard points out, a heroic knight's transition to retired hermit was a conventional feature of medieval romance, and would have accorded well with the fanciful, chivalric tone of the tilting festivities ("hermits" 943).

Six months later, Robert and William Cecil conducted a remarkably similar display before the Queen at Theobalds, their estate in Hertfordshire. Here, the Queen was again subjected to a pageant involving a hermit, and again, this stock character was employed to broach the subject of retirement. The hermit begins by complaining that the aged and grief-stricken Burghley has displaced him in his "cell" and forgone his active life at Theobalds in favour of a melancholy pseudo-eremitic retirement. While the conceit ostensibly reads as a jesting celebration of Cecil's profoundly active political life, James M. Sutton notes in his *Materializing Space at an Early Modern Prodigy House* that the entire proceeding encodes a "retirement program" that simultaneously promotes Robert Cecil's rise to political power and emphasizes his father's desire for withdrawal from public life (125). For instance, the hermit claims that the task of maintaining the estate in Cecil's stead is

vnfyttyng one so base as I

whome nether soons nor seruanttes would obay

the yoonger lyke to scorne my poor aduyce

becawsse that he hearafter in this place

was to becom the gardian of this howsse.

("Queen Elizabeth at Theobalds" 532)

Although royal encomium acted as a structuring imperative in the pageantry and iconography of the Elizabethan court, encomia could disguise real requests for independence, solitude, and retirement—all desires particularly compatible with the generic hermit. In pageants and performances like these, hermits not only combine encomia with the desire for retirement and withdrawal—they also use the guise of humility, wisdom, and subservience to promote more specific political and personal interests.

While the above pageants were taking place at the respective country estates of Ditchley and Theobalds, Edmund Spenser was in England, nearing the conclusion of a trip that saw the publication of *The Faerie Queene's* first three-book installment. Earlier in 1590, Sir Walter Raleigh had facilitated Spenser's introduction at court, which was a success—the Queen honoured his new epic by presenting its author with a generous annual pension of fifty pounds. Nevertheless, by the time of his departure for Ireland in mid-1591, Spenser had become disillusioned with the English court. When *Complaints* was published in 1591, its satirical material scandalized prominent courtiers (most notably, William Cecil, Lord Burghley), and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, composed soon after its author's return home, contains similar anti-courtly sentiments.

Significantly, the opening of *The Faerie Queene's* Book IV (written after 1591 and published in 1596) registers Spenser's characteristically strong division between the elevated Queen and certain allegedly odious courtiers. Burghley's censorious response to the poem's first installment is pointedly countered with a direct appeal to the Queen herself—Burghley is dismissed as a "Stoicke censour" whose antipathy results from a failure to recognize the value of Platonic love, while "that sacred Saint my souereign Queene" is reinserted as the poem's true intended audience (4.Proem.3-4). Here, as with Henry Lee's retirement plea, the Queen becomes an object of direct and personal spiritual veneration. The association between the political and spiritual is only strengthened by the sibilance of "sacred Saint" and "souereign." She also becomes an object of erotic veneration "in whose chast breast all bountie naturall / And treasures of true loue enlocked beene / Boue all her sexe that euer yet was seene" (*ibid*.). In contrast, Spenser's court enemies like Burghley become "Stoicke censours," philosophically divorced from the Platonism of his erotic poetic vision.

As the above example demonstrates, the religious tone of the Cult of Elizabeth invited connections between servitude, Platonic love, and religious worship. With Sir Henry Lee's 1590 performance, this subservience and worship are coexstensive with eremitic retirement—Lee offers to become the Queen's contemplative religious devotee or "Beads-man." However, these eremitic associations could just as easily be employed to dramatize courtly alienation and Petrarchan despair, and this is precisely how Spenser uses eremitic imagery in the narrative of Timias' despondency in Book IV of *The Faerie Queene*. Critics have long read this episode as an allegorical representation of Sir Walter Raleigh's 1592 fall from the Queen's good graces (Craig 325). Just as Timias provokes

Belphoebe's jealousy and "deepe disdaine" with his tenderness toward Amoret, Raleigh was imprisoned in the Tower of London and banished from the Queen's presence for his secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, a royal maid of honour. Further, just as Raleigh dramatized his sorrow and rejection as conventional eremitic withdrawal (in poems such as the celebrated "Like to a Hermit Poor"), Timias withdraws to the forested wilderness where he unites "wilfull penury" (4.7.41), melancholy asceticism, and hermit-like spiritual veneration of Belphoebe and her "relickes" (4.8.6). As Martha J. Craig points out, Timias' eremitic posturing represents a "protocol of submission" that seeks to appease the powerful through self-degradation: "Spenser's representation of submission serves as a reminder of the necessity of self-reduction as a justification for absolution" (335). Ultimately, the veneration and submissive humility of Timias' eremitic gesture convince Belphoebe to "receive [him] againe to former fauours state" (4.8.17) and he "recovers grace" (4.argument).

Craig's argument centres on the notion that Timias' eremitic retreat represents Spenser's attempt at remediating "the individual at odds with social institutions and the people who embody them" (325). Indeed, the Elizabethan era was characterized by an increasing autocratization and formalization of of courtly institutional practice—a situation that produced new social anxieties surrounding the individual's place vis-à-vis Queen and royal court. Works like Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (first published in English in 1561) and George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* served as virtual manuals of courtly manners, rhetoric, and display. For instance, Puttenham's treatise concludes with a discussion of artificiality that recommends as essential a courtier's ability to "dissemble" (250). In Puttenham's view, courtiers and poets are united in this

dissembling—each employs a practiced, yet concealed, artificiality (famously termed *sprezzatura* by Castiglione) crafted to please a prince. Courtiers are associated specifically with allegory ("the figure *Allegoria*, […] not impertinently we call the Courtier or figure of faire semblant" [251]). For Sir Henry Lee, Lord Burghley, Walter Raleigh, and Spenser's Timias, feigned eremitism was among the forms that the dissembling performativity of court life or courting a sovereign lady could take. All four performances are united by the courtly imperative of prince-pleasing, yet combine their "faire semblance" with real personal agendas varying from retirement to reconciliation.

As the title page of *The Faerie Queene's* Book VI announces a concern with the virtue of "courtesie" it should be no surprise that the book explores some of the same issues addressed by Castiglione and Puttenham—issues surrounding the role of the individual within the institution of the court. This focus is evident as early as the book's introductory proem, which concludes with a laudatory nod to "your Court, where courtesies excell," and transitions into an etymology linking "Court" and "Courtesie" that opens Canto i. Nevertheless, Book VI is far from a unilateral celebration of Elizabeth's court and the English aristocracy. The proem actually places these laudatory passages alongside the following social critique:

> But in the triall of true curtesie,
>
> Its now so farre from that, which then it was,
>
> That it indeed is nought but forgerie,
>
> Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas
>
> Which see not perfect things but in a glas:
>
> Yet is that glas so gay, that it can blynd

The wisest sight, to think gold that is bras.

But virtues seat is deepe within the mynd,

And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defynd. (6.proem.5)

Here, a metaphor of counterfeit currency represents the distinction between true and false courtesy—false courtesy is "forgerie," and possesses only the superficial appearance of real virtue, while real courtesy is equated with gold in its legitimate, self-sufficient value. While this social critique is generalized, the importance of the court to Spenser's complaint here cannot be underestimated. For instance the above passage's emphasis on duplicity and public visibility recalls Spenser's earlier dispraise of the court's "faire dissembling curtesie" in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*: "Such is their glorie that in simple eie / Seeme greatest, when their garments are most gay. / So they themselves for praise of fooles do sell…" (lines 721-23). Thus, from the beginning of Book VI, courtesy is displaced from the society and court to the individual—it becomes a public virtue highly dependent on private, self-sufficient morality defined, as the proem declares, in "inward thoughts."

In Book VI's fifth canto, the privacy and internal logic of courtesy are expressed through the unnamed hermit who succors Timias and Serena. As outlined above, this hermit's embodiment of courtesy undermines an exclusive connection between courtesy and the court, and this is emphasized from his first appearance—he welcomes them "Not with such forged showes, as fitter beene / For courting fooles, that curtesies would faine, / But with entire affection and appearaunce plaine" (6.5.38). In this way, the hermit epitomizes the book's broader internalization of the virtue of courtesy—the ultimate

courtesy is embodied by the ultimate symbol of self-enclosure, self-sufficiency, and internal withdrawal.

Furthermore, the hermit's career path mirrors this same transition from public to private—he is a retired knight:

> He had been a man of mickle name,
> Renowmed much in armes and derring doe:
> But being aged now and weary to
> Of warres delight, and worlds contentious toyle,
> The name of knighthood he did disauow,
> And hanging vp his armes and warlike spoyle,
> From all this worlds incombraunce did himselfe assoyle. (6.5.37)

Here, one is reminded of the eremitic performances with which Burghley and Lee dramatized their desires for retirement and withdrawal from courtly service. By employing a generic character trope drawn from English court pageantry, Spenser is not only situating his work within the court milieu, he is idealizing withdrawal and distance from this milieu. The hermit's solitude is idealized throughout: he lives "alone, like carelesse bird in cage" (6.6.4), and is protected from the "annoy" (6.5.34) and "incombraunce" (6.5.37) of worldly existence. Like Burghley and Lee, Spenser takes a generic courtly fiction and repurposes it to idealize autonomy, withdrawal, and retirement from the same courtly power structure that sanctions its utterance. Ultimately, this movement is reflected at large in Book VI's anti-courtly tone and celebration of poetic autonomy, a pattern noted by John D. Bernard:

> [the hermit's] character and the general tenor of his advice imply a growing unworldliness in Spenser's outlook characteristic of the tendency toward withdrawal in his later poetry. In the face of the detraction, scandalmongering, and corruption of language associated with the Beast whose wounds he undertakes to heal, the Hermit is exemplary more perhaps in his elected life of retirement than in the counsel he gives. ("hermits" 944)

Notably, Book VI's hermit revises the eremitic signifiers on display in Timias' earlier withdrawal in Book IV, which is centred around spiritually-tinged veneration of Belphoebe (and, by extension, Queen Elizabeth), and oriented toward reconciliation and reentering courtly service. Although Timias's strategy eventually succeeds, Book VI finds him suffering from the wounds of the Blatant Beast, an enemy associated with the malice, duplicity, and slander that oppose courtesy and social harmony. In keeping with Book VI's broader anti-courtly focus, the form of eremitism idealized in Canto v is divorced from the encomium and courtly orientation of that in Book IV. Instead of Timias' melancholy worship of Belphoebe, the second hermit's ascetic isolation is genuinely religious and characterized by "streight obseruance of religious vow" (6.5.35). Timias' "relickes" of Belphoebe have been replaced by "howres," "holy things," and a "little Chappell" (6.5.35). The translation of religious veneration from sovereign to God is complemented by a celebration of interiority. From this hermit's retired perspective, defamation is an inevitable fact of courtly existence—"Ne euer Knight, that bore so lofty creast, / Ne euer Lady of so honest name, / But he [i.e., the Blatant Beast] them spotted with reproch, or secrete shame" (6.6.12)—and its cure is to be found in emulation of his

own eremitic asceticism and isolation. Timias and Serena are advised to "Abstaine from pleasure, and restraine your will, / Subdue desire, and bridle loose delight, / Vse scanted diet, and forebeare your fill…" (6.6.14). Isolation, interiority, restraint, and reflexivity counter the dangers of public life: "For in your selfe your onely helpe doth lie, / To heale your selves, and must proceed alone / From your owne will, to cure your maladie" (6.6.7). Tellingly, his advice is only effective so long as Timias and Serena continue in eremitic isolation. Almost immediately after departing, the two are "dismayd" by Disdain and Scorn, allegorical villains that recall the social dangers of the Blatant Beast (6.7.48-50).

Ultimately, Book VI's broad interest in self-sufficiency and personal autonomy goes on to culminate in Colin Clout's vision on Mount Acidale, where the private music of the poet's pastoral alter-ego is disturbed by the intrusion of Calidore, the knight errant who serves as the Book's primary protagonist. While Robert E. Stillman points out that Spenserians have typically read Acidale as "an exemplary display of *la poésie pure*" (300) that emblematizes Book VI's larger celebration of poetic and personal autonomy, this thesis has demonstrated that closer analysis of Spenser's idealized autonomy can reveal the ways in which this autonomy itself is inextricably intertwined with Elizabethan power and court politics. In this sense, Book VI's aforementioned hermit is a crucial figure. Putting to use the conventional iconography of court pageantry and revising Timias' eremitic retreat in Book IV, the hermit espouses an autonomous, retired solitude that prefigures the book's larger internalization of courtesy and epitomizes Spenser's disillusionment with the Elizabethan court. His living "alone, like careless bird in cage" (6.6.4) develops and intensifies the broader trajectory of retirement idealized throughout

Spenser's poetic oeuvre by imagining retirement as radically solitary and politically detached.

Chapter Three

"O That great Sabbaoth God": Retirement, Rest, and Elizabethan Panegyric in the 1596 *Faerie Queene*

The final four cantos of *The Faerie Queene's* Book VI contain both the pastoral sojourn of Calidore and the reappearance of Colin Clout on Mount Acidale—two of the most debated episodes in Spenser's entire epic. While critics have long recognized the reemergences of the pastoral mode and that authorial persona to be essential facets of Spenser's broad poetic vision, there has been little scholarly concurrence regarding their relation to the poem or book as a whole. C. S. Lewis famously argued in 1936 that "the shepherd's country and Mount Acidale in the midst of it are the core of the book, and the key to Spenser's whole conception of courtesy" because these moments demonstrate the ways in which courtesy (in both art and life) "comes by nature" (350). Nevertheless, as John D. Bernard points out, critics have often disregarded Lewis' warning against perceiving these episodes as "a pastoral truancy of Spenser's from his moral intention" (*Ceremonies* 146). Frank Kermode, for instance, claims that they dramatize Spenser's real "truancy" from epic composition when he turned from Elizabethan panegyric to more personal matters in *Epithalamion* and *Amoretti* (222-23). Humphrey Tonkin echoes this argument in his 1972 book, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of The Faerie Queene*. Although Tonkin's condemnation of the episode is tempered by his reading of Mount Acidale as a revelation of courtesy's contemplative foundations, he characterizes Calidore's pastoral sojourn as "truancy pure and simple" (299) and suggests that the episode betrays Spenser's internal "conflict between his love for Ireland, for the countryside, for retreat, and his loyalty to the Queen" (303).

Ultimately, Tonkin's analysis reverses the "pastoral of return" posited by Julia Lupton and considered in Chapter One. Whereas Lupton insists on the mode's drive toward retirement and rustication, Tonkin argues that pastoral "structure" demands a "Return" (spelled with a capital "R") that translates contemplation into action (300-06). Just as the *rota virgiliana* imposes a drive toward epic, Tonkin imposes a generic schema in which pastoral poetry and the contemplative life are only valuable as a prelude to epic poetry and heroic action. In *Ceremonies of Innocence*, John D. Bernard takes up Tonkin's focus on "contemplation," yet produces a reading of Book VI more attuned to modes of retirement and oppositional discourse. For instance, while Bernard notes that Spenser feels the compulsion to "break his pastoral pipe and enter into the painful arena of action" (161), he reads much into the hesitancy of this movement, which foreshadows "doubts" and the "return to the pastoralist's native ground" realized in Spenser's final works (162). My analysis of Book VI's pastoralism takes cues from Bernard's view of rustic contemplation as a haven from a court and state "increasingly difficult to conceive as an ethical community" (23). It will also maintain focus on a feature that permeates all studies of Book VI: the fact that its pastoral world is simultaneously a fictional space and a conscious aesthetic shift away from the epic mode. As this study has argued with reference to Spenser's earlier works, the poet's own ideal of secluded artistic independence often overlaps with his pastoral characters' desires for retirement, security, stability, and rustication. This is no different in Book VI, where poet and hero simultaneously retreat from epic and briefly stand side-by-side on secluded pastoral ground. Finally, this chapter insists on the continued centrality of the queen in Spenser's idealized conception of rustic independence, a detail often overlooked by scholars who

emphasize his increasing antipathy toward court after 1590. The continued prominence of Elizabethan panegyric in Spenser's late poetry testifies to the poet's ability to distinguish queen from court—to reject duplicitous courtiers and sanctioned modes of courtly behaviour while maintaining the Queen's position as cynosure of his broader poetic project.

From the first moments of Book VI, Spenser foregrounds the creative processes behind his own poem, situating *The Faerie Queene* amidst an alternating cycle of poetic labour and regenerative inspiration:

> The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde,
> In this delightfull land of Faery,
> Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
> And sprinckled with such sweet variety,
> Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,
> That I nigh rauisht with rare thoughts delight,
> My tedious trauell doe forget thereby;
> And when I gin to feele decay of might,
> It strength to me supplies, and chears my dulled spright. (6.pr.1)

Book VI thus begins by figuring poetic composition as a journey akin to the labours of Spenser's knightly protagonists. Just as in the poem's previous canto, Artegall's Book V heroics are interrupted by his being "called away" to Faerie court (5.12.27), so Spenser's narrator foregrounds the potential for "weariness" to interrupt his literary work. The importance of these tropes to Spenser's poetic self-presentation is evident in the frequency with which they appear throughout his poetry. As A. C. Hamilton notes, two

sonnets in *Amoretti* deal prominently with similar issues of poetic labour (*Faerie Queene* 601)—in Sonnet XXXIII of *Amoretti,* epic composition becomes a "tædious toyle," while Sonnet LXXX builds strong contrasts between poetic "toyle" and "rest":

> After so long a race as I haue run
> Through Faery land, which those six books compile,
> giue leaue to rest me being halfe fordonne,
> and gather to my selfe new breath awhile.
> Then as a steed refreshed after toyle,
> out of my prison I will breake anew:
> and stoutly will that second worke assoyle,
> with strong endeuour and attention dew. (lines 1-8)

While lines 5 to 8 express a renewed drive towards the "worke" of epic composition, lines 1 to 4 privilege the possibility of poetic "rest" and respiration. Overall, the sonnet serves to remind the prospective reader (who is addressed directly throughout) that epic poetry, like any human labour, requires alternating periods of productivity and rest.

Anthony Low points out that Spenser's use of equine and georgic metaphors to represent poetic labour is derived from the second book of Virgil's *Georgics*, which concludes with a direct narratorial invitation to repose (Low 35): "We have covered vast tracts of matter and, besides, / it's high time that we released the sweating horses from their halters" (lines 541-42). While Low is correct to note this metaphor's increasing prominence throughout *The Faerie Queene's* final three books, he neglects to analyze its appearance in the final lines of the poem's first installment, which was published in 1590:

But now my teme begins to faint and fayle,
All woxen weary of their iournall toyle:
Therefore I will their sweatie yokes assoyle,
At this same furrowes end, till a new day:
And ye faire swayns, after your long turmoyle,
Now cease your worke, and at your pleasure play:
Now cease your worke; to morrow is an holy day. (3.12.47)

Like Virgil, Spenser here uses the simile to evoke the poet's own repose at the conclusion of a major section—the repose of a poet who, in the strenuousness of his work, is also a labourer. The "faire Swayns" are Scudamore and Amoret, who, in the 1590 edition, are afforded a repose analogous to that of the poet and his figurative "teme." While correctly emphasizing Spenser's positive valuation of labour for both "individual in society" and "poet as maker" (60), Low's analysis misses the poet's corollary attraction to rest, repose, and retirement—all of which are especially prominent in the anaphoric couplet that concludes Book III. By emphasizing poetic labour at the perimeters of his text, Spenser not only celebrates work, but also the rest and finality of conclusions and, in the case of Book III, the provisional finality afforded by publication.

In fact, throughout *The Faerie Queene's* second installment, the overworked plowman and horses reminiscent of Virgil's *Georgics* most often appear at the conclusion of cantos, where they evoke weariness and the desire for rest. This is the case at the end of Book IV, Canto v ("But here my wearie teme nigh over spent / Shall breath it selfe awhile, after so long a went," 4.5.46), and the end of Book V, Canto iii ("And turne we here to this faire furrowes end / Our wearie yokes, to gather fresher sprights," 5.3.40). In

the latter example, the ambiguity of the phrase "our wearie yokes" represents a moment of slippage in which horse, plowman, narrator, and reader coalesce, indistinguishable in their general "weariness."

The same drive toward finality and homecoming is present in the parallel metapoetic motif of the ship, which, as Jerome S. Dees notes, often "functions as a metaphor connecting the quests of each of the main characters with the narrator's quest for poetic meaning" (1718). Canto xii of Book VI, for instance, begins with a nautical epic simile:

> Like as a ship, that through the Ocean wyde
> Directs her course vnto one certaine cost,
> Is met of many a counter winde and tyde,
> With which her winged speed is let and crost,
> And she her selfe in stormie surges tost;
> Yet making many a borde, and many a bay,
> Still winneth way, ne hath her compasse lost:
> Right so it fares with me in this long way,
> Whose course is often stayd, yet neuer is astray. (6.12.1)

Dees' reading of this simile aligns it with the overall drive toward privacy and personal retreat in *The Faerie Queene's* final book:

> As the poem progresses, the image increasingly polarizes the "stormie surges" in which the poem is "tost" and the "one certaine cost [coast]" to which it aims. . . .This change parallels both a growing skepticism about the power of heroic action to embody the highest ideals of virtue

> and the narrator's search for inner solace from an increasingly wearisome poetic voyage. (*ibid*.)

Yet Dees' claim for a "growing skepticism about the power of heroic action" disregards both the narratorial self-confidence of the above passage and Calidore's belated heroics—in fact, the above simile appears as Calidore departs the pastoral milieu to resume his service to Gloriana and his "atchieuement of the *Blatant beast"* (6.12.2). Nevertheless, Dees is correct to note that the simile demonstrates a generally heightened awareness of weariness, labour, and finality that applies equally to hero and narrator. Calidore himself employs the same metaphor several times in Canto ix: he decries the "tempests of these worldly seas" (6.9.19), longs for a pastoral "safe retyre" to relieve his exposure to "fortunes wrackful yre, / Which tosseth states" (6.9.27), and asks Meliboe for leave "To rest my barcke, which hath bene beaten late / With stormes of fortune and tempestuous fate, / In seas of troubles and of toylesome paine (6.9.31). Like Spenser's Virgillian plowman, Book VI's nautical imagery highlights the laborious nature of both heroic action and epic poetics without definitively denying the continued value of either.

The same tensions given voice in the narrator's metapoetic addresses and epic similes—tensions between labour and repose, and between epic and private modes of existence—are given expression in the encounter between Book VI's primary hero, Calidore, and Meliboe, the "good old aged syre" (6.9.13) who hosts him during his pastoral sojourn and engages in him in a conversation about rustic retirement. Much of the debate surrounding Book VI's pastoralism has centred on Meliboe, and, like the broader pastoral episode, the old shepherd has been subject to a generally negative verdict among critics. This antipathy is perhaps best exemplified by the qualms of Harry

Berger: "Melibee's 'morality' is in fact the same kind of excuse for laziness used by the moral pastors of *The Shepheardes Calender*; it is a recreative withdrawal from care" (233). Such a verdict judges Meliboe and his pastoral world against the standard of epic action—supposedly, contemplation and recreation must resolve into the *via activa*, just as youthful immaturity must resolve into adult responsibility. The problem with this argument is its erasure of the pastoral mode's fundamental multivalence. By associating Meliboe's version of pastoral with "laziness" and "recreation," Berger not only overlooks the georgic and stoic resonances of Meliboe's speech, but also the conventionality of what Steven Marx terms the "pastoral of old age." Marx argues that the figure of the experienced and elderly shepherd is a generic feature of pastoral literature as old as Tityrus, the "*fortunate senex*" of Virgil's first Eclogue. In the English Renaissance, these figures gradually became "the ones who extoll the virtues of the rural mean estate and reject the aspiring mind of the court and city" (25). Like Lupton's aforementioned "pastoral of return," Marx's "pastoral of old age" serves to highlight the ways in which pastoralism could be used to idealize an informed retirement and retreat from the active life—something entirely distinct from the naïve irresponsibility of youth.

In his reference to the "laziness" of *The Shepheardes Calender's "*moral pastors," Berger associates Book VI's Meliboe with Palinode, the Catholic shepherd of "Maye" who defends his easygoing existence against the hard pastoral worldview and "elder witt" espoused by Piers, his Protestant interlocutor. In fact, Meliboe has much more in common with Piers than with Palinode, and exhibits an "elder witt" and world-weary, laborious practicality not unlike that of the earlier character. Even if Meliboe claims his

sustenance arrives "without his care" (6.9.20), his pastoral existence is hardly exempt from labour:

> Sometimes I hunt the Fox, the vowed foe
> Vnto my Lambes, and him dislodge away;
> Sometime the fawne I practise from the Doe,
> Or from the Goat her kidde how to conuay;
> Another while I baytes and nets display,
> The birds to catch, or fishes to beguyle:
> And when I wearie am, I downe doe lay
> My limbes in euery shade, to rest from toyle,
> And drinke of euery brooke, when thirst my throte doth boyle. (6.9.23)

He may have the freedom to "rest" at will, but the words "wearie" and "toyle" suggest that his hunting activities involve real and strenuous labour. Like the narrator, who announces his weariness in Book VI's opening line and continually frames his poetic endeavours in georgic terms, and like Calidore, who endures "Great trauell" (6.9.2) and "toyle" (6.9.2) and "Ne rested . . . but natures dew" (6.9.3), Meliboe is evidently a man whose repose is justified by hard work.

This laborious strain of Meliboe's existence is also overlooked by Anthony Low, who condemns Meliboe in tones reminiscent of Berger:

> Pastorella's foster father Meliboe, although he seems to be a genuine shepherd, tells Calidore that he is actually a retired courtier (literally, a court gardener), and he voices the conventional aristocratic platitudes about escaping from wealth and ambition by retiring to the

> countryside. He proves wholly defenseless against the brigands, who make short work of him. (43)

By aligning Meliboe with "conventional aristocratic platitudes," Low effaces Meliboe's pointed rejection of the court and its values. In fact, he is neither a courtier nor an aristocrat, but a shepherd disillusioned by a past tenure as a court gardener:

> The time was once, in my first prime of yeares,
> When pride of youth forth pricked my desire,
> That I disdain'd amongst mine equall peares
> To follow sheepe, and shepheards base attire:
> For further fortune then I would inquire.
> And leauing home, to roiall court I sought;
> Where I did sell my selfe for yearely hire,
> And in the Princes gardin daily wrought:
> There I beheld such vainenesse, as I neuer thought.
>
> With sight whereof soone cloyd, and long deluded
> With idle hopes, which them doe entertaine,
> After I had ten yeares my selfe excluded
> From natiue home, and spent my youth in vaine,
> I gan my follies to my selfe to plaine,
> And this sweet peace, whose lacke did then appeare.
> Tho backe returning to my sheepe againe,

I from thenceforth haue learn'd to loue more deare

This lowly quiet life, which I inherite here. (6.9.24-25)

Here, Meliboe's version of pastoral associates courtly aspiration with immaturity, "pride of youth," and "follies"; and pastoral contentment with maturity and "learning." His trajectory is thus closely aligned with Steven Marx's "pastoral of old age" or Lupton's "pastoral of return." Pastoral is the milieu of his youth, and his disillusioned rustication is both a rejection of the urban court and an enlightened homecoming akin to that of Colin Clout or Diggon Davie. It is thus unsurprising that his "returning to my sheepe againe" echoes both Colin's choosing "back to my sheep to tourne" (*Colin Clouts* 672) and Diggon's being "Driven for neede to come home agayne" ("September" 67), just as his cynical description of court echoes that of both earlier characters.

Just as Meliboe is set apart from Golden-Age pastoral naiveté by his labour and wizened maturity, his freedom of repose also carries associations that distinguish it from pure "laziness." His rustic position in relative poverty apart from ambitious strivings allows him an independence and semi-proprietary relationship to his *locus amoenus*—he rests when weary, has access to "euery shade," and drinks from "every brooke" when thirsty. His economic independence is highlighted in the following passage:

The litle that I haue, growes dayly more

Without my care, but onely to attend it;

My lambes doe euery yeare increase their score,

And my flockes father daily doth amend it.

What haue I, but to praise th'Almighty, that doth send it? (6.9.21)

This “inherited” independence of Meliboe’s “lowly quiet life” is contrasted to the economic and social dependence imposed by the court milieu, where Meliboe “did sell [himself] for yearely hire.”

In this sense, he is aligned with the idyllic vision of enclosed and self-sufficient retirement presented in Horace’s second epode, “*Beatus ille*,” where a moneylender fantasizes about “avoid[ing] the haughty portal of / Great men, and likewise the Forum” (lines 7-8), and adopting a life of rustic seclusion. Spenser’s imagery bears a striking resemblance to Horace’s:

> Pleasant now to recline beneath a tree,
> and now on some luxuriant sward
> as the waters glide by lofty banks,
> birds quire in the woods
> and purling brooklets babble,
> lulling to gentle slumber.
> But when the winter of thundering Jove
> brings in rain and snow,
> one either harries with hounds
> hither and thither fierce boars
> into the intercipient toils,
> or stretches loose nets on smooth poles
> to deceive the eager thrushes,
> and takes with a noose the pleasant prize
> of coward hare and migrant crane. (lines 24-38)

"*Beatus ille*'s" idyllic tone is famously undercut by its final lines, which reveal the speaker as a moneylender with no real intention of "turning farmer" (69). While this irony separates Horace's speaker from Spenser's Meliboe (whose pastoral idealism is sincere and fully realized), the close textual parallels suggest Spenser's debt to his classical forebear in imagining a version of rustication that priviledges laborious self-sufficiency over leisure. As with Horace's imaginative landscape, Meliboe's home contains "hard pastoral" elements—both versions of *locus amoenus* are idyllic, yet troubled by real-world contingencies and demanding of labour. In fact, vigilance and responsibility are defining features of Meliboe's character, and this is established as early as his first appearance in the text: he appears just as "moystie night" threatens the welfare of the sheep (6.9.13), and his bidding Pastorella to "rise" precipitates the attentive and laborious homeward movement of the surrounding shepherds (6.9.13-15). Further, just as the "family land" of Horace's husbandman depends on the protection of "father Sylvanus / guardian of bound'ries" (lines 22-23), Meliboe's "lowly quiet life" depends on a similar logic of boundary and enclosure—effort and labour are required to "dislodge away" the Fox, just as "diligent attent" is required to "driue the rauenous Wolfe away" (6.9.37). By the end of Canto x, this guardedness will be justified by the Brigants' invasion, which, like the raids of Canto viii's "saluage nation" into "their neighbours borders" (6.8.35), is initially presented as a fundamental violation of "border" (6.9.39).

As Eva Gold points out, Book VI expresses a "preoccupation with border and boundary [that] is a response to a sense of vulnerability, to forces that threaten both from within and without imposed boundaries" (107). In Gold's view, these forces are closely identified with the native Irish, who, for English colonizers like Spenser, represented a

special source of anxiety in their disregard for regulated land ownership, their non-sedentary agricultural practice, and their capacity to form highly-mobile raiding parties—all features that undermined England's controlling structures of land enclosure, primogeniture, and cartography (101-03). Scholars have long been attuned to similarities between Spenser's Brigants and the Irish insurgents that would have posed a threat to the poet at Kilcolman. Andrew Hadfield, for instance, notes a resemblance between the Brigants' underground "hollow caves" and the fortified "crannog" dwellings used by Hugh O'Neill in the Nine Years War (*Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience* 184). Even the Brigants' agricultural practice suggests an itinerancy opposed to the protective stability of boundaries and land enclosure:

> A lawlesse people, *Brigants* hight of yore,
> That neuer vsde to liue by plough nor spade,
> But fed on spoile and booty, which they made
> Vpon their neighbours, which did nigh them border,
> The dwelling of these shepheards did inuade,
> And spoyld their houses, and them selues did murder;
> And droue away their flocks, with other much disorder. (6.10.39)

Without the earthbound fixity represented by "plough" and "spade," the Brigants are fuelled by "spoil" and "booty," and thus defined by the function of "invasion" and the disruption of proprietary space. Their peripheral existence demonstrates the ways in which Spenser's ideal pastoral retirement depends on a protective enclosure dialectically opposed to forces of disruption and destruction—whether the native Irish, the Brigants, the Salvage nation of Canto viii, or, later in his career, the figure of Mutabilitie. In the

epic world of *The Faerie Queene*, where such forces are ever-present, even constant vigilance and protective enclosure are no guarantee that any transient pastoral retirement can be effectively preserved.

Eva Gold also argues that Spenser's Book VI takes personal independence a step further by seeking "to fashion a sense of identity apart from his relation to the queen" (108) and "displacing" the queen in a manner "reminiscent of the strategies by which discourteous figures are controlled in Book VI" (111). In her reading, Book VI's emphases on seclusion, boundary, and independence indicate Spenser's disillusionment with the dependencies perpetuated by both court and queen. For instance, Gold reads the parenthetical reference to "*Glorianaes* heauenly hew" near the start of canto X as an act of "displacement" reinforced by the rejection of "that goodly glorious gaze" in the stanza's opening line (110). However, by reducing the word "glorious" to a "subtle reference to Gloriana," Gold overlooks the parameters of the adjective's actual referent, which are involved in Spenser's complex distinctions between queen and court.

The four stanzas that introduce Canto x are crucial to any understanding of how Spenser's conception of "displacement" informs his relation to Elizabethan centres of power:

> Who now does follow the foule *Blatant Beast*,
> Whilest *Calidore* does follow that faire Mayd,
> Vnmyndfull of his vow and high beheast,
> Which by the Faery Queene was on him layd,
> That he should neuer leaue, nor be delayd
> From chacing him, till he had it attchieued?

But now entrapt of loue, which him betrayd,
He mindeth more, how he may be relieued
With grace from her, whose loue his heart hath sore engrieued.

That from henceforth he meanes no more to sew
His former quest, so full of toile and paine;
Another quest, another game in vew
He hath, the guerdon of his loue to gaine:
With whom he myndes for euer to remaine,
And set his rest amongst the rusticke sort,
Rather then hunt still after shadowes vaine
Of courtly fauour, fed with light report,
Of euery blaste, and sayling alwaies on the port.

Ne certes mote he greatly blamed be,
From so high step to stoupe vnto so low.
For who had tasted once (as oft did he)
The happy peace, which there doth ouerflow,
And prou'd the perfect pleasures, which doe grow
Amongst poore hyndes, in hils, in woods, in dales,
Would neuer more delight in painted show
Of such false blisse, as there is set for stales,
T'entrap vnwary fooles in their eternall bales.

For what hath all that goodly glorious gaze

Like to one sight, which Calidore did view? (6.10.1-4)

As this whole passage progresses, the language of hunting and entrapment is displaced from pastoral sojourn to court: the first stanza finds Calidore "entrapt of loue," while the second highlights the "toile and paine" of "hunting" for courtly favour and the third denigrates the court as a space of entrapment and "stales." The "goodly glorious gaze" noted by Gold refers literally to the court's "painted show / Of such false blisse," which expresses a disparagement of the court rather than the sovereign. In fact, the plurality implied by the narrator's phrasing ("all that goodly glorious gaze") appears to oppose the singularity Spenser typically associates with the Queen, which is reinforced by the conclusion of stanza four ("Saue only *Glorianaes* heauenly hew / To which what can compare?" [6.10.4]).

Rather than reading the narrator's bracketed interjection as an attempt to "control" or delimit the Queen's presence in the text (Gold 110), I wish to propose closer affinities between royal encomium and the peripheral pastoral—between "*Glorianaes* heauenly hew" and the general prospect of "setting [one's] rest amongst the rusticke sort." Just as *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* imagines its titular character inscribing royal allegiance and panegyric onto his pastoral surroundings, so *The Faerie Queene's* Book VI imagines retirement and poetic independence in terms that recall the Cult of Elizabeth. Initially, this is activated by the aforementioned parenthetical reference to Gloriana:

For what hath all that goodly glorious gaze

Like to one sight, which *Calidore* did vew?

> The glaunce whereof their dimmed eies would daze,
> That neuer more they should endure the shew
> Of that sunne-shine, that makes them look askew.
> Ne ought in all that world of beauties rare,
> (Saue only *Glorianaes* heauenly hew
> To which can what compare?) can it compare. (6.10.4)

Rather than setting Gloriana apart from the secluded vision at Acidale, these lines literally invite connections between them—nothing in court ("that world of beauties rare") can be compared to Acidale *except* Gloriana herself, to whom, paradoxically, nothing can compare. This paradox is only heightened by the repetition of "compare" in the final line—the viability of comparison is twice denied even as the possibility of comparison is foregrounded by the word's immediate repetition.

Indeed, throughout the Acidale episode, beauty, sovereignty, and deity are drawn together with language Spenser typically reserves for Elizabethan encomium. Even though Canto x opens by building an apparently strong antithesis between Calidore's dual "quests"—one for "that faire Mayd" and one for "the Faery Queene"—it soon becomes evident that Colin's music is both compatible with and similar to *The Faerie Queene's* larger encomiastic project. For instance, Acidale is quickly established as a type of alternative courtly cynosure for Venus, whose sovereign status is emphasized throughout, and connects her to Elizabeth:

> They say that *Venus*, when she did dispose
> Her selfe to pleasaunce, vsed to resort
> Vnto this place, and therein to repose

And rest her selfe, as in a gladsome port,
Or with the Graces there to play and sport;
That euen her owne Cytheron, though in it
She vsed most to keepe her royall court,
And in her soueraine Maiesty to sit,
She in regard hereof refusde and thought vnfit. (6.10.9)

Later on, the dance participants are described by Colin as "*Venus* Damzels, all within her fee, / But differing in honour and degree" (6.10.21), a description that suggests the hierarchical structure of a real-world Renaissance court and recalls Cynthia's having "so many shepheards in her fee" in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (line 370). The passage also presents Venus' own sovereignty as something compatible with rustication—a moment that expands Spenser's larger project of rendering allegiance and encomium compatible with retirement.

The episode's cultic Elizabethan undertones are furthered by the repeated use of crown imagery, which reaches its apotheosis in stanza 13:

Looke how the Crowne, which *Ariadne* wore
Vpon her yuory forehead that same day
That *Theseus* her vnto his bridale bore,
When the bold *Centaures* made that bloudy fray
With the fierce *Lapithes*, which did them dismay;
Being now placed in the firmament,
Through the bright heauen doth her beams display,

And is vnto the starres an ornament,

Which round about her moue in order excellent.

As Frances Yates notes, this evocation of Ariadne and her constellation, Corona Borealis, is closely linked in the Elizabethan iconographic tradition to the constellation of Virgo and, in turn, the Queen herself (69-70). While the passage famously conflates Theseus and Ariadne with the "bloudy fray" of Pirithous and Hippodamia, the focus remains on the crown—an obvious symbol of royalty that, in this case, carries far-reaching cosmic implications that suggest Platonic beauty and Ptolemaic order.

Just as the Accession Day pageants of 1590 found Sir Henry Lee framing his retirement as an opportunity for renewed spiritual devotion to the Queen, and just as *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* finds its title character singing Cynthia's praises from the pastoral periphery, so the secluded Acidale is highly reminiscent of Spenser's most overtly panegyric moments, most notably, the "April" eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Like the "Shepheardes lasse" in the Acidale episode, "April" finds Elisa elevated to the position of cynosure, as the fourth Grace:

Lo how finely the graces can it foote

to the Instrument:

They daucen deffly, and singen soote,

in their merriment.

Wants not a fourth grace, to make the daunce euen?

Let that rowme to my Lady be yeuen:

She shalbe a grace,

To fyll the fourth place,

And reigne with the rest in heauen. (lines 109-17)

As Stella P. Revard notes, the tradition of the "fourth grace" has its roots in royal encomium, and can be traced back to the Greek poet Callimachus' praise of Queen Berenice II of Egypt (887). Like the analogy linking the Acidalian dancers and Ariadne's crown, the above passage from "April" includes a suggestion of apotheosis—Elisa is to "reigne with the rest in heauen" just as Ariadne's crown "Through the bright heauen doth her beams display."

The celestial light imagery is another element common to both encomia—"April" finds Elisa associated with heavenly bodies, compared to the sun because of "how broad her beames did spredde" (75), just as the beauty and virtue of Colin's love is compared to the preeminent luminosity of the planet Venus:

So farre as doth the daughter of the day,

All other lesser lights in light excell,

So farre doth she in beautyfull array,

Aboue all other lasses beare the bell,

Ne lesse in vertue that beseemes her well,

Doth she exceede the rest of all her race (6.10.26).

Gloriana's subtextual proximity to this description is quickly made explicit when, two stanzas later, the celestial light imagery is echoed in an apologetic apostrophe indirectly addressed to Elizabeth herself:

Sunne of the world, great glory of the sky,

That all the earth doest lighten with thy rayes,

Great *Gloriana*, greatest Maiesty,
Pardon thy shepheard, mongst so many layes,
As he hath sung of thee in all his dayes,
To make one minime of thy poore handmayd,
And vnderneath thy feete to place her prayse;
That when thy glory shall be farre displayd
To future age of her this mention may be made. (6.10.23)

The narrator thus excuses his recent shift in panegyric focus (from Gloriana to Colin's love) by reinforcing Gloriana's (and thus Elizabeth's) overarching primacy for the text as a whole. The praise of his private love is revealed as entirely dependent on the "glory" of the Faerie Queene, which serves as the poem's organizing principle. At the same time, the poem's role in sustaining and promoting this "glory" is subtly acknowledged through Spenser's punning on "minime" and "feete," which are metrical units in music and poetry, respectively. The placement of Colin's love "vnderneath Gloriana's feete" is thus simultaneously an expression of royal reverence and an admission that private poetic endeavours must remain devalued in comparison to the poetry ("feet") devoted to the queen. Finally, the image of the sun is used to highlight this primacy and the ubiquity of Gloriana's influence—both on Spenser's poem and in the world at large.

The panegyric subtext of the Acidale episode exemplifies how Spenser's ideal conceptions of personal and poetic retirement consistently leave room for his royal patroness. Instead of abandoning the cultic reverence required of courtly service and courtly poetry, Spenser's pastoralism often celebrates retirement, peripherality, and rustication as, paradoxically, markers of privileged immediacy and renewed allegiance.

More often than not, this sense of privilege is achieved through the rejection of the court as a system that demands compliance and denies the poet's unique status—a system that reduces the poet to one prince-pleaser among many.

The preoccupation with "rest" and finality that permeates Book VI must be read alongside what John D. Bernard calls Spenser's "pervasive motif [of] the longing for a stillness beyond the flux of things" (*Ceremonies* 12). This motif achieves its ultimate statement in the unfinished *Mutabilitie Cantos*, which allegorize and explore the universal struggle between constancy and "Change" (or "Mutabilitie"). As David Norbrook notes, the "Olympian" scale of Mutabilitie's story in no way precludes the text's engagement with royal politics. In fact, he argues, the issue of mutability carried special political resonances in the final decade of Elizabeth's reign: "anxiety about the queen's mutability reached its height as people were forced to contemplate the imminent possibility of her death and a change in government which was hard to imagine after such a long reign" (135-36). For the purposes of this study, it must be noted that the image of stability, constancy, and eschatological finality idealized by the *Cantos* is closely tied to Spenser's personal drive toward rest and retirement. Nowhere is this more apparent than the final stanza of the seventh book's "vnperfite" eighth canto, which represents the *Faerie Queene's* final extant stanza:

> 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 firmely stayd
> Vpon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is contrayr to *Mutabilitie:*

> For, all that moueth, 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 Sabaoths sight. (7.8.2)

"Eternity" and "that same time where no more *Change* shall be" are, of course, references to the Christian eschatology outlined in the Book of Revelation. Here, the end of time is specially associated with "rest" and opposed to the "loue of things so vaine" and "flowring pride" (7.8.1) that dominate worldly existence under the "sway" of Mutability. In this way, Canto viii's idealization of the end-times is aligned with the broad anti-courtly strain present throughout Spenser's oeuvre—a strain that frequently applies particular critical focus to both "pride" and "vanity." For instance, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* derides courtiers as "puffed up with pride" (line 759) and scorns their "vaunted vanity" (line 719); Meliboe decries the "pride" (6.9.22) and "vaineness" (6.9.24) of court; Book I describes Lechery in the House of Pride as "Full of vaine follies, and new fanglenesse; / For he was false, and fraught with ficklenesse" (1.4.25). In stanza one of *Mutabilitie*'s eighth canto, pride, vanity, and that which is "fickle" are all subjected to the violent finality of "Short *Time*['s]… consuming sickle," and then replaced by stanza two's "stedfast rest."

This movement from "fickle" worldly existence (perhaps best epitomized by the court) to "stedfast rest" enacted in miniature by *The Faerie Queene's* final extant canto will be familiar to readers of Spenser's shorter pastoral works. The apocalyptic scope of these final stanzas encapsulates a broad drive toward retirement and "rest" that, as this study has argued, had propelled Spenser's pastoral narratives since *The Shepheardes*

Calender's publication in 1579. Just as almost all of Spenser's eclogues conclude with an evening movement toward "home" and repose, and just as *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* ends with Colin and his listeners "draw[ing] their bleating flocks to rest" (955), so *The Faerie Queene* ends with mutability giving way to "stedfast rest" and the "Sabbaoth." The invocation of the Christian calendar's cycles of work and repose also recalls the metapoetic conclusion of Book III (and thus of the 1590 *Faerie Queene*): "Now cease your worke, and at your pleasure play: / Now cease your worke; to morrow is an holy day" (3.12.47). As with this earlier passage, the final extant lines of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* take on a highly personal tone that draws Spenser's own authorial work into the cycle of Christian labour—the narrator himself requests his God to "graunt *me* that Sabaoths sight" (emphasis added). However, unlike with the earlier passage, the "rest" invoked here is "eternal," and anticipates a finality that both includes and surpasses the finality of a finished poem.

Nevertheless, closer investigation of Spenser's distinctive uses of "Sabbaoth" and "Sabaoth" in the poem's final line reveals a multilayered eschatological picture that, like all Spenserian modes of retirement, overflows the conceptual framework of "rest." As A. C. Hamilton points out, the distinction between "Sabaoth" and "Sabbaoth" was first noted by John Upton in his 1758 edition of *The Faerie Queene* (Hamilton 712). "Sabaoth" is an English transliteration of the Hebrew "צבאות" (or "*tzebhaoth*"), which means "hosts" or "armies," while "Sabbaoth" is the more common "sabbath" or "rest" that denotes the Judeo-Christian day of rest corresponding to God's "rest[ing] on the seventh day" (*New Oxford Annotated Bible* Exod. 20.8-11) after creating heaven and earth (Hamilton 712). "Sabaoth" is a word often left untranslated in vernacular Biblical translation and

commentary, and although frequently confused with "sabbath" in the sixteenth century (Shaheen 171-72), could be used to draw connections between Judgement Day and martial power. These associations are instanced by the following passage from Luther's *Commentarie or exposition vppon the twoo Epistles generall of Sainct Peter, and that of Sainct Jude*, as translated by Thomas Newton:

> And therefore the life of a Christian is nothyng els but a Battaile or a warfare, as the Scripture saieth: and therefore the Lorde our God is called the *Lorde God of Sabaoth*, that is, of Hostes: and in other places, he is named, *the Lorde mightie in Battell*. And by this he declareth, what a mightie Lorde he is, whiche maketh his people wage battaile, and to stande euer prest in warlike araye and readinesse, whensoeuer the Trumpet shall sounde: to the ende, thei should still thus consider and thinke with themselues: stande here, stoppe there: strike heere, vndermine there &c. (44)

Such passages serve to highlight the multifarious versions of Christian eschatology from which sixteenth century writers like Spenser could draw—"the ende" could signify both the "Battle" of "Sabaoth" and the "stedfast rest" of "Sabbaoth," and necessarily included both active "readiness" and profound repose.

The fact that *The Faerie Queene's* final line contains both spellings (both "Sabbaoth" and "Sabaoth") is a characteristically Spenserian manipulation of etymological and linguistic resonances—something that, as Hamilton notes, Spenser frequently does to "force a word to express its true meanings" ("Our New Poet" 496). Here, the effect conveys the nuance with which Spenser has framed rest and retirement

throughout his poetic oeuvre: as a mode of existence that requires both activity and vigilant service. Just as *The Calender*'s shepherds typically enact a generic homeward movement that implies both vigilance and weariness, and just as Meliboe's pastoral retirement demands vigilant guardedness against external invaders, so Spenser's narrator presents an idealized prevision of the end times that includes both rest ("Sabbaoth") and active militant allegiance ("Sabaoth").

This characteristically Spenserian union of service and repose is only heightened by a further pun Hamilton detects in the epithet "Sabbaoth God":

> One may suspect an oblique allusion to the Queen's name in the closing lines… Since Spenser would know that "Sabbath" signifies "rest," his final prayer at the end of his six days of labour is for the sight of that day of rest: the great Sabbath and eternal rest. Since Spenser would know also that Elizabeth signifies "Peace of the Lord, or quiet rest of the Lord," his final prayer as an exile in war-ravaged Ireland is for the sight of the Queen and the rest which she signifies. ("Our New Poet" 496)

It must be noted that the etymology cited by Hamilton is a false one. It is from William Camden's *Remaines of a Greater Worke, Concerning Britaine* (p. 79) and is almost certainly derived from splitting the name into "El" (a Hebrew name for God) and "Sabeth," which bears obvious likeness to the English and Hebrew "Sabbath." Nevertheless, the singularity of the epithet "Sabbaoth God" and the passage's personal tone lend plausibility to Hamilton's "speculation." The effect not only elevates Elizabeth, but also reinforces the associations between Elizabethan panegyric, vigilant royal service, and spiritual repose that this study has insisted upon as fundamental to Spenser's

understanding of retirement. Parallels can be drawn with the vision of the Redcrosse Knight on the Mount of Contemplation (1.10.53-68) when the service of Gloriana is simultaneously contrasted and aligned with the "eternal peace and happiness" of the New Jerusalem.[9]

The multiple meanings invoked by *The Faerie Queene's* final punning on "sabbaoth"—a term that becomes simultaneously encomiastic, militant, and world-weary—serve as a fitting conclusion to the poem's interest in retirement. Here, as elsewhere, Spenser idealizes retirement and rest while presenting these states as compatible with royal panegyric, yet raises doubts about the possibility and desirability of a retirement divorced from worldly engagement and vigilance. Even in Meliboe's idealized pastoral locale, peripheral forces threaten the security and stability of retired life, demanding anxious vigilance from Calidore and eventually forcing a reluctant return to the sphere of epic action. It is thus singularly appropriate that *The Faerie Queene's* second installment concludes with the escape of the Blatant Beast—an event that perpetuates the need for such vigilance while reinvoking the real-world contingencies of the Elizabethan court:

> So now he raungeth through the world againe,
> And rageth sore in each degree and state;
> Ne any is, that may him now restraine,
> He growen is so great and strong of late,
> Barking and biting all that him doe bate,
> Albe they worthy blame, or cleare of crime:

[9] For analysis of this episode, see pp. 50-53.

Ne spareth he most learned wits to rate,
Ne spareth he the gentle Poets rime,
But rends without regard of person or of time.

Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,
Hope to escape his venemous despite,
More then my former writs, all were they clearest
From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite,
With which some wicked tongues did it backebite,
And bring into a mighty Peres displeasure,
That neuer so deserued to endite.
Therfore do you my rimes keep better measure,
And seeke to please, that now is counted wisemens threasure. (6.12.40-41)

These are the final lines of *The Faerie Queene* published during Spenser's lifetime. By early 1599, less than three years after its publication, Spenser would die in London, his Munster home destroyed by Irish rebels in the Nine Years War. As outlined in Chapter One, the "barking and biting" of Book VI's canine Blatant Beast is prefigured by the characterization of "Envie" in the *The Shepheardes Calender's* prefatory epistle "To his Booke":

Goe little booke; thy selfe present,
As child whose parent is vnkent,
To him that is the president
Of noblesse and of chevalree:

> And if that Envie barke at thee,
>
> As sure it will, for succoure flee
>
> Under the shadow of his wing. (lines 1-7)

The two passages also feature metapoetic address to the text itself. *The Calender's* narrator urges his "little booke" to "flee" the threat of envious readers, while *The Faerie Queene's* narrator cautions his "rimes" that they must "seeke to please" with considerable verbal irony. Chapter One has already established that *The Calender's* initial epistolary poem includes retaliatory connotations that suggest contention between poet and public. However, the 1596 *Faerie Queene*'s final stanza intensifies and concentrates the oppositionality of the *Calender*'s little epistle—not only does that stanza include a backward glance toward Spenser's own past contention with courtly audiences, but it also, as many critics have pointed out, likely includes a specific reference to Lord Burghley which could not have pleased him.[10]

The thematic proximity of the two passages (one from the outset of Spenser's poetic career and one from near its conclusion) highlights the consistency of this poet's characteristic negotiation of oppositional and panegyrical poetics—between the critical and the "pleasing" functions of his poetry. As this study has argued, even Spenser's most encomiastic and aspirational moments insist on the distance between productive poet and receptive centres of power, and this distance is often expressed through modes of retirement that critique these centres. In *The Shepheardes Calender*, the panegyric "April" eclogue sits alongside images of pastoral retirement that criticize abuses in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and England's aristocratic patronage networks; similarly *Colin*

[10] See Danner 197 and Hamilton, *Faerie Queene* 689.

Clouts uses pastoral retirement both to articulate scathing anti-courtly critique and praise Cynthia. In *The Faerie Queene*, hermits epitomize this same duality with their simultaneous capacity for cultic reverence and propensity for detachment. Finally, Chapter Three concludes this study with its account of Book VI—a book where Meliboe, Colin, and the narrator himself all favour retirement, withdrawal, and rest even while promoting the value of vigilance, service, and the panegyric mode.

As this study has demonstrated, the later books of Spenser's epic, like his earlier pastorals, voice an attraction to the simple, detached, and contemplative life of retirement. Nevertheless, as a heroic poem in the chivalric idiom, *The Faerie Queene* manifests a strong commitment to social and civic engagement. Whether engaged with international religious strife, with the public virtues of justice and courtesy, with England's colonization of Ireland, or with panegyric address, Spenser's epic assumes that life is embattled and requires committed endeavour in the public sphere.

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