

THE FIGURE OF THE POET IN THE POEMS OF SPENSER

THE FIGURE OF THE POET
IN
THE POEMS OF SPENSER

By
LINDA HEDY COOPER, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts
McMaster University
September 1974

MASTER OF ARTS (1974)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Figure of the Poet in the Poems of Spenser

AUTHOR: Linda Hedy Cooper, B.A. (Loyola College)

SUPERVISOR: Professor T. H. Cain

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 75

Abstract

This thesis explores the function of the poet in four of Spenser's major poems: The Shepheardes Calender, The Faerie Queene, Epithalamion, and Prothalamion. In Chapter One, The Shepheardes Calender is discussed in terms of the poet Colin Clout who is Spenser's surrogate throughout this poem. Chapter Two of the thesis explores Books I-IV of The Faerie Queene in terms of its demonic enchanters who create social disharmony and function in opposition to the poet figure. Chapter Three focuses on Book VI of The Faerie Queene and Calidore's quest for courtesy is discussed in relation to the developing poetics of the poet. Epithalamion and Prothalamion are examined in the final chapter of this thesis, and the poet's effectiveness is evaluated.

Acknowledgements

To Dr. T. H. Cain my supervisor, I extend my thanks for his assistance in writing this thesis. His comments were always valuable and greatly appreciated.

Table of Contents

Introduction:	vi
Chapter One: <u>The Shepheardes Calender</u>	1
Chapter Two: Demonic Enchanters in Books I-IV of <u>The Faerie Queene</u>	19
Chapter Three: Book VI of <u>The Faerie Queene</u>	41
Chapter Four: The Effectiveness of the Poet in <u>Epithalamion and Prothalamion</u>	58
Bibliography:	74

Introduction

Renaissance literary theory dictates a didactic as well as a delightful function for poetry, thus making the poet, through his poems, society's mentor. As a Renaissance poet, Spenser inherits the role of - didactic and delightful poet. It is this type of role that we see him acting out, not only in his career, but insinuating as a recurrent subject into his poems themselves. This recurrent exercise of developing and scrutinizing his role as an effective poet occurs throughout Spenser's major works and it is this preoccupation that will be studied in The Shepheardes Calender, The Faerie Queene, Epithalamion and Prothalamion. In this thesis the fluctuations of the poet's response to his poetry are examined, as he moves from the highly enthusiastic poet, confident in the didactic value of his works, to the poet who recognizes the limited nature of his impact on an essentially unchangeable society.

Chapter One

THE SHEPHEARDES CALENDER

The Shepheardes Calender is fertile ground from which an understanding of the poet's conception of his role can be extracted. Colin Clout, as Spenser's surrogate, reveals through his words and actions, a changing perspective of what he assumes to be his *raison d'être* as a poet in a social context. There are four major eclogues in the Calender that are directly relevant to a study of Colin's developing conception of his function as poet: Aprill, June, August, and October are principally concerned with this aspect and will be examined in detail in this chapter.

The Aprill eclogue is a verbal exchange between Thenot and Hobbinol which develops into an encomium of Elisa created by Colin Clout but sung by Hobbinol. The eclogue begins with Hobbinol's tearful lament for Colin as a failed poet, but blossoms into the vision of the deified Elisa, made glorious and colourful by the magic art of the erstwhile poet who once created this lavish praise of the Queen. Hobbinol is discovered lamenting over the loss of Colin's piping and Thenot attempts to identify the source of Hobbinol's sorrow. He asks Hobbinol "what garres thee greete?" and enumerates four possible reasons for a shepherd to suffer from unhappiness: loss of lambs, loss of bagpipe, loss of a lover, or a sympathetic response to the wet April

season. Hobbino1 weeps because Colin refuses to pipe; his sorrow is deep and we are meant to appreciate the greatness of his loss.

The significance of Colin's music to the life of Hobbino1 is emphasized by the shepherd himself who states that the common causes of unhappiness are of little importance in comparison to the loss of his friend's harmonious "ditties . . . so trimly dight". Colin Clout's competence as a poet is established by Hobbino1's convincing lament and we are prepared, therefore, for the excellent encomium that follows.

Just as the piping of Colin is of singular importance to the happiness and internal concord of Hobbino1 and the shepherd world, so the continued reign of Elisa is basic to the harmonious existence of her kingdom. The eclogue contains several parallel associations between poet and Queen which reinforce the idea that the pastoral poet is as important in terms of establishing and maintaining harmony in his pastoral realm, as the Queen is in relation to her society. As the Queen orders the public arrangement of society in the interest of social concord, the poet provides similar harmonious direction at a more personal level - - "Hys pleasant pipe . . . made us meriment".

Although Colin is out of harmony with the world around him ("Shepheards delights he dooth them all forswear"), the ability of his poetry to inspire harmony in a discordant world is pervasive. Even Hobbino1 who is lamenting the loss of Colin's "pleasant Pipe" cannot resist the force of Colin's poetry:

Contented I: then will I singe his laye

Of fayre Elisa, Queene of shepheardes all:

Colin's song is closely integrated with nature and is "tuned . . . unto the Waters fall" which suggests the poet's ability to incorporate the natural elements surrounding him into his song. He is the master of his subject, the momentarily omnipotent and omnicompetent creator of this encomium who is able to blend various threads of meaning together into a colourful and harmonious whole. Elisa at the conclusion of the eclogue is the creation of a progressive accumulation of verbal images and she rises before us "in royall aray", a vision of perfection. Colin commands the Nymphs and the Graces to assemble for the celebration of Elisa. Although he is consciously present as the maker of the poem, the encomium moves beyond his control as Colin himself becomes an enchanted spectator of his creation:

I see Calliope speede her to the place,
Where my Goddesse shines:

(100-101)

The encomium with Elisa at its centre assumes a life of its own more wonderful than Colin had imagined, and the vision is enjoyed not only by the observers but also by Colin himself.

In the Aprill eclogue Colin is represented by Hobbinol as a depressed soul, incapable of creative actions. It is clear, however, that Colin, despite his present state of mind, is in fact, through his surrogate Hobbinol, a productive poet. It appears that Colin's despair is a fruitful source of creativity, and the dualistic nature of the April month itself reflects the potential for fruition that seemingly destructive forces embody. Hobbinol's tears are compared to April

showers and like the showers of April they are capable of engendering both positive and negative results.

Hobbinol, like Colin, cannot attend his sheep cheerfully because Colin refuses to pipe:

Shepheards delights he dooth them all forswear,
 Hys pleasaunt Pipe, whych made us meriment,
 He wylfully hath broke, and doth forbear
 His wonted songs, wherein he all outwent.

(16-19)

Although Hobbinol is ostensibly overcome by his grief, he succeeds in conquering it and begins to recite one of Colin's songs. Colin, despite his "woo" or "woes" is seen here singing through his spokesman Hobbinol, underlining the possibility of creativity in an essentially negative context. More to the point in terms of the poetic philosophy of the poet is the discovery of the apparently contradictory forces that operate within the poem. On one hand there is a recognition of time because the Calender is clearly preoccupied with time and its ramifications, while on the other the existence of time offers the artist a challenge to charm it, and the poem is a manifestation of the poet's response to the consuming quality of mutability. The tears of sorrow, like the rain of April, and finally like the devastation that time potentially represents, contain within them the potential for creative expression. Moreover, Hobbinol can "recorde" Colin's ode (Latin recordari, remember) which shows that in spite of what happens to Colin himself, his poems have already achieved the permanence of a lasting artistic achievement.

The encomium is intended not only to honor and praise "our most gracious and souereigne, Queene Elizabeth" but also, according to the argument that introduces the April eclogue, as an occasion "for prooffe of [Colin's] more excellency and skill in poetrie". Colin, while offering homage to his queen, exhibits his skill as a technically competent poet. Dr. T. Cain lists the classical topics of praise that Colin uses in the song to Elisa, and it is clear from this catalogue that the encomium is a highly polished and tightly structured work.¹

Elisa is transported to a pastoral setting where the shepherd-poet can best celebrate her glory, and where her influence over the society of shepherds can be suggested. Elisa's integration with her surroundings is complete - - natural deities are evoked as comparative focuses of beauty and grace. She outshines Phoebus, and she is made by the poet to become the quintessence of physical and spiritual beauty - - a distillation of the natural beauty around her. Elisa's ascendancy over the natural elements is kept in balance with her relationship to her society because, although she is greater than the members of her kingdom, she is also of them and insignificant without them. Colin as a poet who is responsible to his public, must similarly learn the nature of his relationship to his pastoral audience. Hence Thenot admonishes, correctly, the intractability of Colin who "is with love yblent". The June eclogue reveals Colin speaking directly about his poetics and a

¹T.H. Cain, "Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus", University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1971), 30. p. 30.

study of this eclogue is helpful in an endeavour to understand his conception of his role as poet in a pastoral world.

In June Hobbinol, unlike Colin, is able to relax into the calmness and coolness of the month. It is significant that Colin finds difficulty in appreciating the temperate weather but can relate easily to the gloom and frigidity of the winter months. Nature in June is attuned to Hobbinol's disposition: as

The grassye ground with daintye Daysies dight,
The Bramble bush, where Byrds of every Kynde
To the waters fall their tunes attemper right.

(11(7-9)

But Colin's frame of mind is discontented and he is frustrated in his poetic ambitions. The "angry Gods" and "cruell fate" combined with the tragedy of unrequited love are blamed by Colin for his unhappy state. His spirit is so depressed that he cannot rally to the high praise bestowed on him by Hobbinol. Hobbinol's praise does not counteract Colin's entrenched despondency and Colin retreats to the security of "pypping lowe in shade of lowly grove". When he decides to play "to please my selfe", he negates his primary function as a public figure engaged in a morally and politically significant activity. (Piers in a later eclogue reproaches Cuddie and speaks of the poet's obligation to society with Thenot-like severity:

O what an honor is it, to restraine
The lust of lawlesse youth with good advice:
Or pricke them forth with pleasurance of thy vaine,

Whereto thou list their trayned willes entice.

[October 21-24])

We are meant to look askance at Colin's self-indulgent and myopic poetic philosophy: his interpretation of the poetry of "the God of shepheards Tityrus" immediately reflects this limitation. Colin focuses on the elegaic matter of Chaucer's poetry, obscuring and disregarding the often humorous and joyous poems of Chaucer. Chaucer's poetry did more than "wail his woes" as Colin puts it, and this perverse pursuit of the lamenting poet who manipulates his poetic medium for personal or vindictive ends reflects the distorted bias of Colin at this point.² Colin hopes for a drop of the same inspiration that stirred Tityrus' imagination so that he can, in typical Orphic form,

learne these woods, to wayle my woe,

And teache the trees, their trickling teares to shedde.

Then should my plaints, caused of discourtesee,

As messengers of all my painfull plight,

Flye to my love, where ever that she bee,

And pierce her heart with poynt of worthy wight:

(95-100)

²P. Cullen in Spenser, Marvell and the Renaissance Pastoral (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 89, says that "Chaucer as an artist and lover successfully fused the public and private aspects of his life: his poetry slaked the flames of love, while at the same time his 'mery tales' fulfilled his public responsibility by keeping the shepherds awake while their sheep grazed . . . Colin perverts the poet's public responsibility as a teacher into teaching nature to be an extension of himself."

Colin has distorted his sacred Orphic role and attempts not to enchant his audience but rather to indulge his rejection by his own "faithless Rosalind" and cultivate erotic failure. The purgative function that he associates with his song-making alienates him from his role as a poet, who, like Elisa, is not only a part of his society, but responsible to it. In the last stanza of his lament, Colin relinquishes absolute control over his poetic power and would even have someone else tell Rosalind

That she the truest shepheards hart made bleede,
That lives on earth, and loved her most dere.

(111-112)

As a vehicle for his personal lament Colin's poetry ultimately fails him so that from his point of view, his defeat is complete. It is ironic when Colin says that "I am not, as I wish I were" because he is upset not because he cannot fulfil his commitment to his role as a responsible public figure, but because he is incapable of effectively wooing Rosalind with his songs.

The August eclogue with Willy challenging Perigot to a singing-match resembles the opening of the Aprill eclogue. Willy encourages Perigot to compete with him by asking him,

what shalbe the game,
Wherefore with myne thou dare thy musick matche?
Or bene thy Bagpipes renne farre out of frame?
Or hath the Crampe thy ioynts benomd with ache?

(1-4)

as Thenot in April has attempted in the spring eclogue to discover the source of Hobbinol's despair by saying,

Tell me good Hobbinoll, what garres thee greet?

What? hath some Wolfe thy tender Lambes ytorne?

Or is thy Bagpye broke, that soundes so sweete?

Or art thou of thy loved lasse forlorne?

(1-4)

This leads into Hobbinol's delivery of Colin's encomium to Elisa. In similar fashion, Willy's challenge sets Perigot into a song of his beloved "bonilass". The parallels established here are meant to comment upon Colin Clout's effectiveness as a poet and on the nature of his role. Although ostensibly the August eclogue concerns itself with the musical exchange between Perigot and Willy, this roundel reflects the song of praise constructed by Colin and sung by his surrogate Hobbinol in Aprill. Willy perceptively states that love augments confusion and blinds the lover's eye to his social obligations. When he says to Perigot, "Never knew I lovers sheep in good plight", we are meant to relate this to Colin's dismissal of his commitment to his society as he pursues his Rosalind fruitlessly. Cuddie at the end of the August eclogue, by singing another of Colin's more plaintive songs of rejection, focuses our attention once again on the anti-social character of Colin's lament.

Although the song of Perigot emphasizes his sorrow at the cruel response of his beloved, she is described in terms that resemble the descriptive cataloguing of Elisa's beauty. Here the setting is more rustic, with the sheep replacing the muses and graces that are company

to Elisa. Perigot's lady is compared to Phoebus but unlike Elisa, she does not surpass them. Elisa is effectively deified by Colin in April but Perigot's "bouncing bellibone" who trips "over the dale alone" is not immortalized by her admirer. Colin in his praise and glorification of Elisa is clearly the more effective of the two poets. Perigot can only define his lovely lady and lament his case following the pattern established by Colin in April. There is, however, a pervasive irony because Colin, in June for example, is discovered to be the most effective lamenter, who is certainly more convincing than Perigot in a similar negative state. The roundelay in August echoes the elegaic tale of Colin's June song, but Willy's jocular interjections undercut the seriousness of the song. We are meant to discover the paradoxical nature of Colin's role that emphasizes at the same time his unquestionable poetic supremacy, while ironically he is the best self-defamer around. Perigot, who is not betrayed by self-deception, understands the humor of his roundelay and can encourage Cuddie to sing Colin's "dolefull verse/ Of Rosalind", saying "With mery thing its good to medle sadde". Cullen comments on the divergent nature of Perigot's experience and that of Colin, suggesting that Colin is involved in a sadly destructive process: "if Perigot himself finally finds his own experience - or at least an experience like it - a 'mery thing', we can probably be sure that the emphasis in August depends on a contrast of seemingly similar experiences, one sufficiently normal (however painful) to be treated in a merry and light-hearted fashion, and the other tragically destructive and therefore

to be treated in a 'sadde' or serious fashion."³

Since the comparison between Perigot and Colin is obliquely set up in the opening song of August, it is appropriate that Cuddie conclude the eclogue with a song created by Colin about his "greater woe". In this "heavy laye", Colin is discovered retreating from all forms of civilization ("I hate the house, since thence my love did part" and "The walled townes do works my greater woe") for the seclusion of "the wild woodes my sorrowes to resound". Colin moves into the woods that mirror his own discordant storm and he successfully fulfills his passionate desire to "learne these woods, to wayle my woe,/ And teache the trees their trickling teares to shedde" (June, 95-96). Colin calls upon the "banefull byrds" to tune their "yrksome yells" to his cathartic song, as he vows to remaine in the wyld woods" in an effort to diminish his pain and "all the night in plaints, the daye in woe . . . to wayst" until Rosalind returns to him. It is only the love of his Rosalind that can restore Colin to a healthy relation with his society and who "To cheerefull songs can chaunge my cherelesse cryes". Until this time Colin thrusts the burden of his sorrow upon the natural elements growing around him, thwarting their harmonious and natural growth for his unnatural and divisive passion. He perverts his role to purge his own spirit and would perpetuate this perversion by disrupting the peaceful flourishing of those about him:

And you that feelee no woe, when as the sound

³ Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral, pp. 107-108.

Of these my nightly cryes ye heare apart,

Let breake your sounder sleepe and pitie augment.

(188-190)

This is the most deeply despairing of Colin's songs and consequently the most destructive in terms of his anticipated role as a poet. Framed by the pastoral setting the elegy loses some of its impact and intensity because the affairs of this world are only slightly modified by the poet's sadness. Once the song is sung by Cuddie and he is praised for his felicity in rehearsing Colin's verse, the shepherds return to the care of their sheep and the concerns of their daily routine:

Then blowe your pypes shepheards, til you be at home:

The night nigheth fast, yts time to be gone.

(194-195)

Perigot, unlike Colin, at last recognizes that he has a duty to his "younglings" that surpasses his personal preoccupations. His love that has distracted him is put aside as he resumes his social role.

Colin Clout, rather than effectively manipulating the charm of the forest and the elements of his world, is ruled by his passions and seems incapable, therefore, of functioning in the fullest sense of his role as an enchanter. Instead of composing songs of praise or exemplary tales for his audience, his poetry in June and August is a vehicle for his subjective complaints. The June eclogue reveals Colin's basic misrepresentation of Chaucer's aesthetic aims. He imagines or pretends to believe that this pastoral Tityrus grew to fame because of his personal complaints, which helps, in some measure, to justify the

persistently unhappy tone of his verses. He hopes not only to win the stony heart of Rosalind (or even perhaps to vindicate her wrong-doing), but he is also, we discover, interested in achieving immortality through his songs. To do this it is evident that he must confront the truth of his own dilemma, revealed explicitly in October, if he is to fulfil his potential as a poet of major status. He is bound too securely to the flux of time and change, because of his passionate disposition, to develop as a poet without persistently pedestrian concerns. Cuddie discusses this problem that limits Colin's poetic vision in his talk with Piers concerning the survival of epic poetry:

For Colin fittes such famous flight to scanne:

He, were he not with love so ill bedight,

Would mount as high, and sing as soote as Swanne.

(October, 88-90)

Cuddie in October speaks of the bleak future of poetry because now the "vaunting poets" have replaced the accomplishments of the classic writers. Virtue, according to Cuddie, has begun "for age to stoupe" since "mighty manhode brought a bedde of ease," and he is ingenuously diagnosing the disease that plagues Colin which is that of an undisciplined and overly passionate mind. Cuddie is also a product of this same disease, and he is discovered in this eclogue, complaining about the absence of suitable material reward for his poetic labours. His idealism has been replaced with realism as he speaks to Piers about the empty economic value of critical praise:

Sike prayse is smoke, that sheddeth in the skye,
 Sike words bene wynd, and wasten soone in vayne.

(35-36)

Cuddie is the disenchanted poet who reflects the disintegration of his age. His response to Piers' challenge is symptomatic of the negativeness that had its inception in the laments sung earlier by Colin Clout, who was similarly unable to move out of the circumscription of cruel fate and "crabbed care".

In a moment of vision, Cuddie sees the glory of epic poetry restored to its former greatness as in Virgil's time. This vision is the result, Cuddie imagines, of a creative imagination that "with wine . . . begins to sweate". It is only then that "the rhyme should rage" and Cuddie has the courage to "reare the Muse on stately stage". This vision is short lived, however, as Cuddie, following the pattern of retreat established earlier by Colin, admits with relief that his "corage" has cooled "ere it be warme" and he can lapse back into the safety of his pastoral world

Where no such troublous tydes han us assayde,
 Here we are slender pipes may safely charme.

(117-118)

Cuddie clearly points to the danger that this pastoral embodies. By refusing to take up Piers' challenge, he compromises his creative gifts by submitting to the trivial concerns of the day. This capitulation is reasonable in as much as it is apparent that poetry does not feed or clothe the body. But Cuddie also admits to a lack of moral courage that

prohibits him from aspiring to more metaphysical goals. He conspicuously accepts the limited scope of pastoral's "humble shade" because it protects him from the threat of failure. What he fails to recognize, however, is that by rejecting the challenge of creating greater works of art, he is eliminating the possibility of immortality through epic verse. Although Cuddie knows that he clings to a limited level of performance, he, like Colin Clout before him, lacks the intellectual vitality and discipline to correct his predicament.

But despite the narrowness of his perspective, Cuddie points toward the upward swing that Colin's poetry will take toward greater epic creations. Similarly, despite Colin's active protestations that his life is a meaningless ruin because of his unrequited love for Rosalind, glimpses of his immortality are apparent. Although Piers does not rank with Colin as a poet, he is the recorder of his songs, and like Hobbinol and Cuddie, Piers has Colin's laments, encomiums, and tales firmly in his mind - - testimony of the potential for survival of Colin's work. In October the emphasis shifts almost imperceptibly, suggesting the direction of development that Colin's poetry will take toward socially responsible epic poems. This development is suggested throughout the Calender - - Colin's unhappiness never completely destroys his creative and enchanting powers because he is primarily a poet and only secondarily a lover. In fact Cuddie's retreat from a major role serves to herald Colin's coming success with the national epic centered on the queen. Indeed the very love that has undermined his talent is now, according to Piers, raised to a transcendent eros that serves as

the force that inspires him.

The November eclogue illustrates the indestructible quality of the creative impulse now emergent within Colin. Colin elegizes the death of Dido, and this concern for something external gives Colin the necessary freedom to create again. The enchanter replaces the disenchanted lover, and Colin is transformed from a lamenting poet closely in touch with his pastoral surroundings to an inspired "sovereign of song". At the outset of this eclogue, Colin refuses to sing songs of "some iouisance" because it is November and May is the appropriate "time of merimake". Thenot wisely alters the theme of Colin's song, making it suitable to the season and therefore to Colin's nature.

Colin invokes Melpomene the "mournefulst Muse of nyne" to assist him with his task. This invocation is reminiscent of the poetic Muses recorded by Hobbinol in Aprill. However, the significant difference between these two eclogues is found in the difference in subject and tone and also with the singer of the song. The Aprill encomium to Elisa is charged with colour and promise. The month of Venus and of flowers suits the theme of praise with spring bringing with it the hope of fruition. Colin is noticeably absent in Aprill - although he is responsible for the creation of the song, he is mourning the loss of Rosalind and spiritually unable to participate in the occasion. In the November eclogue, however, Colin can identify not only with the season but also with the theme of his poem. This is the only eclogue in which Colin sings his song. Here the unsuccessful Orphic lover is displaced by the effective enchanter who discovers the potential for immortality

for the lamenting yet creative poet. It is, in fact, exactly the role for Colin that Hobbinol has imagined in June.

Dido's untimely death is mourned by the poet who devotes several stanzas to the destruction wrought by "death's mortal stroke". The Muses and Nymphs solicited in Aprill are again called upon to do homage to dead Dido, as a correspondence is established between these two months. The "slipper hope" of "mortal men, that swincke and sweate for nought" recalls the poet's reference to himself in the song to Elisa. But death and futility begin to lose their power, as Colin recognizes what Dido has gained by dying:

She hath the bonds broke of eternall night,
Her soule unbodied of the burdenous corpse.
Why then weepes Lobbin so without remorse?
O Lobb, thy losse no longer lament,
Dido nis dead, but into heaven hent.

(165-169)

Dido's death is triumphant, and the mournful tone that pervades all of Colin's songs is replaced by a sense of control and accomplishment. Colin reflects on earth the success of Dido who has overcome the forces that suppress her. This is a significant revelation for Colin who sees his predicament reflected in that of Dido. Like Dido, Colin will soar above the "trustlesse state of earthly things" and create the instructive and exemplary verses of epic poetry. Like Dido, he will, through his epic verse, move out of the destructive pull of the cycle of life by creating epic monuments that will challenge "death . . . [and]

the bonds . . . of eternall night". In fact the image for Dido's Elysian state is a pastoral one but significantly an eternal pastoral that transcends the limitations of the pastoral of the Calender by being free from the pressures and erosion of time: "The fieldes ay fresh, the grasse ay greene" (189). In this sense Dido's death triumphs over time just as Colin's surpassing poems, once composed, triumph over time as enduring monuments. October and November predict that Colin's coming great poem will achieve this status.

Chapter Two

DEMONIC ENCHANTERS IN BOOKS I-IV OF THE FAERIE QUEENE

Piers' address to Cuddie in the October eclogue anticipates the movement toward epic poetry that Colin, as Spenser's pastoral surrogate, will ultimately take. Cuddie is encouraged to broaden his poetic horizons by giving space for his muse to "display her flutt'ring wing" and to

Lyft up thy selfe out of the lowly dust:
And sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts.
Turne thee to those, that weld the awful crowne,
To doubted Knights, whose woundlesse armour rusts,
And helmes unbruized wexen dayly browne.

There may thy Muse display her fluttyring wing,
And stretch her selfe at large from East to West:
Wither thou list in fayre Elisa rest,
Or if thee please in bigger notes to sing,
Advaunce the worthy whome shee loveth best,
That first the white beare to the stake did bring.

(October, 38-48)

The Faerie Queene immediately takes up the theme of inquiry into the nature of the poet's role and his relation to a poetic continuum established by generations of ancient poets. The focus of attention is centred upon the poet, who has in the context of Spenser's body of poetry, explicitly

developed from the pastoral melodist to the epic enchanter, and one mask is relinquished for another:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
 As time her taught in lowly Shepheards weeds,
 Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
 For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
 And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
 Whose prayse having slept in silence long,
 Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
 To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:
 Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall moralize my song.

(I.pro.I)

Spenser follows Piers' prescribed invocation and calls for the assistance of Calliope - -

Helpe then, O holy Virgin chiefe of nine,
 Thy weaker Novice to performe thy will,

(I.pro.II)

- - which simultaneously establishes a significant link between the poet and the long line of Orphic descendents who precede him and to Orpheus himself.⁴ The deliberate echoes of the Renaissance editions of Virgil's

⁴See T.H. Cain's article "Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus" *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 41, (1971), p. 34. "This pattern of the line of great poets recalls their descent from Orpheus as implied in the *Calender*, and with it the poet's claim to be the new Orpheus . . . At the beginning of the poem there are two signs identifying him with Orpheus. First, the Muse invoked is now generally agreed to be not Clio but Orpheus' mother Calliope, muse of 'living praises in herioke style', because his poem is heroic in genre . . . and encomiastic in its intention 'To blazon broad' 'praises having slept in silence long' . . . The second sign of Orpheus is the conventional tree catalogue that begins the poem's first episode."

Aeneid that are found at the outset of The Faerie Queene⁵ combined with an imitation of the beginning of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso reveal that "Spenser means to present himself as the culmination of the line of great poets . . ."⁶

The Faerie Queene is a measure of the poet's success in achieving his specified goals, namely "the articulation and extension of Elizabeth's glory".⁷ The task at hand is to determine how completely Spenser realizes his projected ambition. The poet is distinctly a character in his own epic creation, complete with a distinguishable point of view that undergoes significant transformations throughout the entire body of his works. Optimism is occasionally replaced by doubt, or melancholy is dissolved and supplanted by tenuous hope; this altering spectrum is already apparent in the various eclogues of The Shepheardes Calender. Colin in Aprill is triumphant beyond his expectation in his Orphic enchantment of both natural and supernatural forces at his command. It is the interaction of these instances of unbounded success and endless sorrow that creates the continuous motion of rebirth and destruction that gives momentum and vitality to the Calender, and foreshadows the thematic thrust of its successor, The Faerie Queene. The negative elements are manifested in allegorical figures throughout The Faerie Queene, rather than through self-doubt in the poet's frame of mind as in the Calender. These malevolent forces become, for the poet, detractors of positive heroes and creative acts, ultimately undermining the poet's own creations, and therefore referred to henceforth as demonic enchanterers.

⁵ Ibid. p. 33.

⁶ Ibid. p. 34.

⁷ Ibid. p. 35.

Archimago and his crew, for instance, lurk treacherously about the landscape of faery land assisted in their wickedness by magic, able to enchant their victims "with charmes and hidden artes". The facility with which the poet and his representatives are able to cope with and successfully overcome their enemies is a measure of the success of the poet as an Orphic enchanter, and this is the central interest of this chapter.

Spenser treats Archimago's deceptions of Una in a humorous vein in Canto 3. A lightness of tone in his treatment of this episode, springs from a knowledge of Una's moral integrity, although we are meant to find her naiveté humorous. As Archimago slinks away at the mere sight of Una's steadfast companion, Una seals her own fate by pursuing him. She understandably mistakes Archimago for her lost Red Cross knight who gently solaces her, and Archimago's speech to Una is an example of effective rhetoric, that not only contradicts the truth of his situation, but by comparison makes his actions more hideous:

He thereto meeting said, My dearest Dame,
 Farre be it from your thought, and fro my will,
 To thinke that knighthood I so much should shame,
 As you to leave, that have me loved still,
 And chose in Faery court of meere goodwill,
 Where noblest knights were to be found on earth:
 The earth shall sooner leave her kindly skill
 To bring forth fruit, and make eternall derth,
 Then I leave you, my lief, yborne of heavenly berth.

And sooth to say, why I left you so long,
 Was for to seeke adventure in strange place,
 Where Archimago said a felon strong
 To many knights did daily works disgrace;
 But knight he now shall never more deface:
 Good cause of mine excuse; that mote ye please
 Well to accept, and evermore embrace
 My faithfull service, that by land and seas
 Have vowd you to defend, now then your plaint appease.

(I.3.28-29)

Una's wholesale acceptance of Archimago's specious apology points out the imminent danger present in such rhetoric. Her belief in Archimago's words is more an illustration of the deadly effectiveness of his verbal enchantment, than of Una's gullibility. Archimago knows how to manipulate circumstances with his verbal skills, and the combination of Una's pressing predicament and Archimago's speech overwhelms her ability to discriminate between untruth and truth:

His lovely words her seemd due recompence
 Of all her passed paines: one loving howre
 For many yeares of sorrow can dispence:
 A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sowre:
 She has forgot, how many a wofull stowre
 For his she late endur'd; she speakes no more
 Of past: true is, that love hath no powre
 To looken backe; his eyes be fixt before.

Before her stands her knight, for whom she toyld so sore.

(I.3.30)

The problem is, however, that while Una has the moral fortitude to survive Archimago's machinations, universal man usually lacks the strength that Una displays. The implications of Archimago's success at this stage are bleak when his formula is applied to an unsuspecting and more fallible victim.

Archimago's conquest is brutally interrupted by the entrance of Sansloy "pricking towards them in hastie heat". Archimago disguised, finds himself in a delicate situation that even the well-meant advice of Una cannot save him from. Sansloy is a man of impetuous actions and is not deterred by words. Archimago is unwilling to expose his true identity and lose Una, so his situation is dangerous. Salvation comes to Archimago, however, through the rude unmasking of his disguise, that works in two ways at once. Sansloy, surprised to find a hoary head where he had anticipated uncovering a young one, says apologetically,

Why Archimago, lucklesse syre,
What doe I see? what hard mishap is this,
That hath thee hither brought to taste mine yre?
Or thine the fault, or mine the erroe is,
In stead of foe to wound my friend amis?

(I.3.39)

Una, however, is not pleased

her selfe so mockt to see
By him, who has the guerdon of his guile,

For so misfeigning her true knight to bee:

(I.3.40)

As Archimago is undone before him, Sansloy risks experiencing a similar fate as he attempts to assault Una. He is less threatening to Una though because she is better able to protect herself against Sansloy's overt attacks than against the more subtle and magical advances of Archimago:

With fawning wordes he courted her a while,
 And looking lovely, and oft sighing sore,
 Her constant hart did tempt with diverse guile:
 But wordes, and lookes, and sighes she did abhore,
 As rocks of Diamond stedfast evermore.
 Yet for to feed his fyrie lustfull eye,
 He snatcht the vele, that hong her face before;
 Then gan her beautie shine, as brightest skye,
 And burnt his beastly hart t'efforce her chastitye.

(I.6.4)

The Red Cross knight at Canto 9 of Book I, also comes in contact with an evil enchanter - - Despayre. Trevisan reveals the effective manipulation of words that Despayre uses to work his evil and deprive mankind of all "hope of dew reliefe". The deceptions of Archimago are exchanged by those of Despayre, and Red Cross choses to fall prey to Despayre's demonic enchantments. Red Cross would zealously avenge Trevisan "before his own blood were cold", and makes himself an easy victim for Despayre's twisted logic. Despayre offers a refuge to those weary of war,

of life, of unhappiness and of discord, as he poses as the "graceful" mediator between life and death (the point of his argument is, of course, that those who are too weary to examine his logic will succumb to his promise of rest and peace). He says, convincingly, to those who have already reached his conclusion concerning life (that is, mortal man), "Is not great grace to helpe him over past?", and Red Cross can only quickly and eagerly nod his consent:

The knight was much enmoved with his speach,
That as a sword's point through his hart did perse,
And in his conscience made a secret breach,
Well knowing true all, that he did rehearse,

(I.9.48)

Spenser scrupulously avoids making this episode less dramatic or terrifying by including humorous touches, as he has done in his treatment of Una in a similar situation. He recognizes not only the vulnerability of Despayre's victim but also the damning effectiveness of Despayre's rhetoric, and falsely syllogistic reasoning:

The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,
The greater sin, the greater punishment:
All those great battels, which thou boast to win,
Through strife, and bloud-shed, and avengement,
Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent:

For life must life, and bloud must bloud repay.
Is not enough they evill life forespent?
For he, that once hath missed the right way,

The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray.

Then do no further goe, no further stray,
But here lie downe, and to thy rest betake,
Th'ill to prevent, that life ensewen may.

(I.9.43-44)

Una correctly and fortuitously identifies the essence of Despayre as "vaine words" that "bewitch [Red Cross'] manly hart". This direct unmasking is fatal to Despayre because of his heavy reliance upon contorted and inflated use of words. Any pretentious attempt to separate Red Cross from Despayre would have been ineffective against the perverted logic that caused him to accept the heretical conclusions of his tempter. Una's words oppose the inherent pessimism of Despayre's rhetoric. She identifies the subtle disease that almost overwhelms Red Cross as the negative thoughts of his passionate mind fail to believe in the reality of grace. Una places in direct opposition to this pessimism, the fact that Red Cross is a chosen knight with a sacred duty, and this effectively rouses Despayre's victim:

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshy wight,
Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
Ne divelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.
In heavenly mercies has thou not a part?
Why shouldst thou then despaire, that chosen art?
Where iustice growes, there grows eke greater grace,
The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,

And that accurst hand-writing doth deface.
 Arise, Sir knight, and leave this cursed place.
 So up he rose, and thence amounted streight.

(I.9.53-54)

Although every figure from the outset of The Faerie Queene is victimized by propagators of discord and deceit, they emerge only temporarily influenced by their detractors. Concord and optimism are not permanently displaced by dissention and by lack of faith, and the poet's individual perspective can be measured by the triumph of Una's straightforward approach to deception that veils despair.

Amoret is also subject to the demonic enchantments of the "vile enchanter" Busirane who "is trying to transfer her love for Scudamour to himself by charms . . . He is literally trying to kill Amoret. His love is not sexual but destructive - - destructive of the will to love within Amoret herself."⁸ Amoret finds herself in this dilemma because of a fundamental weakness implicit within her nature, a weakness that Roche speaks of in relation to mask figures: "Amoret's main tormentors are those very qualities which have preserved her chastity during her courtship, and she is being punished for her long resistance to the power of love." And "the House of Busyrane is presented as if it were the objectification of Amoret's fear of sexual love in marriage."⁹ Busirane's

⁸ Thomas P. Roche, The Kindly Flame (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 80.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 75-77.

existence is predicated upon the existence of figures who are willing (consciously or subliminally) to be victimized by his erotic assaults. Despite Amoret's genuine despair the poet clearly includes a glimpse of her erotic nature which serves as a comment upon her integrity. Britomart has successfully avoided the seductive pitfalls around her in the House of Busirane, and arrives in time to save Amoret. Busirane is compelled to reverse his paralyzing charms (which he takes from a book) and Amoret is described in ambivalent terms as she regains her freedom:

The cruell steele, which thrild her dying hart,
 Fell softly forth, as of his owne accord,
 And the wyde wound, which lately did dispart
 Her bleeding brest, and riven bowles gor'd,
 Was closed up, as it had not bene bor'd,
 And every part to safety full sound,
 As she were never hurt, was soon restor'd:
 Tho when she felt her selfe to be unbound,
 And perfect hole, prostrate she fell unto the ground.

(3.I2.38)

The sexual nature of her experience and her pleasurable response to it is underlined in the explicit terms that describe Busirane's withdrawal of his charms. The world of faeryland loses its innocence, and this loss is mirrored in the increasingly complex situations in which the titular heroes become involved.

The straightforward approach still seems to be the most effective antidote to wickedness, and Britomart passes through Busirane's silent

halls aggressively in spite of the insidious blazons that caution against being bold. The significance of the emblems found above several doorways is related to the perversion of Busirane's passion -- a perversion that relies upon the frustration of sexual fulfilment. Britomart either recognizes the subversive element in the world of this demonic enchanter or perhaps more to the point, she is oblivious to it because her existence excludes anything that is oblique or obscure. Her attack is swift and direct, and she would destroy her opponent as zealously as Red Cross would have destroyed Despayre. The emphasis here, as in Red Cross' encounter with Despayre, is upon the good and bad use of words, and in each instance the demonic enchanters are discovered to have command of their situation. Amoret, because she understands the power of Busirane's words, cautions Britomart against destroying him before his charms have been reversed (echoing too, Una's naive plea for Archimago's life):

So mightily she smote him, to ground
 He fell halfe dead; next stroke him should have slaine,
 Had not the Lady, which by him stood bound,
 Dearnely unto her called to abstaine,
 From doing him to dy. For else her paine
 Should be remedillesse, sith none but hee,
 Which wrought it, could the same recure againe.

(3.12.34)

Britomart's descent to rescue Amoret (on behalf of Scudamour) echoes the descent of Orpheus into Tartarus who attempts to rescue Eurydice

from the dead.¹⁰ The Amoret-Scudamour-Britomart episode parallels the the Orphic myth in several places, and the poet deliberately means them to be contrasted. Although Britomart who acts as a physical, not a verbal hero, is ultimately more successful than Orpheus who loses his Eurydice, Britomart is essentially powerless against the verbal enchantments (carmina or charms) of Busirane. This of course is Orpheus' great achievement - - his ability to charm the gods with his songs. Britomart's success is as temporary and unsatisfactory as that of Orpheus. Spenser is expanding his perspective of enchanter to include, consistent with the Orphic theme, the possibility of defeat, and Book IV continues and develops this conflict between Orphic and demonic enchanter.

The conflict that informs The Faerie Queene with its energy opens out to become an explicit confrontation between Ate (identified as discord) and concord (Orpheus and his progeny). Canto I of this book reveals a preoccupation with Ate's demonic verbal skills. The relics of Ate's rage are a frightening collection of bits and pieces of ruined civilization. The force of her impact is reviewed by the poet with astonishment, because she has destroyed what the Renaissance believed to be the poet's sacred creation - - harmonious civilization:

And all within the riven walls were hung
With ragged monuments of times forepast,
All which the sad effects of discord sung:

¹⁰ Robert Graves, Greek Myths (London: Cassell and Company, 1958), p. 112. "One day near Tempe, in the valley of the river Peneius, Eurydice met Aristaeus, who tried to force her. She trod on a serpent as she fled, and died of its bite; but Orpheus boldly descended into Tartarus, hoping to fetch her back. . . . Hades made a single condition that Orpheus might not look back until she was safely back under the light of the sun."

There were rent robes, and broken scepters plast,
 Alters defyl'd, and holy things defast,
 Disshivered speares, and shields ytorne in twaine,
 Great cities ransackt, and strong castles rast,
 Nations captived, and huge armies slaine:
 Of all which ruines there some relicks did remaine.

(IV.1.21)

Her savage history extends into antiquity, and she is there with Orpheus when the royal poet helped the Argonauts with his songs through their difficulties.¹¹ Amongst the ruins of Ate's making are found those of

antique Babylon,
 Of fatall Thebes, of Rome that raigned long,
 Of sacred Salem, and sad Ilion,
 For memorie of which on high there hong
 The golden Apple, cause of all their wrong,
 For which the three faire Goddesses did strive:
 There also was the name of Nimrod strong,
 Of Alexander, and his Princes five,
 Which shar'd to them the spoiles that he had got alive.

¹¹G.R.S. Mead, Orpheus (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1955), p. 13. "Orpheus . . . was the first poet and the first inspired singer, and his whole life is the history of divine harmony. Lord of the seven-stringed lyre, all men flocked to hear him, and wild beasts lay peacefully at his feet; trees and stones were not unmoved at the music of his heavenly instrument. The denizens of the unseen world and the princes of Hades rejoiced at the tones of his harp. Companion of the Argonauts in their famous expedition, the good ship Argo glides gently over the peaceful sea at the will of his magic strains; the fearsome moving rocks of the Symplegades, that threatened Argo with destruction, were held motionless; the dragon of Colchis that watched the golden fleece was plunged in sleep profound."

And there the relicks of the drunken fray,
 The which amongst the Lapithees befell,
 And of the bloodie feast, which sent away
 So many Centaures drunken soules to hell,
 That under great Alcides furie fell:
 And of the dreadfull discord, which did drive
 The noble Argonauts to outrage fell,
 That each of life sought others to deprive,
 All mindlesse of the Golden fleece, which made them strive.

(IV.1.22-23)

Ate's vehement invective works without the conspiritorial aid of magic needed by Busirane and other demonic enchanterers. Like Despayre her words pollute the minds of her subjects. However, the ramifications of her attacks are more fearful than those represented by Despayre because, Ate's discord, by implication, involves more than one person. Despayre is less treacherous than discord because it is personal rather than social and it is contained within a personal sphere promoting apathy rather than aggressive strife. Despayre is an unnatural and unwholesome force, but discord can flatten nations, and as the poet has revealed, destroy civilizations. This concept of discord is directly antipathetic to the *raison d'être* of the poet in Renaissance minds, because the poet is the guardian of civilization and the poem its highest product.

Ate is the professed enemy of concord and hence of the poet;
 she lives for the specific purpose of destroying harmony:

For all her studie was and all her thought,

How she might overthrow the things that Concord wrought.

So much her malice did her might surpas,
 That even th'Almightie selfe she did maligne,
 Because to man so mercifull he was,
 And unto all his creatures so benigne,
 Sith she her selfe was of his grace indigne:
 For all this worlds faire workmanship she tride,
 Unto his last confusion to bring,
 And that great golden chain to divide,
 With which it blessed Concord hath together tide.

(IV. I. 29-30)

It is, however, from the discord of Ate's tongue that concord has its inception, and it is this theme of discordia concors that is implicit throughout the book of Friendship. Immediately following upon the vision of ruin perpetuated by Ate is the first overt reference to the possibility of an Orphic resolution to the destruction brought by wickedness. For Orpheus mends the schisms that discord creates:

Firebrand of hell first tynd in Phlegeton,
 By thousand furies, and from thence out throwen
 Into this world, to worke confusion,
 And set it all on fire by force unknowen,
 Is wicked discord, whose small sparkes once blowen
 None but a God or godlike man can slake;
 Such as was Orpheus, that when strife was growen

Amongst those famous ympes of Greece, did take

His silver Harpe in hand, and shortly friends them make.

(IV. 2.1)

The close association of Ate and Orpheus is not merely coincidental, and the graphic merging of concord and discord is meant to add another interpretation associated with discord. Orpheus comes into focus to repair the damage that Ate makes, and while this is essentially a good indication that civilized society will triumph over demonic enchantments in the end, we are also prepared through the Orpheus myth for the possibility of failure. This possibility of failure haunts the final books of The Faerie Queene, however, the poet also fights fiercely against this conclusion and the struggle heightens the tensions within the entire work.

The discordia concors theme is again apparent in the Priamond, Triamond, Diamond episode. It is here that we witness the fortuitous resolution of strife. Concord is revealed to be the mean between two extremes and since concord is specifically the poet's concern - - because it is out of harmony that civilization flourishes (according to the Orphic myth) - - the battle and ensuing wedding are relevant to this study. Priamond, Triamond, and Diamond fight with Cambell for the love of Canacee. Triamond through the mysterious translation of life from brother to brother testifies to the depth of their friendship as well as helping him to survive the onslaught of Cambell's strokes. Resolution to this excessively vicious battle comes with the introduction of Cambina, the goddess who administers "Nepenthe . . . a drinck of soverayne grace" and who completes the set of pairs in opposition to the quartet in Canto 1.

"From the opening of Book IV the forces of concord and discord have been gathering . . . Cantos 1 and 2 present an almost symmetrical pattern of this convergence of good and evil. Canto 1 initiates the theme of discord with the appearance of Blandamour and Paridell accompanied by Ate and Duessa. Canto 2 presents a parallel group - Cambell, Triamond, Cambell and Canacee - representing the forces of concord."¹² From the violent discord of battle, harmony and love flourish in the form of love, climaxing in the marriage of Canacee and Triamond, of Cambell and Cambina. Once the conflict has been resolved between the antagonistic sides, Cambina returns with Canacee to his home,

Where making ioyous feast theire daies they spent
 In perfect love, devoid of hatefull strife,
 Allide with bands of mutuall couplement;
 For Triamond had Canacee to wife,
 With whom he ledd a long and happie life;
 And Cambel tooke Cambina to his fere,
 The which as life were each to other lief.
 So all alike did love, and loved were,
 That since their days such lovers were not found elsewhere.

(IV.3.52)

The marine marriage between the Thames and Medway is prefigured in this propitious union of Triamond and Canacee, Cambell and Cambina. Before commenting upon the significance of the various marriages a word about

¹² T.P. Roche, The Kindly Flame (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 80.

Concord who mediates between Love and Hate in Venus' garden is necessary.

The figure of Concord that sits aimably on the poarch leading to the temple of Venus in Canto 10 continues the broadened understanding the Spenser is developing of the meaning of concord. Concord is discovered sitting while

On either side of her, two young men stood,
Both strongly arm'd, as fearing one another;
Yet were they brethern both of halfe the blood,
Begotten by two fathers of one mother,
Though of contrarie natures each to other:
The one of them hight Love, the other Hate,
Hate was the elder, Love the younger brother;
Yet was the younger stronger in his state
Then th'elder, and him maystred still in all debate.

(IV.I0.32)

Concord exists in specific relation to love and hate and it is discovered to be the temperate mean between both passions. Concord is not only a part of love, but also of its antithesis hate, and Spenser preserves the complexity not only of this concept but of life itself in his epic poem. The figure of Concord captures the entire conflict at work throughout The Faerie Queene, and which become pronounced in this fourth book.

Spenser emphatically cannot deliver to his audience a simplified vision of life, and the complexity of vice and virtue that grows as the poem advances signals the similarly complex vision of the poet's own world view.

The catalogue of English rivers and the marine wedding of Thames and Medway that brings the fourth book to its conclusion, grows narratively out of the discord of Marinell and Florimell. The hypnotic recitation of the river catalogue suggests to the imagination the continuous ebb and flow of life, as the rivers are born at their sources, merge (in harmonious union), expand and return again. (The hypnotic effect is a subtle attempt by the poet to overcome by enchantment, the discordant forces at work in his world, as the corpus of his works is an attempt to charm time.) For Roche, "the essential purpose of the procession is to show the unity underlying the complexity of life, as symbolized by the world of the sea."¹³ Arion as the marine Orpheus has effectively tamed the antithetic elements and boldly leads the marriage procession. The positive thrust of this vision testifies to the power of concord in the world, as Arion's "Dainty musicke" is heard playing in response to the raging of the seas:

Then was there heard a most celestiall sound,
 Of dainty musicke, which did next ensew
 Before the spouse: that was Arion crownd;
 Who playing on his harpe, unto him drew
 The eares and hearts of all that goodly crew,
 That even yet the Dolphin, which him bore
 Through the Aegaeon seas from Pirates vew,
 Stood still by him astonisht at his lore,

¹³ T.P. Roche, The Kindly Flame (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 80.

And all the raging seas for joy forgot to rore.

(IV.11.23)

Success of the enchanted union of Thames and Medway does not finally rest with Arion, however, as the poet is quick to reveal in the final canto of this book. Here attention is again brought to the labors of the poet, whose own Orphic skill has created not only the counting of "the seas abundant progeny" but also the existence of Arion, and the whole Faerie Queene that has gone before and that is yet to come. The poet intended his audience to feel strongly his presence in the poem and he exists within this poem as the most omniscient of all Orphic figures within the poem's framework:

O what an endlesse worke have I in hand,
 To count the seas abundant progeny,
 Whose fruitfull seede farre passeth those in land,
 And also those which wonne in th'azure sky?
 For much more eath to tell the starres on hy,
 Albe they endlesse seeme in estimation,
 Then to recount the Seas posterity:
 So fertile be the flouds in generation,
 So huge their numbers, and so numberlesse their nation.

Therefore the antique wizards well invented,
 That Venus of the fomy sea was bred;
 For that the seas by her are most augmented.
 Witnesse th'exceeding fry, which there are fed,
 And wondrous sholes, which may of none be red.

Then blame me not, if I have err'd in count
 Of Gods, of Nymphs, of rivers yet unred:
 For though their numbers do much more surmount,
 Yet all those same were there, which erst I did recount.

(IV.12.1-2)

By lamenting his apparent inability to successfully accomplish what he has in fact just done, Spenser points out the vastness of his achievements. Dr. Cain elaborates upon this inability-topos, suggesting that Spenser is revealing himself to be a poet of Orphic stature and also one of national importance: "The great set piece of the wedding procession of the Thames and the Medway is the sort of song that reflects the concord of the cosmic order. Its invocation of a muse indicates that the episode is a climax and also draws attention to the poet performing like Orpheus as a poet of concord, charming 170 rivers and marine figures into order:

All which if an hundred tongues to tell,
 And hundred mouthes, and voice of brasse I had,
 And endlesse memorie, that mote excell,
 In order as they came, could I recount them well.

(II.9)

But he does. The inability-topos only draws attention to the virtuoso feat. In ordering and bringing concord to the watery world, the most available symbol of flux and mutability but also the sea that Elizabethans are wrestling from Spanish control, Spenser also draws attention to himself as a poet of national importance."¹⁴

¹⁴ "Spenser and The Renaissance Orpheus," p. 39.

Chapter Three

BOOK VI OF THE FAERIE QUEENE

Central to Book VI is Calidore's quest, as a knight of courtesy, for an expedient yet ethically viable sense of "Courtesie . . . Which of all goodly manners is the ground,/ And roote of civill conversation." (6.1.1.). This search by Calidore reflects and is parallel to the poet's concern with the development of his poetics, and Book VI is energized by the self-evaluative nature of that concern. Narcissistic indulgence is not an element in Spenser's preoccupation with his public use of words. The purpose of the endeavour and in fact of this book reveals itself to be a fundamental questioning of the poet's function. Calidore's successful intercourse with his society -- his effectiveness as a harmonizer in a fragmented world -- is meant as a measure of the poet's own success. This parallel evaluation operates specifically near the end of the book and of The Faerie Queene itself. With this in mind the actions of the titular hero assume another level of significance, telling us something of the poet's belief in the redemptive nature of his poetry in the context of society.

Calidore's encounter with Tristram at the outset of Book VI is revealing in terms of the book's recurring theme of intrinsic courtesy that is perpetuated by the heritage of nobility. The nobility of Tristram's character is manifest in his bearing and deeds:

Much did Sir Calidore admyre his speach
 Tempred so well, but more admyr'd the stroke
 That through the mayles had made so strong a breach
 Into his hart,

(VI.2.13)

The ambiguity associated with "breach" here is suggestive - - Tristram has not only killed the discourteous knight of the Barge with a wound in the heart but he has also pierced Calidore's heart with his eloquence. Similarly, individual orators throughout the book are successful or not in relation to their ability to effect just such a reaction on their audience. Calidore is correct in his assessment of Tristram whom he suspects to be "surely borne of some Heroicke sead" (6.2.25), a judgement which is substantiated later by the youth himself who reveals that "good king Meliogras" is his father and "Faire Emiline" his mother (6.2.28-29).

Lineage and its effect on the individual of any society is significant in this book: not only will "gentle bloud . . . gentle manners breed" (6.3.2) but the implied contrary may also be true. Nobility of character is repeatedly linked with nobility of parentage (Salvage Man 6.5.2, Aladine 6.2.28-29, Tristram 6.2.27, and Pastorella 6.12.15-16). The problem raised by the implicit contrary suggestion that bad blood cannot be redeemed, questions the significance and relevance of any creative act. The poet's dilemma reveals itself early in the sixth book where it is unequivocally stated that it is

seldome seene, a trotting Stalion get
 An ambling Colt, that is his proper owne:

So seldome seene, that one in baseness set

Doth noble courage shew, with courteous manners met.

(6.3.1)

It seems then not only are the virtuous members of society fated to be good, but that the dishonorable and destructive are similarly fated to be bad. That is, significant virtue is more a matter of blood than of effort and striving. If this assessment is accurate, then the rehabilitating function of poetry is undermined. Didactic poetry (which most Renaissance poetry attempted to be), when met with this sense of futility, must give way to poetry of pleasure and "seeke to please" because "that now is counted wisemens threasure" (6.12.41). This appears to be the conclusion that The Faerie Queene is moving toward as Book VI chronicles the poet's assessment of his poetry and its social relevance.

Significantly, Calidore speaks of his pursuit as "incessant" to Artegall:

The Blattant Beast (quoeth he) I doe pursew,
And through the world incessantly doe chase,
Till I him overtake, or else subdew:
Yet know I not or how, or in what place
To find him out, yet still I forward trace.

(VI.1.7)

Despite this apparent futility, Calidore heroically pursues his quest, still imagining that he can conquer the divisive elements that interfere with harmonious social co-existence. His forthrightness is maintained

by his determination to perpetuate an illusion of simplicity - - Calidore glozes over the multiple dangers that are everywhere, and similarly he is intentionally ignorant, as the exemplar of true courtesy, of the contradictory nature of his actions. Calidore's speech to the father of Priscilla coupled with the deceptive account of her rescue, undercuts the quality of the virtue that he is attempting to establish. Serena suffers because of the careless intrusion of Calidore and she is compelled to spend much time and effort finding a cure for the Blatant Beast's bite. Calidore naively assumes that conflict and disharmony can be cured by verbal facility. This is only partly true - - Priscilla is protected against severe reprisals and possibly fatal ones because Calidore mixes falsehood with truth when he confronts her father, but Serena wanders about in extreme pain because Calidore mistakenly imagines that he can correct "his so rash default" with "gentle words" (VI.3.21-22). His adventures in Faeryland are an educative process that instruct him in the significant usefulness of what is later identified by the Hermit as being prepared to meet "the occasion of the ill" (VI.6.14).

Calidore disappears from the foreground of the action from canto 4 to canto 9. Discordant and discourteous forces occupy the intervening cantos with Prince Arthur, the Savage man, and the Hermit variously devising methods of overcoming the enemies of harmony. When Calidore appears after this extended absence he is physically and spiritually in need of retreat. We are prepared for Calidore's retreat not only through the experience of the Hermit, but also by that of the poet-persona himself who is sympathetic to the necessity of moral, physical, and spiritual regeneration:

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

(VI.pro.1)

This suggestive association of poet and Calidore through the common motif of weariness and desire for retreat is meant to alert the reader to the parallel between the successfulness of the hero's quest and the successfulness of the poet as a harmonious enchanter. There is a similar parallel operating in the figure of the Hermit who has also left the divisive world of experience for a pastoral hide-out. He is tired, as Calidore is tired of this "worlds unquiet waies" (6.4) but he has retired from the world not simply to escape the "perillous assayes" of fortune, but rather to prepare himself against them. It is because of his experience with this unquiet world and not because of his withdrawal that he is able to counsel Serena and Timias effectively:

For he right well in Leaches craft was seene,
 And through the long experience of his dayes,
 Which had in many fortunes tossed beene,
 And past through many perillous assayes,
 He knew the diverse went of mortall wayes,

And in the mindes of men had great insight;

(VI.6.3)

Through experience and freedom from self-deception, the Hermit knows that the Blatant Beast and its surrogates are everywhere. This awareness protects him, unlike Calidore, from unexpected assaults. He cautions Serena and Timias to practice restraint in anticipation of the Beast (6.7) and it is this measure of self-control that Calidore must learn to exercise while operating within a public sphere. The Hermit protects Serena from the Blatant Beast, while Calidore exposes her to it. The Hermit is thus by implication an exemplary figure whom Calidore is meant to emulate.

Following the pattern of retreat established at the beginning by the poet, we witness Calidore's excursion into the pastoral world of Melibee. That fact that Calidore can be seduced into throwing up his quest points to his implicit uncertainty about the validity of that quest and of his effectiveness as a verbal enchanter. Calidore thoughtlessly accepts the advice of Melibee, whose specious motives for abandoning society should repel Calidore:

The time was once, in my first prime of yeares,
When pride of youth forth pricked my desire,
That I disdain'd amongst mine equall peares
To follow sheepe, and shepheards base attire:
For further fortune then I would inquire.
And leaving home, to roiall court I wought;
Where I did sell my selfe for yearely hire,

And in the Princes gardin daily wrought:

There I beheld such vaineresse, as I never thought.

(VI.9.24)

Unlike the Hermit, Melibee has rejected society not through choice but through necessity, and he is bitter because of his abject failure as a social figure. His advise to Calidore resembles the rhetorical speech of Despayre to Red Cross in Book I. Both Despayre and Melibee are immediately sensitive to the spiritual weaknesses of their victims, and they know how to exploit uncertain souls. It is important to notice that Melibee is not, however, as intentionally malevolent an enchanter as Despayre. Rather he is an aged naif whose feckless idealism and simplistic escapism are attuned to Calidore's own escapism. Melibee's account of his attempt to better his fortune at court closely relates to Calidore's quest, and Calidore can see his frustrations reflected in Melibee's failure. Melibee is disgusted with court vanities while for Calidore it is the home of the Blatant Beast. Since Calidore's pursuit is mirrored by the disenchantment of Melibee of the active world, the conclusion follows syllogistically for Calidore, that Melibee has failed because his pursuit was futile, and the knight will fail because his quest is similarly futile.

Melibee tempts Calidore to relax (usually a sign of moral disintegration in The Faerie Queene) into a pastoral environment that eliminates strife and obliterates action:

Sometimes I hunt the Fox, the vowed foe

Unto my Lambes, and him dislodge away;

Sometime the fawne I practice from the Doe,

Or from the Goat her kidde how to convay;
 Another while I baytes and nets display,
 The birds to catch, or fishes to beguyle:
 And when I wearie am, I downe doe lay
 My limbes in every shade, to rest from toyle,
 And drinke of every brooke, when thirst my throte doth boyle.

(VI.9.23)

Nets and disguises to "beguyle" his prey should alert Calidore to the destructive nature of Melibee's appeal but it has the reverse effect. Like the poet-persona of the sixth book, who is no longer strictly concerned with the public nature of his poetry but rather with the creative act itself and its meaningfulness, Calidore is no longer a hero pursuing a public quest, but a private figure in search of personal fulfillment. He is also, at this point, being enchanted rather than enchanting. By relinquishing his role as an active public hero, Calidore reveals his diminished faith in the purpose of his quest and this in turn reflects the decreasing optimism of Book VI.

Physically spent ("Great travell hath the gentle Calidore/ And toyle endured," 9.2) and morally wasted because of the "incessant" nature of his task, Calidore is able to rationalize his radical change of interest. Pastorella represents the possibility of the fulfillment of his personal concerns, and this combined with Melibee's offer of refuge from "vaine shadowes" forms an irresistible temptation to Calidore. Like the poet-persona of the sixth book who is working toward a more personal statement of the function and nature of his poetry, Calidore, through his escape

into the pastoral landscape, is similarly in the process of recognizing the nature and function as a Hercules Gallicus hero,¹⁵ who until now has attempted unsuccessfully to conquer discordant factions in his society, by alternately applying his physical prowess and verbal skills.¹⁶ He learns the expediency of courteous compromise toward Pastorella and Coridon. He removes his military clothing and replaces them with "shepheardes weed" to capture the heart of Pastorella, who is unable to relate to his "knightly service". He uses Coridon, and Coridon gives him valuable information when the Brigants plunder the land and take Pastorella prisoner. The fact remains, however, that by abandoning his heroic quest he has unequivocally relinquished the Herculean aspect of his role. In doing this, Calidore leaves himself open to the poet-persona's censure:

Who now does follow the foule Blatant Beast,
 Whilst Calidore does follow that faire Mayd,
 Unmyndfull of his vow and high beheast,
 That he should never leave, nor be delayd
 From chacing him, till he had it attchieved?

(VI.10.1)

¹⁵T.H. Cain, "Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus", pp. 40-41.

¹⁶"However closely the hero of eloquence approaches the poet, he does not become Orpheus nor does he even succeed as Hercules Gallicus. In fact, Calidore's attempts to solve problems through eloquence only create further problems and violate his own ideal of 'simple truth and steadfast honesty'. . . . By subjecting himself to Melibee's eloquence he not only abandons his role as Hercules Gallicus . . . he reverses the archetype of the Choice of Hercules (virtue instead of pleasure) and thus rejects the ordinary Hercules role as well." Ibid., p. 41.

Canto 10 also tests the strength and usefulness of Calidore's Orphic facility. As an exponent of harmony through "civill conversation" Calidore is surprisingly insensitive to Colin's vision on Mount Acidale - - the most poetically evocative moment of the entire book. "When Calidore peers through the leaves on Mount Acidale and sees the vision that Colin's piping evokes . . . we see a failed hero, now neither Hercules nor Hercules Gallicus, confronting the achievement of a superbly vatic Orpheus."¹⁷ He destroys Colin's vision, and in an unsubtle fashion resembling his previous blunders, attempts to console the unhappy Colin with gestures of ungainly courtesy. He asks Colin what should be obvious: "But why, when I them saw, fled they away from me?" (10.19). Calidore's iconoclasm occurs at a sensitive point in the spatial organization of the book. By counting stanzas, moving inward from opposite ends of the sixth book, a pattern evolves associating Calidore with the Blattant Beast. At canto 3, stanza 24, exactly 119 stanzas from the beginning of Book VI, the Blattant Beast interrupts the wanderings of unsuspecting Serena:

All sodainely out of the forest nere
The Blattant Beast forth rushing unaware,
Caught her thus loosely wandring here and there,

At stanza 17 in canto 10, again exactly 119 stanzas from the end of the book, Calidore repeats the violently destructive act of the Blattant Beast:¹⁸

But soone as he appeared to their vew,

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁸ Dr. Cain discovered this suggestive pattern and the parallel association of Calidore and the Blattant Beast.

They vanisht all away out of his sight,

And cleane were gone, which way he never knew.

What has previously been a suggestion is now made clear. Calidore, as long as he believes literally in his role as peacemaker, without recognizing his own inability to operate successfully in a divisive world without the abundant use of compromise, will always be a victim of occasion, and at times be a surrogate of the Blattant Beast itself.

Colin instructs Calidore on the symbolic significance of the vision that he has evoked on the Mount. Although Calidore learns that "civility" can be an acquired skill (The Graces "teach us how to each degree and kynde/ We should ourselves demeane"), it is uncertain whether or not Calidore is capable of harmonious enchantment and if society is a willing subject. The Mount Acidale episode exposes not only Calidore's failure as an Orphic hero, but also says something of the power of the accomplished poet Colin, who must now, after all, wait on the power of the Graces. While it is Colin's piping or technical skill that evokes the Graces, he is never certain if they will choose to inspire him. Colin's piping on Mount Acidale recalls his successful encomium of Elisa in the April eclogue, and this comparison emphasizes the diminished poetic stature of Colin. Colin's words to Calidore who has caused his vision to disintegrate, says something about the changing role of the poet or Orphic enchanter in this faeryland:

Not I so happy, answred then that swaine,

As thou unhappy, which them thence didst chace,

Whom by no means thou canst recall againe,

For being gone, none can them bring in place,
 But whom they of them selves list so to grace.

(10.19)

Uncertainty plagues Colin's ability in the final book of The Faerie Queene, as it has done to Calidore and as it will impose itself on the poet-persona in the characteristic pattern of association relating Calidore and the poet-persona through events. Colin appears in the height of his poetical career in the Aprill, October and November eclogues of The Shepheardes Calender; so great is his capacity to create verbal visions in Aprill that he moves into the centre of the vision itself and is not only its creator, but also a central figure in it. Then the appropriate incantation assures the poet that his vision will occur, and Colin has a greater sense of possessiveness and confidence as he creates his poems. The poet's control in Aprill is expressed through the verb forms that are used in the eclogue: verbs of command proliferate in the first section ("forsake", "Help", "see", "tell", "show"), indicative verbs in the second ("I see"), and again imperative verb forms in the concluding part. This contrasts sharply with Colin's qualified success in canto 10, where the Graces

being gone, none can them bring in place,
 But whom they of them selves list so to grace.

(10.20)

Immediately following this interlude, Calidore heroically attacks the tiger that surprises Pastorella as she peacefully gathers strawberries. Here Calidore is in the inadvertant process of re-establishing his Herculean

role, and the danger of being armed with a shepherd's hook only then becomes evident to him. He has won Pastorella by his valiant active pursuit of the tiger - - Coridon is summarily dismissed by Pastorella because of his "cowherd feare" - - and Calidore learns the value of heroic behaviour and readiness in relation to his personal fulfillement. The onslaught of the Brigants on the pastoral realm of Melibee and Pastorella, provides the necessary motivation and opportunity for Calidore to practice his new comprehension of how society really functions. In shepherd's clothing but "armed privily" Calidore enters the Brigant's camp. It is with "huge resistlesse might" that he shatters the doors and locks of Pastorella's prison. (Her capture reflects not her weaknesses as it does with Amoret for example, but rather the lack of wisdom on the part of Calidore.) It is not Calidore's poetic felicity that assists him in his battle against this enemy, and although there is an intended echo of Orpheus' descent into Hades for Eurydice, Calidore is successful because of his sword. (Hercules also descends to the underworld but with a sword and not a lyre.)

It is with "a muzzel strong/ Of surest yron, made with many a lincke" that Calidore returns with to his quest to stop the "blasphemous tong" of the foul Blattant Beast. The poet-persona and Calidore are both eventually powerless against the "barking and biting" of the Beast despite their poetic attempts to stop it. Neither poetic inspiration, nor courteous eloquence can charm away the divisive effects of a seasoned and determined detractor:

Ne spareth he the most learned wits to rate,

Ne spareth he the gentle Poets rime,
But rends without regard of person or of time.

(12.40)

The final book has, of course, forecast its own destruction; the Blatant Beast exists only because the poet has given him substance. It has been manifested not in a mood of capitulation but of realistic recognition of the omnipresence of destructive forces existing at every level in society. As Calidore has been pitted against these divisive elements, the poet-persona has tested the redemptive power of his poetry in a fragmented world. The poet has conceptually shredded the whole poem in an endeavour to discover the significance of the creative act. This recognition of the vulnerable nature of humanity arms the poet against despair, as Calidore has learned to protect himself from the thrust of occasion with his "sword of better say" that reinforces his verbal skills with physical prowess.

The insistent reference to lineage and the suggestion that the quality of one's character is determined by good or noble blood lines (the Hermit, Tristram, Aladine, and Pastorella are all unequivocal proof of this) circumscribes the poet and touches his task with futility. This futility is apparent in Calidore's response to his quest, and Colin the once determined creator, is plagued with uncertainty. One can only be certain, it seems, of change, of the historical process that alters and fashions all natural elements. Spenser entered into this process to perpetuate the line of "antique Poets historical" and like Homer and Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso, he means to "overgoe" his poetical ancestors

in the sense that he will not only write in their tradition as epic poets, but also that he will surpass their conventions. Throughout The Faerie Queene there runs a comparison and evaluative study of history and poetry that is metaphorically expressed in Alma's castle at Book II. A glance at this episode is instructive because it reveals the poet's response to history and to poetry, foreshadowing the pessimistic conclusion of this epic.

Alma's mentor Phantastes, as the imaginative component of the mind, suggests something of the possible fate of inspiration. He is discovered surrounded and tormented by

Infinite shapes of things dispersed thin;
 Some such as in the world were never yit,
 . . . Such as in idle fantasies do flit,
 Infernall Hags, Centaurs, feendes, Hippodames,
 Apes, Lyons, Aegles, Owles, fooles, lovers, children, Dames.

(II.9.50)

This imaginative function of the mind, rather than discovering expedient solutions to mortal discord, is preoccupied with tenuous fantasies

Which buzzed all about, and made such sound
 That they encombred all mens eares and eyes;
 Like many swarmes of Bees assembled round,
 After their hives with honny do abound,
 All those were idle thoughtes and fantasies,
 Devices, visions, sooth-sayes, and prophesies;
 And all that fained it, as leasings, tales and lies.

(II.9.51)

Although Phantastes is a man of "yeares yet fresh," he is of "Crabbed hew/ That him full of melancholy did shew" (42). Eumnestes who "things past could keep in memoree" (939), on the other hand, although "an old old man, half blind" (55), is full of "lively vigor". He has recorded (and is recording) "all things els the which this world doth weld . . . Where they for ever incorrupted dweld" (56). (The suggestion here is that history, unlike forms of artistic creation, is the one continuous truth of humanity's existence because it is essentially an objective rather than a subjective expression of that reality.)

But history assures the perpetuation of society and of its Blatant Beasts. Poetry may have its fleeting effect in the historical process but as an effective agent against discord and detraction, like Courtesy as a graciously effective one, it falters when pitted against the onrush of historical fact. Book VI itself ends with an encapsulated history - - from Calidore to Spenser's own day - - seen entirely in terms of the persistence of the Blatant Beast and society's continuing inability to control him. For the Beast escapes after many knights fail in the attempt to repeat Calidore's quest:

Thenceforth more mischief and more scath he wrought
 To mortall men, then he had done before;
 Ne ever could by any more be brought
 Into like bands, ne maystred any more:
 Albe that long time after Calidore,
 The good Sir Pelleas him tooke in hand,
 And after him Sir Lamoracke of yore,

And all his brethern borne in Britaine land;
Yet none of them could ever bring him into band.

(VI.12.49)

Chapter Four

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POET IN EPITHALAMION AND PROTHALAMION

In Epithalamion the poet articulates the dilemma of human existence within time. The poem is an attempt to reconcile the "hasty accidents" of life with the human desire for "endlesse moniment":

And ye high heavens, the temple of the gods,
In which a thousand tourches flaming bright
Doe burne, that to us wretched earthly clods,
In dreadful darknesse lend desired light;
And all ye powers which in the same remayne,
More then we men can fayne,
Poure out your blessing on us plentiously,

(409-418)

Fortune's "mishaps" are acknowledged as an elemental part of life. Even the muses are subject to "fortune's wreck". Their poetry like that of the speaker of the Epithalamion and of Orpheus before them, is a vehicle for the expression of "doleful dreariment" caused by the forces of mutability. The bridegroom in Epithalamion, by associating himself with the Orphic formula, sets up the dichotomy that characterizes the entire poem: although Orpheus charmed the trees and rocks around him, his attempt to save Eurydice and surpass the edict of the gods is finally a failure. The groom and speaker of this poem forecasts, through this

analogy, his success on one level as an enchanter of his bride, but also suggests that his enchantment of "time" will be a limited success.

The poem is contained within a temporal framework. It begins at dawn creating an expectant mood that is touched, however, with a hint of melancholy. The speaker commands the bride's attendants to go early to the bower of his love and awaken her. He is confident and aggressive as he organizes the wedding party, but he is also realistic in his consideration of time which must be properly ordered if it is to be even partially controlled:

Early before the worlds light giving lampe,
His golden beame upon the hils doth spred,
Having disperst the nights unchearefull dampe,
Doe ye awake and with fresh lusty hed,
Go to the bowre of my beloved love,
My truest turtle dove,
Bid her awake; for Hymen is awake,
And long since ready forth his maske to move.

(19-26)

The refrain reflects the hopefulness and assurance of a newly dawning day; variations in the refrain subtly record the passing of time in much the same way that lengthening shadows signal the approach of afternoon, evening, and night:

The woods shall to me answer and my Eccho ring.
That all the woods shal answer and theyr eccho ring.
That al the woods may answere and their eccho ring.

That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

The woods no more shal answere, nor your echo ring.

The woods no more us answer, nor our eccho ring.

The affirmative pose established at the outset is continued through the third stanza, which is alive with sensuous detail - - the senses are engaged as the speaker commands the attendants to "Bring with you all the Nymphs that you can heare". Colourful garlands must adorn the nymphs to help in the composition of a radiant sight, and fragrant flowers must be laid down to protect the bride's tender foot. Music also fills the air as the song is echoed by the woods in characteristic Orphic fashion.

The consequent harmony of the forthcoming marriage has a positive effect upon those who are near by. Decorum characterizes the atmosphere surrounding the marriage scene: the Nymphs of Mulla must "bynd up the locks which hang scatterd light" and the "wylde wolves" are kept in check by the nymph's darts that are poised, ready to maintain control over the dissident elements. The scene reflects the harmony and control that Orpheus' music traditionally brings, and as the poet of this poem has forecast "So Orpheus . . . So I," he is in complete power over the event.

Time reasserts itself in the following stanzas, however, to challenge the poet's omniscience, as morning replaces dawn. The bride is chided for sleeping too long, because the speaker knows that time unaccounted for slips by in a subtle, but none the less destructive manner (the refrain mirrors the sun's movement - an obvious manifestation of time). The bride is therefore encouraged to awake and await "the

coming of [her] joyous make". The past (awake), and the present (await) and the future (coming) are all alluded to. Time and its ramifications are a central force in the marriage poem because it is a universal measure of events, devised by human intelligence to order and understand these events. When the bridegroom includes in his poem a reference to the movement of Phoebus, it is meant to signal both the beginning of the day and a reminder of the effect of time on man. Each successive reference to the time of day throughout the poem is a reminder of this fact. Hence arises the speaker's persistent urging of the bride to awake and make the most of the time available to them. The emphasis is upon using time constructively:

Wake, now my love, awake; for it is time,
 The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed,
 All ready to her silver coche to clyme,
 And Phoebus gins to shew his glorious hed.

Ah my deere love why doe ye sleepe thus long,
 When meeter were that ye should now awake,
 T'awayt the comming of your joyous make,
 And hearken to the birds lovelearned song.

(74-88)

The bridesmaids are preceded in the adorning of the bride by "fayre houres" because the speaker acknowledges the philosophical and natural significance of time. Creation occurs in time, which paradoxically ages that which it creates. The making and wearing away of "moniments"

is acknowledged in the sixth stanza. At this point the creative aspect of temporality triumphs - - it can "make and still repayre" - - which underscores the continual process of making and creation, but because of the ambiguity of "repayre" the more sinister destructive aspect of time is indirectly alluded to.

Stanza seven discovers the poet attempting to charm Phoebus:

But let this day let this one day be myne,

Let all the rest be thine.

(125-126)

Here there is the temporary festival illusion of the poet triumphing over and ordering time. The happiness created by the occasion is blended with the poet's Orphic success prescribed by him at the beginning of the poem. But we are prepared by various signposts through the poem for the shift in tone. The sun which contains the potential for growth and fruition is also a destructive force, and time similarly brings with it the sort of happiness that the speaker and his bride are experiencing but it also brings them one step closer to extinction. This ambivalent attitude is reflected in the words used to define the sun's "favourable ray" and "lifull heat" which is precisely balanced against its potential to destroy:

And let thy lifull heat not fervent be

For feare of burning her sunshyny face.

(118-119)

"Lifull heat" like the "fayre hours" suggests in the same instant the paradox implicit in these forces. They can "make and still repayre"

which is, of course, the paradox of the human dilemma. One must die in order to live, or less cryptically, one must recognize that we are but "for short time an endlesse moniment". There is an exquisite if painful splendor in this realization, which makes existence precious because it is finite.

This recognition of mortality shifts the focus to the earthly sphere. In stanza eight the minstrels make their human music of loud cries and "strong confused noyce". Mortality is temporarily driven back as the "merry Musick" and "carrol sweet" "ravish quite" "all the sences". This is an affirmation of the power of human voices to counter fragmentation and uncertainty that offers an analogy to the spheral music itself- the sound of the unfallen cosmic order undamaged by time. Shrill noises and sounds come together into harmony overpowering discord:

Harke how the Minstrels gin to shrill aloud
 Their merry Musick that resounds from far,
 The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud,
 That well agree withouten breach or jar.

(129-132)

The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,
 Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
 As if it were one voyce.

(137-139)

So effective and convincing is this display of energy and union that "even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill/ Doth reach, and all the

firmament doth fill" (141-142).

It is now appropriate that the earthly "Phebe" make her first appearance. Marriage is a social event because it recognizes the conventions of society and reinforces them. It also promises the continuation of that society through children, and the town is therefore an integral part of this celebration ("Tell me ye merchants daughters did ye see/ So fayre a creature in your towne before?"). The modest bride is "abashed" as she beholds "So many gazers as on her do stare". Implicit in the encomium of the bride is not only the highest praise of her beauty ("Lyke Phoebe from her chamber in the East") but also a reference and reminder of her mortality ("Arysing forth to run her mighty race"). The dialectic of life which encompasses both living and dying becomes synonymous with references to time. With one qualifying phrase "Arysing forth to run her mighty race" the bride's beauty is discovered to be temporal. As certainly as her "yellow locks" are now like "golden wyre" will they become, with time, like silver wire. With equal certainty her "cheekes lyke apples" and "all her body" which now "like a palace fayre" will be transformed to less charming objects of delight. It is because of the inevitability of this metamorphosis that the speaker turns rapidly to the inner transcendental beauty of her "lovely spright". At the same time her physical and spiritual excellences are clearly analogous and the body is not disparaged in favour of the soul.

As the bride steps over the threshold of the temple gates his earthly success is assured. He has charmed his bride with his song. In stanza twelve the events of the moment move beyond the framework of

the poem. The bride becomes a divine figure in a "holy place", and for an instant, time is crystallized and is wholly divorced from its destructive potential. The angels' acknowledgement of the transcendent beauty of the bride maintains the sacred tone of the marriage:

Behold whiles before the alter stands
 Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes
 And blesseth her with his two happy hands,
 How the red roses flush up in her cheekes,
 And the pure snow with goodly vermil stayne,
 Like crimsin dyde in grayne,
 That even the Angels which continually,
 About the sacred Altere doe remaine,
 Ofte peeping in her face that seemes more fayre,
 The more they on it stare.

(223-233)

The speaker is himself absorbed by the magnificence of the event. "Behold" reflects the reverential mood of the poet, who is (like Colin before him) extraordinarily pleased with his accomplishments:

Now al is done; bring home the bride againe,
 Bring home the triumph of our victory,
 Bring home with you the glory of her gaine,
 With joyance bring her home and with jollity.
 Never had man more joyfull day than this,
 Whom heaven would heape with blis.

(242-247)

Feasting and drinking are encouraged as the guests participate wholeheartedly in the festivities. Because for the bridegroom "This day for ever to me holy is," he will "without restraint or stay" enjoy his success with the townspeople. Wine is lavished on all who participate, and the recurrent elegiac mood of the poem is temporarily forgotten. A single and innocent reference to time, however, sends the speaker once again into a consideration of time and change. "Day" is mentioned five times in the fifteenth stanza. The sun's loss of "heat and light" is clearly analogous to the subtle yet persistent diminution of physical strength:

This day the sunne is in his chiefst hight,
 With Barnaby the bright.
 From whence declining daily by degrees,
 He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,
 When once the Crab behind his back he sees.

(265-269)

As the speaker anticipates the consummation of his marriage (in stanza sixteen), he typifies the dilemma of man on earth. The approach of night brings him one step closer to death, while simultaneously bringing with it the promise of posterity through children. Night is alternately the resolution of "this long weary day" and also the beginning of "sad dread". This conflict is expanded in the remaining stanzas of the Epithalamion. The tension is most clear in stanza eighteen:

Now welcome night, thou night so long expected,
 That long daies labor doest at last defray,

And all my cares, which cruell love collected,
 Hast summd in one and cancelled all for aye:

But let the night be calme and quiet some,
 Without tempestuous storms or sad defray:

(315-328)

Stanza nineteen is a charm against the "teares", "feares", "dout", "sights", "affrights", "harmes", "sprights", "charmes", "yells", and "spells" of the night. Many of these are noises and forms of disorder opposite to the harmony of the poet's song and a threat to its aspirations. Again the poet is successful in alienating and enchanting the negative forces operating in the nighttime world.

The speaker refers to a power outside his own and prays to "Cinthia" "Juno" and "glad Genius" to "informe" his bride "with timely seed" and "bring forth the fruitfull progeny". This is related to the petition to Roman gods for offspring at the end of classical epithalamia like Catullus and also to the prayer for the heritage of children in the Anglican matrimonial service. Even though this is a typical act of supplication to the gods, it underscores the poet's diminished power. Resignation prevails at the end of the marriage song, because the poet is finally impotent against the coming of night. Dawn has become dark night - - the poet's charm has been only partially successful. While his song has enchanted his bride, he can only hope for immortality within the context of his established mortality:

Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,
 And the chaste wombe informe with timely seed,

That may our comfort breed:

(385-387)

and

Send us the timely fruit of this same night.

(404)

Children breed comfort not only to aging parents, but also to the poet because they are a link with immortality both inside and beyond time. They are "timely seed" and "timely fruit" because they are trapped within time. The bride and groom must be satisfied with the solace of knowing that they may be perpetuated through "a large posterity", and "lasting" in "lasting happiness" is conditioned by this understanding of human immortality. The poet accepts the diminished aspect of his stature and lives in "hope" for the future and the happiness (again made more significant because it is temporal and not eternal) that it will bring:

So let us rest, sweet love, in hope of this,

And cease till then our timely joyes to sing,

The woods no more us answer, nor our echo ring.

(424-426)

The speaker is predicting his own conclusion as he contemplates his children's procession to the "heavenly tabernacles". This is where his and his children's true immortality is to be found - - not here on earth where, consistent with the medieval view of life, men are "wretched earthly clods", but in "High heavens".

The poet's success as an enchanter has been marginal. He has captured his bride and charmed the evil "sprights" of the night. He has

not, however, effectively arrested the decline of Phoebus, that diminishes "daily by degrees" and brings him closer to his end; the once affirmative stance of the poet has shifted as daylight gives way to darkness.

Although he has created and fashioned the song, it has not rescued the speaker from time. He looks upward for solace and must rest his wish for immortality with a power greater than himself.

The mood of the poet at the end of the poem is a prelude to the pervasive melancholy that is unredeemed by moments of happiness in Prothalamion. Implicit in the chant that concludes each stanza of Prothalamion is the recognition of mutability. Coupled with this is the desire to mediate the change that time inevitably brings. Time and its capacity to alter the elements of this world is the major concern of this "Spousall Verse". For the poet the personal ramifications of process and change have been "fruitlesse" and at the outset he is bitter about his failure to gain favour at court:

I whom sullein care,
Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay
In Princes Court, and expectations vayne
Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away,
Like empty shaddowes, did afflict my brayne,
Walkt forth to ease my payne
Along the shoare of silver streeming Themmes,

(5-11)

The scene that greets the speaker is antipathetic to the elegiac mood that overwhelms him. Until now he has been trapped by the despair

of his "expectations vayne". The opening four lines of the poem are in the past tense suggesting that, although the poet has until now been circumscribed by his condition, his personal pessimism has yielded to the temporary demand for celebration. The "rutty Banke" of the Thames that is "paynted all with variable flowers" provides an opportunity for the poet to extend himself beyond his personal care.

The meadow "Nymphes" by the river's side spring from a source of potential fertility. Their sexual nature brings with it the hope of fruition:

There, in a Meadow, by the Rivers side,
A Flock of Nymphes I chaunced to espy,
All lovely Daughters of the Flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks all loose untyde,
As each had been a Bryde.

(19-23)

Flowers of "every sort, which in the Medow grew" are abundant, but they are set against the onset of time and are meant to

decke their Bridegromes posies,
Against the Brydale day, which was not long:

(35-36)

The brides as swans are the quintessence of purity and a source of great expectation. They are comparable to celestial perfection, but although they are "beauties bright/ That shone as heavens light," they are nevertheless the product of time:

For sure they did not seeme

To be begot of any earthly Seede,
 But rather Angels or of Angels breede:
 Yet were they bred of Somers-heat they say,
 In sweetest Season,

(64-69)

The nymphs greet the swans, the brides-to-be, with a lay which is "Prepar'd against that Day,/ Against their Brydale day, which was not long" and there is a hint that it is meant as a charm against the inevitable flow of time. Significantly the nymphs wish for the happiness of the brides' "gentle hearts" and for "blessed Plentie" which poignantly contrasts the discontent of the speaker. The nymphs lay, like the speaker's song, is meant to enchant the future and charm it to bring with it constructive mutability. But the refrain, the passage quoted above, and the swan-image itself (with its sense of a single song sung just before death) is powerfully undermined even as it is sung - - the bridal day will not last long as the refrain suggests because reality will undermine the ideal.

London "my most kyndly Nurse" reminds the poet of his previous good fortune and of his present "freendles case". But this melancholy is mastered by the poet's imagination as he recognizes the incongruous nature of his unhappiness at a time of celebration:

But Ah here fits not well
 Olde woes but joyes to tell

(141-142)

This return to London also dramatically alters the poet's understanding of his role as he begins to realize that his function as the national

poet, although it has come to an end, will be taken up by someone else. By this capacity of placing himself objectively in the historical process while at the same time recognizing the more important goal of the national poet which is to perpetuate Elisa's name, the poet temporarily is reconciled to his fate:

And great Elisa's glorious name may ring
Through al the world, fil'd with thy wide Alarmes,
Which some brave muse may sing
To ages following,

(157-160)

The marriage itself takes place in a moment of history: brides and bridegrooms meet and are united "at th'appointed tyde". Events occur in terms of the flux of the Thames, the most poignant symbol for the Elizabethans of change.

The union of bride and groom only in a limited sense reconciles the inner tensions of the poem. There is harmony symbolized by their marriage even though their union occurs within the context of temporality - - "th'appointed tyde". The grooms have immortal counterparts for "like the twins of jove they seemed in sight", and their marriage to those "two fair brides" is the most promising union that could occur on earth ("to us wretched clods"). The poem ends with this celebration of England's honorable past, present, and hope for the future found in this propitious marriage. Within the spectrum of the historical continuum of England, the speaker succeeds in alienating and diminishing the "empty shadowes" that "afflict" his brain. But this is only a tenuous

conclusion as the refrain ending the poem suggests. Time as an erosive force belying human aspirations will continue in spite of the poet's attempt to harness it with his charm - - the song. The speaker has managed to slow the process of change - - "Sweete Themmes run softly" - - with the fragile Orphic gesture of his poetry which may perpetuate his name, but he cannot alleviate, in any significant way, the overriding tyranny of mutability. The repeated imperative of the refrain is consequently modest - - "Sweete Themmes, run softly, till I end my song."

The image of the poet as a limited enchanter is present from the beginning of Spenser's works and it is available to the reader in his pastoral poem The Shepheardes Calender. It is there in the postures of Colin but it is not seriously considered as permanent and unredeemable because Colin is preoccupied more with his quest for fame than with the significance or effectiveness of his enchantments. The Faerie Queene, however, develops it into a major issue, with Calidore in the final book attempting to work out the validity of his quest as a close surrogate of the poet. If the reality of the limited nature of the poet's effectiveness is a major consideration in the important works of Spenser it does not, fortunately, overwhelm him to the point of impotence as an Orphic figure. Rather it informs his poetry with a sense of honesty in his response to life even as a diminished enchanter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Greenlaw, Edwin, ed. The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition.
11 vols. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1932-1957.

Secondary Sources:

Items cited below were consulted in the preparation of this thesis but are not necessarily mentioned in the text or footnotes.

Cain, T. H. "Spenser and The Renaissance Orpheus." University of Toronto Quarterly. Vol. 41. 1971-1972.

Cullen, Patrick. Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970.

Durling, Robert H. The Figure of The Poet in Renaissance Epic. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Graves, Robert. Greek Myths. London: Cassell and Company, 1958.

Hieatt, A. Kent. Short Time's Endlesse Monument: The Symbolism of The Numbers in Edmund Spenser's "Epithalamion". Port Washington, New York and London: Kennikat Press, 1972. (orig. 1960)

Mead, G.R.S. Orpheus. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1955.

Nelson, William. The Poetry of Edmund Spenser. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.

Roche, T. P. The Kindly Flame. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.

Sale, Roger. Reading Spenser: An Introduction to The Faerie Queene. New York: University of Washington Press, 1968.

Seznec, J. Survival of The Pagan Gods. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Taylor, E. W. Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

Tonkin, Humphrey. Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of The Faerie Queene. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Williams, Arnold. Flower on A Lowly Stalk; The Sixth Book of The Faerie Queene. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967.

Wind, Edgar. Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967.