Spenser's Sabbath Sight: Work and Play Reconciled in *The Faerie Queene*

Ryan Laferrière – 260870322

Department of English

McGill University, Montréal

August (Summer) 2024

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Professor Kenneth Borris (Supervisor)

Professor Maggie Kilgour (Examiner)

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines ways in which elements of work and play in Edmund Spenser's Arthurian epic *The Faerie Queene* are opposed and eventually united in accordance with the principles of sabbatical leisure conceived as the culmination of the cycle of civic-oriented activity. In the Neoplatonic and humanistic works of Spenser, this underlying tendency toward syncretism, the hidden synthesis of contradictory principles, is, I argue, serio-ludic. Chapter One explores the origins of the early modern developments of syncretism in the Classical ideal of *scholē*, which motivated Spenser's pursuit of a "common wisdom" by way of an ambivalent poetics. Chapter Two studies the essential compatibility between the logic of syncretism and the varieties of shepherd labour in the bucolic interlude of Book VI. The task of resolving the antagonism of industry and idleness—evident in the competing genres of rural literature, the georgic and the bucolic—emerges in Elizabethan pastoralism as a reaction to clerical indulgence and the increase of vagrancy brought about by mass enclosure. Thus, Spenser celebrates the contemplative attainments of the beatific vision achievable in country repose, which reconciles the pattern of social detachment and involvement. In Chapter Three, the comparative analysis of the virtues of temperance and justice issuing from Books II and V centers around the serio-ludic concept of the chivalric trial. The resurgence of the contemplative ideal extolling at once a serious and playful version of study is achieved through these "virtues of experience" that actively "test" the hero's resolve against the temptations toward vain industry and fruitless idleness.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine les façons dont les éléments de travail et de jeu s'opposent et se réconcilient dans l'épique arthurienne d'Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, en accord avec les principes du loisir sabbatique conçu comme étant le point culminant du cycle d'activité civique. Dans les œuvres néoplatoniciennes et humanistiques de Spenser, on perçoit que la tendance vers le syncrétisme, c'est-à-dire, la synthèse de principes contradictoires, est sério-ludique. Le premier chapitre explore les racines classiques des développements du syncrétisme de la Renaissance poussant Spenser à favoriser la « sagesse populaire » au gré d'une poétique ambivalente. Le deuxième chapitre analyse l'interlude pastoral du sixième livre et vise à établir une compatibilité entre la logique du syncrétisme et les responsabilités bergères—les deux axés sur le rassemblement. Dans la littérature pastorale de la période Élisabéthaine qu'a popularisé Spenser, la résolution du conflit entre le travail et l'oisiveté, y compris entre l'esprit géorgique et l'esprit bucolique, répond à l'excès monacal et au vagabondage, ce dernier causé par l'encloisonnement des terres fertiles. Spenser célèbre l'effort contemplative de la béatitude rédemptrice tout en soulignant la paix du repos rural. Le troisième chapitre compare tempérance et justice issus du deuxième et du cinquième livre et y « teste » la relation sério-ludique entre le procès juridique et la quête chevaleresque. L'idéal contemplatif, prônant l'étude à la fois sérieuse et ludique, renait grâce à ces « vertus d'expérience » qui forment une discipline modératrice permettant au héros de résister consciemment aux tentations dangereuses vers l'oisiveté infructueuse et le travail vain.

Acknowledgements

My thesis on Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* has not been as straightforward as I had anticipated; however, I suppose that, in a special sense, my occasionally wayward process of composition and revision has inevitably realised one of the dominant themes of the poem: the propensity to "wander too and fro in wayes vnknowne" (*FQ* I i 10). Nevertheless, like the Knight of the Red Crosse tempted by the dens of error and despair, I would not have found the straight and narrow path without the guidance of a few to whom I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude. Let me first acknowledge the encouragements of McGill University Professors David Hensley and Maggie Kilgour, who have helped to reassure a tentative student that "leisure studies" need not be a profitless endeavour. As teachers, they presented to me the gift of comparative literature and taught me many of the Greek and Roman classics that found a place in this work, and which I hope someday to read without the burden of translation. Furthermore, I wish to thank a few of the faculty members in the Department of English at McGill who have demonstrated to me that the dialogic spirit of play can still thrive in university classrooms: Professors Gibian, Trehearne, Mathes, Van Dussen, and the late Professor Popescu.

The concept of scholastic leisure that witnesses the conjunction of work and play in Sabbatarian activities represents the fruit of my own education, which began at home, but would later be refined on the campuses of John Abbott College and McGill. I am grateful for my parents' frequent lessons in humanism often enjoyed, in the spirit of the serio-ludic symposium, at the dinner-table, the optimal setting for the discussion of "grave matters and profound sciences," as Rabelais once remarked. I also wish to highlight their generosity in permitting me to access their extensive personal libraries, without which I would not have conducted my research as efficaciously, especially in the years of remote learning. To my mother and father,

whose financial support these past few years has made it possible for me to practice what I preach, and live a life of leisure, and who have influenced me more than they may themselves realise to stay busy in playful occupations, I reserve a special thanks.

My final and largest acknowledgement is to Professor Kenneth Borris, an unwavering supervisor and tutor. He has been more diligent in his corrections than he would allow himself to acknowledge, and a most inspiring guide to such an undeserving admirer of Spenser. A few years ago, as an undergraduate student little acquainted with Renaissance poetry, I made a serendipitous decision to take a course on early modern pastoralism. With a term paper on the sportive elements in the Legend of Holiness, I succeeded in painting the first strokes, so to speak, of an idea that would later metamorphose into the current study of (sabbatical) leisure in Spenser's epic. More importantly, I rekindled my waning passion for literature and discovered the complexity of good poetry in no small part because of Professor Borris' compendious lectures on Spenserian allegory, and the levity he brought to bear in his reading of *The Faerie Queene* that so influenced my own. Otherwise, I would not have taken heed of its author's prime instruction: "Now cease your worke, and at your pleasure play; / Now cease your worke; to morrow is an holy day" (*FQ* III xii 47a).

Introduction: On Play and Seriousness

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

<div align="right">Matthew 6.28-29</div>

The dearth of scholarship committed to studying the serio-ludic, particularly since the achievements in early modern comparative literature of A. B. Giamatti and Michael O'Loughlin,[1] twin pillars of leisure studies at Yale University during the 1970s, has undoubtedly exaggerated the persistent marginalization of play in academia. Many academics, operating within a tonality that can only be labelled "puritanical," fail time and again—possibly out of *shame* for their own complicity in a life of ease—to not take themselves seriously. The sparsely remaining scholarship addressing the topic of leisure has tended to focus on Greece and Rome, especially the hyper-individualistic and private amusements of the Epicureans and Hellenistic Stoa.[2] Study of early modern leisure stands to benefit from Josef Pieper's timeless book entitled *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1963), which examines the relationship between the Greek and Aquinian ideals of contemplation, and also Siegfried Wenzel's brilliant survey of the ecclesiastical attitudes regarding the medieval vice of Sloth in *'Acedia' in Medieval Thought and Literature* (1967). However, neither contribution considers, at any great length, the sixteenth-century developments of the concept of idleness. As for the Renaissance proper, Petrarchan *otium* has recently garnered some serious scholarly recognition, courtesy of Julia Conaway

---

[1] See Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic*, Princeton University Press, 1966; *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1975; O'Loughlin, *The Garlands of Repose: The Literary Celebration of Civic and Retired Leisure: The Traditions of Homer and Vergil, Horace and Montaigne*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

[2] See Jean-Marie André, *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine*. Dissertation. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966; *Les Loisirs en Grèce et à Rome*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1984. Also, W. A. Laidlaw, "Otium," *Greece & Rome*, vol. 15, no.1, 1966, pp. 42-52, and Vickers, "Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of otium (Part I)," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1990, pp. 1-37.

Bondanella, and the second installment of Brian Vickers' two-part publication on the retired leisure of the Renaissance devotes much-needed attention to leisure in the poetry of Andrew Marvell.[3] Nevertheless, there remains a notable lacuna on the matter of leisure in contemporary studies of Edmund Spenser. Like Spenser's own chivalric heroes delaying their arrival to the court of Gloriana, Renaissance scholars have been circulating around this matter without directly engaging it.

Although Giamatti dedicated an entire chapter to the moral ambiguity of play and Elizabethan pageantry in *The Faerie Queene*,[4] and R. Rawdon Wilson's article "game" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* acknowledges that "play and game elements abound in Spenser's writing in at least four ways: in wordplay; in the numerous accounts of festivals and chivalric tournaments; in a number of narrative episodes involving entrapment… and in [metafictional] reflexivity" (321), there has yet to be a substantial treatment of Spenser's perspective on leisure in its relation to labour. This dissertation cannot exhaustively enumerate every instance of play in the poetry of Spenser, but rather invites the reader of his epic to ask, more pertinently, where, if at all, is the play-spirit lacking?

For the Renaissance humanists, play could not be entirely dissociated from the workaday world and realm of social responsibilities, even when grounded in the privacy and autonomy of studious contemplation. The openness to ponder the varieties of human experience—a guiding motive for the author and reader of epic poetry—can be a summons into the urban world of unrestrained ambition; but it in turn may evoke by contrast a separate world of uninterrupted

---

[3] See Bondanella, "Petrarch's Rereading of *Otium* in *De vita solitaria*," C*omparative Literature*, 2008, vol. 60, no.1, pp. 14–28; Vickers, "Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of otium (Part II)," *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1990, pp. 107-154.

[4] See Giamatti, "Pageant, Show, and Verse," *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1975, pp. 78-93.

pleasance as the fruit of labour. "The authentic significance of retired leisure," writes Michael O'Loughlin concerning Montaigne, "will be realised dramatically as it is sought from within the flux and press of the busy world" (98). Renaissance writers are significantly indebted to the ancient Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, who justified work as the reason for play: "we do without leisure [*ascholon*] in order to have leisure [*scholē*]" (*Politics*, 1334a, 1337b). But wherever ends can also be conceived as means, the opposite is true. The seriousness of play may, ultimately, set forth the manner of its attainment, labour, as *equally necessary* to the fulfilment of human existence.

In the sixteenth century, the emergence of a Protestant casuistry of moral conduct coinciding with the breakup of the monastic system notably merged the pragmatic temperament with the "Benedictine" (what we might call the simultaneously pastoral *and* georgic) quality of saintly discipline, and mundane activity would be thereafter directed to the joint goals of collective and personal salvation—to public-facing leisure in this world, and reposeful retirement in the next. After all, the great representative of Northern European humanism, Desiderius Erasmus, who regarded with little fondness his time foolishly spent trapped inside the confining walls of the monastery at Steyn, famously but not unironically expressed a desire to transform the city into a cloister writ large, and make the sprawling space of secular achievement conform to the rigours of his own faith.

The legacy of the pattern of civic engagement and detachment in Christian votive life was the reconciliation not only of work and prayer (*laborare est orare*) but of work and play.[5] For example, Erasmus' friend and correspondent, Thomas More, fashioned agrarian work into a higher form of play by insisting that public-serving labour should be pursued as if for

---

[5] O'Loughlin prefers instead to characterise the unification of labour and leisure as the fusion of work and art. See pp. 181, 187.

amusement. There would be no place for the company of delinquent idlers in his imaginary city. In addition, the citizens of More's utopia would be provided every opportunity to immerse in liberal education, thereby introducing the other form of political "action" conceptualised as leisure—fusing the different aspects of *cultivation* into a coherent *culture* (O'Loughlin 19, 31).

More's paradigmatic synthesis of political activity and studious retirement remained faithful to the Ciceronian ideal of *otium cum dignitate* and its corresponding ideology of good government, characteristic of the zenith of the Roman Republic.[6] As Jean-Marie André writes, "[celui] qui fonde l'ordre, en droit, sur l'ordre universel et sur la santé morale de l'humanité… [se trouve] dans une tradition platonicienne et péripatéticienne adaptée à des fins romaines par le Moyen Portique" (299). Nevertheless, the conjunction of "dignity and ease" once attributable to political labour *par excellence* rapidly devolved into a "pathos of nobility and distance," a phrase coined by Nietzsche to explain the condition of an aristocratic leisure class freed from political and agricultural responsibility.[7] Notwithstanding Aquinas' refinement of the Aristotelian civic-oriented conception of leisure, which united the movements of intellectual activity with the tranquil consideration of truth as "the end of the whole human life,"[8] the associated notion of "retirement" came to mean, much as it does today, a hiatus from the world of employment: it is consigned to aristocratic luxuriance, and subsists on the freedom from the harsh necessity of rusticated labour. Contrasted with the serious endeavours of everyday life, play was increasingly dismissed as a *marginal* activity or simply inactivity, as an opiate, as idleness (French *oisiveté*),

---

[6] As O'Loughlin demonstrates, Cicero himself—who reluctantly lived a life of retirement, and even in leisure occupied his thoughts with public business (*in otio de negotio cogitare*)—was reimagined in the Renaissance, especially in the syncretic minds of Florentine literati such as Leonardo Bruni Aretino, as "a type of the ideal union of political commitment and literary and philosophical recreation" (197-198).

[7] See Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (I.2), p. 15.

[8] See Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I. Q. 73. Art. 1-2; II. Q. 179. Art. 1-2; Q. 180. Art. 3-4, 6-7; Q. 182. Art. 1 (in which Aquinas writes that "the contemplative life consists in leisure and rest," according to Psalm 46.10, *Be still and see that I am God*).

as repose, as dereliction of duty, and a wandering of the mind.[9] It may be a pastime worthy of

being incorporated in a child's lessons,[10] but as soon as the human being entered adolescence, he

was expected to put his frivolous diversions, among which some included the writing and

reading of poetry and fiction, on the backburner. As Sir Philip Sidney reported, poets faced

condemnation for supposedly spending time wastefully, but when poetry could serve to teach and

move, "then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose

employed"; as for the related charge of abuse, that poetry sets the hearts of men to delight upon

an idle imagination, and not upon virtuous action, it does not preclude right use, and, in being

properly used, to be taken for instructress of courage and martial prowess (*Defense of Poesy*, 35,

38-39).

The general yet incomplete subordination of play to work accelerated exponentially in the

English-speaking world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the emergence of a

new merchant middle-class whose rigorous business practices found validation in the industrious

Protestant ethic. At first glance, the austerity of the reformed churches—in particular, English

Puritanism—appears antithetical to the spirit of play; however, as Max Weber notes, the Puritan

disinclination to sport, brought into the forefront in the dispute over the *Book of Sports*, was not

---

[9] The common view is expounded by Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* 1.8, pp. 69-70:
> Comme nous voyons des terres oysives, si elles sont grasses et fertilles, foisonner en cent mille sortes d'herbes sauvages et inutiles, et que, pour les tenir en office, il les faut assubjectir et employer à certaines semences, pour nostre service; et comme nous voyons que les femmes produisent bien toutes seules des amas et pieces de chair informes, mais que pour faire une generation bonne et naturelle, il les faut embesoigner d'une autre semence: ainsin est-il des espris. Si on ne les occupe à certain sujet, qui les bride et contreigne, ils se jettent desreiglez, par-cy par-là, dans le vague champ des imaginations.

[10] See Montaigne, *Essais* 1.26, pp. 220-221. In a chapter on the education of children, Montaigne shares a famous story of his learning of Latin. Having been put by his father in the care of a German preceptor, incapable of speaking French but well versed in the Roman tongue, Montaigne finds himself compelled to converse in Latin. To make matters more decisive, neither the child's mother and father, nor valet, nor chambermaid, nor any other domestic is to be permitted in his company to use any words but those in Latin. Thus, every member of the household participating in the game becomes Latinized. As for Montaigne himself, he learns the language in a spirit of play, which is to say without toil: "sans art, sans livre, sans grammaire ou precepte, sans fouet et sans larmes" (without art, without book, without grammar or preceptor, without whip and without tears).

at all a matter of principle (167). Recreation in service of one's worldly calling, that strengthened

moral resolve, could well be permitted, and even defended.

Eugen Fink has suggested that play is a fundamental phenomenon of human existence

that stands *over and against*, not in opposition to, the other existential phenomena such as love,

law, war, religion, art, and work (21). In other words, play incorporates all the other dignified and

"serious" cultural expressions because it is of a *higher order*; the diversity of early modern ludic

forms demonstrates that play is the one component of human life that cannot be denied. As Johan

Huizinga summarised, "seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include

seriousness." The sharp, apparently irreconcilable, antithesis between the "cardinal moods of

life"—play and seriousness—imperfectly expressed in the late Middle Ages through the

opposition of folly and wisdom, was frequently reconciled by Renaissance thinkers (Huizinga,

Homo Ludens, 6, 45).

Erasmus disproved the distinction in his satirical "trifle," the *Moriae Encomium*, by

uniting the apparent disjuncts under the umbrella of self-applauding Stultitia—Folly herself, who

becomes a kind of wisdom when the satire, in the later sections, morphs into censure. In François

Rabelais, play as farcical laughter, jesting, joking, to which classical Latin has given the word

jocus (evolving into the French *jeu*, *jouer*), appears as *le propre de l'homme* (*Gargantua*, 13);

however, the invitation to enter into a pantagruelist fiction that announces itself as a comic

pastime is to be accepted in earnest, for laughter is the fruit of studious reflection and a sign of

sagacious comprehension, proof that the joke has been understood. Then there is the Renaissance

fashion for epic romance that combined diverse genres, discourses, and modes of life in playfully

fantastic ways, even combining sometimes the rusticated simplicity of pastoral with noble

chivalric grandeur. The mock-heroic tones of Ludovico Ariosto and Miguel de Cervantes

exemplify the prevalence of the serio-ludic in early modern literature. Also, the general

seventeenth-century "Baroque" tendency to intentionally exaggerate proportions—as if perhaps

to *overdo* things, evidence of a competitive ethos—can be found a generation or two earlier in

Edmund Spenser's efforts at playing with past Roman and Italian epics.

In Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, the synthesis of seriousness and play centers

particularly around the observance of the Sabbath rest which constitutes the completion of the

cycle of work (VII viii 1-2). The medieval vice of *acēdia*, the characteristic flaw of many of

Spenser's chivalric heroes, is synonymous with an over-intensive "busyness" that entails an

incapacity to enjoy the peace of contemplative judgment best described, according to the words

of Wisdom in Proverbs 8.30-31,[11] as participation "in an ultimate reality that is itself essentially

playful, as divine wisdom was at the creation of the world" (O'Loughlin 6). Mental exercise,

which enables the recuperation of the body, is not divorced from the elements of strain and

exertion characteristic of work; but, in truth, each of these qualities are equally entwined in play,

which involves tension, uncertainty, and competition—reflected in the ancient Greek propensity

for agonistics.

The legacy of medieval conceptions of leisure confined the serio-ludic within a system

of vice and virtue; thus, the moral criticisms about idleness were continually being undone by

claims about the seriousness—and godliness—of play.[12] As Huizinga aptly writes in *Homo*

---

[11] "I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times; playing in the world. And my delights were to be with the children of men." Huizinga notes (*Homo Ludens*, p. 212n2) that the translations based on the Latin Vulgate bring out more forcefully the sense of play. Curiously, the New Revised Standard Version is of a different tone: "I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race." The word translated as "master worker" can also mean "little child," which points to the relationship between play and *paidia*. Compare Heraclitus, fr. 52: "Lifetime is a child playing, moving pieces in a game; kingly power is in the hands of a child."

[12] Testifying to the necessity of play in human life, Friedrich Schiller famously wrote in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* that "man plays only when he is a man in the full sense of the word, and *he is only a complete man when he plays*" (15th letter, 56). A human being can only be most blessed—and most earnest—when in a state of play, which explains why humankind has always either projected what it considers to be the best life to the most

Ludens, "the contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. *The inferiority of play is always being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness.* Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play" (8, emphasis added). Even the Christian world, which inherited from the Old Testament a sense of the inferiority of concupiscent play, could regard the burden of work unfavourably, as evidenced in the *Genesis* myth that made the life of toil a suitable punishment for Adam's original sin (*Gen*. 3.23). Certainly, the dissociation of work from play, in the form of the problematic relation between industry and idleness, underscores the punishment of Cain for the wasteful slaying of his brother, which happens to be consistent with the attributes of *acēdia*: "Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; *I will be a restless wanderer on the earth*" (*Gen*. 4.14, emphasis added).[13] To be sure, the instruction in the first gospel to "Come to me [i.e., Jesus Christ], all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" suggests that leisurely repose can promise an end to human strivings and triumph over vanity (Matthew 11.28). Although the Protestant conception of the justification of effectual grace in impassioned worldly labour diminished at first glance the value of play, assessing the importance of ends rather than means would nonetheless have shown the merits of resting in the presence of God.

As mentioned, the Protestant Reformation brought a climate of increased hostility throughout Europe toward play, evidenced in the ethical opposition to the perceived excesses of the false Church of Rome: insofar as the Lutheran conception of labour in a calling was

---

supreme and godly form of existence, or in its proximity to the divinity of the gods by way of an intimate initiation, has supposedly acquired knowledge of liberative play. Thus, the philosophers of ancient Greece conceived of the human being as *a doll*, a plaything of the *idle* gods who "took pity on the human race, born to suffer as it was, and gave it relief in the form of religious festivals to serve as periods of rest from its labours" (Plato, *Laws*, 653). On the correspondence of the life of leisure and the divine existence, see Fink, pp. 100-101, 144, 174-175.

[13] Compare Montaigne, *Essais* 1.8, p. 69: "L'ame qui n'a point de but estably, elle se perd: car, comme on dict, c'est n'estre en aucun lieu, que d'estre par tout. *Quisquis ubique habitat, Maxime, nusquam habitat* (Martial, *Epigrams*, VII, lxxiii)."

considered the ultimate end of life, the surest way to live in proximity to God, idleness became

the most evident measure of a lack of grace and, consequently, the evil peculiar to Roman

Catholicism, with its platoon of mendicant friars and otiose monks. As O'Loughlin puts it,

"privacy can be literally a state of privation" (10)—from the world, but also from God. Hence,

Protestants saw monasticism as a selfish and slothful withdrawal from civic duties, dangerously

renouncing work in service of a calling (Weber 81).

Early modern literature is replete with examples of "solitaries" delinquent in their

monachal duties. As Rabelais puts it succinctly, *l'habit ne fait point le moine* (*Gargantua*, 16).

Spenser presents the villainous Archimago and Duessa as popish figures and condemns "sluggish

Idlenesse" in Lucifera's pageant as

> the nourse of sin;
>
> Vpon a slouthfull Asse he chose to ryde,
>
> Arayd in habit blacke, and amis thin,
>
> Like to an holy Monck, the seruice to begin. (*FQ* I iv 18)

Holding a breviary well-worn but little read, a proof of devotional inobservance, and indulging in

excessive sleep, Idleness is made the paragon of unproductivity:

> From worldly cares himselfe he did esloyne,
>
> And greatly shunned manly exercise,
>
> From euery worke he chalenged essoyne,
>
> For contemplation sake. (*FQ* I iv 20)

Preaching instead the virtues of thrift and industry, the Protestant reformers insisted that

the Papacy validated luxury and idleness. In addition, the pauper was typically regarded as poor

by choice, an idler, reliant upon the charity of others, and therefore, refusing to work (Tawney

123). Pilgrims, for their part, were hardly better esteemed, since pilgrimages were often occasions for debauchery and all sorts of infidelities, and the vice of sloth was itself defined as a tendency to wander, without rhyme or reason (Huizinga, *Middle Ages*, 161; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II. Q. 35, Art. 4). But it was the monastery that represented the ultimate excuse for idleness. For instance, it was commonplace to take holy vows simply out of laziness, as conventual life promised an idyllic environment of repose and self-indulgent contemplation away from urban commercial battlegrounds such as the court and marketplace (Huizinga, *Erasmus*, 10). For in the early days of Christian monasticism, as Aquinas reports, the *demon meridianus*—so called for his tendency to appear with the midday sun—was well known to the monk, and threatened the hermit (*Summa Theologica*, II. Q. 35, Art. 3).[14]

Little had changed by the end of the sixteenth century, since we find that in Spenser's epic the trail of the Blatant Beast unsurprisingly leads the Knight of Courtesy into a cloister, which lends support to Luther's conception of the "calling" as an iconoclastic "weapon against monasticism"—to which we may add, a weapon against idleness (Tawney 239; *FQ* VI xii 23-24). Nevertheless, the world that the solipsist retires "from" can either be the sphere of ordinary human activity, or even a realm that makes possible the blending of labour and leisure as the fruit of civic participation, in which, according to O'Loughlin, civil service celebrates the public goal of free time (10). Spenser's poetic calling is an example of the latter kind of retirement and, in this respect, a paean to the Protestant spirit of the Elizabethan era. After an exodus to Ireland around 1580, he continued composing an Arthurian epic, in moments of respite from his varied civic and other duties, that proved to be his peculiar form of national service, and which paved the way for the professionalization of the literary vocation in the succeeding age of Jonson and

---

[14] Compare Huxley, "Accidie," *Essays New and Old*, pp. 47-48.

Shakespeare. As A. Bartlett Giamatti famously expressed, in the mind of Spenser writing had somehow become synonymous with living, and the labour of versification was a didactic variation of the work of the ploughman furrowing the soil to prepare it for cultivation (*Play of Double Senses*, 92).

For Spenser and other Renaissance humanists, imaginative play was not divorced from the seriousness of everyday life; however, the suspicion of play in some classically-trained circles was further supported by the legacy of Plato's critique of poetry stemming from his twin-worlds theory. Though Neoplatonists revised it so that art could be a means of revealing truth, his association of the plastic arts with the derivative realm of appearances,[15] with becoming as opposed to being, with pretence and illusion (Latin *inlusio*, *inludere*, meaning "in play"), has nonetheless had a lasting impact upon the Western attitude toward play. Even Huizinga, for all his efforts to restore play to its rightful seat atop the pantheon of human activities, refers to play as an adornment, an amplification of life, a foray into a "temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (*Homo Ludens*, 8-9). Additionally, Fink defines play as "a finite creativity within the magical dimension of appearance" (29), in short, a symbolic representation, a "mirror-image," something actual that nonetheless contains an aspect of non-actuality. The conception of play as not "ordinary" or "real" betrays a sense of its inferiority as compared to the "seriousness" and utility of craft (*technē*); yet the awareness of play as a second-order creation should not prevent it from being undertaken with absolute probity. Fink's definition assuredly recalls one of the principal resolutions of Renaissance Neoplatonism in the sphere of the arts: by imitating ideals, art could bypass ordinary reality so as to disclose something of eternal truth and

---

[15] See Plato's distinction between philosophic and poetic language in *Phaedrus* 276a: "the living and animate speech of the man who understands," as opposed to "the written version of which… rightly called a kind of reflected image."

beauty, as Erwin Panofsky explains (138). Thus, Spenser's rendering of the three Graces as a

sign of undefiled beauty and integrity replicates one of most persistent motifs of early modern

iconographical art: the figure of *nuda Veritas* or "nude Truth" (Panofsky 155).[16]

The Neoplatonic view of transcendent meaning and its accessibility to the arts was

powerful in Western cultural history and informed the humanistic studies of pagan mysteries that

revealed a *gravitas* underlying artistic creativity, transforming it into serio-ludic allegorical play.

It was under the guise of ludicrous tales and trifles that a latent "syncretism" or secret unity was

demonstrable in the contrasting systems of Orphism (via Pythagoras and Plato) and Kabbalism.

The study of hidden doctrinal coincidences—what became known as the principle of *discordia*

concors—took the form of serious games (*serio ludere*) practiced by the likes of Ficino, Pico,

and Cusanus (Wind 222). We can also trace a line of descent from the Italian Neoplatonists to the

Elizabethan poets. The Protestant humanists Harvey and Spenser had studied the works of Pico

della Mirandola, which included excerpts from Cusanus, and Ficino. Giordano Bruno's *Eroici*

furori, dedicated to Sidney, helped to popularise the concordance of opposites amongst the

Elizabethan literati, and contained emblems for the concomitance of movement and rest later

repurposed by Jonson. Meanwhile, Bruno's allusive compliment to England in the phrase "the

world outside the world," referring to the virtue of isolation that helped to ensure England's

maritime sovereignty, possesses serio-ludic undertones derived from the more general law of

necessary contrariety with resonances in pastoral poetry: that to be positioned outside a political

situation is to occupy a prominent place within it (Wind 225-226, 228).

In this thesis, I propose to examine the logic of early modern syncretism in Spenser's *The*

Faerie Queene from the standpoint of the serio-ludic, which necessarily qualified contemporary

---

[16] See *FQ* VI x 24, ll. 3-5: "And also naked are, that without guile / Or false dissemblaunce all them plaine may see, / Simple and true from couert malice free."

politico-religious debates about work and play. Chapter One considers the influence of Renaissance syncretism on the structure and contents of his poetry, but first examines the Classical sources that provided humanists with examples of the value of moderation and synthesis. The secret coincidence of antithetical principles, coterminous in iconographic traditions with the delightful play of the three Graces, entered literate circles through readaptations of the model of the tripartite life, which set the epicurean life of "noble *voluptas*," in Edgar Wind's phrase, as the *summum bonum* of Renaissance Neoplatonism over but not necessarily against the conflicting lives of pragmatic activity and contemplative nonactivity (69-70).[17] The late-Medieval and Renaissance conception of temperance owes a further debt, we find, to the Aristotelian theory of the "golden mean" and especially to the representation of Harmony as the fruit of the union of Mars and Venus, both of which figure prominently in the multivalent allegory of *The Faerie Queene*.

In an age of political turmoil and religious strife, burdened by the questions of royal succession that severely compromised the unity of the kingdom, Spenser was generally preoccupied with exposing the "common wisdom" of apparently antagonistic worldviews— pagan and Christian, Classical and Scriptural—that underlie his national epic; as Giamatti writes, "Spenser is the greatest poet of marriage in English literature, and in many ways *The Faerie Queene* is his greatest marriage poem" (*Play of Double Senses*, 77). Spenser's paradigmatic work of humanist erudition celebrates a *studious* ideal of union that recalls the Greek conception of

---

[17] See Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, pp. 68-71. Wind notes that an entry in Erasmus's *Colloquies* sets the pleasure principle of Epicureanism as a guide to enjoyment both in the world and in states of rapturous departure, the latter of which, characteristic of a higher intimacy with the divine, became a privilege of the initiated (Wind 70-71). The mystical experience of ecstasy, sanctioned by the authority of Plotinus, and perhaps more convincingly by an allegorical reading of the passage on nectar and ambrosia in Plato's *Phaedrus* (247e), encouraged Ficino to reconsider the ascetic tendencies of medieval Christian morality (Wind 69n60). Further evidence for the inclusion of pleasure within the threefold system of Florentine Neoplatonism is Pico's medal of the three Graces featuring the trinity of *pulchritudo-amor-voluptas* which Wind discusses at length in his third chapter.

leisurely activity (σχολέ, *skolē*), which blends, for its part, a civic-oriented ease and toil. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant Sabbatarians somewhat comparably defended the Biblical sanction of rest against charges of idleness by referencing the classical model of scholastic retirement. This chapter focuses predominantly on the climactic episode of the epic, the ascent of the suggestively named Mount Acidale, since Calidore's desire to comprehend the substantive core of the harmonious dance of the Graces reveals the marriage of the lusory and the laborious that appeared characteristic of mystical initiation into the religious space of the Platonic Academy, among Florentine Platonists and their followers.

Chapter Two looks to place Renaissance syncretism within the cyclical and seasonal patterns of pastoral labour implicit in the overall structure of Spenser's eclogues and the calendrical pageant of the Mutability cantos. The pastoral outlook and the various activities of shepherd life are essentially compatible with the proto-Hegelian logic of syncretism, understood in the sense of dialogic progression and unification, but also with Spenser's overarching task of synthesising the ever-increasing polarisation of industry and idleness. This goal of restoring the original harmony of work and play—through egalitarian pastoral occupations and the mutually-beneficent competitions between rusticated swains, an ideal of common labour and leisure—takes on fresh proportions in the sixteenth century, since it ultimately points to the harmful legacy of the privatisation of land. The major consequence of enclosure and the separation of pastures from farmland, as indicated by Sir Thomas More, was the augmentation of profitless idleness by means of vagabondage, the platoon of "sturdy" beggars remembered as "the characteristic evil of the Sixteenth Century" (Trevelyan 283).

This apparent problem of idleness resonated in Elizabethan pastoralism, which inherited the Christian pattern of departure and return, particularly the idea of banishment from an Edenic

idyll and its eventual recovery. This chapter explores how the abandonment of genuine civic responsibilities to pursue vainglorious achievement and worthless courtly entertainments (commonly expressed in Spenser's poetry through allusions to the parable of the good and bad shepherd[18]) is denounced in his writings, and how they nonetheless also valorise beatific leisure which completes the cycle of earthly labour. Hence, country repose and recreation need not be alien to effort, especially the generative kind valued by Protestants in accordance with the indissociable ends of social advancement and personal salvation, which transforms the pastoralized stage into an ideal proving-ground, a *locus* of education. By contrast, indulging in unproductive play is all too frequently exposed as a moral failing, deficient, and illusory in what O'Loughlin calls the ironic "vaunted realism" of the court (25). The advancement of the serio-ludic theme of early modern pastoral redeems the chief quality of the court—liberality—but only as a possibility within pastoralism, as a voluntary temporary retirement from the Sisyphean toils of ordinary life. Yet the abandonment of restless activity nonetheless consecrates play as an esteemed civic "calling." This is Spenser's vision for a socially constructive courtesy demonstrable throughout the pastoral interlude in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, in the charitable game of polite exchange between the aptly named Sir Calidore (from the Greek *kalos + dorus*, "beautiful gift") and Coridon (which recalls the French *cœur + don*, "heart, gift"), in the goodly manners of "ciuill conuersation," and especially in the didactic vision of the three Graces, who adorn body and mind with "all the complements of curtesie… / …which skill men call Ciuility" (*FQ* VI i 1, x 23).

Chapter Three examines the serio-ludic concept of the "ordeal" in Books II and V of *The Faerie Queene*. The Aristotelian "golden mean" and the logic of Neoplatonic syncretism are

---

[18] See *FQ* VI ix 22, and the three moral eclogues "of dissolute shepheards and pastours" ("May," "July," and September") in *The Shepheardes Calender*.

central not only for a thorough comprehension of each book, which occupies the middle position in the triadic structure of the epic,[19] but also to a general definition of the ordeal. Spenser understood that the ordeal (in German, *Gottesurteil*, meaning "The Final Judgment") is a kind of trial and moral decision-making with roots in the agonistic contest. The synthetical formula of the play of arbitration is evident in the trial of Duessa, which gives the sovereign Mercilla the power to hold the judicial game in balance. Furthermore, the concept of the ordeal meaning purposeful (and legal) "processes" reinforces the ambulatory motifs of errant wandering and sportive racing in the epic, especially noticeable in the pedestrian journey of the Knight of Temperance. According to James Nohrnberg, the Spenserian ordeal is, properly speaking, a (con)test or examination, an experiential lesson in "self-reliance… learning to stand on one's own two feet" that is even reducible to martial training (299-300).

The ludic elements of the chivalric trial, however, are not set in opposition to didactic and broadly ethical concerns. From the Platonic argument that the soul of the autonomous individual corresponds to the threefold division of the harmonious state, Spenser makes justice and temperance respectively the public and private manifestations of the mean, which notably come together in the episode at the Castle of Medina. Resistance to temptation (from the French verb *tempter*, meaning "to try, attempt"), which characterises Guyon's ordeal in the Cave of Mammon, corresponds to "That part of Iustice, which is Equity," standing for rational judgment and the merciful restraint of the written law—in a word, moderation (*FQ* V vii 3). Thus, the structural parallel of the books on Temperance and Justice is explained by their ideal

---

[19] Spenser published books I-III in 1590 and books IV-VI in 1596. This would explain the structural affinity between books II and V. By the same logic, books III and IV hold together the double trinities and focus respectively on the private and public manifestation of concord (e.g., chastity is to marriage what friendship is to social cohabitation). This chapter is inspired by part three of James Nohrnberg's *Analogy of The Faerie Queene*, pp. 285-425.

participation in the logic of harmony, which complements the symbolic union of work and play present throughout the epic.

Any study that defends the unification of the phenomena of work and play in *The Faerie Queene* should necessarily consider the trail of inspiration that Spenser left amongst his imaginative imitators. Although the task of placing the poets' poet in conversation with future moral allegorists, serio-ludic writers, and Sabbatarians far exceeds the bounds of the current thesis, for the purposes of identifying avenues of possible inquiry, and to justify my own approaches to reading, it is not inappropriate to gesture towards some of Spenser's most immediate successors.

For instance, the harmony between play and seriousness is essential to a proper understanding of the labours of John Milton's Adam and Eve in their Edenic proving-ground, which captures, like Spenser's conception of pastoralized courtesy, the true sense of *competere* (Latin for "competition") as mutually beneficent activity or "striving together." For the desired synthesis is ruptured after the couple's fall into unproductive antagonism: "Thus they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours" (*Paradise Lost*, IX. 1187-88). The legacy of Spenser and Milton addresses issues of providential and human guidance, a theme which is further developed in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan's allegory of the *miles Christi*. Moreover, at the center of Christian's ordeal is the judicial contest, the serio-ludic trial at Vanity Fair, which reveals that the spirit of Protestantism can be favourable to the development of authentic and serious play—play in service of an *examined* life. However, the training process in Spenserian literature can take the form of a confrontation of worldviews in which the expected concordance may be partially and selectively concealed. It is precisely this Puritan tendency towards irreconcilable contradiction that is explored in Samuel Butler's mock-heroic poem *Hudibras*, which satirises the enjoyment

of such studious pastimes as philosophical questioning and traces its degeneration into idle, fractious, and synodical dispute. Spenser's epic ambitions betray the quest for the discovery of a common wisdom, a shared truth, demonstrable through the complexities of work and play, that continues also amongst his prominent debtors of the seventeenth century.

Unsurprisingly, these nuances went largely unnoticed in the subsequent epochs driven toward extremes of luxury and thrift, exemplified in the shift from Restoration decadence to the dominant Whiggish political and mercantile ideology that followed the Glorious Revolution of 1688. For instance, in the two comparatively thematized cantos of James Thomson's poem *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), there can be found what is not generally a feature of Spenserian poetics, but instead one representative of eighteenth-century Whig pastoralism: the stark opposition of idleness and industry. The fairytale landscape of the bucolic Castle of Indolence is drawn primarily from the deceptive earthly paradises in Spenser's Legend of Temperance, the Bower of Bliss and the Lake of Idleness. But the poem itself, composed in the year following William Hogarth's completion of a "pictur'd Moral" entitled *Industry and Idleness*, hinges on an intentionally obvious moral decision between the Wizard of Indolence, named Archimage (II. 281), and the Knight of Arts and Industry, who echoes the figure of Guyon by successfully destroying the false spectacle of luxury (Sambrook 166). The final impression is for the most part discordant, even farcical. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the moral, which is deliberately set apart from the formal "play" with Spenser, Thomson himself confesses the use of "obsolete Words, and *a Simplicity of Diction in some of the Lines, which borders on the Ludicrous*, [and which] were necessary to make the Imitation more perfect" (173, emphasis added). In summary, we are presented with the incongruity of serious content and ludicrous form, but no *serio-ludere* signifying harmony between elements of work and play.

Although James Sambrook argues that Thomson's reworking of the final canto of Book II of *The Faerie Queene* includes a "moral haziness and subjectivity" that is absent in Spenser (167), in truth, ethical ambiguity (on the matter of play) is rather *more appropriate* to Spenser's poetry than the simpler allegorical poem of Thomson. In Thomson's erroneous interpretation of Spenserian didacticism, the virtues of civic labour stand opposed to the manifold pleasures of pastoral retirement:

> It was not by vile Loitering in Ease,
>
> That *Greece* obtain'd the brighter Palm of Art,
>
> That soft yet ardent *Athens* learn'd to please,
>
> To keen the Wit, and to sublime the Heart,
>
> In all supreme! compleat in every Part!
>
> It was not thence majestic *Rome* arose,
>
> And o'er the Nations shook her conquering Dart:
>
> For Sluggard's Brow the Laurel never grows;
>
> Renown is not the Child of indolent Repose. (*Cas. Ind.*, II. 442-450)

These lines could never conceivably be mistaken for Spenser's. This is the pragmatic spirit of *The Seasons* (1730) that prospers throughout a "Happy Britannia" in which toilsome rural tasks contribute to imperial expansion and commercial progress (*Summer*, 1442). Anticipating Albert Camus' description of Sisyphus, Thomson imagines that "*even Drudgery himself*, / As at the Car he sweats, or dusty hews / The Palace-Stone, *looks gay*" (*Summer*, 1459-1461, emphasis added). Although joyous labour assumes the wondrous quality of leisure, it never ceases to be labour. As John Barrell and John Bull explain, to accomplish their role in Thomson's Augustan England, "the workers must work, but still be as happy as if they were not working" (296). The felicity

that accompanies play adorns work as a kind of pretense. Hence, unreal play becomes in this special sense a redundancy, an overabundance of fancy.

Since Thomson's georgic poem is a paean to the genius of commerce and industrial advancement, we can expect that when he celebrates poets, it ought to be less for their formal achievements than for their civic engagements; however, we find that this is not the case in his praise of Spenser.[20] Surprisingly, Spenser was lauded for the alluring features of his verse, which perhaps explains Thomson's attempt to imitate his stanzaic form in *The Castle of Indolence*. In other words, the poet's poet was (and continued to be) regarded as a champion of indolence and a precursor of the quintessential urban escape, as evidenced by his importance to such Romantic poets as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Keats who notoriously dabbled in the soporific effects of opium.[21] This essay attempts to illustrate the pattern of unification and dissociation underlying the dynamics of leisure in Western literature; but where the dominant strain that emerged toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, evident in the georgic poetry of Thomson, perceives only the contrast of industry and idleness, in Spenser we find their resolution as an essential feature of early modern syncretism.

---

[20] Spenser is unfittingly referenced at the end of Thomson's list in praise of the civic-oriented English "Sons of Glory." See *Summer*, 1572-1575:

> Nor shall my Verse that elder Bard forget,
> The gentle *Spenser*, Fancy's pleasing Son;
> Who, like a copious River, pour'd his Song
> O'er all the Mazes of enchanted Ground.

Compare with Thomson's panegyric to Raleigh and Sidney. See *Summer*, 1499-1513.

[21] For a survey of Spenser's Romantic imitators, see Greg Kucich, *Keats, Shelley, and Romantic Spenserianism*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.

Chapter One

The Classical Inheritances of Spenserian Syncretism

Edmund Spenser's prefatory address to Sir Walter Raleigh introducing the general intention and meaning of *The Faerie Queene* ironically outlines "the Methode of a Poet historical." Echoing Sir Philip Sidney's—and earlier still, Aristotle's—argument for the superiority of poetry, Spenser writes that unlike the historian, who studies the past, and the philosopher, who ponders how the future should be, the poet is thrust "into the middest, euen where it most concerneth him, and there recoursing to the thinges forepaste, and diuining of things to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all" (16-17).[22] Spenser's continuous concern with "the middle of things" illuminates what C. S. Lewis has called the "allegorical core"[23] of the entire poem.

Since Spenser's poetic method is indirect, that is, "clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall deuises" (16), he demonstrates his predilection for synthesis by means of images, symbols, and diverse intertextual references—representation *through a mirror, dimly*, as it were (1 Corinthians 13.12). For example, Aristotelian metaphysics assumes that the center of the closed κόσμος, likened to the still point of a turning circle, is an Unmoved Mover whose presence necessitates the rotation of the unalterable heavens.[24] Likewise, the center of Spenser's epic is the Faerie Queen herself, Gloriana or Elizabeth I, and it is her image represented as if in a dream that prompts the devotional Arthur to endlessly seek her out. Moreover, Prince Arthur is a perfected *cortegiano* and, as the personification of Magnificence (Aristotle's Magnanimity,

---

[22] Compare Sidney, *Defense of Poesy*, p. 18; Aristotle, *Poetics*, ix. 3: "Poetry… is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular."

[23] Lewis applies the term to the structuring idea of each book, but it can be appropriately extended to the epic as a whole. See p. 381.

[24] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072b-1073a. This argument also complements the geocentric cosmology. See Spenser, *FQ* V ii 35, ll. 5-6: "The earth was in the middle centre pight, / In which it doth immoueable abide […]."

μεγαλοψυχία[25]), contains each moral virtue represented by the other chivalric heroes. The middle is both revealed Truth and Unity (in the sense of *Whole*ness and *Holi*ness).

The numerical value of the middle is One—Una, who is literally and metaphorically "enwrapped" in veil and wimple (*FQ* I i 4). Hence, Una is positioned in the first pageant of Book I *in the middle* of Red Crosse and the Dwarfe, bravely providing a stable force between the rashness of the former and the cowardliness of the latter. Classically trained readers will recognise the allusion to Aristotle's theory of virtue informing the entirety of *The Faerie Queene*.[26] Virtue of character, which according to Aristotle is correct and praiseworthy, pursues in thought or action the intermediate condition between excess and deficiency, and it can only be singular since many are the ways that lead to error (*Ethics*, 1106b15-35).[27]

The measuring of a mean[28] arises from the right sort of habituation or "discipline": the voluntary repetition of similar actions resulting from prior deliberation. Spenser learned partly from his reading of Aristotle, however, that consistency in thought and action, if unassisted, "is hard work to find" (*Ethics*, 1109a25). Virtue is that leisurely centre point about which servile labour endlessly revolves like a hapless lover.[29] Not only did the faerie knights find themselves unavoidably wandering between Aristotelian extremes, "*too and fro* in wayes unknowne" (*FQ* I i 10, emphasis added), but a re-examination of the planetary orbital patterns in the years leading up to Kepler seemed to prove that even the "rowling spheres… are wandred much" (*FQ* V Pr.

---

[25] See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a25.

[26] Compare Spenser, Letter to Raleigh: "I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised, the which is the purpose of these first twelue bookes" (15-16).

[27] Compare *FQ* V ii 48, l. 6: "For truth is one, and right is euer one."

[28] Compare Spenser, *FQ* II i 58, l. 2, and *SC*, "July" Gloss referring to the first of the twin emblems, *In medio virtus*: "he taketh occasion to prayse the meane and lowly state, as that wherein safetie without feare, and quiet without danger, according to the saying of olde Philosophers, that vertue dwelleth in the middest, being enuironed with two contrary vices."

[29] See Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, p. 21.

5).[30] Maintaining a *via media* had become increasingly burdensome in a disorderly world estranged from its appointed source and "runne quite out of square" (*FQ* V Pr. 1).[31]

In the autumn of the Middle Ages, the tone of life was characterised by an oscillation between extremes. "To the world when it was half a thousand years younger," writes Johan Huizinga, "the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us" (*Middle Ages*, 9). The medieval spirit, consisting in well-defined contrasts, persisted long into the Renaissance: cruel violence and saintly tenderness, rigid asceticism and attachment to worldly pleasures, ostentatious aristocratic pageantry and ragged beggary, town and country, everywhere loyalty and dishonor, always the polemics of good and evil, all striving toward extremes. The adversarial character of medieval life spilled into the religious wars of the sixteenth century and opened new fissures (such as the opposition between Crown and Parliament in the Jacobean and Caroline eras) which prompted, in reaction, a desire to reconcile opposition in the form of a unificatory politics. Hence, the ascension of the Tudors put to rest the bloody War of the Roses by uniting the Houses of Lancaster and York; later, the coronation of James I and VI "married" the kingdoms of England and Scotland; and lastly, in the Restoration, the reemergence of dramas and other serio-ludic forms served to heal a nation fractured by civil warfare. As foregrounded in the structure of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, Renaissance Neoplatonism also participated in the celebration of an ideal oneness achieved through dangerous liaisons with doubleness or duality by noting hidden affinities between Kabbalistic, Orphic, and Scriptural sources.

An important contribution of the early Italian humanists to Renaissance culture, therefore, was the perception of a secret concordance between apparently antithetical doctrines. As Edgar Wind assiduously notes, the "pagan revival," which has often been considered

---

[30] See also Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II, vii, l. 6: "We shall have shortly discord in the spheres."
[31] See also *FQ* VII. vi 6, l. 6: "And all this world is woxen daily worse."

fundamental to the Renaissance, was "less a 'revival of the classics' than a recrudescence of that ugly thing which has been called 'late-antique syncretism'" (22). The conciliatory temperament of Renaissance humanism, expressed in such three-part concepts as the Neoplatonic *discordia concors* and the general preference for *symbolic* insignia, which by definition bring ordinarily diverse things together,[32] could therefore be positioned apart from the unwieldy Christian dialogism of the Middle Ages.[33]

The triadic structure of early modern syncretism finds its origin in the Platonic concept of the "tripartite life" which corresponds to the three powers of the soul: reason, spirit, desire (*Republic* iv, 439). "No reasonable being doubts," wrote Marsilio Ficino to Lorenzo de' Medici, "that there are three kinds of life: the contemplative, the active, and the pleasurable (*contemplativa*, *activa*, *voluptuosa*). And three roads to felicity have been chosen by men: wisdom, power, and pleasure (*sapientia*, *potentia*, *voluptas*)" (quoted in Wind 82). According to Ficino, eudemonic virtue—a mark of universality—consisted in following all three paths conjointly.

---

[32] A "symbol" *means* something. Symbol (in Greek, σύμβολον) derives from συμβάλλειν, which literally means to hold two halves of a ring against each other to see where they fit, i.e., to bring together. As Martin Heidegger showed, the symbol contains a reference to something sensual, the ring or image (*Bild*), but also references something non-sensuous, namely the "spiritual sense" (*Sinn*). The symbol, as a kind of "allegory" (a compound of ἄλλο, "other," and ἀγορά, "the open or public place"), meaning to say something hidden by way of something familiar, unites the public and the private. The symbol is therefore a "sign" or "symbolic image" (in German, *Sinnbild*). See Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn*, p. 16.

[33] However, it is important to distinguish between the way that life is interpreted and how it is *lived*. The Middle Ages conceived society as an analogy of the human body: it was an organism composed of different members each completing their appointed function suited to their station in life and must not aspire to more (this perspective is markedly different from the tone of Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*). As is often the case, the real and the ideal can be vastly different, but the former typically determines the latter. Concerning the ideal, Tawney states,

> The distinctive feature of medieval thought is that contrasts which later were to be presented as irreconcilable antitheses appear in it as differences within a larger unity, and that the world of social organization, originating in physical necessities, passes by insensible gradations into that of the spirit […]. But the characteristic thought is different. It is that of a synthesis. (33)

And again:

> Society was interpreted… not as the expression of economic self-interest, but as held together by a system of mutual, though varying, obligations. Social well-being exists, it was thought, in so far as each class performs its functions and enjoys the rights proportioned thereto. (37)

Nevertheless, the road of pleasure is a late Florentine addition to the Neoplatonic doctrine of necessary contrariety, which does not preclude even the antiquarian contrast between active and contemplative life to devolve into an irreconcilable antithesis. As Erwin Panofsky explains, despite the obvious contrasts between the *via activa* and the *via contemplativa*, both justify the attainments of beatitude and immortality by endowing the Neoplatonic initiate with "the power of discernment and thought" and "the power to act"—the respective offerings of Saturn and Jupiter, according to Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* (208-209n114).[34] Importantly, both channels to apotheosis are regarded as virtues. The Jovial trait of *Magnanimità* ("Magnanimity"), as defined by Cesare Ripa, is as equally favourable as the Saturnian attribute of parsimony, symbolising the distinctive characteristics of the paired funerary statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici in Michel Angelo's unfinished project for the Medici Chapel (Panofsky 211). The moral redemption of convivial activity and self-centered contemplation may have also contributed to the temporary exclusion of pleasure from the Neoplatonic vision, until it was introduced into the Ficinian synthesis.[35] Macrobius, for instance, adopted the Stoic prejudice that separated virtue from pleasure, which a poet such as Jonson would find appalling (Wind 85), while the early modern distinction between industry and idleness is a late development of the dissociation of pleasure from the laboursome "polliticke vertues" of contemplation and action.[36]

---

[34] See Pico della Mirandola's Commentary on a Canzone of Benivieni, quoted in Panofsky, pp. 209-210:
> Saturn signifies the intellectual nature which is only devoted to and intent on understanding and contemplating. Jupiter signifies the active life which consists of superintending, administering and keeping in motion by its rules the things subjected to it. These two properties are found in the two planets called by the same names, viz., Saturn and Jupiter. For, as they say, Saturn produces contemplative men, while Jupiter gives them principalities, government, and the administration of peoples.

[35] For Plato, it is reason that stands alone, maintaining order and harmony amongst discordant drives. In the *Phaedrus* (246b), reason is described as a horseman driving a pair of winged horses, the one, good and noble, the other, from an opposite stock. On the influence of Plato's *Phaedrus* for Spenser and other Renaissance Neoplatonists, see Kenneth Borris, *Visionary Spenser*, pp. 83-121. See also Wind, p. 82.

[36] See Spenser, *FQ* II iii 40, ll. 8-9. See also Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 1297-1299. For a commentary on the Puritan suspicion of pleasure, see Weber, p. 167.

On the contrary, Ficino, whose lifelong Epicurean sympathies have been well documented, consistently held that the culmination of philosophic inquiry lay in pleasure (Wind 48, 50). Pleasure not only completes the Neoplatonic triad, he supposed, but is also a pacifying force when it is "projected into the Beyond" and coincides with the beauteous dance of the Graces. This later Ficinian addition was supported by Aristotle's serio-ludic theory of the "golden mean" (Wind 47).[37] Although it is just as likely that the holy trinity provided commentators with a sufficient model of equality reconciling diverse entities, the pagan origins of the relationship between concordance and the charming effects of pleasure deserves further consideration. From the illegitimate union of Venus and Mars emerges a daughter named Harmony: *Harmonia est discordia concors* (Wind 86; Panofsky 163; Campana 15).

For Pythagoreans and Platonists, the word αρμονία (*harmonia*) designated the universal order "made by Simmetry and proportion, and is in that respect compared to Musick, and Musick to Poetry" (Thomas Campion, quoted in Borris 52).[38] The consonant "music" of the nine Ptolemaic planetary spheres, which correspond to the nine Parnassian muses and the triple triad of Christian angels,[39] was allusively represented in the nine-line Spenserian stanza (*FQ* II ix 22, Borris 53). Plato's *Republic* specifically correlated the inner and outer νόμος (*nómos*), the proper balancing of the soul with the well-ordered polity, establishing the foundations for the Hegelian

---

[37] According to Aristotle, pleasure characterises the "actuality"— ἐντελέχεια (*entelecheia*) and ἐνέργεια (*energeia*, derived from the Greek ἔργων (*ērgon*, meaning "work"))—of the Unmoved Mover that constitutes the realisation of a process, namely the circular movement of the heavens and the natural world. Actuality is distinguished from potentiality, that is, processes that are incomplete and wearily pursue their end (*Met*. 1048b). Aristotle attacked creationist cosmogonies, specifically Plato's *Timaeus*, which posited an Atlas-like Demiurge that would seemingly struggle to keep the world in order. God is complete and, therefore, cannot be an antagonist (*Met*. 1050b). Moreover, action is the completion of a thought that has set a process in motion and since the completion of a thought is nothing more than thought itself, God abides eternally in the reposeful activity of self-contemplation (*Met*. 1072b). The Prime Mover is a *deus studiosus*, and study is pleasant and enjoyable leisure, σχολέ (*skolē*) (see *NE* 1177b5). Felicitous leisure, as virtuous action, is concordant with the self-sufficient mean. Thus, there is a sense in which pleasure, as the accompaniment of studious leisure, synthesises the opposition between motion and rest, between work and play, between the serious and the ludicrous.
[38] Compare n. 33.
[39] See Dionysius the Areopagite, *Celestial Hierarchy*, p. 27.

logical synthesis between subject and object. To the mind acquainted with etymologies, harmony and law are conceptually linked since *nómos* is the Greek word for both "law" and "tune." Thus, the child becomes "accustomed" to traditions or *customs* by learning to obediently participate in choral melodies.[40] This harmonious combination of the pleasances of poetry, song, and dance maintained its vitality throughout the Renaissance by means of the Neoplatonic allegory of the three Graces, which occupies an essential role in the climactic episode of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*: Sir Calidore's epiphanic ascent of Mount Acidale.[41]

That Spenser alludes to the recreations of Venus in his choice of setting for the dialectical dance of the Graces, symbolising the modes of that "Unity" called Love,[42] is a testament to his awareness of the connection between triadic syncretism and leisure:

> 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;[43]
>
> That euen her owne Cytheron, though in it
>
> She vsed most to keepe her royall court,

---

[40] See Plato, *Laws*, 654: "By the term 'uneducated' man we shall mean a man who has not been trained to take part in a chorus; and we must say that if a man *has* been sufficiently trained, he is 'educated'."

[41] Tonkin, in *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, calls this episode a "point of epiphany," p. 245. The Platonized humanists must surely have learned from their reading of the *Laws* that the Greek words χαρα (*chara*, "charm") and χορός (*choros*, "chorus") are etymologically linked, for Plato makes an effort to mention it. See *Laws*, 654.

[42] See Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 168:

> while the current mythographical sources depict the Three Graces as something like Venus' handmaidens or 'Ladies-in-waiting' (*pedissequae*), Platonizing humanists of the Renaissance had come to interpret their relationship to Venus in a more philosophical way. The Three Graces were thought of as qualifications of the entity that was Venus, so much so that they were termed a 'Trinity' of which Venus was the 'Unity:' they were held to embody the threefold aspect of Venus, i.e., supreme Beauty, in much the same way as God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are considered the threefold aspect of the Deity.

[43] See also *FQ* IV v 5.

And in her soueraine Maiesty to sit,

She in regard hereof refusde and thought vnfit. (*FQ* VI x 9)

Spenser derives the name Acidale from the Greek ἀκηδία (*acēdia*), meaning "carelessness" (a

medieval precursor of *ennui*, "boredom"[44]), which doubtless points to Calidore's temporary

reprieve from his pursuit of the Blatant Beast. Excluding Erasmus' lighthearted treatment of

Μισοπονία ("Laziness") as a companion of Folly,[45] Christian commentators generally regarded

acēdia as a moral failing: the capital sin of sloth (Wind 69). Spenser is no exception, for he

addresses Sloth as "the nourse of sin" and gives its personification a preeminent role in the

pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins (*FQ* I iv 18).[46] Spenser gradually complicates his assessment

of sloth (or idleness) as he expands *The Faerie Queene*, ultimately closing the epic with a sincere

desire for rest: "O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight" (*FQ* VII viii 2).[47]

Therefore, throughout the books of Holiness and Temperance, idleness means inactivity, a kind

of sportive delight, and it is employed as the antithesis of an ascetic industriousness exemplified

in Spenser's Belphoebe. However, in the book of Courtesy, Spenser turns away from an overtly

proto-capitalist ethic by restoring the truer sense of *acēdia* as synonymous with restlessness (or

"busyness"), what Josef Pieper calls the "incapacity to enjoy leisure" (38).

Just as Calidore's "endlesse trace" of the Blatant Beast frustrates him (*FQ* VI i 6, ix 1-3),

Spenser understood that *acēdia* constituted a breach of the fourth commandment, in which the

---

[44] See Wenzel, p. 127. For an extensive analysis of Christian interpretations of *acēdia* and especially its literary manifestations, see Wenzel, chapter six, pp. 127-163.

[45] See *Essential Erasmus*, p. 104.

[46] *Acēdia*, as Pieper notes, was regarded as one of the *vitia capitalia*, the seven "capital" or cardinal sins. "For they were not called "capital"," he adds, "because of the best-known rendering of *caput*; *caput* certainly means "head," but it also means "source" or "spring" […]. They are sins from which other faults follow "naturally," one is tempted to say, as from a source" (40). This dual meaning of "capital" informs Spenser's pageant, as the "Chamberlain *Slowth*" stands at the *head* of the procession and is *followed* by the other vices personified. See also Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. Q. 35, Art. 3-4.

[47] See also the final couplet of the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene*, substituted out in the following edition: "Now cease your worke, and at your pleasure play; / Now cease your worke; to morrow is an holy day" (III xii 47a).

devotee is invited to complete his labour and "observe the sabbath day and keep it holy" (Ex. 20.8, Deut. 5.12).[48] Pieper appropriately compares festal leisure to "the tranquil silence of lovers, which draws its strength from concord" (42). Leisure is not non-activity, but a serene apprehension of the totality of the world, a *pleasing analysis of all* that completes—or rather, unites and balances—Ficino's existential triad.[49] Thus, in the manner of early modern syncretism, Spenser merges the classical dream of studious repose (what the Romans called *otium*) with the Sabbatarian vision: he continues to furrow the poetic soil and then, like God after the first founding of the world, to actively "admire ech turning of thy verse" (*SC*, "August," l. 191), harmonising work and play in beatific leisure.[50]

Spenser makes the panoptic Sabbath's sight of Calidore, inspired by the Graces' unitive play, the climax of *The Faerie Queene* because he knows that the heroic poet definitively incorporates all kinds of literature, all kinds of life, so that the epic is the perfect home for the syncretic mind. Furthermore, epics are encyclopaedic attempts to include all prior epics, and Spenser, Gabriel Harvey testified, consciously sought to master, and ultimately overdo, his predecessors' literary exploits (Giamatti 22-23).[51]

There was much more in Renaissance culture that sustained Spenser's synthetic approach. The most astute observation in Wind's *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* may be the one which gets the briefest treatment: the overarching tone of early modern humanist

---

[48] See Pieper, pp. 39-40. I have simply substituted the reference to Aquinas' name for Spenser's.
[49] Compare Huizinga, *Middle Ages*, p. 132, *Homo Ludens*, pp. 3-4. Also Pieper, p. 44:
> The point and the justification of leisure are not that the functionary should function faultlessly and without a breakdown, but that the functionary should continue to be a man—and that means that he should not be wholly absorbed in the clear-cut milieu of his strictly limited function; the point is also that he should retain the faculty of grasping the world as a whole and realizing his full potentialities as an entity meant to reach Wholeness.

[50] Giamatti's etymological reflections on agriculture and versification, and how they relate to the Spenserian mind, are still the gold standard. See p. 92-93.
[51] See Selincourt's introduction to *Spenser's Poetical Works*, p. xli. It should also be noted that the Latin *vertere*, which gives us "verse," is cognate with *advertere* ("adversary").

syncretism—of the Renaissance, *tout court*—is the serio-ludic.[52] Ficino remarked that his examination of the allegorical mysteries in Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato all revealed the same lesson: "to jest seriously, and diligently play" (*iocari serio, et studiosissime ludere*).[53] *Serio ludere* became an adage of Ficino and Pico, More and Erasmus (Wind 236)—not to forget the Platonised Rabelais, who insisted that the dinner table was the choicest setting to discuss *haultes matieres et sciences profundes*.[54] There are also Spenser's "labors of lost time" which issue forth paradoxically from an "aboundance of an idle braine" (*FQ* II Pr. i). Indeed, what Huizinga says of Ariosto could easily be extended to his sincere admirer, Spenser:

> Where has poetry ever been so unconstrained, so absolutely at play? Delicately, elusively he hovers between the mock-heroic and the pathetic, in a sphere far removed from reality but peopled with gay and delightfully vivid figures, all of them lapped in the inexhaustible, glorious mirth of his voice which bears witness to the identity of play and poetry. (*Homo Ludens*, 181)

Moreover, the popular forms of enigmatic art, such as emblems, belonged to the category of intellectual *exercitatio*, instructive wrestling matches that placed the player in the middle way between knowledge and ignorance, hearkening back to the Platonic pedagogic ideal which had become, in effect, the rule of humanist educational theories.[55] Associating mental dialectics to passionate "Herculean labour" predates Hegel by several centuries; Huizinga notes, for instance, that in Hans Holbein's portrait of Erasmus at Longford Castle, Erasmus' hands are placed on a book bearing the inscription ΗΡΑΚΛΉΣ ΠΟΝΟΙ ("The Labours of Heracles"), which recalls

---

[52] See Wind, p. 222.
[53] See Wind, p. 236n1.
[54] In a letter to Thomas More declaring Erasmus' intent to compose the serio-ludic *Moriæ Encomium* (the *Praise of Folly*), we find that even study should be playful: "how unfair it is truly, when we grant every calling in life its amusements, not to allow the profession of learning any amusement at all." See *Essential Erasmus*, pp. 99-100. Also Rabelais, *Gargantua*, "Prologe de l'auteur."
[55] See Wind, p. 164n48, 190.

Erasmus' view of himself (*Erasmus*, 125). Nevertheless, under the veil of poetic allegory, dialectics could become a ludicrous "slanging-match," a lampoon moderated by an umpire, adapted by Theocritus and Virgil for the pastoral eclogue (to be picked up later by the likes of Marot and Spenser).[56] Even the three Graces could be represented playing ball, throwing to one another the golden apples of discord (Wind 84n13). "We must emphasize," Huizinga observes, "that play does not exclude seriousness. The spirit of the Renaissance was very far from being frivolous. The game of living in imitation of Antiquity was pursued in holy earnest" (*Homo Ludens*, 180).

Classical and Christian sources provided Renaissance poets with a plethora of examples, literary and non-literary, disclosing the polemics of utility and vanity, of industriousness and idleness. This theme, coupled with the humanist spirit of reconciliation, its predisposition to direct all private enterprise to the common good, made the sixteenth-century ripe for the syncretism of work and play that animates Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Nonetheless, with the separation of pleasure from virtue in some sixteenth-century circles, work and play became dissociated phenomena—industry and idleness—that fueled the political and theological controversies dividing Protestants (especially Calvinists) and Catholics.

Spenser confirms, in the eightieth sonnet of the *Amoretti,* the unification of work and play in contemplation, the activity of resting from his labours:

> After so long a race as I haue run
>
> Through Faery land, which those six books compile

---

[56] See Aristotle, *Poetics*, iv 8-9:

> The appropriate [poetic] meter was here introduced; hence the measure is still called the iambic or lampooning measure, being that in which people lampooned one another. Thus the older poets were distinguished as writers of heroic or of lampooning verse.

See also Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 68.

> 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.
>
> Till then giue leaue to me in pleasant mew,
>
> to sport my muse and sing my loues sweet praise:
>
> the contemplation of whose heauenly hew,
>
> my spirit to an higher pitch will rayse.
>
> But let her prayses yet be low and meane,
>
> fit for the handmayd of the Faery Queene.

In the context of Spenser's literary production, the request for a "pleasant mew / to sport my muse and sing my loues sweet praise" reflects a desire to put aside epic themes in favour of a marriage hymn: the *Epithalamium* that Spenser composed for his wife Elizabeth Boyle sometime after the completion of Books IV-VI around 1594. Alternatively, if we read the sonnet as a commentary on *The Faerie Queene*, the reposeful contemplation "low and meane / fit for the handmaid of the Faery Queene" is comparable to Calidore's sabbatical sight of the dancing Graces, the "daughters of delight, / Handmaides of *Venus*" (*FQ* VI x 15). The conciliatory aesthetic judgment of the closing sestet about the value of contemplation annuls the serio-ludic controversy of the opening octave, which juxtaposes the playful assonance of the first quatrain to the language of labour introduced in the second, and in the process reveals how the separate sections of the poem—divided into sentences—can stand in proper relation to each other.

Therefore, leisurely contemplation serves as a guide for proper reading, and the distanced perspective granted to the reader (a role assumed by Spenser in the sonnet above) enables the structure of the poem to be known. Defined by A. C. Hamilton as "an Idea or argument which unifies the whole poem" (quoted in Alpers 111), structure implies an essential coherence between the totality and its parts—the One and the Many. Structure becomes, in a special sense, another word for syncretism, and Spenser's readers had best attend to the organisational power of his moral schema. C. S. Lewis' *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* tells us much about Spenser's structuring moral "philosophy":

> Some scholars believe that in parts of the *Faerie Queene* they can find Spenser systematically expounding the doctrines of a school. But if so, the school can hardly be defined as anything narrower than Platonized Protestantism. (385)

Spenser also learned from Aristotle, but that is beside the point. By the time he sets out to write *The Faerie Queene*, distinctions of ancient and modern, classical and biblical, real and ideal, sacred and profane, are irrelevant to him.[57] "In general he is concerned with agreements, not differences," adds Lewis. Spenser sought to become a poet of harmony, his task was to "embody in moving images the common wisdom" (Lewis 386).[58] In a way, Spenser is the poet who best exemplifies the mean: "while he touches hands with the pure Golden poets, he also touches hands with Chaucer, Byron, and Crabbe" (Lewis 391). For "at the still point of the turning world" where past, present, and future are all gathered, "there the dance is" (Eliot, *Four Quartets*, "Burnt Norton"). There, at the center of the ring in the Graces' dance in Book VI, lies

---

[57] Compare Pico, *Oration*, p. 44: "It is certainly a mark of excessive narrowness of mind to enclose oneself within one Porch or Academy; nor can one reasonably attach himself to one school or philosopher, unless he has previously become familiar with them all."

[58] Compare Lewis, p. 392: "It is also probably true that the lack of tension in his verse reflects the lack of tension in his mind. His poetry does not express (though of course if often presents) discord and struggle, it expresses harmony."

the epistemic fruit of syncretism: the fourth Grace, representing the celestial Venus, Rosalind, Eliza, Elizabeth Boyle, or simply Truth and Unity.[59]

In this climactic scene, Spenser himself, as Colin Clout, plays the same detached role as Mercury in Botticelli's *Primavera*. To the humanists, swift-footed Mercury—the conductor of the Graces, the "guide of souls" or psychopomp (ψυχοπομπός), the divine messenger travelling between heaven and earth to mediate the affairs of gods and men—was most importantly a god of quiet contemplation, the patron of grammarians and metaphysicians who honoured his name through a branch of esoteric knowledge: ἑρμηνεία (Wind 122).[60] By turning away from the world to behold the transcendent, that from which all things flow and to which they all return, pensive Mercury represents one part of the cycle of play: play as peace, pastoral retreat, repose, and contemplation. But Spenser knew that Colin Clout must come home again, that the departing enthusiast needs to "returne in hast / Vnto so great atchieuement" (*FQ* VI xii 13) and re-enter the busy world of civic affairs. The active player who puts down his oaten reeds represents the other (and equally serious) half of the eternally recurrent process of play: play as war, movement, enterprise, and activity.

Spenser's *discordia concors* not only intimated the hidden wisdom of Antique and Hermetic philosophers, but also reinforced the underlying pattern of existence: matter, that undifferentiated worldly mass the Greeks called *chōra* (the root of Latin *cor*, that happens to be cognate with "chorus"), is formed and ordered through strife, warfare. As Heraclitus

---

[59] Compare *SC*, "April," and *FQ* VI x 15-16. See also Botticelli's *Primavera* featuring Venus as the central figure, which follows the Neoplatonic convention of calling her the goddess of moderation or harmony (Wind 119). Botticelli's Venus was understood by Italianate commentators as holding together or protecting the dance of the Graces while her impetuous son, Cupid, blindly interrupts them. Consequently, we can compare Cupid's role to Calidore's blunder that puts an end to the dance upon Mount Acidale.

[60] The crux of "Hermeticism" is to reveal secret truths in a symbolic manner, so that the mystery can "giueth great light" while remaining "clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall deuises." I do not wish to say that Spenser is a "Hermetic" in a religious or even philosophical sense, I only mean to draw out the similarities between Spenser's poetic syncretism and the methods characteristic of the Hermetic tradition.

enigmatically preached, "War [Πόλεμος, *polemos*] is father of all, and king of all" (frag. 53). The

Presocratic philosopher Empedocles later refined the view, proposing that an admixture of Love

and Strife created the rudimentary elements of nature—hence the reason why poets have

depicted the liaisons of War and Love, Pico demonstrated (19-20).[61] Furthermore, in the portrait

of the prototypical gentleman, exemplified by Spenser's Calidore, the paradoxical extremes of

Mars *and* Venus harmonise, corresponding to what Wind called "the double life led by the

average courtier, that of a warrior and of a lover" (85). Through the coincidence of both

occupations, the twofold senses of play participate in the quintessentially Neoplatonic definition

of man as "the center of the universe" free to accomplish his personal salvation by devoting his

life to heavenly contemplation or to earthly activity in service of the task of perfecting human

existence (Panofsky 137-139). As Panofsky explains, by means of contemplation *and* action, the

two wings that according to Cristoforo Landino "carry the soul" to higher spheres, the virtuous

individual could realise the transportive pleasures of beatitude (192)—to which may be added

the pleasances that inhere in leisure, uniquely capable of integrating retirement into civic

responsibility.

Although play has been (erroneously and) persistently "related to the genuine, serious

carrying out of life in a sort of analogous manner to the way in which sleep is related to

wakefulness" (Fink 16),[62] it is not at all the case that Spenser considers Sabbatarian leisure to be

---

[61] The relevant section of the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is also quoted in Wind, p. 89. The Empedoclean sublimation approximates the Neoplatonic, the Lucretian but also, much later, Ficinian, belief that Love is a generative principle and the only force capable of offsetting the destructive impulse of Mars. The source of cosmic "mixture," Venus acts in tandem with Mercury, as mediators between heaven and earth. See Panofsky, pp. 152, 164.

[62] Compare C. S. Lewis: "it is at once so true and so misleading to call [Spenser's] poetry dream-like"

> its images have the violent clarity and precision which we often find in actual dreams, but not the dimness and evasiveness which the overtones of the word *dreamlike* (based more on waking reverie than real dreaming) usually call up. (387)

Dim and evasive. These words perfectly characterise Calidore *before* the Knight of Courtesy learns how the instructive entertainment of the Graces—what we might otherwise call serious play (or playful work)—engenders social harmony "which skill men call Ciuility" (*FQ* VI x 23). Located in Faery Land, Spenser's epic turns toward

a peripheral and supplementary human activity. Spenser notably relegates rest to the margins of

his epic and repeatedly illustrates its dangers; however, his critique of rest is not a censure of

play *tout court*, but rather a "reproch of carelesnesse" (*FQ* I vii 3).[63] Spenser teaches us that the

abandonment of responsibilities—to self, to other, and to all—is a foolish "dalliance," the kind of

erroneous play dissociated from the cycle of heroic labour.[64] This latter endeavour answers the

call to civic action in the Hesiodic spirit of athletic Saint George "brought… vp in ploughmans

state to byde" (*FQ* I x 66).[65] But practical discipline ensures that even respite from physical

exertion—as Sabbatarian leisure enabling one to seek a "pleasing Analysis of all"—can be an

effective grace ordained through sweat and agony: "Abroad in armes, *at home in studious kind* /

Who seekes with painfull toile, shall honor soonest find," "In woods, in waues, in warres she

wonts to dwell, "And will be found with perill and with paine" (*FQ* II iii 40-41, emphasis

added).

---

wakefulness, as evidenced by the idolatrous dangers associated with sleep in I, the chronicles in II and III, the plethora of historical allusions in V, and the nature of the heroic journey in VI.

[63] See also Cymochles at the Lake of Idleness, lulled to sleep by the Circean temptress, Phaedria: "By this she had him lulled fast a sleepe, / That of no worldly thing he care did take" (*FQ* II vi 18). Likewise, the immediate effect of the Bower of Bliss, according to Maurice Evans (see p. 145), is to make men careless when they ought to be full of care.

[64] See *FQ* II vi 21, l. 9.

[65] See *Works and Days*, ll. 11-35. Hesiod was one of the first to argue favourably regarding agricultural Strife (*Eris*). He sang how Zeus gave birth to two goddesses of Strife, the one Bad and the other Good, and that the latter made her dwelling "in the roots / of earth." This latter Strife is good for mortals, stimulating the envious ploughman, who sees his rival grow rich, to action, which produces the necessary surplus for communal feasts in honour of Demeter, goddess of the grain. Friedrich Nietzsche examines this concept of "envy" in detail in his essay *Homers Wettkampf* (Homer's Contest). Likewise, Spenser appears to plant himself within the georgic tradition, which need not be, as it had been for Virgil, a genre distinct from the epic. Giamatti has shown how Spenser seems to have understood that the English word "verse" is derived from the Latin *versus*, meaning "the turn of a plow, a furrow, line, or row" (92). Spenser learned that cultivating the soil is analogous to drawing a line of verse; however, as I have mentioned previously, he certainly connected *versus* to *adversarius*, which means "a rival, opponent, adversary." The poet— like the legendary hero Hercules—plays the dual role of ploughman and athlete.

Chapter Two

The Pastoral Grounds of Serio-Ludic Spenserian Syncretism

Βουχολιχαὶ Μοῖσαι σποράδες ποχά, νῦν δ'ἄμα πᾶσαι ἐντὶ μιᾶς μάνδρας, ἐντὶ μιᾶς ἀγέλας.[66]

Theocritus, Epigram xxvi

The renascent pastoralism of the Elizabethan era further illuminates Spenser's serio-ludic syncretism. Throughout *The Faerie Queene*, the dilemma between the activities of play and work, illustrated through the recurring motif of the Choice of Hercules, brings to the forefront the confrontation of two worldviews (the contemplative and the active) with their corresponding poetic forms, respectively pastoral for the former, and georgic and epic for the latter. In the pastoral interlude of Book VI, Spenser adapts the medieval genre of the *pastourelle* which announces the intrusion of the chivalric world of martial questing into the bucolic idyll of leisure and amorous delight. This conjunction of a harsh reality, a world of political ambition rife with destructive warfare and social fragmentation, with a relative Golden Age of felicity, somewhat apart from the ordinary toils and tumults of human life, reflects pastoral's provision of "a midway point between perfection and imperfection" (Marinelli 13).[67] Navigation between the real and the ideal, and subsequently the experience of both court and country, is a necessary feature of pastoral poetry and typifies Spenser's literary career in which he shuttled back and forth between pastoral and epic.[68] However, the ongoing process of conventionalising the

---

[66] The English translation by Anthony Holden reads:

> The pastoral Muses once were scattered; now
> they are together in one fold, one flock.

[67] See also Marinelli, p. 37:

> Arcadia is primarily the paradise of poetry. It is a middle country of the imagination, half-way between a past perfection and a present imperfection, a place of Becoming rather than Being, where an individual's potencies for the arts of life and love and poetry are explored and tested. It points two ways therefore, backward into the past and forward into a possible future.

On heroic poetry as a testament to earthly decay, see p. 17.

[68] See Marinelli, p. 51.

pastoral "form," effected in the very act of writing within the Theocritean-Virgilian tradition, has

effectively concealed its embeddedness in lived experience, severing the literary form from its

material substrate. It may even be that the very suppression and obscuring of the material

conditions of pastoralism—the pastures themselves—is the essential feature of the (Elizabethan)

pastoral;[69] however, as the early sections of this chapter demonstrate, the humanistic element of

the Renaissance complicated the matter by reorienting the human gaze to the material world, in

life and literature.

Louis Adrian Montrose cogently notes that English literature came to fruition in the soil

of English society. In other words, "poems and novels embody changing modes of production

and property relations, the shifting dialectic between rural and urban forms of social life" (418).

Therefore, the assimilation of pastoralism in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries

into many other literary genres points to the central feature of Elizabethan socio-economic life,

namely the controversy surrounding the enclosure of common fields (Montrose, "Politics," 424).

The dichotomy between textual and material pastoralisms, the latter of which highlights class

competitions waged on the fields of rural England between shepherds and ploughmen, is

expressed by Spenser and other Elizabethan poets in terms of idleness and industry.

The standard shepherds and shepherdesses of pastoral romance are civilised figures

artfully dressed in a guise of simplicity; as Peter V. Marinelli writes, "they are shepherds hardly

---

[69] See Montrose, "Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form," p. 422. It should be noted that dispossession is inherent to pastoralism, for one of the dominant ideas of the pastoral tradition (pagan and Christian) is banishment from the paradisal idyll. In the Ovidian account of the four ages, the silver age is heralded by the departure of Astraea (and occasionally Saturn) from the earth. The fall as major precondition for pastoral poetry is prefigured in the punishment of Adam, and other consequences of the original sin such as the Edenic exodus. Lastly, in the first eclogue, Virgil laments the exile from their landholdings of the supporters of Antony, who lost the War of Actium against Octavian (ll. 71-73): *Impius haec tam culta novalia miles habebit, barbarus has segetes? En, quo discordia civis produxit miseros! His nos consevimus agros!* (Is a godless soldier to hold these well-tilled fallows? a barbarian these crops? See where strife has brought our unhappy citizens! For these have we sown our fields!). See Marinelli, *Pastoral*, p. 20, 43. On the pastoral as "the most telling indictment of war with its hardships and miseries," see Cooper, pp. 3-4.

at all, for their real interests are love and poetry" (4). Taking Spenser's hero Calidore as an exemplum, we find that many shepherds in Elizabethan pastoral literature possess the ideals of courtesy—a trait, Spenser observes, not without irony, that best excels in the court.[70] Although many pastoral works oppose the vain pomp and "gay showes" of the royal court (*FQ* VI ix 22, 27), the anti-court rhetoric in Renaissance pastoral, as Montrose writes, "is itself an aspect of courtly or aristocratic culture" expressing aristocratic discontent rather than a critique from an actual rustic outsider ("Politics," 426-427). The leisurely occupations of pastoralized gentlemen and the relative ease of shepherd life (compared to manual labour), indicated by the conventions of literary pastoral, reflect the ideology of courtly privilege. Nevertheless, the implication that courtiers ought to abstain from the cruel necessities of labour through dissemblance (pastoral or otherwise) hides the exhaustions of courtly aspiration and self-fashioning. "If pastoral forms are characteristic embodiments of courtly play," Montrose tersely comments, "*play* is nevertheless the characteristic embodiment of courtly *work*" ("Politics," 452). The discouragement of labour in Renaissance court performances, which conveniently conceal the tiresome discipline required to sustain an aura of natural ability and playfulness, stands in sharp contrast to the spirit of Protestantism.

Protestant ideas regarding God's subjection of humanity to the troubles of agrarian toil after the Fall (Gen. 3.17-19), and the notion of effectual grace understood as the work of God but finding *justification* in the industrious ethic characteristic of Puritanism, further complicate the dialectics of toil and ease in early modern England. Notwithstanding the Protestant acceptance of practical leisure activities such as physical training, the (especially Puritanical) suspicion of spontaneous means of enjoyment and vociferous condemnation of all things allegedly

---

[70] See *FQ* VI Pr. 7, l. 9: "your Court, where courtesies excell."

superstitious—which include such communal folk recreations as the May games, Whitsun-ales, and Morris-dances at issue in the dilemma over the *Book of Sports*—effectually enshrined spiritually isolated work and self-disciplined conduct as the sole mechanisms for social and personal improvement. The Protestant's compulsive obsession to guarantee his own election ironically, or perhaps dexterously, shifted the focus away from the transcendent cause of grace to its discernible material condition, that is, unrelenting toil (Tawney 229-230).[71]

Nevertheless, the desire to renounce the fallen world and move from the court to the country, from the city to the cloistered garden, links Renaissance pastoral poetics to Scriptural inheritances—a connection reinforced by the conflation of the shepherd and priest in the word *pastor*, and the bucolic biblical parables (Huizinga, *Middle Ages*, 136). The Protestant wayfarer longing for a more authentic fellowship in the Heavenly Jerusalem has an essentially pastoral desire for utopian retired leisure incorporating elements of work and play. This connection of apparently warring principles is a typically overlooked feature of Protestantism and is indicative of the broader syncretism characteristic of Reformation humanism.

As we have seen in Chapter One, early modern syncretism followed a logic of its own which challenged the principle of the excluded middle, the *tertium non datur*. The Aristotelian logic of a complete disjunction between opposites, reinforced by the heightened polemics of the Reformation, concealed ancient wisdom and led many Renaissance thinkers to mistakenly believe that "they had only some *Choice of Hercules*."[72] "It is the absence of any transcendent alternative which renders the moral so respectable," Edgar Wind insightfully writes concerning the ethical dilemma, "but although the humanists used it profusely in their exoteric instruction, they left no doubt that, for a Platonic initiate, it was but the crust, and not the marrow" (205).

---

[71] Compare Pieper, p. 32.
[72] Quoted from Carlyle (*Sartor Resartus* II, x) in Wind, p. 206n50.

Truthfully, for many commentators, the dilemma between two opposites was not a "choice" in the traditional sense but an invitation, through studious meditation, to *rompre l'os, et sucer la substantifique moelle*[73]—that is, to explore the enigmas of allegorical symbols. Thus, the myth of Hercules at the crossroads presents, on the surface, an uncomplicated decision between Pleasure and Virtue that reveals a third option, a hidden concordance between the two.

Nowhere is the dilemma between the two dames, Pleasure and Virtue, more apparent— but nowhere is it more starkly sketched—than when Belphoebe opposes idleness and industry (*FQ* II iii 40).[74] For Spenser, ease and toil (also peace and war, frivolity and seriousness, liberality and servitude, Venus and Diana, Amoret and Belphoebe) are rarely irreconcilably opposed to each another as extremes.[75] After all, Spenserian syncretism was informed by the Elizabethan cult of the Queen, which revived the structures of vassalage that connected chivalric performance with contractual obligations. The ceremonial, highly ritualised, knightly "play" of allegiance[76] united oathtaking to the concept of dutiful employment that would later assimilate

---

[73] See Rabelais, *Gargantua*, "Prologe de l'auteur," p. 16.

[74] See Evans, pp. 43-44. Evans insists that the original formulation of the heroic or Herculean choice is in Hesiod, derived by way of Torquato Tasso. This is true insofar as Hesiod compares the life of ease, spent in oratorical disputation in the legal and royal "courts," to the life of country toil, of agricultural labour. Yet, in Hesiod both ways are governed by their own Eris, goddesses of Strife. Labour has its own agonistic component which more perfectly captures the synthesis of work and play embodied in the figure of Hercules. It is best to think of Hesiod as propounding two kinds of Strife: the useless (i.e., vain, idle) and the useful.

[75] As Evans shows, it is not surprising to discover the opposition of work and play in this episode since Belphoebe, the template for toilsome Virtue, stands over and against Braggadochio, the emblem of despoiling Pleasure. Spenser seemingly invites his reader to play the role of Hercules:

> If her code is based on the acceptance of the Fall and the possibilities of amendment which human nature still possesses, his code, like that of Acrasia, denies the Fall altogether and the need of labour to repair the ruins. Braggadocio seeks the results without the labours, and his confrontation with Belphoebe anticipates that of Guyon with Acrasia, the harsh, sweating realism of the one faced with the delusive fantasy of the other. That is why Braggadocio is the proper person to have Guyon's splendid horse and is prepared to take Arthur's sword [II. iii. 18]; they offer an apparent short cut to Fame which the nature of the fallen world makes illusory […]. Spenser makes out of the meeting, therefore, a great set piece. (125)

Another exception of severed work and play can be found in the dangerously seductive words of Despaire:

> Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
> Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please. (*FQ* I ix 40)

[76] The English "play" derives from the Anglo-Saxon *plega* (v. *plegan*) meaning primarily "play." Nonetheless, the Old Saxon *plegan* (and its Old German correlate *pflegan*, which leads directly to the modern German *pflegan* and

(or be assimilated into) the Protestant conception of the calling. Furthermore, the analogies between the twelve Herculean labours, the twelve cantos of each book of *The Faerie Queene*, and the monthly agrarian labours ensured that heroism could fit within the cycles of earthly activity—that, in a way, swords could be beaten into ploughshares (Isaiah 2.3-4).[77]

The fusion of these cyclical patterns of labour with courtly performance constitutes the primary action in Spenser's *Mutability* cantos. In Mutability's ludic procession of the seasons and months, Spenser incorporates the farming cycle, an old pastoral motif in Christian art that recalls the divine injunction to work one's way to salvation.[78] The pageant also reflects Spenser's Christian and Neoplatonic view that the prototypical odyssey begins and ends in God. The seventh-day rest does not stand opposed to work as the mere cessation of earthly labour but stands as the perfection of utilitarian activity and looks beyond, with hope, to the start of a new cycle of creation on the eighth day of resurrection—represented in the "vnperfite" (or *unfinished*) eighth canto that concludes *The Faerie Queene*. Hence, as William Nelson observed, Spenser placed Mutability's pageant in the seventh canto of the seventh book, a number signifying God's immutability, "Heav'ns Rule," the sabbath, and all-seeing divine judgment (*FQ* VII viii 1).[79]

Dutch *plegen*) has a secondary meaning of risk-taking, more specifically, "to expose oneself to danger for someone or something," i.e., to bind or engage oneself, to attend to, to take care (whence the English "plight"). Thus, play is cognate with "*pledge*," which Medieval Latin formed into *plegium* by way of the Germanic and re-entered English in its modern sense. See Huizinga's masterful exposition in *Homo Ludens*, pp. 38-40.

[77] Human play is essentially rule-bound; it is established and sustained by something binding. Compare Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 11; Fink, *Play as Symbol of the World*, p. 23. Huizinga carefully sidesteps the problem of determinism he suggests that the play "instinct" alone has the quality of freedom; however, he mistakenly conflates a necessary for a sufficient cause for the emergence of play by insisting that play is a voluntary activity that "marks itself off from the course of the natural process." Although play appears as a deliberate flight from the workaday world, it is at most "something added thereto and spread out over it like a flowering, an ornament, a garment" (Huizinga 7). For Spenser, the illusion (from the Latin *illusio, inlusio*, meaning "in play") of escaping into the playground of Faery Land conceals the fact that one is unavoidably entrenched in the contemporary reality of hired labour. On the relationship between war and farming, see Nohrnberg, pp. 421-422.

[78] See *Genesis* 3.17-19. Also, Roche, ed., on *FQ*, VII vii 32-43, pp. 1239-1240.

[79] See Roche, ed., on *FQ* VII viii 2, p. 1244.

Nonetheless, each season "marching softly" has its proper form of play, beginning with Spring, which corresponded to the start of military campaigns in ancient Rome and the traditional commencement of the calendar year.[80] Hence, the march of mounted months wittily begins with "sturdy *March*… armed strongly" yet carrying a spade and bag of seeds "Which on the earth he strowed as he went, / And fild her womb with fruitfull hope of nourishment" (*FQ* VII vii 32).[81] This paradoxical figure—like Spring, "fit for warlike stoures" (*FQ* VII vii 28)—not only sows the soil but, as a soldier, is sure to leave behind a trail of destruction. Spenser synthesises in a clear image the life-giving germ and life-taking death, the respective temporal boundaries of the existential game combining work and play.[82] In natural and Christian cycles alike, the death or *carrying away* of flesh is not exclusively the rapturous termination of life set abruptly in opposition to earthly labour but also prepares the triumphant return of activity in the world.[83] Take, for example, the New Year festivities of the Roman Saturnalia, notorious for its

---

[80] See also *SC*, General Argument: "For it is wel known, and stoutely mainteyned with strong reasons of the learned, that yeare beginneth in March. For then the sonne reneweth his finished course, and the seasonable spring refresheth the earth, and the plesaunce thereof being buried in the sadnesse of the dead winter now worne away, reliueth."

[81] Compare Cupid in *FQ* III xi 45: "… mournfull Tragedyes, / And spoiles, wherewith he all the ground did strow." For an analogy between the zodiacal imagery of the Mutability pageant and the complex mythology of Book V, intermittently animating the Herculean imagery, see Nohrnberg. For example,

> we find Talus as *Aries*: Ares is another name of Mars, and Talus—both armiger and armament—is introduced here, as the martial aspect of Artegall. In the Mutabilitie cantos Aries bears the month to which Mars gives his name, and accordingly March is "armed strongly" (p. 398).

Nohrnberg also makes Artegall's groom, Talus a "rustic Mars, the god of husbandmen." See pp. 421-422:

> Talus' activity also has an agricultural cast. The rebels, in the wake of his flail, "lay scattred ouer all the land, / As thicke as doth the seede after the sowers hand" (*FQ* V xii 7). This comparison, coming late in the legend, may even express the hope that the sword can be beaten into the plowshare, for sowing is a "martial" image in a special sense.

[82] Compare "iolly *Iune*" in *FQ* Mut. vii 35:

> All in greene leaues, as he a Player were;
> Yet in his time, he wrought as well as playd,
> That by his plough-yrons mote right well appeare.

See also September, October, and November (*FQ* Mut. vii 38-40).

[83] The Medieval joke in which the Latin *carne vale*, meaning literally "flesh, farewell," supposedly gives us "carnival" can be juxtaposed to the more accurate derivation of the word. "Carnival," which comes from the Latin *caro* and *levare*, meant "the raising, removing, of flesh." See Bakhtin, p. 199. The point is, there is an inherent apotheotic levity to the term. We find the combination of death with laughter and sexual obscenity in the Renaissance motif (especially in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne) associating death with the male orgasm. Spenser notably links impalement, typically "groin" injuries (by the jousting knight, or "prykiere"), with sexual penetration.

carnivalesque behaviours, that were transformed and compacted into a celebration of Christ's nativity. Furthermore, the thematic of a death conceived simultaneously as a "rebirth" resurfaces in some humanist circles of the sixteenth century as synthesisers, from Rabelais to Spenser, gave themselves the difficult task of reconciling the contradictory realities of the age.[84]

It became necessary, once the Renaissance world began to break free from the yoke of a closed Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmos, to destroy the hyper-stratified Medieval picture of the world—feudal hierarchies, empty ceremonies, and scholastic polemics that served only to separate individuals from each other—if only to cleanse and restore, to ultimately cultivate, the authentic man and his authentic world (Bakhtin 156, 169).[85] Few have stated the fact more succinctly than M. M. Bakhtin: "the present… for the first time began to sense itself not only as an incomplete continuation of the past, but as something like a new and heroic beginning" (40). The linear biblical conception of history, Bakhtin points out—the Creation of the World, the Fall from Grace and Edenic Expulsion, the Flood, Redemption, the Second Coming, the Final Judgment which ends in complete destruction—is replaced by a novel and creative sequence that links time to (earthly or "natural") space: "A new chronotope was needed that would permit one to link real life (history) to the real earth. It was necessary to oppose to eschatology a creative and generative time, a time measured by creative acts, by growth and not by destruction" (205-206). Naturally, the sources of the new temporal perspective were to be found in various bucolic images and literatures depicting the first stages of the development of human culture. The earliest

---

[84] There are similarities between the reality of the Renaissance, which bred a distinct kind of syncretism that inevitably took on the characteristic of a synthesis between work and play, and the Hellenistic age which experienced a revival of the image of Hercules (in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* and Theocritus' xiii, xxiv, and xxv *Idylls*). Interestingly, both periods correspond to important transitional ages that witnessed a transference of authority—respectively from Greece to Alexandria then Rome, from Catholic centers to Protestant hubs.
[85] Bakhtin insists that these intentional features comprise Rabelais' idiosyncratic artistic method and form the basis of what he calls the "Rabelaisian chronotope." In fact, the authorial intentions Bakhtin identified as being peculiar to Rabelais can also be applied to Spenser and other humanistic writers of the sixteenth century.

indexes of holidays were centered around the cycle of agricultural labour—the seasons and months of the year, the ripening of vegetation, the stages in cattle farming, and so forth (Bakhtin 206); in other words, time was first conceptualised, "plotted," as "*shepherds' calendars*" in the general sense of guidance for the labours of the seasons and the seasons of life.[86]

Spenser's pastoral eclogues supplemented the hidden insights gleaned from his studies of Neoplatonism and Aristotelian ethics, enshrining the principle of *discordia concors*, the doctrine of resolving paradoxical antinomies,[87] within the pattern of serio-ludic bucolic labour. He echoes George Puttenham, who defined the shepherd's life in synthetic terms as "the first example of honest fellowship" and a discursive site of "assemblies and meetings when they kept their cattell and heards in the common fields and forests" (52). "Eclogue" most assuredly derives from the Greek ἐκλογή, meaning "collection"[88]; nevertheless, English writers of the Renaissance generally followed the French standard (*églogue*) that posited an imagined origin in the Greek αἰγός ("goat") and λόγος ("discourse"), since pastoral poems initially featured the conversations of goatherds. In honour of Theocritus and the poet Clément Marot, Spenser termed his twelve discourses "æglogues."[89] By deliberately choosing the lesser-used spelling, however, Spenser revealed an etymological link between goat herding and play, since αἴξ or αἰγός is cognate with ἀγών (*agon*), the ancient Greek word for "contest" (but also "gathering, assembly"[90]).

---

[86] Here I am generally appropriating the title of the ubiquitous early modern almanac first mentioned in the late fifteenth century.
[87] See Wind, pp. 85-87.
[88] The Greek ἐκλέγειν means "to pick out, select." See Marinelli, p. 8; Cooper, p. 2.
[89] See *Shepheardes Calender*, "General Argument,":
>They were first of the Greekes the inuentours of them called Æglogaj as it were αἴγον or αἰγονόμων. λόγοι. that is Goteheards tales. For although in Virgile and others the speakers be more shepheards, then Goteheards, yet Theocritus in whom is more ground of authoritie, then in Virgile, this specially from that deriuing, as from the first head and wellspring the whole Inuention of his Æglogues, maketh Goteheards the persons and authors of his tales.
[90] The Greek ἀγορά (*agora*) denotes the market, literally the "place of assembly."

Spenser understood better than most that the eclogue, as a kind of selection, is

conceptually tied to the act of *assembling* sheep or goats safely into a herd. Thus, the derelict

shepherd is unable to dutifully guard his flock, as Spenser writes in the "May" eclogue:

> Those faytours little regarden their charge,
>
> While they letting their sheepe runne at large
>
> Passen their time, that should be sparely spent,
>
> In lustihede and wanton meryment.
>
> Thilke same bene shepeheards for the Deuils stedde,
>
> That playen, while their flockes be vnfedde. (ll. 39-44)

The lazy shepherd not only starves his sheep,[91] but also leaves his scattered sheep vulnerable to

the assaults of beasts that lie in wait:

> They wander at wil, and stray at pleasure,
>
> And to theyr foldes yead at their own leasure.
>
> But they had be better come at their cal:
>
> For many han into mischief fall,
>
> And bene of rauenous Wolues yrent,
>
> All for they nould be buxome and bent. ("September," ll. 144-149)

Yet Spenser must have realised that an assembly (in any context, but especially in that of a

spectacle or game) is something *enacted*, usually upon an elevated stage, involving pretense and

feigned display. Animated by the spirit of Greek agonistics, the eclogue is a quasi-dramatic

---

[91] See also *SC*, "September," ll. 62-65:
My seely sheepe (ah seely sheepe)
That here by there I whilome vsd to keepe,
All were they lustye, as thou didst see,
Bene all sterued with pyne and penuree.

dialogue, a communicative contest, but the essential ambiguity of the genre produces a general

impression of impartiality and egalitarianism, and therefore of mutual commitment between

conversing shepherds to achieve a higher synthesis or, as Puttenham demanded of pastoralists,

"under the vaile of homely persons… to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters" (31).

The verb "to act" (Latin *āctus*,[92] Greek ἀγερέ), which only belatedly developed in

English a secondary sense of theatrics in the sixteenth century,[93] originally meant forward

movement, "leading" (from the Greek ἄγειν)—literally, *keeping the herd together while drawing*

the sheep out to pasture—referring to the prominently protective responsibility of the shepherd.[94]

The manifold meanings of "action" explain the logic of syncretism (i.e., dialogic progression and

unification) that underlies the cyclical patterns of life and (pastoral) labour in *The Shepheardes*

Calender, but also in the Mutability pageant, which unfolds in a moving sequence of dramatic

tableaux.

---

[92] Classical Latin also attests to the following senses, which have less to do with performative play than with farm labour: "action of driving cattle or carts, road for cattle, cart-track, path, course, series, sequence (of numbers), process of waxing or diminishing, progress." See the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for "act."

[93] See Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 14. As it happens, the connection between action and theatre was worked out by Aristotle. See *Poetics*, VI, 9-10: "For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality."

[94] See Louis Adrian Montrose, ""Eliza, Queene of shepheardes" and the Pastoral of Power," pp. 40-41, for the ways in which objects and relations in the real world of pastoral labour are "sublimated" into forms of hegemonic ornament. The Anglo-Saxon word for "sheep," *scép* or *scéap*, may be connected to *sceaft* ("shaft, spear, lance") rooted in the Latin *sceptrum* ("sceptre"), meaning "royal staff." This ancient symbol of royalty and sovereignty—the Egyptian pharaohs, for instance, are often portrayed with a shepherd's crook—has been well adapted to the biblical theme of the pastor, Christ. The comparison is signalled in the Gloss of the *Shepheardes Calender*. In "May," the shepherd god Pan is associated with Christ: "The name is most rightly (me thinkes) applyed to him, for Pan signifieth all or omnipotent, which is onely the Lord Iesus" (*SPW*, p. 439.). Pan was famously the only Greek god to have been proclaimed dead, and Spenser follows the French poet Rabelais by relating this tale to the death of Christ, who suffered for his flock. In "April," Spenser calls Eliza (Elizabeth I) the "daughter without spotte, / Which *Pan* the shepheards God of her begot" (ll. 50-51), meaning to join the god of shepherds to "the most famous and victorious King, her highnesse Father, late of worthy memorye K. Henry the eyght" (*SPW*, p. 434). Also relevant are the "pastoral pastimes" (213) in Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* that elucidate the fullness of the *past* (or *passed*) in the duty of the pastor tasked with securing the safe passage of his flock. Passage, as a transcendental crossing over, characterises the essence of play: to be seized, carried away to a space with its own governing principles, subject to conditions far different than those encountered in the everyday world accessible empirically, a world of praxis and familiar feeling. In the play-world, the temporal sequence is not halted but changed, and to speak of linear time "passing away" means to let it recede from the picture. The pastime, which can only be experienced *sub specie aeternitatis*, obscures the passage of time through ludicrous diversion.

Spenser's decision to conclude the pageant of Mutability with the word "employ" (*FQ* VII vii 46) is highly suggestive of its overarching theme of synthetic work-play.[95] For "employment," which implies paid labour and contractual obligations, can also mean an endeavour or pastime. Employment may also be etymologically related to the Anglo-Saxon *plega*, which gives us "play," or even the Latin *implicare* meaning "enfold, entangle, unite." Nevertheless, Spenser's unitive ambitions reveal the workings of a perspective continuously buffeted by embittered strife, from without and within. The worldview that produced Spenser's particular brand of syncretism arises from a standpoint that has tangibly experienced the decay and destruction of the ideal of communal labour: a standpoint that has already witnessed the departure of Astraea, goddess of justice, and, lamenting the social disruption caused by the private expeditions of war and trade, wishes to redeem humankind and restore the common possession of land. This is the worldview of the pastoral that registers the feeling of lost innocence in the historical process of earthly degeneration (Marinelli 9, 16).

The late-medieval and Renaissance pastoralists have already undergone the effects of an increased division of labour dissociating creative activity from mundane industry (Bakhtin 211-212). Play, in this disrupted framework, gets relegated to the mysterious margins of life, the sphere of the unproductive, the nonutilitarian. The world of play thereafter loses its connection to the material substrate—the "real" world of communal labour—while the privatised player,

---

[95] For example, Spenser takes great pains to explicitly unite toil and ease in the figure of Life, compared to

> a faire young lusty boy,
> Such as they faine *Dan Cupid* to haue beene,
> Full of delightfull health and liuely ioy,
> Deckt all with flowres, and wings of gold fit to employ. (*FQ* VII vii 46).

Life resembles Cupid, the ultimate sportsman (like Hercules, the legendary founder of the Olympic games) and instigator of "cruell battels" (*FQ* III xi 29), but also Mutability herself who, like the winged god, "doth play / Her cruell sports to many mens decay" (*FQ* VII vi 1). Spenser elsewhere laments the "pittious worke" of the relentlessly aspiring Titaness, Mutability (*FQ* VII vi 6), which may connect her to the figure of Life "fit to employ" the golden wings of Cupid.

henceforth alienated from his community, becomes a secluded priest, contemplative philosopher, or prodigal seeker. Play, especially in this abstracted "form," may quickly appear to become sterile and lose all substance. It becomes seemingly vain show, a *mere* appearance, a dangerously deceptive illusion, a "phantastic" mode of representation. We come to find work and play strictly divided in the pejorative (and Platonic) terms of "actuality" and "non-actuality," "being" and "non-being." This may explain why Renaissance poets, as Giamatti observes, are "obsessed with the problems of art and nature, illusion and reality; they constantly examine the deceitfulness of appearances, and return again and again to the creation of fictions, myths, conventions, codes, constructs, artifacts" (25). Spenser is no exception; however, as Fink points out, he does not naïvely continue to operate "within the popular antitheses of "work and play," of "play and the seriousness of life," to therefore remain "stuck in the contrasting shadow of the putative counter-phenomena" (17). He does not go about as if there were no third option between Florimell and her falsified double, since the history of the girdle takes us to Venus and the Acidalian Mount, and for Spenser, poetic invention, though literally false, may nonetheless partake in the truths that Florimell signifies. In the somewhat pastoralized spaces of Faerie Land, the real and the ideal fruitfully collide. Spenser's epic is a testament to the fact that, even in a fallen world, as Fink would insist, "there are not only actual and non-actual things… but there is also the mediation between both; there is something actual that contains something non-actual as a represented, meaningful content" (84).[96] There is the performance of reality: play as the very symbol of the world. In other words, there is the liminal space of allegory wherein political enterprise is reenacted, *played*.[97]

---

[96] Compare Fink, p. 78; Borris, p. 61.
[97] It has been brilliantly pointed out that Spenser's ardent mind was suspended continuously between the worlds of fact and fiction. The epic terrain strangely mirrors at times the Irish landscape or the court of Queen Elizabeth, helping to rescue the "poet of our waking dreams," as William Hazlitt famously called Spenser, from repeating the

Despite Spenser's commitment to reconciling the antitheses of work and play, the conflict between industry and idleness, a significant problem in England at least as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, started to become a national issue in Tudor times.[98] This conflict is synonymous with expanding enclosure, with that era of solitary genius and private enterprise tied to the legacies of Spenser and Bacon, with the explorations of Drake and Raleigh, that all but sprung from the "death" of the medieval system, the growth of urban mercantile centers, and the

---

mistakes committed by Medieval allegorists. Spenser's moral images, from the simpler conceits such as the pageant of the Seven Deadly sins and the Masque of Cupid to the extended metaphors including, but not limited to, the rivalry between Red Crosse and the powers of dissemblance, are never too abstract and remote from vital human concerns. For the moral allegory is almost always a duplicate of contemporaneous political episodes, and its main characters are people Spenser, the "Poet historical," intimately knew. Nevertheless, the analogies are rarely consistent and vary throughout. Elizabeth, for example, appears in a variety of dresses: in Gloriana, Una, Belphoebe, Britomart, and Mercilla. The struggle between the real and the ideal is present, and painfully complex, throughout Book V. The hero, Artegall, an agent of Justice, is engaged in domestic and foreign affairs that stand for factual episodes in contemporary politics. As Selincourt shows, Pollente with his traps may signify the massacre of Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Day as instigated by Charles IX. Guizor, his groom, represents the leader of the Papal party in France, the Duc de Guise. Soldan's combat with Arthur alludes to the English navy's encounter with the Spanish Armada. The episodes of Belge and Geryoneo refer to the Netherlands. The seventeen sons of Belge are the seventeen provinces, and Arthur's endeavour refers to Leicester's campaigns. Geryoneo is the King of Spain who unleashes "a dreadfull Monster" (FQ V x 13)—the Inquisition. His Seneschal is the Duke of Alva, Regent of the Netherlands. Bourbon is Henri de Navarre, later Henri IV, whose renunciation of Protestantism is signified by the casting aside of the shield of (Protestant) faith for the sake of Flourdelis, the insignia of French kings. See *SPW*, "Introduction," p. liii. Maurice Evans suggests, on the contrary, that, in Book V, the "gap between the ideal and the real grows progressively greater" (200), since the victories of the book are achieved by the ideal hero instead of the human knight. In other words, Arthur and Artegall play the role of Hercules, especially evident in the latter's punishment at the hands of Radegund, recalling Hercules' effeminizing subjection to Omphale.

We may expect, therefore, that Spenser's worlds of romance, in spite of all that they borrowed from his dreamlike imagination and from classical mythology, correspond to the experiential world. In the Book of Temperance, Spenser suggests that the land of faery may even be found in a hidden region of the world undiscovered by prospective European exploration, which amounts to confessing that his "aboundance of an idle braine" has some grounding in reality:

> Of Faerie lond yet if he more inquire,
> By certaine signes here set in sundry place
> He may it find […]. (*FQ* II Pr. 1, 4)

It is specifically the Spenserian poet, in the bucolic guise of Colin Clout, that has "a foot in the world of the ideal and the real" (Evans 216). Colin belongs to the *idyllic* world of pastoral romance, but his name, borrowed from John Skelton, simultaneously lowers him to the familiar English countryside. Colin merges the contradictions between the two traditions of the pastoral—the ideal (bucolics) and the real (georgics)—and, incidentally, reveals a conflict of mind that would only be fully resolved in *The Faerie Queene*.

[98] The first parliamentary statute against enclosure was passed in 1489—four years after the ascendency of Henry VII—as the consequence of the revival of trade in the final years of Yorkist rule began to take shape. Myers reports that out of the nearly 16,000 acres of land that were enclosed in Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Berkshire between 1485 and 1500, over 13,000 acres were devoted to pasture. Nevertheless, the English Crown did comparatively little to hinder the enclosure of open fields since it relied heavily upon the support of the typical culprits, the country gentry and the new merchant landowning class. See pp. 230-231.

humanistic reaffirmation of the individual man—the Rabelaisian Thelemite—as "measure of all things" free to shape himself into his preferred image (Trevelyan 267).[99] In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the growing Continental demand for English fabrics, coupled with the arrival of French and Flemish Huguenots escaping persecution and bringing their weaving expertise to the island, replaced the declining wool trade until then monopolised by the Merchants of the Staple by "drawing the whole countryside into a conspiracy to produce cloth" (Trevelyan 280). As Trevelyan aptly comments, the English cloth trade not only had a modernising effect upon rural society, but was unexpectedly "individualist, not cosmopolitan or corporate" (282). The new wealth which entered from eastern ports—London and Norwich—landed in the hands of opportunistic merchants, while capitalist sheep-farmers and the emancipated yeomanry in partnership with the urban bourgeoisie consolidated the nation's most valuable asset through "enclosure" of the open fields (Myers 226).

The immediate effect of enclosure was a contest between two ways of utilising the land, which (from a Marxist perspective[100]) tended to degenerate into a struggle between two societal classes, and between leisure and labour: the landowners, who turned toward sheepherding, and the tenants, who relied exclusively upon the cultivation of crops (Bindoff 16). The conflict worsened because of the general evictions that normally ensued enclosure. Since shepherding required comparatively far fewer hands than the communal activities of tillage and threshing, pasture farming created a labour surplus and drove many ploughmen to mendicancy. The expanding numbers of "sturdy beggars" were, according to Trevelyan, the "characteristic evil of the Sixteenth Century" (283). Many vagrants, turned out of their possessions by an increase of

---

[99] Compare Pico, *Oration*, p. 11; Rabelais, *Gargantua*, chapter lvii, "Comment estoient reiglez les Thelemites à leur manière de vivre."
[100] See Marx's historical analysis of the English policies of enclosure as a form of "so-called primitive accumulation" in *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 877-940.

pasture and unable to find employment, were forced either to steal or beg, only to be imprisoned as "idle vagabonds," as Thomas More had illustrated in *Utopia*:

> let agriculture be set up again, and the manufacture of the wool be regulated, that so there may be work found for those companies of idle people whom want forces to be thieves, or who now being idle vagabonds, or useless servants, will certainly grow thieves at last (9).

Nor could the "beggars" rely, as before, on the monastic dole, since the abrupt dissolution of the monasteries initiated by Henry VIII halted the longstanding customs of hospitality and precipitated a ruthless land speculation. In the span of a few years, many abbey lands fell into private hands who had little sympathy for the monastic orders regarded, in accordance with the new Protestant conception of the "calling," as valueless in the eyes of God and selfish products of withdrawal from the world (Weber 81). The Protestant religion, supported by an individualist ethos, was especially congenial to this new and ambitious peerage (Trevelyan 282-283; Myers 234).

More claimed that an increase of pasture entails an exponential increase in idleness that can only be curtailed by purposeful agricultural practices. This may explain why it is difficult to reconcile the industrious Protestant spirit, which desires fewer occasions for idleness, and a policy of land acquisition that leaves fields to their "wasted" natural state—it appears to be a contradiction in terms. Indeed, the "labour theory of value" finds it impossible to justify enclosure for any sake other than tillage, since "alway men claimed property in their apparell and armour, and other like things made by their owne trauel and industry" (Puttenham 30).[101] In the

---

[101] Compare Locke, *Second Treatise*, § 32, 3-7: "The *Labour* of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*." For Locke, a later critic of consumptive grazing, any immodest possession of land that leads to decay is punishable; hence, he writes

language of commerce, to "lay waste,"—that is, to squander, consume, despoil, or ravage to the point of desolate vacuity—is the ultimate vanity. Property left to waste (from the Latin *vastare*, Old English *westan*) is unprofitable or worthless, otherwise called *idle*. Therefore, idleness may get easily entwined with futile, nonutilitarian, and nonserious play.[102]

Spenser was apparently sympathetic to More's view and makes idleness a trait appropriate for the "lawlesse… *Brigants*" of Book VI, whose relationship to the land is one of hostility, for they

> 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. (*FQ* VI x 39)[103]

The word "reaver" is appropriately cognate with "rover," meaning "one who wanders or rambles without direction," in search of a momentary pleasure. The rover *strays*. And rashly wandering "too and fro in wayes vnknowne" is the central problematic of *The Faerie Queene* (*FQ* I i 10).

---

that "Land that is left wholly to Nature, that hath no improvement of Pasturage, Tillage, or Planting, is called, as indeed it is, *wast*" (II, § 42, 18-20).

[102] See the etymology of the word "sport," which is derived from the Old French *desporter* meaning "carry away, divert"—from the Latin *des*, "away," and *portare*, "carry." To carry away is also conceptually tied to rape (from Latin verb *rapere*, which gives us "rapt, rapture"), or more generally to the act of abduction, plundering, reaving. Etymologically, the word "reaver" is connected to the noun "reverie" (see the French *rêver*), which may provide some further insight into the dreamlike quality of *The Faerie Queene* and perhaps even the role of Spenser's Busirane in Book III.

[103] Compare Spenser, *FQ* VI viii 35.

Spenser notably does not associate idleness with the "happie life" of Meliboe and

Pastorella, who appear to be modest and independent landowners,[104] but instead locates "such

vainenesse, as I neuer thought" in the royal court (*FQ* VI ix 24). He even uses a metaphor for

ploughing in reference to his own writing, representing the play of imagination as a version of

manual labour; thus, he laments a moment of inactivity: "I lately left a furrow, one or twayne /

Vnplough'd, the which my coulter hath not cleft" (*FQ* VI ix 1).[105] The point is that reconciled

work and play operates where there is *profitable* activity, where duties are honoured and the land

is maintained, which is precisely what problematizes, say, Guyon and Cymochles' foray onto the

"waste and voyd" island in the middle of the Lake of Idleness (*FQ* II vi 11).[106] Spenser describes

the empty island as "a choice plot of fertile land… / As if it had by Natures cunning hand, / Bene

choisely picked out" (*FQ* II vi 12), but it is laid forth as an example of fruitless impotence.

On the other side of the equation, vanity can be bound to Sisyphean labour when it is

regarded as the inescapable routine of everyday life, such as when Spenser describes Guyon's

encounter with Pilate in the Cave of Mammon: "But rather fowler seemed to the eye; / So lost his

labour vaine and idle industry" (*FQ* II vii 61). It has also been proposed that the magnitude of

Spenser's epic, the meanderings of both poet and hero, is meant to communicate "the laborious

and perhaps futile effort… to master all the stuff of history and experience" (Giamatti, *Play of*

Double Senses, 21). When this unpleasant reality invades the idealised Arcadian scene, and

---

[104] As possible evidence for the presence of a modest family business, Spenser reveals that Meliboe's cottage is "clad with lome, / And all things therein meane" (*FQ* VI ix 16), punning on the words "loam" and "loom." See also *FQ* VI ix 28, ll. 3-4: "what happinesse ye hold / In this small plot of your dominion."
[105] Compare *FQ* VI ix 12.
[106] See *FQ* II vi 18, ll. 1-2: "By this she had him lulled fast a sleepe, / That of no worldly thing he care did take." This passage recalls Spenser's description of Idleness in the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins, *FQ* I iv 20: "From worldly cares himself he did esloyne, / And greatly shunned manly exercise, / From euery worke he chalenged essoyne."

leisure becomes a tainted monotony, it often arises that pastoral poetry becomes an elegiac complaint and expresses a desire for rest, even death (Marinelli 37).

Nonetheless, Spenser's concluding stanzas of *The Faerie Queene* differ much from Sir Calidore's suspended chase of the Blatant Beast, which, in fact, necessitates at that point "Another quest, another game" (*FQ* VI x 2). Although Spenser sets up his pastoral interlude as if it could be a truant holiday for Calidore, a means to delay work, the bucolic retreat from cruel strife and hollow titles promises uncomplicated and meaningful labour. But we cannot make the mistake of believing that Calidore's break from the workaday world is an excuse for sloth. In effect, Calidore cannot tolerate inactivity; he requires new rivalries and new challenges, namely "the guerdon of his loue to gaine" (*FQ* VI x 2). He realises that his quest for the Blatant Beast is an aristocratic pastime—the noble sport of hunting mandated as a courtly mission—and that he must seek the new insights and attainments available in this relative repose "Rather then hunt still after shadowes vaine / Of courtly fauour" (*FQ* VI x 2). Moreover, his apparent rest is not without effort. The process of learning pastoral values is an imperfect enjoyment, involving a certain intellectual and physical labour which is the regretful consequence of the Fall and, at the same time, the condition for redemption and return to the world of chivalric virtue (Marinelli 21, 45). This is precisely what separates Calidore from the host of unrepentant cavaliers beguiled by Circean enchantresses.[107] Pastoral retreat is beyond good and evil; as Marinelli notes, it depends entirely on the Herculean decisions of the characters involved, the way of life they choose for themselves (36). Do they make of the Arcadian demesne a place of learning preparatory for

---

[107] See *FQ* II xii 87, ll. 6-9:
> The donghill kind
> Delights in filth and foule incontinence:
> Let *Grill* be *Grill*, and haue his hoggish mind,
> But let vs hence depart, whilest wether serues and wind.

future heroic labour? Or does retirement become a slothful dereliction of duty? In other words, Spenser's pastoral landscape is the ultimate proving-ground:

> a middle country of the imagination, half-way between a past perfection and a present imperfection, a place of Becoming rather than Being, where an individual's potencies for the arts of life and love and poetry are explored and tested. (Marinelli 37)

Thus, Calidore witnesses and later participates in communal herding, which maintains an element of competition (in accordance with the dictates of Hesiodic Good Eris):

> each his sundrie sheepe with seuerall care
>
> Gathered together, and them homeward bare:
>
> Whylest euerie one with helping hands did striue
>
> Amongst themselues, and did their labours share,
>
> To helpe faire *Pastorella*. (*FQ* VI ix 15)

Calidore himself joins this labour:

> vnto the fields he went
>
> With the faire *Pastorella* euery day,
>
> And kept her sheepe with diligent attent,
>
> Watching to driue the rauenous Wolfe away,
>
> The whylest at pleasure she mote sport and play;
>
> And euery euening helping them to fold. (*FQ* VI ix 37)

In an important sense, the synthesis of work and play in this rural entr'acte is achieved through communal games—such as sheepherding, caroling, sportive dances, wrestling and other physical exercises—comprising the daily routine of a folkloric life reminiscent of the old prelapsarian

social harmony (Tonkin 18). Although flight from the court—in Petrarch, for instance—became a Christian expression of solitary independence and renunciation of the world, the motif also found favour with those seeking simpler, more natural, social (and conjugal) bonds.[108] This is expected since friendly, socially beneficent, competition is "the ground, / And roote of ciuill conuersation" (*FQ* VI i 2).

Nevertheless, when the pastoral is only a temporary retreat and prelude (literally "to play beforehand for practice," from Latin *praeludere*) to a far greater endeavour, the heightened seriousness correspondingly produces an amplification in complexity. Pastoral poetry can no longer be, if it ever was, the creation of shepherds themselves, but necessitates a second and intrusive perspective distanced from the simple life that is pastoral's prominent attribute (Marinelli 41, 53).[109] The bucolic setting becomes the quasi-dramatic stage of conflicting worldviews—the contemplative and active—represented in the confrontation of two social classes, now shepherds and courtiers, and again in the poetic genres appropriate to each, the pastoral and the epic, that ironically inverts pastoral's initial partiality for Nature over Art in the process whereby an aspiring poet seeks to create a patterned poetic career for which the eclogue signifies "the first step of a ladder with many rungs" (Marinelli 45).[110] Spenser himself worked through this dilemma in his tenth eclogue and declines, for all intents and purposes, the life of idleness for a higher calling in the workaday world.[111] With the opening lines of the first Proem

---

[108] See Marinelli, p. 24.

[109] See Cooper, p. 2: "Pastoral is never the product of the particular section of society it claims to depict. It is the attempt of the court or city to find an image of life outside itself, and the simple life of the pastoral world is the opposite of the society that creates it."

[110] Marinelli is even clearer on p. 64 (emphasis added): "The return, then, is the important thing: *pastoral retirement is not an end in itself.*"

[111] An entry in the *Commentary* for the "October" eclogue indicates that "the cause of contempt of Poetry [is] idlenesse and basenesse of mynd." The passage in question makes the meaning evident: idleness kills poetic creativity. See *SPW*, p. 457, 459:

> But after vertue gan for age to stoupe,
> And mighty manhode brought a bedde of ease:

of *The Faerie Queene*, he signals his participation in a literary tradition that had begun with Virgil. Consequently, the (Elizabethan) pastoral genre exhausts the possibilities of its own form and necessarily combines with other forms as, at best, a creative stimulus, or at worst, a simple decoration (Marinelli 7).[112] Paving a way for the more structurally complex epic, within which it can be a component, pastoral becomes a conventional initiation into a process of ever-increasing artifice.[113]

> The vaunting Poets found nought worth a pease,
> To put in preace among the learned troupe.
> Tho gan the streames of flowing wittes to cease,
> And sonnebright honour pend in shamefull coupe. (ll. 67-72)

Spenser's worldly return may also be regarded as the temptation of ambition. In the ordeal at the Cave of Mammon, Guyon's second temptation is that of pride or vainglory. Through his daughter Philotime, Mammon promises Guyon political or social advancement, as well as "Honour and dignitie," all of which were coveted by poets and lead to competitions, civil strife (*FQ* II vii 47-49). For a commentary on ambition in relation to the Ambrosian-Augustinian tradition of Christian morals, see Nohrnberg, pp. 337-338. For Spenser's assumption of functionary duties in service of the state, see Greenlaw, pp. 348, 350:

> Spenser differed from all other literary men of his time in that he persistently clung to that conception of a poet's function that made him a *vates*, a "seer," a man who should warn and advise, directly or through cloudy allegories, those who ruled England […] Spenser was not to be sent as ambassador on affairs of state, he was not to be associated with his friends in the great projects that made the air electric, but he was to be the laureate of the new England, defending that national policy which, however cruel and narrow in some of its applications, was to enable her to thwart the foes that threatened her destruction.

[112] See Montrose, "Politics," p. 420:

> Elizabethan pastoral is characterized by a proliferation into other genres…: not only are there eclogues and interpolated pastoral episodes within larger narrative and dramatic forms, but also lyrics, romances, satires, comedies and tragicomedies, erotic Ovidian narratives, pageants and masques, all of which may be wholly or partially pastoral. It is this explosion of pastoral possibilities that makes the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century the golden age of English pastoral literature.

[113] See Huizinga, *Middle Ages*, p. 135:

> The new enthusiasm for nature does not mean a truly deep sense of reality, not even a sincere admiration for work; it is only an attempt to adorn courteous manners by an array of artificial flowers, playing at shepherd and shepherdess just as people had played at Lancelot and Guinevere.

Compare Marinelli, p. 54: "the whole question of pastoral existence was reduced to a delightful game. As such it survived for a while, but having no inside, so to speak, it crumbled easily before the onslaughts of the succeeding [i.e., post-Augustan] age." Also Cooper, pp. 5, 7:

> The Classical or Renaissance or Restoration pastoral shepherd is obviously an 'artificial' figure in the Elizabethan sense—created by art to serve the purposes of art […] The debate about the nature of pastoral that raged in the early years of the eighteenth century shows how completely any sense of the mode as a dynamic idea had been lost. Augustan poetry polarized into the sharply witty parodies of John Gay and the saccharine idylls of the imitators of Pope; and Dr. Johnson gave pastoral poetry its death-blow with his characterization of it as 'easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting. Pastoral had lost its focus: the sharp perspective it had given on society, its unique value as an optic on the nature of art, on art and nature, were forgotten.

It is against this façade of pretense and delusion[114] that we are to read Meliboe's

opposition to the fashions of the court, and perhaps even Calidore's own "instinctive distrust of

vanity and appearances" (Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses*, 87). The Knight of Courtesy

commends the happy life of shepherds for its ease and freedom from strife; however, we must

distinguish the sense of idleness from genuine rest.[115] After all, Meliboe reminds his guest that

happiness does not simply lie in indolent repose, nor in futile ambition, but in a kind of neo-

Aristotelian self-sufficiency:

> For not that, which men couet most, is best,
>
> Nor that thing worst, which men do most refuse;
>
> *But fittest is, that all contented rest*
>
> *With that they hold*. (*FQ* VI ix 29, emphasis added)[116]

To "rest" in the mean is to synthesise the contrasting elements of labour and leisure—the

activities of ploughman and shepherd, georgic and eclogue—appropriate to the pastoral milieu.

An important aspect of Meliboe's version of active leisure is analogous to the Sabbatarian

"sight" unconsciously experienced by Calidore, which revolves around the *observance* of the

fourth commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour

and do all your work. But on the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do

any work" (Exodus 20.8-10, see Chapter One). Meliboe's primary—and hardly toilsome—duty

is to attend to his flocks, while the privative sin of his youth, which bears a resemblance to the

---

[114] From the Latin *deludere*, meaning "to play false; to deceive, mislead." The Latin prefix *de-* usually meant "down, away from, not, opposite of"; therefore, it functioned to reverse a verb's action. In the case of "deluding," we might think of it, properly speaking, as the antithesis of play. The modern English word "display" also has this sense, but it is curiously derived from the Latin *plicare* "to fold"; thus, in a pastoral sense, to display means to unfold, scatter (from Medieval Latin *displicare*), which is contrary to the responsibilities of the shepherd. See also Spenser's use of the word "diffuse" regarding earthly fortune in *FQ* VI ix 29, l. 4.
[115] See *FQ* VI ix 19.
[116] Compare *FQ* VI ix 20.

medieval conception of *acēdia* as the renunciation of God, consists of turning his gaze away from his charge and beholding vanity at court: the "sight whereof soone cloyd, and long deluded / With idle hopes" (*FQ* VI ix 24). This false play, which is a kind of non-observance of meaningful responsibilities, represents the opposite of authentic rest achievable in the pastoral realm. From a Christian standpoint, Pieper points out, authentic rest—in a word, serenity—takes the form of the *holy* individual's grasp of the *Whole*, a "happy and cheerful affirmation of his own being, his acquiescence in the world and in God" (39).[117] Thus, we find Meliboe praising the charitability of God together with his humble situation:

> 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? (*FQ* VI ix 21)[118]

Meliboe found in the royal court and in his detachment from the pastoral realm only deceitful spectacle, the antithesis of leisurely comfort, but after "backe returning to [his] sheepe againe" (*FQ* VI ix 25), he rests in the stable perspective of the seer, validated by productive endeavour, including the care of his foster daughter Pastorella and his hospitality for Calidore.

In contrast, Calidore's own admixture of entrancement and suspicion of vanity in the decisive moment of Book VI results, as Giamatti intimates, in "the shattering of one of the most authentic moments of vision in the poem" (87). Spenser himself connects the wasted scene to a

---

[117] The names of Spenser's three Graces therefore highly suggest that Calidore experiences a moment of genuine leisure atop Mount Acidale: Euphrosyne ("good cheer"), Aglaia ("bright"), and Thalia ("festive").

[118] Spenser here recalls the vision of leisure introduced by Virgil at the beginning of the first eclogue: *O Meliboee deus nobis haec otia fecit. / namque erit ille mihi semper deus* ("O Meliboeus, a god has given us this ease—One who will always be a god to me") (ll. 6-7). Quoted and translated in O'Loughlin, p. 57.

general displacement, and more specifically to the scattering of the Nymphs, as Calidore says to Colin, "Which to thee flocke" (*FQ* VI x 19). We can infer from Colin's reaction Spenser's own feelings about such an "vnhappy turne" that fails to keep better measure (*FQ* VI x 18). On the one hand, the Puritanical impulse to turn away from deceitful pleasure would destroy the art, the image, the *illusion* that supports edifying instructional play, such as Spenser's very own poem, and equally interrupts the presence of the divinities who often appear in these moments of supreme folly as guides of the soul.[119] On the other hand, an over-infatuation in delightful portraiture (i.e., "painted forgery," "painted show" [*FQ* II Pr. 1; VI x 3])[120] would delay salvific spiritual development, which "necessarily involves a certain toil or labour in the intellect which is the counterpart of the physical toil imposed as punishment upon our first parents" (Marinelli 21).

As Nohrnberg illustrates, in keeping with the principles of humanism, Spenser's errant knights are free to either fall into the abyss of privation and thereby delight in monstrous filth or to ascend a New Jerusalem, the highest Mount of Contemplation (alluding conjointly to the site of revelation, Sinai, the locus of poetic inspiration, Parnassus, and the festive haunt of the Graces) that stands for the place of princely education ("Acidale," 4).[121] Because Calidore's initiation into the mysteries of unified work-play recalls the Neoplatonic model of scholastic matriculation,[122] the vision upon Mount Acidale is accompanied by one of the major pedagogic

---

[119] See Erasmus, *The Essential Erasmus*, pp. 169-170.
[120] Compare Spenser's dedicatory sonnet to "All the Gratious and Beautifull Ladies in the Court." For all the supposed rustic charm and didacticism of the dance of the Graces, it remains a performance, an "enchaunted show" that reinscribes the courtly mode of grace manifest in "Sweet semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde, / And all the complements of curtesie" (*FQ* VI x 17, 23), popularised in sixteenth-century courtesy books.
[121] Compare the depravity of Grill (*FQ* II xii 87) to the foolish defiance of the Titaness Mutability, *FQ* VII vi 30: "But now, this off-scum of that cursed fry, / Dare to renew the like bold enterprize, / And chalenge th'heritage of this our skie." For the link between the heights of heavenly Contemplation, Sinai and Parnassus, see *FQ* I x 53-54.
[122] For Plato's Academy as a mystery cult, see Wind, p. 3.

hieroglyphs of *The Faerie Queene*, the "Handmaides of *Venus*" (*FQ* VI x 15)—the three harmonious Graces.

According to the iconographic tradition of the Renaissance preserved in E. K.'s insightful commentary on *The Shepheardes Calender*, the Graces represent the triadic pattern of conventionalised generosity (or liberality): the game of offering, accepting, and returning.[123] Furthermore, in part because of their Greek name *Charites*, the three Graces were allegorised as the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity (Tonkin 236).[124] These dialectical formulations illustrate how liberality is implicated in the "Holy Trinity" of concordant discord, a moral that Spenser may have learned from Servius, especially since the essential feature of gift exchange, a game played between two opponents in the ambivalent spirit of combined hostility and friendship, exposes a desire for superiority in the sharing of victory (Wind 28; Tonkin 250-251).[125]

These gamesome "struggles of politeness," writes Huizinga in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, were remarkably developed in the court life of the fifteenth century and beyond. Since it was considered a great disrespect not to honour a superior in accordance with one's rank, there

---

[123] See *SPW*, p. 434:

> The Graces) be three sisters, the daughters of Iupiter, whose names are Aglaia, Thalia, Euphrosyne, & Homer onely addeth a fourth .s. Pasithea) otherwise called Charites, that is thanks. whom the Poetes feyned to be the Goddesses of al bountie & comelines, which therefore (as sayth Theodontius) they make three, to wete, that men first ought to be gracious & bountiful to other freely, then to receiue benefits at other mens hands curteously, and thirdly to requite them thankfully: which are three sundry Actions in liberalitye. And Boccace saith, that they be painted naked, (as they were indeede on the tombe of C. Iulius Cæsar) the one hauing her backe toward vs, and her face fromwarde, as proceeding from vs: the other two toward vs, noting double thanke to be due to vs for the benefit, we haue done.

[124] See *FQ* I x 4. Christian tradition names God incarnate a "gift" to humankind, prompting the Medieval and Renaissance association of grace with courtesy, and courtesy with the example of Christ. See Tonkin, p. 239; Borris, *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 194. For the relationship between the Venus Coelestis (Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία) and Charity (*Caritas*), mediator of the human mind and God, in the doctrine of Ficino, see Panofsky, p. 142.

[125] See Calidore's relationship to Coridon in *FQ* VI ix 44. For the comparison between the three harmonious Graces and the Idaean goddesses fashioned by Jove after the feuding deities at the wedding of Thetis—an image of combined unity and discord, see Nohrnberg's "Acidale," *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 4.

ensued a veritable *race* to be the first to pay homage to another (44-45).[126] Huizinga echoes

Goethe, who once said that each expression of politeness betrays an ethical foundation (*Middle*

Ages, 46); likewise, courtesy becomes the ultimate public virtue in Spenser's moral system since

it guarantees the mutual improvements of social intercourse.[127] As Spenser writes, even

Calidore's exemplary physical prowess elicits admiration:

> euen they, the which his riuals were,
>
> Could not maligne him, but commend him needs:
>
> For courtesie amongst the rudest breeds
>
> Good will and fauour. (*FQ* VI ix 45)

Courtesy, which requires inner self-control, we are reminded, emanates from an impassioned

soul attempting to overcome its injurious inclinations productive of social evils, such as Envy

and Detraction, which jointly beset Artegall at the end of Book V. Hence, contentious violence,

in words and deeds, is the opposite of polite restraint (Huizinga, *Middle Ages*, 48).[128] The

slanderous reviling-match (or lampoon) characteristic of Hudibrastic, and later Augustan, satire,

---

[126] See *FQ* II i 34: "So courteous conge both did giue and take, / With right hands plighted, pledges of good will."

[127] See Fink, p. 23:

> Playing is a fundamental possibility of social existence. Playing is interplay, playing with one another, an intimate form of human community. Playing is, structurally, not an individual or isolated activity—it is open to one's fellow human beings as fellow-players. It is no objection to point out that frequently, though, the ones playing carry out their games "all alone," apart from their fellow human beings. For, in the first place, being open to possible fellow-players is already included in the sense of play, and, in the second place, such a solitary person often plays with imaginary partners. The community of play need not consist of a number of real players.

Also, p. 27: "Play is primordially the strongest *binding* power. It is community-founding."

Compare Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 30:

> Granted the 'truth' of the common presumption that the very *essence of all civilization* is to produce a tame and civilized animal, a *domesticated animal*, from man, the beast of prey, it follows unquestionably that we must regard all instinctive resentment by which the aristocratic races, together with their ideals, were finally wrecked and overwhelmed, as the true *instruments of civilization*.

[128] Spenser confesses that even the English tongue had become a babbling beast, "a gallimaufray or hodgepodge of al other speches" (*SPW*, 417). Consequently, one of his literary ambitions was the restoration of a "common"—and by that he meant *natural*—English language, which exposes an ideology of linguistic (but also cultural, national) unification and centralisation.

in ages less congenial to the flourishing of pastoral, is a perversion of the far more common display of "sportsmanship": the courtesy-match, wherein players exchanged *graces*—titles, honorariums, commendations—and other formal habits that comprise the non-pecuniary currency of the court.[129]

The quarrelsome spirit of *protest*—in a word, renunciation—that engulfed the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries decimated the chivalric politeness of the preceding epoch rendered increasingly hollow by the allegedly superstitious ceremonialism of the Roman Church. But even courtesy had long abandoned its lowly—and in the context of Elizabethan pastoral, feudal— upbringing and was "so farre from that, which then it was" (*FQ* VI Pr. 5). Thus, when Spenser introduces "courtesy" in conjunction with the "court" at the start of Book VI, it is only for the purposes of a later ironic subversion: "Of Court *it seemes*, men Courtesie doe call" (*FQ* VI i 1, emphasis added).[130] As Spenser lamented, although courtesy was first planted in an earthly bower "from heauenly seedes of bounty soueraine" (*FQ* VI Pr. 3),

> Yet brancheth forth in braue nobilitie,
>
> And spreds it selfe through all ciuilitie:
>
> Of which though present age doe plenteous seeme,
>
> Yet being matcht with plaine Antiquitie,

---

[129] Compare Huizinga's study of the *potlatch*. *Homo Ludens*, pp. 58-63. In time, the performance became everything, and "grace"—meaning the appearance of effortlessness in deeds under the guise of natural and innate ability, which Baldassare Castiglione had termed *sprezzatura*—was the sole prize. See *The Book of the Courtier* (*Il cortegiano*), p. 29:

> It is true that, whether favoured by the stars or by nature, some men are born endowed with such graces that they seem not to have been born, but to have been fashioned by the hands of some god, and adorned with every excellence of mind and body; even as there are many others so inept and uncouth that we cannot but think that nature brought them into the world out of spite and mockery. And just as the latter, for the most part, yield little fruit even with constant diligence and good care, so the former with little labour attain to the summit of the highest excellence.

For relevant references of this dissociation of work from play, of effort from ease, see Tonkin, p. 169; Montrose, "Politics," p. 444.

[130] See O'Loughlin, p. 25: "in so many of the later Western celebrations of free time *in* time, we shall find that an ironic realism… will expose the vaunted realism of the busy world as centrifugal and illusory."

Ye will them all but fayned showes esteeme,

Which carry colours faire, that feeble eies misdeeme. (*FQ* VI Pr. 4)

The possibility of reviving through pastoralized courtesy, not a forgotten innocence, but a higher and harmonious authenticity after the tribulations of worldly contention, which recalls what Aristotle had once argued for in his *Politics*—that we do "without leisure" [*ascholon*] in order to have leisure [*scholē*] (1334a, 1337b)—recapitulates the Christian pattern of descent and ascent that reverses the main assumption of the Virgilian sequence of literary development. As the *Eclogues* yield to the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, so is rest improperly opposed to the realism of work and movement, and so the Arcadian groves and pastures are regarded as temporary private residences, idyllic playgrounds freed from mundane cares, utopian sanctuaries from a busy world that must eventually be confronted. Instead, Spenser integrates pastoralism to the cycle of heroic labour, thereby proposing a civic conception of leisure that celebrates the public and scholastic ambition of "free time *in* time" (O'Loughlin 25). There is a reason why Calidore's bucolic interlude in the final completed book of *The Faerie Queene* is dominated by *æglogues*, "conversations" with goatherds (such as Meliboe and Colin). Through the sanctification of repose within daily enterprise, Spenser's heroes experience the central theme of the epic, which the author presents as a gift to the reader: liberal education, pursued as an end in itself, is a leisure activity that makes possible the only life worth living—the examined life of the "gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" ("Letter to Raleigh," 15).

Chapter Three

Spenser's Syncretism Tested: The Ordeals of Temperance and Justice

And euery feend his busie paines applide / To melt the golden metall, ready to be tride.

FQ II vii 35

The relationship between justice and temperance, which recalls Plato's conception of the harmonious state organised according to the model of the righteous individual,[131] reflects the deeper structural unity of *The Faerie Queene*, based on the pairing of analogous books. This chapter will examine the second and fifth legends, the quests of Guyon and Artegall, corresponding respectively to private and public order.[132] As James Nohrnberg remarks, uncontrolled impulse in Book II relates to lawlessness in Book V. "The individual's goal of achieving a temperate existence in the physical world," he writes, "corresponds to the justiciar's goal of securing an orderly basis for life in society" (289). However, a further qualification can be added to these analogues which reveal, in accordance with the broader theme of this thesis, the complex synthesis of work and play. Temperance and justice are importantly "virtues of experience" associated with the training of the moral being in a postlapsarian world—in short, they denote self-control, mental and physical mastery over the extremes of idleness and industry that represent each face of the "disorder" of vanity.[133]

For Spenser, the chivalric quest is always in danger of becoming an idle and purposeless recreation, so that his heroes could become stuck in the proverbial "quicksand of *Vnthriftyhed*"

---

[131] See Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, p. 352:
> The association of justice and temperance goes back to Plato's proposal in the *Republic* that the just society be organized on the model of the faculties of the well-governed man […] In the *Republic* itself, this rule of reason is manifested by the early domination of the other characters by the reasonable Socrates; indeed, after the first book, the theory of the just state takes the form of an anatomy of the mind of its chief exponent. Guyon is similarly dominated by the Palmer.

[132] See Nohrnberg, p. 285; Roche, ed., on *FQ* V, p. 1187. For the structural analogy between the Microcosmos and the Macrocosmos in Neoplatonic philosophy, see Panofsky, pp. 135-137.

[133] See Berger, *Allegorical Temper*, p. 26.

(*FQ* II xii 18), impulsively abandoning their responsibilities. Nevertheless, a life of service can just as frequently be reduced to the vainglorious pursuit of honours and economic achievement, despite its identification by some Protestant reformers with the evidence of salvation (Nohrnberg 346n122). Consider Mammon's proposition that Guyon "must wage / Thy workes for wealth, and life for gold engage" (*FQ* II vii 18). According to Nohrnberg, the loss of freedom is the predominant note in these extremes of prodigality and hoarding—the Scylla of *luxuria* and the Charybdis of cupidity[134]—while temperance is subsequently offered up as a conscious exercise of judgment closely identifiable with justice, in particular the mediatory concept of equity, as evidenced by the walls of Alma's second advisor adorned with pictures "Of Magistrates, of courts, of tribunals, / Of commen wealthes, of states, of pollicy, / Of lawes, of iudgements, and of decretals" (*FQ* II ix 53).

It is precisely "That part of Iustice, which is Equity," a kind of measured mean between excess and deficiency, more and less (not unlike Aristotle's own conception of virtue,[135] see Chapter One), that Spenser deliberately introduces at the equinoctial point of Book V when the Sun (Isis) and Moon (Osiris) "both like race in equall iustice runne" (*FQ* V vii 3, 4). His emphasis on the continent *course* of justice—recalling the French word for "trial," *procès*—not only points to the eventual restitution of justice *in time*,[136] perhaps by way of Protestant Reformation, but ultimately connects the Herculean labours of Artegall to the concept of the ordeal, understood in both the broader sense of trials (or "temptations," from the French *tempter*, meaning "to try, attempt") and, more specifically, in legal "processes."

---

[134] See Nohrnberg, p. 291.
[135] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b15-35.
[136] See Spenser's familiarity with a secondary sense of temperance as *tempo*, "the keeping of time in music"—in a word, harmony—associated in Book VI with the dance of the Graces. See Nohrnberg, p. 307: "One meaning of temperance, then, is good timing—a meaning that its etymology will support. The porter at the Castle of Alma never rings his "larumbell" out of time (*FQ* II ix 25); he never sounds the alarm heedlessly, or speaks out of turn."

As evidence of the importance of arduous testing in chivalric romance and its connection to early modern syncretism, we may note Spenser's reformulation of the principle of *discordia concors* in the trial of Duessa (from *duo*, "two"[137]) announcing the victory of national unity in the wake of political and theological strife. In Book V, canto ix, the personification of Elizabeth I (the First, the One) in the "Souerayne Goddesse" Mercilla stands over and against the fraudulent figure of doubleness and duality topically representing Mary Stuart.

Spenser also explores the private instantiation of testing having encountered in medieval romance the structuring principle of "the hero undergoing a trial"—a test of virtue, especially chastity and reciprocal fidelity, of strength, courage, nobility, and even faithfulness to the rigorous demands of chivalry. As Bakhtin reports, in all cases where the hero and heroine are beset with dangerous temptations and emerge with their honour unsullied, they undergo a process that does not fundamentally change their character, nor jeopardise the security bestowed upon them by God. The hero is, in a sense, "ready-made"; all that he has, and will ever be, has been guaranteed to him from the beginning. His interests cannot be dissociated from those of his Maker—the Divine Arbiter (34-35). Therefore, one of the basic compositional motifs of the trial, evident not only in chivalric romance but also epic, is the predetermination of the hero's calling, a testing of his "chosenness."[138] The adventurous heroes of chivalric romance glorify themselves

---

[137] See Craig, p. 455.

[138] See also Bakhtin, p. 389. The idea of testing the hero is, according to Bakhtin, the "most fundamental organising idea in the novel"; therefore, we can safely assert that the development of the novel form follows the same pattern as the development of the idea of testing—a way of saying that they are inseparable, essentially linked. The "novel of ordeal" typically refers to the seventeenth-century Baroque novel (*Prüfungsroman*), regarded by literary historians as a modernised version of the Greek romance (106). The Baroque novel is preceded, however, by the chivalric romance, such as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which "lies on the boundary between epic and novel" (154). A unique development of the idea of the test arises in the nineteenth-century novel with the Romantic version of the trial as the testing of a man's "genius." Earlier still, in the eighteenth century, German first-wave Romanticism, led by Goethe, organically combines the theme of "becoming" and the theme of testing, introducing the *Bildungsroman*. For the first time, the concept of the trial does not begin with a fully-formed hero subjected to an ideal that is entirely worked out in advance—in other words, the test is severed from "being." As Bakhtin writes (p. 392-393),

> Life and its events no longer serve as a touchstone, a means for testing a ready-made character (or at best, as a factor triggering the development of an already preformed and predetermined hero)—

and glorify *others* (their feudal lord and lady, but especially their God) (Bakhtin 107-108, 153). The general aim of the laboursome trial is theodicean, to justify, in Milton's words, "the ways of God to men" (*PL*, I. 26);[139] however, the form of this devotional work betrays sportive origins. As Huizinga remarks, in somewhat Hegelian terms, the trial is "a revelation of truth and justice because some deity is *directing the fall of the dice* or the outcome of the battle" (*Homo Ludens*, 82, emphasis added). The heroic trial or "ordeal" (in German, *Gottesurteil*, meaning "The Final Judgment") assumes a legal character, but underneath the toilsome juridical apology of the hero is the *agon*.

The serio-ludic ordeal is etymologically connected to legal justice through the concept of judgment (*Urteil*, in German), and traces its origin to the primitive contest. Beginning with law in broader terms, we can see quite unremarkably that a lawsuit is a kind of ritualistic game bound by fixed and restrictive rules involving two competing parties appealing to the decision of an arbitrator. Moreover, the legal process takes place in a consecrated playground, a *temenos*, separated from the "everyday" world: the "court" of law, which is notionally related to the royal enclosure, the site of aristocratic racquet sports.[140] Lastly, in any legal dispute, the outcome, either victory or defeat, is uncertain. For example, in Classical iconography the goddess of fate

---

now, life and its events, bathed in the light of becoming, reveal themselves as the hero's *experience*, as the school or environment that first forms and formulates the hero's character and world view.

[139] See Weber, pp. 108-109:

The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability. But God requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandments, in accordance with that purpose. The social activity of the Christian in the world is solely activity *in majorem gloriam Dei* […]. This makes labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him.

[140] The Avestan word for "enclosure" is *paridaēza*, which gives us "paradise." See Giamatti, *Take Time for Paradise*, pp. 42-43.

As for the contemporary games still played on "courts," I have in mind tennis and squash. Notice how the sportive passion for argument and counter-argument highly characteristic of the litigation perfectly captures the essence of these games if we replace the speakers for the players striking the ball back and forth.

(Tyché, Fortuna) is occasionally linked to the goddess of justice (Diké, Justicia) and holds the game "in balance," represented by weighing the scales of justice first depicted on the shield of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad* (Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 79-80).[141] For Protestants, the test of faith presupposes notions of destiny and chance, connections with ancient Greek and Roman allegory which are introduced in some early modern narratives in the serio-ludic form of the wayfaring knight.

As Lewalski demonstrates, the course of the elect Christian's life, according to Protestant doctrine, is the laboursome attainment of a constant faith; however, God can remove that assurance of salvation for a time, to test him. Thus, the "trial of faith" is one of doubt and despair, a self-examination that reasserts the essence of the wager as "that which puts the outcome into question" (22-23). The practice of wagering further implies that a "right," such as the favourability of God, is given up, and that a claim is cast or thrown—a sportive action—by one party so that the other may dispute it.[142] Oftentimes this legal duel takes the form of a battle proper: the noble game of war waged for the sake of honour and virtue that prompted the medieval ideal of chivalry and thus, consequently, secured the groundwork for international law and the contest later known as *de jure belli ac pacis*, which remains subject to a system of restrictive rules intended to protect humanity from "great wrong" (Huizinga 96).[143] For the ludic—and therefore, the legal—quality of war to prevail, battles must be fought out in the open, without hidden treacheries, in a predetermined place and time, and using preestablished techniques that limit casualties. This may be illustrated in the conventions of ancient Greek

---

[141] For Spenser's use of the scales of justice, see *FQ* V ii 30.

[142] See *FQ* V xii 8, ll. 8-9. Huizinga notes that the Greek word δίκη ("right," "justice") is derived from δίχεῖν, to cast or throw. See *Homo Ludens*, p. 80. Curiously, the English word "dice" may be a reference to the Divine Will that *decides the way the dices fall*, that determines the outcome of a trial, or, more generally, the fate of the world. The Ases of Eddic mythology, for example, are portrayed as engaged in a game of dice (p. 81). This may also explain why Spenser cleverly refers to justice at the seat of Mercilla's throne as *Dice*. See *FQ* V ix 32.

[143] In Italian, *gran*, "great," and *torto*, "wrong." Grantorto is the primary antagonist of *FQ*, Book V.

warfare (such as the deployment of the hoplite phalanx) that stands in sharp contrast to the cruel wars of modern times.[144] Rebellion, usually involving clandestine guerilla forces committing "hidden crimes," such as the kerns Spenser encountered in Ireland (*FQ* V xii 26; Nohrnberg 363), may also be indicative of an absence of temperance and a humanising play-spirit.[145] By contrast, Spenser's champion of True Justice, Artegall, invites his tyrannical opponent, Grantorto, dressed as an Irish foot-soldier,[146]

> to reclayme with speed
>
> His scattred people, ere they all were slaine,
>
> And time and place conuenient to areed,
>
> In which they two the combat might darrained. (*FQ* V xii 9)

In the late Middle Ages, it was customary for members of the nobility to settle scores via the "trial by battle," which was considered a humanitarian measure designed to replace war and to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.[147] Despite the inherent violence of single combat, the judicial duel would frequently end without much harm being inflicted, since implementations of physical handicaps and restrictions regarding weapon choice—that went beyond the typical systems of regulative rules shared by all legal contests rooted in agonistics, such as spatial-temporal limitations—were devised to equalise the playing field between unequal combatants, leading some scholars to openly ask whether this ancient custom was practiced in earnest or with a

---

[144] See Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, pp. 96-98. For the medieval practice of "exchanging civilities," see p. 99.
[145] Compare Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part II*, Act III, Scene 1, ll. 1595-1596: "The uncivil kerns of Ireland are in arms / And temper clay with blood of Englishmen."
[146] See *FQ* V xii 14.
[147] See *FQ* V iv 47:
> There she resolu'd her selfe in single fight
> To try her Fortune, and his force assay,
> Rather than see her people spoiled quight.

certain ludicrousness.[148] Huizinga, for example, insists that "a conscious appeal to heaven… is

not the primary meaning" of trials by combat, and concludes, based on the empirical evidence

that they are nowhere found in Anglo-Saxon laws but rather introduced by the Normans, that in

England the ordeal was always a far more common and important form of serio-ludic

adjudication (93). Along with the conventions of chivalric romance and the theological

underpinnings of Protestant wayfaring, this historical fact may further explain why the ordeal is

ubiquitous in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

A remark by Artegall in the episode with Sir Sanglier (V, i) proves that Spenser knew the

difference between single combat and the ordeal:

> now sure this doubtfull causes right
>
> Can hardly but by Sacrament be tride,
>
> Or else by ordele, or by blooddy fight. (*FQ* V i 25)

The marked difference between the ordeal and other kinds of serio-ludic adjudication is not that

the former consciously ascends into the sphere of faith, nor that it is simply a contract, but that

the ordeal, as opposed to the trial by combat, is a *contrat à plusieurs épreuves*. The ordeal may

certainly include "single fight," but it is distinguished by its magnitude and variegation, which

greatly amplifies its ambulatory motifs of wayfaring, adventure, and vagabondage. The ordeal

takes on a multiplicity of forms including, but not limited to, wrestling matches, military

campaigns, pilgrimages, and repetitive races—often in simultaneity with one another.[149]

According to Nohrnberg, the overarching theme of the Spenserian ordeal is that of development,

---

[148] See Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 95: "Being essentially a play-form, the duel is symbolical; it is the shedding of blood and not the killing that matters […]. When blood flows, honour is vindicated and restored."
[149] Red Crosse twice compares Guyon's mission to a footrace (*FQ* II i 32, 34), while his own dalliance in *FQ* I vii is compared, in the fifth stanza, to a "rest in middest of the race."

rather than proof of "chosenness"—in a word, *training*.[150] Regarding the Knight of Temperance, he writes:

> Guyon's legend repeatedly illustrates the maxim that all growth takes place in a resisting medium. Muscles are hardened by exercise and strain, movement entails conflict and friction, and intellectual growth results from the effort of study. Accomplishment is proportional to such effort; drifting ends in stultification, inanition, and flaccidity. (295)

Of course, being tested is fundamental to undergoing an ordeal in a general sense, and in Guyon's case Nohrnberg defines his arduous moral conditioning as "the whole discipline of self-reliance… learning to stand on one's own two feet" and finds support for this explanation in Guyon's pedestrian expedition into the Cave of Mammon (299-300). In contrast, Peter V. Marinelli has perceptively remarked how Guyon, upon entering the Bower of Bliss, is depicted "Bridling his will, and maistering his might" (*FQ* II xii 53), a reminder of the sense of toil visible in the figure of a woman holding a bridle (35).[151] Although horsemanship is the more conventional dress of Temperance amongst Medieval and Renaissance iconographers, and Spenser additionally resorts in his explanation of the "golden mean" to the nautical image of the steady helmsman, he compellingly links the virtue of ambulation to the combat against damnation and to the Christian fear of "falling" evoked in the "deadly fit" of Guyon (*FQ* II vii 66).[152]

---

[150] From the French verb *trainer*, meaning "to pull, drag, draw out." The sense of "disciplining, teaching, or bringing to fulfillment by means of instruction" dates from the mid-sixteenth century, and likely derives from an earlier sense of "drawing out to bring to a desired form" (14th c.). Compare English "tract," from Latin *tractus* ("track, course, duration") and verb *tractare* ("to handle"). The locomotive connotations are present from the beginning; so too is the link with "treatise" (French *traiter*, Latin *tractatus*) which may inform Spenser's broader pedagogic intentions. The verb "treat" may also help to contextualise Guyon's temptations in the Cave of Mammon, as it means "to entertain with food and drink… by way of complement and bribery" (c. 1500). See the relevant entries in the *OED*.

[151] Compare *SC*, "April," ll. 19-20: "And hath he skill to make so excellent, / Yet hath so little skill to brydle loue?"

[152] The association of horsemanship and temperance is rooted in the Platonic symbol of the charioteer.

Nohrnberg compares the three temptations of Christ by Satan in the "wilderness" of Judaea—the sins of gluttony, vainglory, and avarice endured by Guyon—to the three falls of a Herculean wrestling match, alluding to the theme of dispossession as loss of footing or balance (300).[153] The Greek τάλαντα (*talanta*, "talent"[154]) originally meant "scales," with reference to the "scales of justice" (Huizinga 80). Ἀταλάντη (*Atalántē*) means "equal weight or value, balance." Therefore, this threefold structure of temptation further connects Guyon to the mythic sprinter Atalanta, defeated in a bridal race by her future husband, Hippomenes, appearing alongside other apple-stories in Spenser's description of the Garden of Proserpina.[155]

The apples harvested by Atalanta and found by Guyon growing on a "goodly tree" (*FQ* II vii 53) are compared to the fruit of the forbidden tree that tempted Adam and Eve, but they are also associated with the golden prizes of the Hesperides won by Hercules[156]—both symbols of knowledge and learning (Nohrnberg 335). The "goodly golden fruit" of Discord that instigated the Trojan War prompted many "noble" deeds of war; thus, when Spenser writes "Their fruit

---

Lack of self-restraint as a kind of indolence is evoked in Phaedria's gondola that floats along the water "Withouten oare or Pilot it to guide" and suggests the Italian *gongolare*, meaning "to laugh or chuckle uncontrollably, excessively, or until one's body aches" (*FQ* II vi 5; Craig 464). The reader is invited to contrast this "litle skippet," which *skips* aimlessly on a lake meant to symbolise the Adriatic (recalling the Greek αδράνεια, *adráneia*, "inaction, inertia") to the boat steered by the sagacious Palmer in the final canto of Book II, guiding the Knight of Temperance on an "euen course" between Scylla and Charybdis (*FQ* II xii 3). See *FQ* II xii 29, ll. 5-9:

> the Boateman strayt
> Held on his course with stayed stedfastnesse,
> Ne euer shruncke, ne euer sought to bayt
> His tyred armes for toylesome wearinesse,
> But with his oares did sweepe the watry wildernesse.

The relationship between the "golden mean" and sailing is introduced in the Greek myth of Scylla and Charybdis, and is later to be found in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.ix, and Horace, *Odes*, II.10. See Nohrnberg, pp. 295-296.

[153] Guyon's name possibly derives from the word *gyon*, meaning "wrestler." See Roche, ed., on *FQ* II, p. 1108. For the relation between the agonistics of argument, juridical battles, and wrestling, see Plato, *Euthydemus*, 277d-e.

[154] The word "talent" (Latin *talenta*, *talentum*), which has come to mean money, a sum of gold, possessed affective connotations as early as the late thirteenth century: "inclination, disposition, will, desire." Curiously, the notion of a "God-given gift" of an innate ability—the modern sense of *having talent* or *being talented*—was not unfamiliar in Elizabethan times.

[155] See *FQ* II vii 54-55.

[156] See Apollonius, *Argonautica*, pp. 131-132.

were golden apples glistring bright, / That goodly was their glory to behold," he suggests that beyond the surface of avarice lies the possibility of reward. Intemperate judgment can be redeemed or *justified* through the heroic work of *justice* (playfully spelled "warke" in *FQ* II i 32).[157] Nevertheless, the complications of Guyon's "wicked" faint, such as the necessity for divine intervention, highlight the dangers of attempting to comprehend temperance by subjecting the self to allurements.[158]

In *The Allegorical Temper*, Berger argues that Guyon's faint is connected to the Aquinian sin of *curiositas*, that is, "an unprofitable curiosity and a perhaps less than practical desire to make trial of his own excellence—to feed on his virtues," undoubtedly stemming from what can only amount to an "aboundance of an idle braine" (29; *FQ* II Pr. 1). Guyon, having been separated from his guide and in need of adventure, attempts to make trial of his own temperance, creating for himself a contrived game with a series of unnecessary obstacles, in the form of temptations to overcome or resist.[159] Berger explains that Guyon's "profitless tour" is not a bona fide ordeal, but a kind of vainglorious exercise consisting of "muscle flexing—moral as well as physical" (18); however, this sinful curiosity, this self-indulgent *trial for trial's sake*, classified under the notably Augustinian "concupiscence of the eyes" and manifest in the fondness for visual spectacles, is of a different register and finds its contrary in one aspect of the virtue of temperance, namely *studiositas* ("studiousness"), which is pragmatically a version of restraint rooted in the Aristotelian ideal of leisure (i.e., *scholē*).[160] As Nohrnberg shows, by refusing the apples of Mammon, Guyon puts "a limit on the temptations as a whole" and proves that there can

---

[157] See Alpers, pp. 243-244.
[158] See *FQ* II viii 1.
[159] See *FQ* II vii 2, ll. 6-7: "So long he yode, yet no aduenture found, / Which fame of her shrill trompet worthy reedes." Compare Suits' definition of the minimum requirements for a game, in *Grasshopper*, p. 41.
[160] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II.II, q.166-167; Augustine, *Confessions*, x. 35 (quoted in Aquinas' exposition of *curiositas*). The relevant passages are cited by Berger, *Allegorical Temper*, pp. 22-23, 26-27; also, Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, pp. 336-338.

be an end to the ordeal: "He does not taste the apples, that is, he does not *test* them" (338). But

Guyon's faint shows that there is a limit to temperance, namely physical or mental exhaustion.[161]

      The careless curiosity that first leads the Knight of Temperance to Mammon's den is

proof that unlike the figure of "selfe-consuming Care" (*FQ* II vii 25), Guyon is incapable of

remaining constantly vigilant against vice.[162] Although, as Berger demonstrates, commentators

of *The Faerie Queene* differ vastly in their interpretations of Guyon's "deadly fit," if we accept

the admittedly contentious reading that it is a loss of control, a punishment for inaction, then the

faint, or the general limits of human capacity that it may symbolise, becomes an inadvertent

means of obtaining mercy, a *Felix culpa* that *fittingly* prepares the wretched creature to receive

God's generosity. It is worth mentioning here that Guyon's trying descent into the underworld

and encounter with the devilish Mammon is equated with the Final Judgment, recalling the

Palmer's prophetic remark:

> death is an equall doome
>
> To good and bad, the common Inne of rest;
>
> But after death the tryall is to come,
>
> When best shall be to them, that liued best. (*FQ* II i 59)

Since Guyon's struggle against indolence in the Cave of Mammon is, properly speaking, an

or*deal*, it is only appropriate that it ends in a charitable allotment, a transactional *dole*[163] (Old

---

[161] See Nohrnberg, p. 351:

> When Spenser's hero faints at the end of his trial, we are to understand both the limits upon the
> kind of resistance temperance by itself can offer and the limits upon self-reliance in general. At
> just this point Guyon's guardian spirit descends to take over for the senseless knight; the
> guardian's office in turn passes to Arthur, that is, to a "self" who relies upon more than one virtue.

[162] As Nohrnberg perceptively reports,

> Guyon is also enticed by Mammon with a "siluer stoole"—a footstool—"To rest thy wearie
> person" (FQ II vii 63). Food and sleep are the two supports for the life of man, and if eating the
> fruit of the dead kept Proserpina in hell, sitting on the silver seat is not likely to prove less
> dangerous to Guyon. An evil rest in this case would imply a relaxation of vigilance (342).

[163] From the Latin *dolens*, *dolere*: "to suffer pain, grieve."

English *dál*, which gives us "deal") through the mediative ministration of the blessed angels and Arthur's rescue of the slumbering hero.

The emergence of grace begins what has been called "the dissociation of the hero," referencing the way by which heroic labour is transferred at the midpoint of the narrative—from Guyon to Arthur in Book II, and from Artegall to Britomart at the corresponding point of Book V.[164] The space filled by the central ordeals of Temperance and Justice further points to the heroes' absenteeism: Artegall loses his power of action while imprisoned in Radigund's abode, and Guyon ventures below the earth away from the workaday world (Nohrnberg 359, 361). The restoration of effectual masculine labour is accomplished by the return of their guides, who summon magnanimous characters, emblematic of divine grace, able to intervene on their behalf.

In Book V, the part of justice most connected in the Christian mind with the mediations of divine judgment, is equity. Equity partly involves the rational interpretation and merciful restraint of the written law—in a word, moderation. Thus, Spenser compares chaste Britomart, the personification of equity in Book V, to the dutiful priests of Isis Church: "For by the vow of their religion / They tied were to stedfast chastity, / And continence of life" (*FQ* V vii 9). Spenser extends the theme of abstention to a defense of vegetarianism borrowed from Plutarch's *Moralia*, which doubles as a Protestant critique of the Eucharist: of the devotees of Isis, he writes that

---

[164] Many scholars, especially Berger, have noted the sharp division between the first and second halves of Book II. Before Guyon's collapse, the Knight of Temperance dominates the action (except for canto iii, where Spenser introduces Belphoebe and Braggadochio). He rushes into battle against Red Crosse, buries Mordant and Amavia (both canto i), delivers the infant Ruddymane to Medina and quashes the conflict between her immodest sisters and their suitors (canto ii), he rescues Phedon from the hag Occasion and her child Furor (canto iv), he defeats Pyrochles in single combat (canto v), and lastly, before stumbling into Mammon's den, he fights with Cymochles and resists the seductions of Phaedria in the Lake of Idleness (canto vi). Excluding the final canto of Book II wherein Guyon journeys with Palmer to the Bower of Bliss to defeat Acrasia, Guyon accomplishes comparatively little in the latter half. Arthur arrives as a divine messenger—"of bold and bounteous grace" (*FQ* II viii 17)—to protect the slumbering knight just as Pyrochles and Cymochles attempt to run off with Guyon's armour. Arthur slays the pagan brothers (canto viii). Arthur travels to Alma (accompanied by Guyon) which he defends from the siege and assault of Maleger (canto xi). Perhaps the purpose of Arthur's continued presence in the second half of Book II is to emphasise, in an almost Calvinistic manner, the fallen hero's need for providential grace. This point may prove to be more convincing when compared to Arthur's similar salvific role in Book I. See Berger, *Allegorical Temper*, pp. 5-6.

"they mote not taste of fleshly food, / Ne feed on ought, the which doth bloud containe, / Ne drinke of wine, for wine they say is blood" (*FQ* V vii 10). Here, the sublimation of temperance into equity recalls the clash between Guyon and Britomart at the beginning of Book III, which ends in pacification,[165] but also prepares the broader structural compatibility between the virtues of Temperance and Justice.

The analogy between the legends of Temperance and Justice is derived from Plato's argument in the *Republic* that a just society will model the threefold composition of the mind of the rational man (*Rep*. IV. 435). Personal harmony promotes the attributes of the governor that serve to maintain political order. Thus, the self-reliance of the governor is reflected in his just policies; the failure of the governor to master his passions is measured in his inability to supress rebellion (Nohrnberg 371). For Spenser, the role of the Castle of Alma, symbol of a well-ordered mind and body, is later taken up by the court of Mercilla since her counterpart the Elizabethan Virgin Queen stood as the most obvious English trustee of justice and temperance. Moreover, insofar as justice is primarily, to use Nietzsche's expression, a will-to-power, it is essentially hierarchical and authoritative: "Well therefore did the antique world inuent, / That Iustice was a God of soueraine grace" (*FQ* V vii 2; Nohrnberg 353). The proximity of justice to mercy is demonstrable through Mercilla, herself the beneficiary of theological accreditations—of the *divine right* of governance, sanctified by angels upholding her "cloth of state"—emphasising the connection of these virtues to the Absolute Will of God (*FQ* V ix 29).[166]

---

[165] See *FQ* III i 12.

[166] Compare Mercilla to the figure of Eliza, Queen of the Shepherds, whom Spenser makes a "Fourth Grace." See *SC*, "April," l. 113. Also, *FQ* V x 1: "in th'Almighties euerlasting seat / She first was bred, and borne of heauenly race; / From thence pour'd down on men, by influence of grace."

As for equity, it appears in the relationship between gold-crowned Isis and Mercilla,[167] and again in the formation of the tribunal in the trial of Duessa, inspired by the lawsuit in the final installment of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: Spenser balances the rival claimants by having five witnesses appear on behalf of the defendant, and five witnesses support the prosecuting body, with Arthur and Artegall landing on either side of the debate—what amounts to a hung jury until the sovereign decides in favour of conviction (Nohrnberg 381).

Furthermore, the playful image of Isis suppressing the unrestrained power of the Crocodile, ties Isis (from Greek *isos*, "equal") to Artegall (French *égal*, "equal"), whose earliest education in justice is learning how to tame wild animals, but especially to "That part of Iustice, which is Equity."[168] The joust between Artegall and Arthur produces a stalemate or "faire accordaunce" (*FQ* V viii 14),[169] for the resonances of "Artegall" indicate that he is "Arthur's equal." In some sense, equity is the *idol* or "ideal" of justice;[170] but it can also be a technic, an *art d'égalité*, with real-world implications. In a passage notable for its allusions to Aristotle's definition of the "golden mean," Astraea instructs Artegall

> to weigh both right and wrong
>
> In equall ballance with due recompence,
>
> And equitie to measure out along,
>
> According to the line of conscience. (*FQ* V i 7)

As the counterpart of temperance, equal justice is the public rather than private expression of the mean: "right sate in the middest of the beame alone" (*FQ* V ii 48).[171] Since equity is largely in

---

[167] In *FQ* V vii 3, Isis is described as "A Goddesse of great powre and souerainty." For the relationship between equity and mercy, and between mercy and temperance, see *FQ* V vii 22: "clemence oft in things amis, / Restraines those sterne behests, and cruell doomes of his."

[168] For the allegory of Isis, see *FQ* V vii 7, 15. For Artegall's sportive training, see *FQ* V i 7-8.

[169] See *FQ* V viii 9.

[170] See *FQ* V vii 6.

[171] The "right" resides in moderation, and is sustained by a series of traditional ascetic practices, as in Guyon's case:

effect in matters of friendly exchange, such as in the reaching of a balanced "settlement" of the kind that Artegall administers between the quarrelling kinsmen Amidas and Bracidas, it is involved in harmonious reconcilement. Justice develops the argument of the preceding book by securing friendship and fostering social cohesion (Altman 414; Evans 197).[172] The unitive role played by Samient (Dutch *samen*, "togetherness") is prefigured in Medina, symbol of the mean between deficiency and excess, who pacifies her feuding sisters Elissa ("short-of-equal") and Perissa ("over-equal") and their clashing suitors.[173] We are therefore to understand that equity is a kind of peace.

The close relationship between equal justice and placation in *The Faerie Queene* is surprisingly unrecognised in contemporary Spenser scholarship. Yet the Isis Church allegory explicitly presents the Egyptian nocturnal goddess, taming the Crocodile "which sleeping lay / Vnder the Idols feete in fearelesse bowre" (*FQ* V vii 15), in the role of an equitable and peaceable *Venus victrix*:

> For that same Crocodile doth represent
>
> The righteous Knight, that is thy faithfull louer.
>
> Like to *Osyris* in all iust endeuer.
>
> For that same Crocodile *Osyris* is,
>
> That vnder *Isis* feete doth sleepe for euer:

His race with reason, and with words his will,
From foule intemperance he oft did stay,
And suffred not in wrath his hastie steps to stray. (*FQ* II i 34)
The origins of the English word "right" (in French, *droit*) reveal what is meant by the *rule* of law (Spenser's "line of conscience" inherently opposed to the "wavering" or "indirect" course): the Greek ὀρήκτος (*orektos*) and Latin *ērectus*, meaning "straight, upright, direct," proceed through an Old Germanic base (Dutch and German *recht*) to give us the modern appellation.
[172] See the cognate words *jus* ("right, law") and *jungo* ("join, fit, tie together").
[173] Nohrnberg reminds us of the etymology at play in this episode. See *Analogy*, p. 386.

> To shew that clemence oft in things amis,
>
> Restraines those sterne behests, and cruell doomes of his. (*FQ* V vii 22)

Spenser thus positions Isis as analogous to Venus in her ascendency over Mars, a myth that for the most part valorises pleasure and harmony over war. The Renaissance syncretism of Venus and Isis owes much to Plutarch's essay *De Iside et Osiride* wherein Harmony is described as being born from the leisurely union of Mars and Venus, and from which Pico della Mirandola borrowed exhaustively in developing his theory of beauty.[174] By representing Isis as a symbol of Equity, Spenser was assuredly following Plutarch, and perhaps Pico, who paradoxically defined Venus as a goddess of moderation (Wind 119). Moreover, the refinement of the myth of the victorious Venus in this ideal vision of equity from its previous associations with indolent excess, such as we find in Cymochles' foray into the Lake of Idleness, demonstrates Spenser's attempt to resolve the initially uncomplementary antitheses of work and play.

In general, the disarmament of knights in *The Faerie Queene* represents play cleaved from work—idleness in contrast with industry.[175] After Red Crosse removes his chainmail by the fountain side, he carelessly "feedes vpon the cooling shade" (*FQ* I vii 3) and indulges in concupiscible sins of the flesh (i.e., Gluttony and Sloth). When the spellbound Verdant hangs upon a tree "His warlike armes, the idle instruments / Of sleeping praise" and falls victim to

---

[174] See Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 48 (*Moralia* 370d-371a), quoted in Wind, pp. 86-87. In Spenser's complex allegory, Osiris (Mars) stands for Artegall, while Isis (Venus) represents Britomart, whose particular virtue in Book V is equity. Thus, the marriage of Artegall and Britomart produces a Lion signifying the royal lineage culminating in the Tudor Dynasty that united the Red and the White Roses of Lancaster and York. The sovereignty of lion-like Harmony, as a kind of social order or *pax Brittanica*, completes the allegorical vision at Isis Church that recalls the earlier prophecy of Merlin (*FQ* III iii 26-49).

[175] Artegall's punishment, recalling Hercules' subjection to the Amazon queen Omphale, can be regarded as an exception to the rule, but one which nonetheless preserves the dissociation of work from play. His unheroic and slavish works are stripped entirely of their playful character; they become a parody of economic industry and masculine enterprise:

> First she doth them of warlike armes despoile,
> And cloth in womens weedes: And then with threat
> Doth them compel to worke, to earne their meat,
> To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring. (*FQ* V iv 31)

"lewd loues, and wastefull luxuree," he plays what Spenser calls a "lustfull game" (*FQ* II xii 80, 81). Malecasta entreats the faire Britomart to abandon knightly toil and "to disarme, and with delightfull sport / To loose her warlike limbs and strong effort" (*FQ* III i 52). Even Marinell's own mother unwittingly disarms her son with "subtile sophismes, which do play / With double senses, and with false debate" (*FQ* III iv 28). These lessons in continence all contain a strikingly similar message: the heroic ordeal that harmonises work and play is impossible when recreant faery knights descend to their most unheroic level.[176] How noteworthy it is that when Artegall becomes the counterpart of emasculated Hercules, the burden of this ordeal falls on Radigund who, in her "combats of sweet loue" against her maid and amorous rival Clarinda, "vntimely must / Thereof make tryall" (*FQ* V v 24, 29), indicating that the ordeal is coterminous with freedom—the power to judge and oppose.

In any case, the domination of Venus over Mars, of peace over strife, is *difficult* to maintain. Opposition is inescapable, which is precisely what makes upholding the logic of syncretism, the conjunction of apparent disjunctives, for Spenser an arduous ordeal. Although Mars is prevented from ever controlling Venus, Venus herself may be tempted to practice the same "cruel methods" of her lover. As Edgar Wind writes,

---

[176] It is worth mentioning that the taming of Mars by Venus takes on religious and political dimensions in *FQ* II vi, the episode at the Lake of Idleness. As Martha Craig illustrates, Phaedria is associated with Italy and, through a series of puns involving the "litle Gondelay" (*FQ* II vi 2), especially Venice, further implied by the location of her domain in an island in the midst of a great lake (i.e., the Mediterranean). Moreover, the idyllic island of Venice suggests, to the typical Renaissance Englishman, the land of Venus. Craig continues:

> Through such puns the Phaedria incident forms an elaborate commentary on the Italian way of life during the Renaissance and a criticism of the young Englishman's practice of sowing his wild oats there and affecting the Italianate style. Spenser finds reflected in Italy the prototype of inane mirth and shallow epicureanism: in the virtual enclosure of the Mediterranean Sea he finds a symbol of stagnation and idleness. (464)

It is probable that Craig partly overlooked the religious dimensions of the episode, emphasised in the correspondence between Venice and Venus; however, it is worth mentioning that the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene*, as indicated by Craig, contained a proverbial allusion to the pope: "Sometimes she sung, as loud as lark in aire, / Sometimes she laught, as merry as Pope Jone." Are the wiles of Venus connected to Roman Catholic Italy? And do they threaten the militant Protestantism of Britain symbolised by the warring Mars? Let it be remembered that the comingling of Britain and Mars occurs later in the name of the Knight of Chastity, Britomart.

for although Venus 'tames and mitigates' the contentiousness of Mars, she also 'loves Mars because Beauty, which we call Venus, cannot subsist without contrariety'; and thus a union of sweetness and sting remains implicit in the *discordia concors* of Mars and Venus. (91)

In other words, the triumph of love over war can also mean its converse—love of war, or perhaps the warfare of love—when, instead of putting Mars to sleep, the pugnacious Venus takes up arms and "with her rod him backe did beat" (*FQ* V vii 15). Contrary to what we might expect, this delightful pagan myth is not uncomplementary to the life of the Protestant wayfarer as *miles Christi* instructed to safeguard the soul from the vanities of the world and "Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6.11), for both these perspectives on life involve an agonistic ethos, which consequently reasserts the concept of the wager as "that which puts the outcome in question." The militant Christian, undergoing fits of doubt, is in open combat and conflict against the hostile forces of darkness that jeopardise his peace of mind (Lewalski 24). He encounters the other as a threat to the assurance of his own salvation.

Maurice Evans astutely notes that the rancorous tone permeating much of Book V "springs from the fact that the justice which the hero himself is capable of learning, though only by the most painful means, is even more difficult to apply to other people." Spenser must have realised, argues Evans, that the exhausting task of imposing virtue upon those in a fallen world who obstinately have no desire to reciprocate heroic virtue, as opposed to the successful self-discipline of Red Crosse (and supposedly Guyon), is inevitably problematic for the hero (199-200). Thus, Temperance ironically vanquishes licentious lust, embodied in Acrasia (from Greek

akrasia, "incontinence," *akratos*, "intemperate, violent," *akrates*, "powerlessness"[177]), in a manner most *intemperate*.[178] In other words, it becomes increasingly more difficult to "measure out a meane." Restraint is compromised: justice, "to preserue inuiolated right, / Oft spilles the principall, to save the part." When the rigours of the law designed to protect the individual become excessively strict, the very spirit of justice can be sacrificed in the struggle against injustice (Evans 203). In this case, insists Spenser, it is "better to reforme, then to cut off the ill" (*FQ* V x 2).[179] It is better to be merciful than to destroy, but mercy must not surrender to an unguarded or irresponsible pity: "Ne let thy stout hart melt in pitty vayne" (*FQ* II v 24), the Palmer instructs Guyon. As for the Champion of Justice, his misplaced leniency toward Radigund becomes a sign of weakness or "effeminateness of mind," a humiliating loss of control that Nohrnberg calls elsewhere an erroneous "partiality to injustice" dangerously hindering the ability to equitably apply the letter of the law (353, 383). Nonetheless, in a view informed by Christianity, Spenser's representation of ideal successes, such as Arthur's intervention on behalf of Belge, ensures that ultimate failure is not envisaged despite present earthly difficulties (Evans 199-200).

Spenser is primarily concerned with the "test of faith" inasmuch as the incompleteness of morally "good" works for redemptive purposes compels the sinner to heroically accept and justify—meaning to *carry out* in the workaday world—an effectual calling (Lewalski 16-17). Success comes from seeing this "task" through to the end, which requires skill and control; the

---

[177] See Berger, p. 66. Compare to *FQ* V iv 2, which treats Justice as the virtue most concerned with social decay, that is, with the aftermath of the concupiscent Original Sin.

[178] Spenser's emphasis on choler, erasure, monumental defacement, and anti-pastoral waste is evident in Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss. See *FQ* II xii 83. On Guyon's assault as a violent act of remembrance, an ironic response to historical amnesia, see Jennifer Summit, "At the Limits of Memory: Imagination and the Bower of Bliss," *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*, Anne Lake Prescott and Andrew D. Hadfield, editors, Norton, 2014, pp. 775-780.

[179] Contrast with *FQ* V ii 28, ll. 7-8: "Sir Artegall vndid the euill fashion, / And wicked customes of that Bridge refourmed." These lines, which perhaps contain a veiled critique of the Protestant Reformation, demonstrate, when contraposed to the passage in canto x, Spenser's shifting attitude within Book V.

inability to finish the race, so to speak, derives from weakness and incompetence. Nohrnberg has noticed that nearly every episode in Book V includes an example of "fruitless industry or thwarted effort." "In Spenser's legend about faith," he continues, "there is naturally more misplaced faith than elsewhere in the poem; in his legend about work, there is rather more lost labor" (373).[180] But for all the futile labour, there is the equally deplorable wastefulness of luxury representing the other extreme of that "single disorder" called vanity—the dissociation of labour from leisure. As Berger perceptively states,

> Mammon's argument is the other side of the coin: *where the Epicurean Phaedria says Relax, he stoically invokes man to sweat*; where Phaedria wants man to believe he is all body, Mammon tries to make him forget his body and concentrate on the goods of the spirit… for when we say the eye feeds, the metaphor works both ways, and *both perversions are in fact parts of a single disorder*. (26, emphasis added)

The serio-ludic ordeal, with its myriad poetic allusions to the civic labours of Hercules,[181] offers a way to temper the divide and balance the scales of justice.

---

[180] Hence, frustration characterises the demagogic giant's efforts at balancing the scales of justice, which proves Spenser's point about the organisation of society, that democracy merely "[stirs] vp ciuill faction" (*FQ* V ii 51). Meanwhile, Artegall's resignation at the end of Book V, his abrupt decision not to follow the Blatant Beast, recalls the departure of Astraea into the firmament.

[181] See Nohrnberg's complete list of Herculean references in Book V, pp. 374-375:

> the apprehension of Sanglier, the capture of the Erymanthian boar; the struggle with Pollente, the wrestling-match with the river-god Achelous; the cleaning up of Munera's corruption, the cleansing of the Augean stables; the hero's victories in the tournament at Marinell's wedding, Hercules' quelling of the Lapiths and Centaurs at the wedding of Theseus; the period with Radigund, the Omphale-phase or the victory over the Amazons; the episode of the Soldan, the mares of the Thracian tyrant Diomedes; the destruction of Malengine, the killing of Cacus, or of the shape-changing Periclymenus; the service of Mercilla, the service of Hera, or Hera's glory (the etymology of Hercules); the battle with Geryon, the battle with Gerioneo; the rescues of Samient, Beige, and Irena, the rescue of Hesione; the use of Talus, Hercules' use of "The club of Iustice dread, with kingly powre endewed" (*FQ* V 1 2).

Conclusion: On the Past, Present, and Future State of the Serio-Ludic

"The spirit of playful competition," writes Huizinga, "is older than culture itself and pervades all life like a veritable ferment" (*Homo Ludens*, 173). Culture, the record of human activity, has always been "played" because what is true about life is true of play falling under the category of the ἀγών: both unite the ideas of contest, struggle, tension, movement, chance, change, exercise, exertion, and suffering. The English language knows this all too well, for the word "play" is rooted in the Anglo-Saxon *plega*, meaning any kind of rapid movement or gesture. But *plega*—which gives us the chivalric "pledge"—also has a secondary sense of risk-taking, "to expose oneself to danger for something or someone," and is used in reference to sacral oath-taking and "engagements," or to "service" more broadly which, for centuries, has authorised the life of leisure (Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 38-39; O'Loughlin 236). Thus, every game has imperiled consequences, what the French have revealingly termed *un enjeu*: that which is at stake and wagered. There is always a prize *up for grabs*.[182]

According to Sir James Frazer, even primitive man, who could not perceive the annual alterations of the seasons with the superior detachment of a Kantian, imagined the course of life in sportive terms and recognised how intimately his own survival was entwined with the instabilities of nature, how the changes which bring about the decay of vegetation threaten him with the possibility of his own extinction. Early in his development, man seems to have entertained the notion that he might prevent or delay the menacing encroachments of winter through magical play—incantations, sacrifices, and other ritual ceremonies that could aid the forces of life and fertility in their battle against the opposing forces of death (Frazer 300).

---

[182] The notion of "grasping hold of something" is salient in the context of play. In French, the word *emprise* derives from *prise*, "taking, seizing, holding, by force." The latter word was likely anglicised into "prize" (c. 1300). Note also the appropriateness of the Greek word for "prize." "Prize" is ἆθλον and the prizefighter is ἀθλητής, literally "the athlete." See Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 51.

Cultural play, originally tied to the processes of labour, the preparation of the soil for *cultivation*, later developed into harvest customs such as contests among reapers and threshers with the supposed stated goal of avoiding the ignominy of finishing last.[183] Importantly, in the performance of these rites the player seems to be capable of maintaining his power of action and defy the external threat of idleness that befalls the weak. His labour is essential for creating that superabundant state of festal leisure which enables the flourishing of social institutions, of art and philosophy.

Yet, as Michael O'Loughlin explains, the developments of culture in the civic leisure of the festival paradoxically entail the loss of the ends once served by agrarian labour; "what is left," he adds, "is the substitution of means for ends and the futile voyeurism of a cultural acedia—the incapacity for leisure ironically registered in the *plaisant spectacle*" (251). Thus, the Greek ideal of *scholē*, stultified at the apogee of imperial Rome, degenerates into the vain ceremonialism of the Ludi and that *panem et circenses* which is prescribed wholesale as the palliative of boredom. The sin of Sloth diagnosed by medieval Christian commentators as a kind of "work for work's sake" transforms idleness into a perverse activity that simultaneously testifies to the inability to guarantee genuine repose and resolution. First defined by Hesiod as Bad Strife, and later by Spenser as a nefarious force of social agitation disguising itself as the repudiation of war,[184] idleness is the dark side of agricultural superfluity, it is a kind of waste and mass sacrifice—not stagnant unproductivity but *production in excess* (O'Loughlin 255).

---

[183] The best classical example is perhaps the Phrygian Lityerses, a lament sung at reaping and threshing. According to one story, Lityerses was a son of Midas who enjoyed challenging passersby to reaping matches and used to beat the vanquished. One day, he met a stronger opponent, who killed him. In a different version, the stronger opponent is identified as Hercules, who reportedly slew Lityerses in the same fashion as the Phrygian used to kill his opponents, by throwing his body into the Meander (symbolically encouraging the fertility of the soil). See Frazer, pp. 436-437.

[184] See Craig's analysis of Phaedria in "The Secret Wit of Spenser's Language," p. 464: "In repudiating war, Phaedria refers to the kind of skirmishes she prefers as "scarmoges." This spelling instead of the usual "skirmish" (*FQ* IV ix 20, l. 2) associates the term with Italian *scaramuccia*, the name of Harlequin's companion with his buffoonish battles in the Italian farce."

Remarkably, the ceaseless "busyness" that dissociates ends from means, which has been recognised by O'Loughlin as the hallmark of a "cultural acedia" gradually eroding the contours of a harmonious work-play, has been accentuated by the problematic legacy of the Puritan ethic, and of the debates in the reformed churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries concerning the question of humankind's radical depravity and God's overwhelming grace. As Barbara Lewalski shows, the Protestant understood from Paul's Epistle to the Romans that his original nature, crafted in the image of God, was despoiled beyond recognition by the fall of Adam.[185] Because of the depravity of his current state, the Protestant believes (in contrast to the Roman Catholic who continues to perform sacraments) that he can no longer perform good and praiseworthy actions *in themselves* to facilitate the reception of grace. In one sense, he loses his will-to-power and, consequently, the burden of salvation is to be God's alone.[186] Presuming that any single action is meritorious is an injurious mark of reprobation. Salvation can only be recognised by a constant faith which is itself a providential sign of election (15-16).[187]

In a conflicting sense, a steadfast industriousness is considered an important proof of salvation, despite allegedly having no practical effects on the possibility of election. To say that effectual grace is unearned would imply that it comes effortlessly; however, the only way that a dutiful Protestant could live acceptably according to God's preestablished standards was

---

[185] See Rom. 3:10, 20, 23-24, 8:29-30.
[186] See Eph. 2.8-9. Compare Spenser, *FQ* I x i:
    Ne let the man ascribe it to his skill,
    That thorough grace hath gained victory.
    If any strength we haue, it is to ill,
    But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will.
[187] Spenser himself compares the inconstant faith of Roman Catholics to shepherd swains, such as the pastor Palinode, who abandon their charge for the sake of a pilgrimage to Rome to meet "Theyr Pan," that is, the Pope "whom they count theyr God and greatest shepheard." See *SC*, "July," l. 179; also, *SPW*, p. 447. For the relationship between temperance and fortitude as it relates to the particularly Ciceronian evil of *aegritude* in Spenser's *FQ*, Books I and II, see Nohrnberg, pp. 319-320.

exclusively through a "calling": the fulfillment of a task imposed upon the atomic individual and suited to his worldly station (Weber 80).

The possibility of recreating the Classical conditions of civic leisure becomes increasingly tenuous in a post-Reformation world that valorises the excessive accumulation of wealth through the resolute industry of the self-interested proletarian as a *summum bonum*, and where, much to our detriment, private *negotium* is no longer practiced for the sake of a public *otium*. Unsurprisingly, there is a special sense in which the stakes for recovering the power of action through an "authentic" (from the Greek αυθηντής, *authentes*, meaning "self-doer") spirit of play—defined throughout this thesis as the reconciliation of humankind's serious and ludicrous drives, of work and play—have never been greater.

Our contemporary social, religious, and political landscape is witness to an ever-increasing polarisation, the likes of which have perhaps not been seen since the rise of Protestantism, which produced in response the ecumenicism of Erasmus, the pacifist humanism of More and Rabelais, and the conciliatory poetics of Spenser. Partisan politics, combined with the commodification and bureaucratization of every sector of life, not to mention the hyperrational trans-humanist technologization that threatens to strip the world of its mysteries and beauteous illusions, together divide the individual from others and from himself, and represent an unnatural affront to humanity's equally autonomous and collective existence— compromising what it means to be "human." To be human is to *compete*, which means, in the true sense of the word, to coexist with others as rivals in the attainment of a common goal. Hence, there is a special sense in which the recovery (and completion) of the concept "human" is interchangeable with a re-examination of the logic of concordant discord, which underlies our

89

use of the word "play" for everything that finds a happy medium between friendship and alienation, or between freedom and constraint.

As Friedrich Schiller famously wrote in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, "man plays only when he is a man in the full sense of the word, and *he is only a complete man when he plays*" (15th letter, 56). Schiller's seemingly circuitous reasoning becomes visionary once we recognise it as anticipating not only the ideal of beauty—emerging from the reciprocity of two contrary principles—but also the paradox of play: "we find ourselves at once," he says, "in a state of complete rest and complete movement" (57).[188] These states of relaxation and tension, of contemplation and action, compose the life of leisure. They are signified by the two hostesses of the Lord: the active by Martha, and the contemplative by Mary (Luke 10.38-42; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 179, Art. 2). Importantly, Christ does not say that Martha has chosen a bad occupation; he only says that Mary has chosen a better one. The force of the argument is that both, provided that they remain commendable, are needed to tend the home, and to receive "Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight" (*FQ* VII viii 2). Spenser's thoughts about labour and leisure, and about Mutability and Constancy, are much the same. He needs movement in order to rest eternally in a Sabbath sight.

---

[188] Compare 22nd letter, p. 80: "If… we have given ourselves the enjoyment of true beauty, at such a moment we are master equally of our passive and active powers; and with the same facility we will turn to seriousness and to play, to rest and to movement, to compliance and to resistance, to abstract thought and to intuition."

Bibliography

I. Primary Sources – Literature

Apollonius of Rhodes. *Jason and the Golden Fleece (The Argonautica)*. Translated by Richard

    Hunter, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Butler, Samuel. *Hudibras: Written in the Time of the Late Wars*. Edited by A. R. Waller,

    Cambridge University Press, 1905.

Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Book of the Courtier*. Translated by Charles S. Singleton, Garden

    City, New York, Anchor Books, 1959.

Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. 1974. London, Faber and Faber, 2002.

Hesiod. *Works and Days*. Translated by A. E. Stallings, Penguin Books, 2018.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Edited by John Leonard, Penguin, 2000.

---. *Samson Agonistes and the Shorter Poems*. Edited by Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey, Signet,

    1966.

Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni. *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. Translated by A. Robert

    Caponigri, Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1956.

Puttenham, George. *The Arte of English Poesie*. Kent State University Press, 1971.

Rabelais, François. *Les Cinq Livres: Gargantua, Pantagruel, Le Tiers Livre, Le Quart Livre, Le

    Cinquième Livre*. Librairie générale française, 1994.

Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. 2008. Edited by Alan Brissenden, Oxford University Press,

    1993.

---. *Henry VI, Parts I, II and III*. Edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, Modern Library,

    2012.

Sidney, Sir Philip. *Defense of Poesy*. Edited by Albert S. Cook, Boston, Gynn and Company,

1890.

---. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Edited by Maurice Evans, Penguin Books, 1987.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Edited by Thomas P. Roche, Jr., Penguin, 1987.

---. *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*. Edited by J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, Oxford
      University Press, 1932.

Theocritus, et al. *Greek Pastoral Poetry*. Translated by Anthony Holden, Penguin, 1974.

Thomson, James. *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence, and Other Poems*. Edited by James
      Sambrook, Oxford, Clarendon, 1986.

II. Primary Sources – Philosophy & Theology

Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. 22 vols. London, Burns, Oates, and Washbourne,
      1917-1927.

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred, Penguin, 2004.

---. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin, Hackett, 1985.

---. *Poetics*. Translated by S. H. Butcher, New York, Hill and Wang, 1961.

Augustine, Saint. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Dionysius the Areopagite. *Celestial Hierarchy*. Translated by John Parker, London, 1894.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *The Essential Erasmus*. Translated by John P. Dolan, New York, Mentor
      Books, 1964.

Heidegger, Martin. *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*. Translated by William McNeill and Julia
      Davis, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996.

Heraclitus. *Fragments*. Translated by T. M. Robinson, University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. Edited by Peter Laslett, Cambridge University Press,
      2019.

More, Thomas. *Utopia and Its Critics*. Edited by Ligeia Gallagher, Chicago, Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1964.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Homer's Contest*. Translated by Christa Davis Acampora, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, North American Nietzsche Society, 1996.

---. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Michael A. Scarpitti, Penguin, 2013.

Plato. *Euthydemus*. Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1993.

---. *Laws*. Translated by Trevor J. Saunders, Penguin, 1982.

---. *Phaedrus*. Translated by Robin Waterfield, Oxford University Press, 2002.

---. *Republic*. Translated by A. D. Lindsay, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1957.

Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Translated by Keith Tribe, Penguin, 2016.

The Bible. The New Oxford Annotated Version, 4th. ed., Oxford University Press, 2010.

III. Secondary Sources – Literary Theory & Analysis

Alpers, Paul J. *The Poetry of The Faerie Queene*. Princeton University Press, 1967.

Altman, Joel B. "Justice and Equity." *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. A. C. Hamilton and William W. Barker, editors, University of Toronto Press, 1990, pp. 413-415.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Translated and edited by Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, 1981.

Barrell, John, and John Bull. Editors. *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse*. Penguin, 1982.

Berger Jr., Harry. *The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's Faerie Queene*. 1957. Yale University Press, 1967.

Borris, Kenneth. *Visionary Spenser and the Poetics of Early Modern Platonism*. Oxford

University Press, 2017.

Campana, Joseph. *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity*. New York, Fordham University Press, 2012.

Cooper, Helen. *Pastoral: Mediaeval into Renaissance*. Ipswich, D. S. Brewer, 1977.

Craig, Martha. "The Secret Wit of Spenser's Language." *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism*, edited by Paul J. Alpers, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 447-472.

Csapo, Eric. "An Ideological Analysis of the Myth of Heracles." *Theories of Mythology*, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 301-315.

Evans, Maurice. *Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism: A Commentary on The Faerie Queene*. Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Giamatti, A. Bartlett. *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Greenlaw, Edwin A. "Spenser and British Imperialism." *Modern Philology*, January 1912, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 347-370.

Hamilton, A. C., and William W. Barker, editors. *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. University of Toronto Press, 1990.

Huxley, Aldous. "Accidie." *Essays New and Old*, New York, George H. Doran Company, 1927, pp. 47-53.

Lewalski, Barbara Kiefer. ""Is there in truth no beautie?": Protestant Poetics and the Protestant Paradigm of Salvation." *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 3-27.

Lewis, C. S. "Sidney and Spenser." *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*. Oxford University Press, 1954, pp. 318-393.

Marinelli, Peter V. *Pastoral*. 1971. Routledge, 2018.

Montrose, Louis Adrian. ""Eliza, Queene of shepheardes" and the Pastoral of Power"

    Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance, edited by Arthur

    F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins, Amherst, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, pp.

    34-63.

---. "Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form." *English Literary*

    History, Autumn, 1983, vol. 50, no. 3 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 415-459.

Nelson, William. *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser: Selected Papers from*

    the English Institute, Columbia University Press, 1961.

Nohrnberg, James. "Acidale." *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. A. C. Hamilton and William W.

    Barker, editors, University of Toronto Press, 1990, pp. 4-6.

---. "Books of the Governors." *The Analogy of The Faerie Queene*, Princeton, N. J., Princeton

University Press, 1977, pp. 285-425.

O'Loughlin, Michael. *The Garlands of Repose: The Literary Celebration of Civic and Retired*

    Leisure: The Traditions of Homer and Vergil, Horace and Montaigne. Chicago:

    University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies In Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. 1st ed.,

    New York, Routledge, 1967.

Tonkin, Humphrey. *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*. Oxford University Press, 1972.

Wenzel, Siegfried. *The Sin of Sloth: 'Acedia' in Medieval Thought and Literature*. University of

    North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1967.

Wilson, R. Rawdon. "Game." *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. A. C. Hamilton and William W.

    Barker, editors, University of Toronto Press, 1990, pp. 321-323.

Wind, Edgar. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. Rev. ed., Norton, 1968.

IV. Secondary Sources – History & Sociology

André, Jean-Marie. *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine*. Dissertation. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966.

Bindoff, S. T. *Tudor England*. Penguin, 1955.

Fink, Eugen. *Play as Symbol of the World, and Other Writings*. Translated by Ian Alexander Moore and Christopher Turner, Indiana University Press, 2016.

Frazer, Sir James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Edited by Robert Fraser, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Giamatti, A. Bartlett. *Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games*. New York, Summit Books, 1989.

Huizinga, Johan. *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation*. Princeton University Press, 1984.

---. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1955.

---. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956.

Myers, A. R. *England in the Late Middle Ages*. Penguin, 1972.

Pieper, Josef. *Leisure the Basis of Culture*. Translated by Alexander Dru, Mentor Books, 1963.

Suits, Bernard. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*. Boston, Nonpareil Books, 1990.

Tawney, R. H. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. 1938. Penguin, 1980.

Trevelyan, G. M. *History of England*. Longmans, 1960.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.