

REDEMPTION PARADIGMS IN BOOKS I, II AND VI OF  
THE FAERIE QUEENE

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REDEMPTION PARADIGMS IN THE FAERIE QUEENE

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## ABSTRACT

In Books I, II and VI of The Faerie Queene, the knights quest to capture or destroy those monsters which threaten the good of society. As such, the knights play the role of social redeemers -- to varying degrees of success. In Chapter One I examine how Spenser conveys Book I's needed redemption as national by drawing on Virgilian and biblical paradigms, the legend of Arthur and, perhaps most importantly, the very immediate historical context in which he is writing. In Chapter Two, I turn to Book II where the needed redemption has moved to the personal, specifically the family and the body. Here Spenser draws on Herculean analogues to express the problematic aspects of such redemptions. In Chapter Three my focus is Book VI. Here Spenser evokes the ambivalence of the Hercules figure to convey the difficulties of redeeming civilization from a centrally human flaw: envy. It is through study of these redemption paradigms in Books I, II and VI that we come to a further understanding of how The Faerie Queene maintains a tenancy between the active life and the contemplative life.

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## Introduction

The knights in The Faerie Queene set out to redeem Gloriana and her citizens from the monsters which threaten to destroy those things that are best in a society. It is in focussing on the knights' 'redemptions' that we begin to see glimmers of a mind, presumably Spenser's, wrestling with the problem of the comparative worth of the active life over and against the contemplative life. Rajan notes that The Faerie Queene submits to the difficult task of maintaining a tenancy between "Sidney's proposition that the end of all learning is virtuous action and the Augustinian proposition that existence is a pilgrimage or trial through which we assert our claim to a higher citizenship" (52-3).<sup>1</sup>

Spenser elicits this central Renaissance debate through the various redemption paradigms he weaves through the poem. In Book I the most salient of these paradigms are redemption *types* found in Exodus and in Aeneas' katabasis in Book VI of the Aeneid. The Exodus paradigm makes sense given the immediacy of the

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, I will refer to this debate, for the sake of clarity, as the *contemptus mundi* question.

approaching Armada and England's need as a nation to be delivered from the twin threats of Spain and the Papacy. The Virgilian paradigm furthers the idea of England's future glory.

Book I provides the most successful depiction of worldly involvement in the poem while, at the same time, it contains the highly interior vision of the New Jerusalem. In Book II, Guyon attempts to redeem the family, while Arthur seeks to deliver the body from disease. It doesn't make sense in Book II, with its focus on the family and the body, to turn to Exodus or the Aeneid to understand how one redeems these things. Instead Spenser draws heavily on Herculean analogies to explore how one battles for the family and the body. There is a movement from the nation in Book I to the family and body in Book II. In Book VI it is the individual -- Calidore -- and the culture who must be delivered from envy. Given the interior nature of envy, a culture may only be delivered from envy by individuals who hold their own envy in check, the effect of which will filter out through the rest of the society. In order to convey the need to be redeemed from one's own envy, and by extension envy as an intrinsic social reaction, Spenser again draws on Hercules. While in Book II Spenser is primarily concerned with those aspects of Hercules which have to do with limitations, by the time he moves into Book VI, Spenser is more concerned with the ambivalence of Hercules as redeemer figure.

Even though Book I does not draw upon the Hercules myth to the degree that the other books do, all three concern knights who must deliver their societies (and



themselves) from monsters. Furthermore, Spenser chooses to model many of the monsters in The Faerie Queene on monsters that Hercules encounters in his labours, suggesting similarities in the nature of those things from which society must be delivered. Galinsky notes that "the literal monsters against whom the knights of The Faerie Queene fight are every bit as fantastic as those overcome by Herakles" and "what is more, some are deliberately modelled on Herakles' antagonists" (206-7).

When we consider that Spenser had originally intended to write twelve books of The Faerie Queene, and that each book is twelve cantos long, it is possible that the significance of the number twelve refers, in part, to Hercules' twelve labours.<sup>2</sup> While the labours do not provide us with "a schematic, controlling structure" (Galinsky 207),<sup>3</sup> the analogies between the labours and the knights' battles do suggest the battles as types of labours. Cain observes that Spenser continually borrows "the Herculean word 'labours' to designate the poet's activity (as in the 1596 additions to the royal dedication)" (171).

Hercules suggests complexities inherent not only in the process of redeeming

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<sup>2</sup> Nohrnberg approaches this point from a somewhat different angle, suggesting that we compare Spenser's "service to Gloriana to Hercules' twelve labors for the "glory of Hera" (40). He also compares Gloriana and Hera: "Gloriana reminds us a little of Juno or Hera, the offstage goddess who was ultimately responsible for the twelve labors of Hercules" (50). When we take into account Queen Elizabeth's infamous petulance then comparison to Hera seems apt.

<sup>3</sup> Galinsky notes that Spenser does "not use the Herculean analogies to set up a schematic, controlling structure, but as in Milton and Vergil, they are an integral part, above all, of the poetry and the poetic contexts of the Faerie Queene" (207).

society, but also within the redeemer himself. He possesses many roles, including that of civilizer. In Euripides' Heracles, Hercules' primary task is "to civilize the earth" (Fitch 17). Nohrnberg, in writing of Artegal's Herculean associations, notes that "the services of Hercules to mankind were connected with the establishment of civilization from classical times" (374). But not all of Hercules' associations are positive. In addition to his admirable roles as *mortis victor* and as Hercules Gallicus,<sup>4</sup> Hercules also carries with him "hubristic overtones" (Fitch 34), particularly in his descent to the Underworld.<sup>5</sup>

In and of themselves the labours accomplish nothing, which leads us to question the value of these arduous tasks. Why does Hercules undertake the labours? He ends up doing the labours as both penance for the killing of his family and as a

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<sup>4</sup> Hallowell notes that "in Lucian's portrait and in its Renaissance imitations the Gallic Hercules is the god of inspired eloquence, an embodiment of *logos* in both the rhetorical and theological sense" (243). However, Hercules Gallicus is also an ambivalent figure. Hallowell observes that while many "important artists of the Renaissance drew this ridiculous figure seriously," among them Holbein, Penni and Greuter, others did not, notably Durer. Interestingly, especially when we consider Book VI, Durer's satirical portrait of the Gallic Hercules appears to be "a satire of the 'oratorical artifices of the Gallic Hercules'" and represents "a Lutheran attack against the humanists' dedication of eloquence" (Hallowell 248-9). Furthermore, Gallic Hercules is associated with France, lending him further ambivalence as a figure in England. Ben Jonson makes a mocking reference to the "French Hercules" and his dubious association with eloquence in Volpone (1606). Mosca says to Voltore: "Worshipful sir,/ Mercury sit upon your thundering tongue,/ Or the French Hercules, and make your language/ As conquering as his club, to beat along,/ As with a tempest, flat, our adversaries" (Act IV, scene ii).

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of "the equivocal implications of Herakles' descent to the underworld" in Hercules Furens see Galinsky 171.

means of winning back immortality. The labours, though, can't bring back his family. In fact, in Seneca's Hercules Furens, "Hercules himself comments that he would have been better employed in defending his family than in the labours" (Fitch 16).<sup>6</sup> The labours do, however, gain Hercules immortality. Thus, action that is shown to be futile in the temporal realm may sometimes be of inestimable value in the eternal realm.

The purpose of this focus on Hercules is, of course, to suggest analogies with The Faerie Queene, particularly in terms of the ambivalence of the quests, or labours. Given the religious, historical and social implications of the books' quests we may approach the quests as redemptions. It is in considering the ambivalence of these redemptions that we glean something of the paradoxical nature of redemption in The Faerie Queene, especially as it sheds light on Spenser's handling of the *contemptus mundi* question.

In Book I the Redcrosse Knight's quest is a Herculean labour -- the redeeming of Una's parents' kingdom from a dragon. This labour can only be accomplished when the hero has been both informed and tempted by the vision afforded by Heavenly Contemplation. The labour itself, a "virtuous action" (Rajan 53), and the required edification and temptation by the *contemptus mundi* experience with Contemplation, successfully maintains the tenancy between action and the wholly

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<sup>6</sup> Aptekar observes that Seneca's two plays about Hercules -- Hercules Furens and Hercules Oetoeus -- "largely shaped the Renaissance concept of the hero" (163).

interior experience. Moreover, the relationship between Redcrosse's recognition of eternal truths with Contemplation and the carrying out of a labour suggests that current battles, namely the war with Spain, will possess heavenly worth above and beyond their earthly effects.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Redemption of England: Book I**

The Redcrosse Knight's quest to rescue Una's parents and restore their kingdom reveals that it is the nation that must be redeemed in Book I. Spenser develops this concern by drawing on national redemption *types*, which include those found in the Aeneid, Exodus, and the figure of Arthur. Furthermore, it is important to take into account the historical context in which Spenser is writing Book I. The English people know that the Armada is inevitable, which lends a sense of immediacy to the needed national redemption. I have chosen to examine first the House of Pride episode because it is here that Spenser elicits the need for the Redcrosse Knight to make a katabasis, such as Aeneas makes in Book VI of the Aeneid. It also illumines the limitations of a pagan redemption paradigm by hinting that before England may achieve national glory, she requires an Exodus-style deliverance.

#### The House of Pride

Spenser uses the descent at the House of Pride to indicate Redcrosse's unexploited classical katabasis. The Redcrosse Knight misses his opportunity to make a katabasis and, while he lounges about in bed at the House of Pride, Duessa, Night

and Sans Joi go to the Underworld instead. The description of their descent evokes much of Aeneas' katabasis. The trio cross Acheron, pass by Cerberus, and encounter the traditional sufferers in Hell: Ixion, Sisyphus, Tantalus, Tityrus, Typhoeus and Theseus. What is missing, of course, is an Aeneas-like hero to experience the descent. Spenser uses this parodic katabasis to show that a genuine one is needed.

Spenser selects only the bad parts of a Virgilian Underworld in constructing the world below the House of Pride. This Underworld does not possess Elysian fields, or any figure capable of imparting knowledge which will lead to future national glory. Indeed, the idea of a descent to receive grace does not work well in a Christian poem in general, and the Book of Holiness in particular. Watkins notes that "more than anything else in the Aeneid, Anchises's sermon on cosmology defied commentators' attempts to assimilate Virgil's paganism to Christianity" (105). This directional problem is later resolved when Spenser transforms the traditional katabasis to a much more appropriate 'anabasis' in the Contemplation episode in canto x.

The exclusion of any *in bono* elements of a Virgilian Underworld leads us to wonder whether it is a good thing that the knight of England misses the descent. After all, even if he had made a descent, Redcrosse would not have gained a vision of future national glory. Redcrosse's absence from this descent does two things. First, it shows that he is going to have to make a genuine katabasis at some point in the book. Second, as we later see with the Dwarf, a quick descent to glean practical information about the nature of the House of Pride is invaluable. When the Dwarf makes a

descent, he learns that below the House of Pride lies "a dongeon deepe" where "huge numbers lay/ Of captiue wretched thrals, that wayled night and day" (45). Fortunately for Redcrosse, his Dwarf relays this information to him so they can leave immediately. The Redcrosse Knight should have done what his Dwarf does and taken a descent to collect practical information.

While Redcrosse misses the descent he ought to have taken, his alter ego, Sans Joi, does make a descent -- the wrong kind of descent. Sans Foi and Sans Joi serve several functions, including operating as projections of Redcrosse's inner states. We see this dynamic in canto ii when Redcrosse meets Sans Foi when he himself is faithless (ii. 25). Spenser utilizes the ambivalence between Redcrosse and Sans Joi, particularly in the fight in which Redcrosse just barely beats Sans Joi, to reveal the difficulty of the Redcrosse Knight's struggle against depression. After the fight between Redcrosse and Sans Joi, Redcrosse lies in bed at the House of Pride and is provided with leaches "to salue his hurts, that yet still freshly bled./ In wine and oyle they wash his woundes wide" (17). Similarly, in the Underworld, Aesculapius provides "salues, or oyles, or herbes, or charmes" (41) for Sans Joi.

Anderson draws a connection between Aesculapius' healing of Sans Joi and Redcrosse's seeming recovery at the House of Pride. When Duessa returns from the Underworld, she finds "the Faery knight/ Departed thence, albe his woundes wide/ Not throughly heald, vnreadie were to ride" (45). Anderson notes that "in a poem which repeatedly uses sequence to indicate causal relationships, these stanzas suggest a

connection between Aesculapius' efforts to cure Sans Joy and Redcrosse's pulling himself together" (491). However, if we are to take seriously that Aesculapius "restores life to life's enemy" (Nelson 155), then a more appropriate causal relationship may be found. Aesculapius heals 'joylessness,' which in the ensuing cantos develops into Redcrosse's depression, and even despair. Contrary to what Anderson suggests, Redcrosse's sadness at the beginning of the next canto evokes a different causal relationship between Sans Joi and Redcrosse. At the beginning of the next canto, even though Redcrosse has "escapt so sad ensamples in his sight" (vi. 1), he is depressed. Redcrosse "ne dares/ To joy at his foole-happie ouersight:/ So doubly is [he] distrest twixt ioy and cares" (vi. 1). Thus, Redcrosse misses the practical advantages of a descent and experiences, through his alter ego Sans Joi, the disadvantages of his failure to fulfill his Aeneas role.

Spenser not only excludes the Elysian fields from this Underworld, but also any *in bono* classical elements whatsoever. Later on, when the Dwarf makes a quick trip to the dungeon, he notes that both great and terrible Roman leaders are lumped into the same pile. Romulus, Tarquin, Lentulus, Scipio, Sylla, Marius, Caesar and Antonius "together in one heape were throwne" (49). Anderson notes how this group of classical figures, both good and bad, taken together with the classical Hell, undercuts positive classical associations: "the unmistakably classical character of hell's landscape ... serves to compromise the whole classical view -- both its values and its forms. The same implication becomes explicit when noble and wicked classical



heroes are heaped together in Lucifera's dungeon" (485). Therefore, even in her greatest moments, Rome is associated with temporality and, ultimately, oppression. This depiction of Roman leaders suggests the limitations of classical paganism, which of course includes Virgil.

Given that oppression and redemption are not central concerns of the Aeneid, Virgil cannot provide for Spenser a sufficient redemption paradigm in a book written at a time where there is a very real threat of invasion. The Book of Exodus, however, can. In the Underworld at the House of Pride, Spenser adds several Old Testament tyrants to the "heape" of Roman leaders. The most evocative tyrant is "that great proud king of Babylon/ That would compell all nations to adore" (47), Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon during the Exile and tyrant par excellence, conquers the Israelites, enslaves them, and forces them to worship an idol (Daniel 3). Spenser draws upon this allusion to depict not only political oppression, but also the perversion of religious worship. He also names Nimrod and Ninus, the founders of Ninevah. The reference to Nimrod, the first tyrant after the Flood, elicits both tyranny and pride. The Geneva gloss, in annotating Genesis 10, calls Nimrod "a cruel oppressor & tyrant." We learn of Ninus that he was "in princely pompe, of all the world obayd" (v. 48), which defines him in terms of his excess and power over others. Notably, even when Spenser alludes to Alexander the Great, he compares him to a biblical figure, Ammon. The description of Alexander, or Ammon, emphasizes his oppression of people.

There also was that mightie Monarch layd  
 Low under all, yet aboue all in pride,  
 The name of natiue syre did fowle vpbrayd,  
 And would as Ammons sonne be magnifide,  
 Till scornd of God and man a shamefull death he dide.  
 (48)

These Old Testament tyrants evoke the need for deliverance from oppression that is concomitantly political and religious.

Spenser adds, to this already considerable heap of tyrants, a stanza worth of lusty, tyrannical female rulers: Semiramis, Sthenboea, and Cleopatra. The desire of these women prevents them from being good leaders and results in "thousands moe the like, that did that dungeon fill" (50). It is possible that there is an element of instruction for the Virgin Queen here, i.e. the Queen should remain a virgin. After all, the women rulers listed all lose their power because of their lust. This association also works to characterize the enemy as a whore. In fact, a connection between the Papacy and whoredom was often made in the Protestant literature of the day,<sup>1</sup> and by Spenser himself in the figures of Duessa and Lucifera. By heaping together Roman rulers, enemies of Israel, and libidinous female leaders in the dungeon of the House of Pride, Spenser creates a particularly nasty portrait of the primary threat from which

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<sup>1</sup> In Thomas Becon's "A Comparison Betweene the Lordes Supper, and the Popes Masse," he writes:

that all true English hearts may understand and perceive how greatly the greatest part of all them are called Christians have been in times past, as many yet are, *seduced* and deceived by this glorious *strumpet* and gallant *harlot* the mass, while they only beheld and considered the outward, gorgeous apparel of that *Babylonical whore*. (Waters 4) [italics mine]

England must be delivered: the Papacy.

Orgoglio's Dungeon

The need for deliverance from oppression becomes particularly overt in canto viii when Redcrosse is imprisoned by Orgoglio. The name itself not only reflects the interlacing of the Papacy and Spain, but also reveals how these two powers have distorted England's true nature. Orgoglio, which means "pride" in Italian, is a distortion of George -- St. George. Orgoglio is also linked to Philip of Spain. This connection is apparent when Arthur enters Orgoglio's castle and finds "all the floore (too filthy to be told)/ With bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trew" (33) and then sees an altar where "true Christians bloud was often spilt" (36). Spenser alludes here to the historical burning of English Protestants, which occurred during the last two years of Mary Tudor's reign and was attributed to Philip.

The allusions to Spain, the Papacy, and particularly the martyrs, develop a sense of immediacy and intensity about the threat of Roman Catholicism to the English people. In the earlier battle between the Redcrosse Knight and Orgoglio's beast, the beast is clearly associated with the Papacy. We learn that the beast is deemed worse than the Hydra because "this same Monster much more vgly was;/ For seven great heads out of his body grew" (17). The "seuen heads" (17) allude both to Rome, which has seven hills, and to the beast of the Apocalypse (Revelation 13:1),<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In the Geneva Bible Revelation 13:1 is rendered: "And I sawe a beast rise out of the sea, hauing seuen heads, and ten hornes, and vpon his hornes were ten crownes, and vpon his heads the name of blasphemie." The Geneva gloss interprets the seven-

a connection drawn by the Geneva gloss.

D. Douglas Waters explores at length the episode in Orgoglio's dungeon as a theological allegory. Waters argues that Duessa operates as a symbol of the Roman Mass. Her "golden cup" (14) symbolizes the cup of the Roman Mass, while Orgoglio symbolizes both the Redcrosse Knight's pride and Philip of Spain (67). These two interpretations of Orgoglio make sense when we consider the etymology of his name.<sup>3</sup> As such, Orgoglio suggests the monster created by the internalization of Spanish and Papal influences, a monster particularly horrific because he is the distortion of the knight whose heavenly name will be St. George. Orgoglio's Philip role provides a particularly provocative example of Spanish and Papal influence in the most powerful position in England.

Waters points out that in sixteenth-century Protestant literature, the Roman Mass was associated with a rather complicated process of pride leading to weakness, then depression, and ultimately, bondage.<sup>4</sup> The idea of inherent papal bondage is

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headed beast as the "Romaine empire which standeth in crueltie and tyrannie" and "meaning Rome because it was first gouerned by seuen Kings or Emperours after Nero, and also is compassed about with seuen mountaines." It is also said to refer to Papacy. The gloss reads: "As the kingdom of Christ is from heauen, & bringeth men thither: so the Popes kingdome is of the earth & leadeth to perditie, & is begone, & established by ambition, coueteousness, beastelines, craft, treason & tyranie."

<sup>3</sup> For the etymological implications of Orgoglio as a fallen form of 'George' see Hamilton (Hamilton ed. 15).

<sup>4</sup> Waters elucidates this point:

... the Mass-hearer's foolish confidence in meriting grace through hearing the Mass outwardly inflated his pride but inwardly increased

developed by the association of the Papacy and Spain with captivity. These twin threats are fused in Orgoglio's castle, which encompasses both Spanish power and papal authority. As Waters notes, in sixteenth-century Protestant literature, Roman Catholicism was often referred to as a "fortress, bulwark, or castle" (76). Orgoglio's "Castle" (23) refers both to oppressive church authority and to Castile, a place associated with Philip. Spenser anglicizes 'Castile,' making it 'castle,' again suggesting etymologically that there is an insidious Spanish influence at work in England. We see how this castle metaphor plays out in canto xii when Redcrosse releases Una's parents, who have been "long opprest with tort,/ And fast imprisoned in sieged fort" (xii. 4). This event leads to "reioycing at the fall of that great beast,/ From whose eternall bondage now they were releast" (xii. 4).

The oppression from which England must be delivered is immediate: the Armada is coming and England needs to be saved. In cantos vii and viii, Spenser draws upon the figure of Arthur and biblical figures, particularly those associated with the Exodus, to express the need for strong national leadership. This focus makes sense when we consider the encomiastic aspect of The Faerie Queene, a component of which includes veiled advice for the queen. From the very beginning of canto viii, the

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his spiritual weakness. Trusting in merit brought him to his proudest moment, which was also his weakest. But pride remained. Presumptuous pride turned to depressive pride. Hence, the Mass-hearer, like the elated but exhausted Knight of Holiness at the fountain, unwarily through the deception of the Mass, lands in the dark, deep, and bottomless dungeon of sadness, confusion, and depression -- like that of Orgoglio's [dungeon]. (Waters 68)

subject of redemption is not only addressed explicitly, but also associated with the queen. In the Argument, we learn that the "faire virgin [is] to redeeme her deare." This thought is reiterated soon after in the exordium, where "this Redcrosse knight in bands [would] haue dyde,/ For [whose] deliuerance she this Prince doth thither guide" (1).

Canto viii is clearly Arthur's canto. Spenser draws on the Arthur myth and also alludes to the Exodus to express England's pressing need for national redemption. One cannot properly study the Arthur figure in The Faerie Queene without taking into consideration his cultural associations. Certainly a Renaissance reader would come to the poem with knowledge of Malory's Arthur. Malory writes that "some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and shall win the Holy Cross" (Morte D'Arthur xxi). Intriguingly, this passage from Morte D'Arthur was picked up in the sixteenth-century and there was a rumour circulating in Britain that at the time of Philip's marriage to Mary Tudor in 1554, Philip (presumably ironically) said he would relinquish the throne if Arthur returned to Britain (Loomis 65). When we consider the concern with Philip as oppressor in the Orgoglio episode, then the Arthur figure as redeemer of England takes on much more immediate significance. Spenser cleverly fuses Arthurian legend and a contemporary rumour as a means of inspiring heroic deeds in the present.

Arthur is associated with two Exodus figures in Book I. In canto vii, Arthur is

indirectly associated with Aaron because the plume on his helmet is "like to an Almond tree ymounted hye" (32). Hamilton notes that the allusion to the almond tree has several associations, one of which is Aaron's rod (Hamilton ed. 103). In Numbers 17, the blossoming rod shows that there is no uncertainty that the Aaronic priesthood was chosen by God. The rod was kept with the ark of the covenant and a jar of manna as signs of God's promise of deliverance.<sup>5</sup> By associating Arthur with Aaron's rod, Spenser unequivocally sanctions England's position as God's nation. The first description of Arthur in the canto associates him with Joshua at Jericho. Arthur marches "towards that castle wall" (3), blows his horn and all the doors of the castle fly open. In addition, Arthur rescues the Redcrosse Knight at stanza 40. Forty is, of course, associated with the deliverance of the Israelites. As Hamilton notes, "the fortieth stanza is chosen for the Knight's redemption because that number marks the limit of wandering" (116). As such, Arthur fulfills his Joshua role by rescuing Redcrosse.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, comparing Arthur to Aaron and Joshua circumvents the

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<sup>5</sup> The Geneva gloss of Numbers 17 notes that the blossoming of Aaron's rod declares "that God did chose the house of Levi to serve him in the Tabernacle."

<sup>6</sup> There was a great deal of interest in the Book of Exodus during the sixteenth century in England. The Geneva Bible, the most popular Bible in England in the later half of the sixteenth-century, and one of the Bibles used by Spenser, prefaces both the Old and New Testaments with a woodcut of the parting of the Red Sea. See Appendix A. Even the New Testament woodcut is accompanied by verses from the Old Testament. The verses are: "Feare ye not, stand still, and beholde thee saluation of the Lord, which he wil shewe to you this day" (Exodus 14:13); "Great are the troubles of righteous: but the Lord delivereth them out of all" (Psalm 34:19); and "The Lord shal fight for you; therefore, holde you youre peace" (Exodus 14:14)." Interestingly, the Geneva Bible contains more illustrations and maps to explicate the Exodus than any

problematic figure of Moses. While Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt and receives the Ten Commandments, he cannot enter the Promised Land.

After the Redcrosse Knight's captivity in Orgoglio's castle, his state of mind may be compared to that of the Israelites after their release from Egypt. The Israelites complain that they would rather go back to slavery in Egypt than wander around in the desert (Exodus 14:11-12). Thus, despite many external threats, the greatest barrier for the Israelites during their years in the desert is essentially spiritual, or psychological. The Redcrosse Knight's response to Arthur's rescue of him provides a tangible and experiential understanding of Papal and Spanish aggression and its effects upon the English people. This oppression has distorted the very character of the people to such a point that even when the oppressive force is removed, England has internalized much of what has oppressed her and is unable to fulfill her role as God's nation. After Arthur rescues Redcrosse, this effect is apparent in the knight, whose physical appearance reveals his inner depression:

His sad dull eyes deepe sunck in hollow pits,  
 Could not endure th'vnwonted sunne to view;  
 His bare thin cheekes for want of better bits,  
 And empty sides deceiued of their dew,  
 Could make a stony hart his hap to rew. (41)

Once Arthur and Redcrosse have exchanged gifts and Arthur leaves, Una is worried about "the decayed plight,/ And shrunken synewes of her chosen knight" (20). In the very next stanza, Trevisan comes galloping by with "his eye backward cast" (21). The

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other part of the Bible, including the New Testament. See Appendix B.



meeting with Trevisan begins Redcrosse's journey to Despair's Cave for it is in Despair's Cave that Redcrosse becomes so depressed that he attempts suicide, an attempt thwarted only by Una's intervention.

While English religious and political sovereignty is threatened from abroad, the psychological residue left after many years of living under papal authority poses an ongoing threat to the Church of England. England must first deliver herself from her oppressors politically. Then she must continue the spiritual or psychological battle until all vestiges of the dungeon, or House, i.e. the Papacy, are eradicated. Here we see how in one way Spenser shows that national redemption is not complete without spiritual redemption. However, it is in the Redcrosse Knight's vision of the New Jerusalem that Spenser provides the most inspiring expression of spiritual redemption and the national deliverance it encompasses.

### Contemplation

The aesthetic climax of the book (and arguably of the poem) can be found in the Redcrosse Knight's vision of the New Jerusalem with heavenly Contemplation. Redcrosse's experience with Contemplation provides both a vision of national glory and a sublime vision of grace. Furthermore, Redcrosse's vision of the New Jerusalem, and his renewed commitment to serve Gloriana, provide the book with the long-awaited katabasis or, more appropriately, anabasis.

Contemplation takes Redcrosse up a mountain which is described as a synthesis of Sinai, the Mount of Olives and Parnassus. All three mountains emphasize the

intensely interior and inspirational nature of this vision. We learn that "earthly tong/  
 Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell" the vision Redcrosse experiences. The  
 synthesis of these highly symbolic mountains in stanzas 53 and 54 also develops  
 passivity as a prerequisite for receiving inspiration. Moses must go up Sinai and  
 receive instructions from God and carry them out. Apparently Spenser thinks that the  
 Mount of Olives is the site of the Sermon on the Mount and, hence, alludes to Christ's  
 role as poet. More importantly, of course, the Mount is a crucial site in the Passion.  
 It is here that Christ places himself in a submissive position to God in order to carry  
 out his role as redeemer. In the case of Parnassus, the poet goes up to receive  
 inspiration alone but then must descend and carry out the work himself -- the *poeta*  
 aspect of poetry.

Once he has seen the New Jersualem, Redcrosse does not want to bother with  
 earthly concerns, namely, pursuing fame and glory as one of Gloriana's knights. He  
 compares Gloriana's city, Cleopolis, unfavorably to the New Jerusalem: "But now  
 prooffe all otherwise I weene;/ For this great Citie that does far surpas,/ And this bright  
 Angels towre quite dims that towre of glas" (58). Significantly, Contemplation  
 validates Cleopolis and states that Redcrosse has a mission to fulfill in serving  
 Gloriana. While Cleopolis is a place of "earthly frame," it is also the home of  
 Gloriana, who is "heauenly borne." Thus, to serve Gloriana in the earthly realm and  
 to receive glory from her has spiritual ramifications. Contemplation uses the vision of  
 the New Jerusalem as an inspiration so that Redcrosse will know that it is his final

destination.

But, it is vital that Redcrosse then descend the mountain and actively carry out his duties as one of Gloriana's knights. The need for a descent from the mountain to engage, once again, the world is implicit in the allusions to Sinai, Parnassus and the Mount of Olives. These sublime moments only find worth in the carrying out of actions inspired from the vision on the mountain. The Ten Commandments are useless unless Moses carries them back to the people. Poetic inspiration amounts to nothing if the poet doesn't actually write the poetry and certainly Christ's submission at the Mount of Olives would be meaningless had he not gone through with his Crucifixion. These experiences, which lead to wisdom, poetry and Christian redemption, are intended to lead to the edification of others.

Initially, Redcrosse does not see why he must return to the world and carry out his role as one of Gloriana's knights. He asks Contemplation, "But deeds of armes must I at last be faine,/ And Ladies loue to leaue so dearely bought?" (62). According to Contemplation, Gloriana unites earthly and heavenly glory; that is, national redemption may, for now, be inherently partial and incomplete, but it is full and complete in the heavenly realm. Thus, Contemplation justifies Redcrosse's role as an earthly knight by showing it to be a corollary of the vision Redcrosse has received. Redcrosse must fulfill his military, political role, go to Cleopolis, and win the appropriate honors. By doing so, he may fulfill his role as Gloriana's knight and then be given his redemption through grace. In order for Redcrosse to carry out his

katabasis he must descend the mountain.

Redcrosse tells Contemplation: "O let me not ... then turne againe/ Backe to the world, whose ioues so fruitlesse are;/ But let me here for aye in peace remaine" (63).

Contemplation responds to Redcrosse:

That mayst not be (said he) ne maist thou yit  
Forgo that royall maides bequethed care,  
Who did here cause into thy hand commit,  
Till from her cursed foe thou haue her freely quit. (63)

Redcrosse must overcome this temptation, return to the world and carry out his duties, which he does. The Contemplation episode, thus, fulfills the requirements of a Virgilian katabasis, i.e. the knowledge needed to fulfill a national quest given, as in Virgil, by a father-figure. Spenser, however, overgoes the Virgilian katabasis by altering the descent to an ascent, or anabasis. The knowledge imparted in the vision is spiritual and individual, rather than simply a vision of nationalism. But it is Contemplation's explanation of the vision to Redcrosse that is most comparable to Anchises's giving Aeneas the vision of the future glory of Rome. Spenser manipulates Redcrosse's sublime moment with Contemplation to justify English nationalism. At the same time, it is necessary to keep the purer spiritual vision in mind because, as we move into the anti-Faerie Queene in books V and VI, this vision holds as the nationalistic vision falls apart.

However it is Cleopolis, and not the New Jerusalem, that demands our attention. Nelson writes that "although the New Jerusalem is the sabbatical, the

ultimate and sustaining vision, Cleopolis is the subject of The Faerie Queene" (171). When we think about Cleopolis as home to Gloriana -- the Faerie queen -- it is important to consider what places in England Cleopolis might encompass in order to understand more fully the nature of the vision. Obviously, it must include London and perhaps, as Hamilton suggests, Windsor (141), both places associated with Queen Elizabeth. But there is another particularly evocative alternative: Glastonbury.

Glastonbury suggests a convergence of a number of elements found in the poem. First, the poem is about the Faerie Queen, and Glastonbury is famous for its Faery history. Second, legend has it that Arthur is buried there. Third, Glastonbury is "the place where Joseph of Arimathaea was said to have come from Jerusalem and to have left the red cross of Christianity and the relics of the passion" (Demaray 107). During the Middle Ages, Glastonbury was the place of "the earliest sacred British center of the medieval pilgrimage" (107) and was referred to as the British "New Jerusalem" (107). Indeed, one of the activities associated with these pilgrimages was the re-enactment of the Exodus at Glastonbury. Certainly Glastonbury provides a perfect synthesis of ancient Britain, Christianity and the claim to the throne.<sup>7</sup>

The Contemplation episode is ultimately a sublime vision which transcends

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<sup>7</sup> Spenser describes Cleopolis as possessing a "towre of glass" (x). Saxon, on his map of Somersetshire in 1575, spells Glastonbury "Glassenbury" (Demaray 108). In Spenser's age the only remaining ruins of the ancient church at Glastonbury were a tower. Demaray writes that "the partially reconstructed remains of the church in Spenser's time consisted of a 70-foot-high stone tower that stood commandingly uplifted, rising on the Tor summit" (108).

time and place. However, Spenser grounds this transcendent vision in the English situation, hence the suitability of the highly evocative Exodus redemption type. The vision of the New Jerusalem shows a working out of national redemption grounded on English soil.<sup>8</sup>

'Now are we come vnto my natiue soyle': St. George and the Dragon

The very name of St. George evokes English nationalism. St. George's slaying of the dragon is, in some ways, a simple episode. After all, slaying dragons is what St. George is supposed to do. However, this battle contrasts with many of the other battles in the poem because of its comparative purity. Spenser achieves this purity, in part, through the delineation of Redcrosse Knight in cantos xi and xii. While Spenser chronicles Redcrosse's flaws, and how they stand in the way of his fulfilling the quest, by the time he gets to canto xi, Redcrosse has risen to the occasion and his achievements are presented without irony. This idealistic presentation of Redcrosse

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<sup>8</sup> As Christian redemption is worked out on English soil, so English nationalism is worked out in the Holy Land. In Gabriel Harvey's The Surveye of the World, we learn that "the south-eastern shoulder of the Mare Interum, an area near Egypt and the Holy Land, is labeled "Brachium S. Georgi" (Demaray 125). Furthermore, the "earlier, anonymously written Mappa Mundi also calls attention to the name of St. George, noting that the "Maremedian" or Mediterranean Sea extends from the "Gulfe of S. George" in the east to the "porte of Nesembre in the West," and emphasizes that at the "mydle" of the earth "there Jerusalem standeth" (Demaray 125). The appropriation of the Holy Land shows that not only were English Protestants interested in enacting the Exodus on their own soil, but also made the Holy Land their own. In this very area of 'S. George' can be found Heliopolis, one of the last of the Israelites' campsites before they crossed the Red Sea. Notably, Heliopolis is marked clearly in the map of the Exodus in the Geneva Bible. Heliopolis, of course, is similar in name to Cleopolis.

contrasts with the more ambivalent figures of Guyon and Calidore in books II and VI. Even in their final battles, there is a nagging sense that somehow Guyon's and Calidore's intentions aren't entirely honorable.

The purity of the episode is achieved in part by the invocation to Clio (5-7), a device which raises the aesthetic level of the battle. Even in the midst of the invocation, the political implications of the allegory are still intact. The narrator asks Clio to "lay that furious fit aside,/ Till I of warres and bloody Mars do sing,/ And Briton fields with Sarazin bloud bedyde,/ Twixt that great faery Queene and Paynim king" (7). As Hamilton notes, "that pagan king would be the Catholic Philip II of Spain" (Hamilton ed. 144). This reinvocation also implies that the real fight is yet to come because the fight between the Redcrosse Knight and the dragon is a *type* of the actual war soon to come between England and Spain. Furthermore, the political element implicit in the invocation raises the political concern of the book to the subject of epic.

St. George has the good fortune to encounter the "Well of life" (29) during the battle. This water "vnto life the dead ... could restore,/ And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away" (30). The water is compared to the biblical sites of Shilo and Jordan and to the "german Spau"<sup>9</sup> and "the English Bath" (30). The Jordan elicits the redemption associated with Christ's baptism, while the reference to Bath anglicizes Jordan, making it a place of redemption on English soil -- an English Jordan. The

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<sup>9</sup> The German reference suggests Germany as birthplace of the Reformation.

redemption of the English people is also conveyed by noting the restoration of the land (46-48). The redemption of the land as a metaphor for the deliverance of its people has, of course, archetypal significance. It possesses biblical analogues, most notably in Isaiah, and finds expression in chivalric romance, most saliently in Chretien's Fisher King in the Conte du Graal.

Clearly St. George must kill the dragon and he does so. However, while the battle is relatively simple and St. George wages a perfect fight against the monster, there is still something unsettling about the dragon's death. Spenser conveys this uneasiness through a bit of comedy about superstitious peasants who think the dragon's death is not permanent:

Some feard, and fled; some feard and well it faynd;  
 One that would wiser seeme, then all the rest,  
 Warned him not touch, for yet perhaps remaynd  
 Some lingring life within his hollow brest,  
 Or in his wombe might lurke some hidden nest  
 Of many Dragonets, his fruitfull seed;  
 Another said, that in his eyes did rest  
 Yet sparkling fire, and bad thereof take heed;  
 Another said, he saw him moue his eyes indeed. (xii. 10)

In this way, the dragon is much like the monsters the other knights in The Faerie Queene encounter. The monsters must be killed but the battle is, by its nature, ongoing; that is, the knight's achievements are real but cannot be final.

At the beginning of canto xii Una's parents are released. They rejoice "at the fall of that great beast,/ From whose eternall bondage now they were releast" (4). It is made clear that St. George has restored something that has been corrupted and lost.



This idea of restoration is developed by the association of Una and her family with a unified kingdom. Una's family has descended from a long line of

ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore  
 Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore,  
 And all the world in their subiection held;  
 Till that infernall feend with foule vprore  
 Forwasted all their land, and them expeld. (i. 5)

Here Spenser alludes to the propaganda which dates back to Henry VIII's time and which was revived after 1570 by the Queen. Queen Elizabeth I insisted upon her "role as head of a church founded by Joseph of Arimathaea and a State that inherited the powers of the Constantinian Empire. Indeed she had, the claim ran, reunited the two" (Kermode 275). Una contrasts with Duessa, who is aligned with the Papacy. Duessa is "Borne the sole daughter of an Emperour,/ He that the wide West vnder his rule has,/ And high hath set his throne, where Tiberis doth pas" (ii. 22). Unlike Una's family, Duessa's family has no claim to rule.

Despite the return to wholeness there is a sense of melancholy which pervades cantos xi and xii. In addition to the doubt about the permanence of the dragon's death, there is something unsettling about the binding of Archimago. The binding of Archimago recalls Hercules' binding of Cerberus, an allusion exploited in all its ambivalence at the end of Book VI. Like Cerberus, Archimago is bound "hand and foote with yron chaines" (36), though in both cases the binding isn't permanent. Though Archimago is continually watched, the narrator poses this unsettling question: "Who then would thinke, that by his subtile trains/ He could escape fowle death or

deadly paines?" (36). In fact, Archimago does escape and is out causing problems for the Redcrosse Knight from the first line of the first canto of Book II. We learn that the "cunning Architect of cancred guile" has used his magic to escape "caytiues hands" (II. i. 1).

Redemption in Book I is incumbent upon national deliverance from Rome and Spain, though Spenser realizes that to be truly free, the people of England must destroy any vestiges of the Papacy that exist in their minds. While Spenser's delineation of the psychological effects of papal 'slavery' are a central element of his suasive purpose, these effects also contribute to the growing sense in the poem that the world is at odds with spiritual reality. This inward turn becomes increasingly pronounced and is, indeed, overt by books V and VI -- the anti-Faerie Queene.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Redemption of the Body and Family: Book II**

Spenser changes his focus from the single redemption of the nation in Book I to the double quests to redeem the body and the family in Book II. Guyon attempts to redeem Ruddymane's family from the destructive sexuality of the Bower of Bliss, while Arthur seeks to deliver the House of Alma from Maleger, or disease. The two quests merge on the most basic narrative level, as we see when Spenser depicts Ruddymane's loss of his family in his permanently distorted hands. Furthermore, the redemption or, perhaps more accurately, preservation of the family involves exercising control over the body, i.e. temperance. Moreover, the twin quests evoke Hercules and his association with both the body and family tragedy.

#### Hercules' Limitations and Book II's Quests: The Body and Family

In examining the quests in Book II, it is helpful to note the Herculean analogues Spenser draws upon in order to convey the limitations which accompany the quests. Guyon's attempt to redress the very needed redemption of the family suggests an attempt to overgo Hercules. For all of Hercules' victories over terrible monsters during his labours, he cannot bring his family back to life. Fitch notes that in

Hercules Furens "Hercules himself comments that he would have been better employed in defending his family than in the labors" (16).<sup>1</sup>

The figure of Hercules also, paradoxically, suggests physical limitations. Seneca emphasizes how Hercules' neglect of his own body leads to his physical and mental weakness. Fitch observes that Seneca's Hercules goes mad, in part, because he "refuses to take rest between tasks" (Fitch 31). Similarly, Spenser makes clear that Guyon's lack of attention to the physical body -- he doesn't eat, drink or sleep for three days-- leads to his fainting at the end of his three day temptation in the Cave of Mammon. Interestingly, in one Hercules cult, he "is invoked as a deliverer from troubles of all kinds, particularly disease" (Fitch 17).<sup>2</sup>

Mordant, Amavia and Ruddymane

While the tragedy of Ruddymane's family doesn't parallel Hercules' destruction of his own family, in both cases the ruin of the family comes about because the father loses his reason. Furthermore, the tragedies spur quests -- of sorts. Hercules' labours, while impressive in and of themselves, are arbitrary and accomplish nothing, least of all bring back his family. The problems start for Ruddymane's family when Mordant wants to leave his pregnant wife to go off and have adventures. Amavia tells Guyon how the problems started with Mordant:

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<sup>1</sup> Fitch notes that in Euripides he "establishes beyond any doubt his [Hercules'] concern for his family, which is just what Seneca's Hercules fails to do" (24).

<sup>2</sup> See Pindar's Isthmian Odes (4. 57) and Book VI of the Aeneid.

One day when him high courage did emmoue,  
 As wont ye knights to seeke aduentures wilde,  
 He pricked forth, his puissant force to proue,  
 Me then he left enwombed of this child,  
 This lucklesse child, whom thus ye see with bloud defild. (i. 50) <sup>3</sup>

As with many other knights and heroes before him, Mordant's adventurous intentions lead him into the arms of an enchantress. Acrasia not only prevents Mordant from carrying out knightly duties -- he doesn't have a clear quest <sup>4</sup> -- but also weakens him through "pleasure and delight" (52). Thus, while in Book II Spenser often explores the idea of temperance or intemperance in a sexual context, he is also interested in examining the intemperance of knighthood. Mordant's desire for adventures is clearly intemperate and leads to even greater intemperance. This flaw is also apparent in Guyon when he comes to the Cave of Mammon. He has been comforting himself with "his owne vertues, and prayse-worthy deedes": "So long he yode, yet no

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<sup>3</sup> The chivalric quest has traditionally been at odds with the family. In Chretien and Malory there is a fundamental antagonism between knighthood and the family. In Malory's Morte D'Arthur, Perceval's mother, the Queen of the Waste Lands, speaks against the knights of the Round Table to Perceval:

When they are chosen to be of the fellowship of the Round Table they think themselves more blessed and more in worship than if they had gotten half the world; and ye have seen that they have lost their fathers and mothers, and all their kin, and their wives and their children, for to be of your fellowship. It is well seen by you; for since ye departed from your mother ye would never see her, ye found such fellowship at the Round Table (226-7).

<sup>4</sup> Mordant is a good example of a knight who simply wanders rather than has an actual teleological quest. By contrast, Redcrosse, despite his wandering away from his quest, knows exactly what his quest is from the beginning of Book I. In Book II, Guyon figures out his quest by the end of canto i.

adventure found,/ Which fame of her shrill trumpet worthy reedes" (vii. 2). This same characteristic may also be found in *Tristram* in Book VI (ii. 39). Even Arthur, who operates as an exemplar of knighthood, and possesses the noble quest of finding the Faerie Queene, sometimes behaves like a young man simply going from adventure to adventure.

In addition to setting up the basis of Guyon's quest, this episode also demonstrates how Spenser conveys threats to the family or the body with metaphors of liquidity. For example, when Guyon comes across Amavia, he finds her with a knife in her breast "From which forth gusht a streme of gorebloud thicke,/ That all her goodly garments staine around,/ And into a deepe sanguine dide the grassie ground" (i. 39). Interestingly, the only time Amavia speaks reasonably and articulates something meaningful occurs when "dry drops congealed in her eye" (49). Form is associated with reason, as clotting blood signals a return to not only consciousness, but also reason. Similarly, when Guyon encounters Mordant, Guyon's "flesh bloud did frieze with fearefull cold" (42), which is, of course, the right response.<sup>5</sup>

Liquidity also characterizes the Bower of Bliss. Amavia tells Guyon that Acrasia's Bower is set "within a wandring Island" (51), this water imagery is underscored in the next line when the Bower is referred to as a "perilous gulfe" (51). The landscape is associated with water, as are Acrasia's victims, whom "She makes ...

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<sup>5</sup> In Book I, Redcrosse Knight's association with wetness reveals his loss of reason. See I. i. 36.

drunken mad" (52). In stanza 55, we learn that Acrasia has given Mordant a charmed cup (55) which he takes with him when he leaves the Bower. Then, "comming to this well, he stoupt to drincke:/ The charme fulfilled, dead suddenly he downe did sincke" (55). These metaphors entrench the formless, i.e. intemperate, threats to the body and the family. As such, the story of Ruddymane's family shows how the intemperance of the father leads to his death, the despair and suicide of his wife, and the orphaning of his son. It is this tragedy that Guyon vows to redeem (i. 61).

#### Belphoebe and the House of Alma

The destruction of the body and the family is juxtaposed against the House of Alma and the figure of Belphoebe, both representative of virginity. In Book II, two different virginities are praised: that of Belphoebe, virgin till death, and that of Alma, the marriageable virgin. The first kind of virginity finds its most striking expression in Belphoebe's blazon, which celebrates, in a concomitantly serious and comical fashion, the power of the Queen's virginity. The people celebrate her virginal body, festooning Belphoebe's "temple of the gods" (iii. 28) with "girlands greene" (iii. 28). The comedy of the episode furthers several serious ideas about the Queen's virginity. First, it emphasizes that Belphoebe's virginity affects the happiness of her people.<sup>6</sup> Second, the metaphor of the temple recalls the biblical idea of the body as a temple.

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<sup>6</sup> In the Shepherd's Calendar Spenser makes clear that Elizabeth is married to England and is, thus, unable to marry the French prince (Cain ed. in Oram 69). It is essential that Elizabeth remain a virgin, or at least unmarried, so that no foreigner, read Roman Catholic, may have power in England.

As Cain notes, "the leg-pillars supporting the temple of the body catch at the Pauline image, especially apt in this book, of the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost (I. Cor. 6:19)" (89). Finally, the emphasis on the solidity of the temple associates the virginal body with form and strength, i.e. temperance. Paradoxically, this virginity leads to procreation -- of a political sort. The "fruitfullest Virginia" (2) of the Book II's Proem is one of the more impressive fruits that results from the marriage of the Virgin Queen to her nation.

The Virgin Queen is associated with not only faith, but also strength and protection. Armor, and particularly the armor which bears the image of the queen, gives form and strength to the wearer's body. Guyon's shield bears the image of the Faerie queen, an image of virginity. Guyon tells Arthur that Gloriana "is the flowre of of grace and chastitie" (ix. 4). Miller notes that the image of the Queen is in the very place that one would have found an image of the Virgin Mary in an earlier generation (147), which suggests a parallel to the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, the shield suggests faith which protects the possessor of the shield from "all the fyrie dartes of the wicked" (Ephesian 6:16).<sup>7</sup>

Spenser uses the metaphor of armor as protection against both physical and spiritual threats. In Ephesians 6, St. Paul stresses the formless nature of threats against the body. He writes that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities" (Ephesians 6:12). As such, the form of the body is pitted against

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<sup>7</sup> Note that Maleger, the threat to the body, is also associated with arrows (xi. 21).



enemies which are especially virulent because they are formless. In order to wage battle against these insidious threats to the body one requires the "whole armour of God" (v. 11). This metaphor takes on political significance when we consider the importance of the Queen's body being protected, i.e. her remaining a virgin. The Queen's virginity is intrinsically related to England's sovereignty. The Virgin Queen must fight off threats to both her own body, and to the body politic, in order for her nation to be 'fruitful' -- at home and abroad.

A different kind of virginity is celebrated at the House of Alma. 'Alma' possesses the following meanings: virgin, soul and nourishment (Hamilton ed. 250). Alma's virgin body is depicted as a suitable dwelling for the good soul, her name's connotation of nourishment suggesting genuine procreative potential. Alma is a nubile virgin who has begun to entertain suitors (ix. 18-20). As "a virgin bright;/ that had not *yet* felt Cupides wanton rage" (18) [italics mine], Alma's erotic associations develop the idea of virginity ideally moving to marriage and then, of course, parenthood. Clearly Alma's temperance involves virginity now, but not forever.

These two virginities both have potential for growth. Spenser praises Belphoebe's virginity for encomiastic reasons and very clearly reminds his Queen that her current state of virginity is an essential element of English political power, particularly in terms of colonial expansion. The other virginity praised, that of the nubile Alma, suggests that virginity that leads to marriage and family creates an environment that is both temperate and restorative. As such, the House of Alma hints

at the possibility of a functional family which, of course, contrasts with Ruddymane's family. The main quest of the book is the redemption of a family so that, despite the encomiastic significance of Belphoebe's type of virginity, virginity which leads to the married state is shown to be ideal. Further credence is given to Alma's type of virginity because the House of Alma is associated with the poplar branch (ix. 39), an emblem proper to Hercules.

#### The Cave of Mammon

Hercules' labors don't accomplish anything in and of themselves and, furthermore, do not redeem Hercules' killing of his family. In the same way, Guyon's experience in the Cave of Mammon has nothing to do with his quest and accomplishes nothing lasting. As with Book I's House of Pride, there is ample evidence to let Guyon know that he should never have entered the Cave in the first place. The Cave is in "a gloomy glade" and shrouded "from heauens light" (2). If Guyon were rescuing someone or slaying a monster, he would have a reason to enter the Cave. As it stands, he does not. However, if we are to understand the value of the Cave, and of the House of Pride as well, we must focus on the heuristic Spenser weaves through the episode. The value of the episode rests largely upon the psychological verisimilitude with which Spenser depicts temptation.

If we are to consider the heuristic aspect of the Cave of Mammon, it is necessary to think about how Spenser depicts his protagonist. Guyon is not presented as an ideal embodiment of the withstanding of temptation and, in spite of his Faery

status, is shown to react to temptation in a very human way. Indeed, when he sees the beautiful arms that Mammon's slaves have fashioned, Guyon is described as having a "mortall eye," "a liuing eye" (38). Guyon's limitations are apparent in Spenser's ironic presentation of Guyon from the very beginning of the canto. The narrator says that Guyon is a "Pilot well expert in perilous waue" (1) though, quite clearly, Guyon reveals his limitations in piloting himself through Mammon's grand temptation sequence.

The ironic presentation of Guyon's competency to withstand temptation is perhaps most evocative in the allusions to Christ's temptation in the desert. Guyon goes through a "desert wilderness" (2) to get to Mammon's Cave. His temptation lasts forty stanzas, which suggests an ironic parallel with Christ's forty days in the desert. Like Christ, Guyon goes through this temptation without food, drink or sleep and then, when the temptation is over, faints. However, unlike Christ, Guyon has not accomplished anything. The comparison to Christ is furthered by Mammon's questioning of Guyon. While Guyon withstands the temptations Mammons throws at him, Mammon succeeds in ascertaining information about Guyon that will help him in the temptation. Mammon learns that Guyon's pride and desire lies in his desire for knighthood. Guyon tells Mammon that he is interested in "der-doing armes" (10), unlike weaker men who desire money. Mammon takes this information and uses arms as a means of tempting him. Guyon's responses not only reveal his love of arms, but also shed light on his lack of self-knowledge. When Guyon sees the splendid arms, he

has never seen anything that he "didst craue so earnestly" (38). He views himself as completely different from those "frayle men" who "with sad cares empeach our natiue ioyes" (15). He projects his weakness onto others and, in so doing, fails to understand his own intemperance. Guyon's lack of self-understanding and his equivocation contrasts with Christ's handling of his temptation in the wilderness. Furthermore, he isn't immune to the needs of the body, as we see in his faint.

Temperance requires an imposition of order that is not possible in Mammon's Cave because one thing cannot be discerned from another. Once Guyon is in Mammon's cave, he has entered a world that excludes clear perception of forms -- both in the strictly Platonic sense, as well as generally. It is helpful to keep this epistemological paradigm in mind during this episode because all that can be seen in the Cave are shadows, shadows of things which are in themselves outside of the realm of true understanding. Spenser conveys this lack of form with images of obfuscated visibility. In stanza 28, Spenser creates a visually evocative portrait of Arachne, who "did lift/ Her cunning web, and spred her subtile net,/ Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more blacke then jet" (28). This "chiaroscuro effect" (Hamilton ed. 229) is apparent in the description of Mammon's house in stanza 29.<sup>8</sup> There is a growing

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<sup>8</sup> We learn that

Both roofe, and floore, and wals were all of gold,  
 But ouergrowne with dust and old decay,  
 And hid in darkenesse, that none could behold  
 The hew thereof: for vew of chearefull day  
 Did neuer in that house it self display,  
 But a faint shadow of vncertain light;

emphasis on darkness, lack of clarity and form. This development becomes particularly significant when we consider stanza 30's horrid description of mauled bodies. Like the House of Pride, Mammon's Cave is covered with skulls and bones and, even more disturbingly, "vile carcasses now left vnburied" (30).

One means by which Spenser conveys lack of clarity is through metaphors of blending. Hamilton notes that "blend" denotes "blind; defile" (Hamilton ed. 225), a meaning we see when Mammon tempts Guyon with worldly greatness. Guyon responds:

Regard of earthly mucke doth fowly blend,  
And low abase the high heroicke spright,  
That ioyes for crownes and kingdomes to contend;  
Faire shields, gay steedes, bright armes be my delight:  
Those be the riches fit for an aduenr'rous knight. (10)

One sub-section of the blending metaphors is the alchemical metaphors. Mammon takes Guyon on a circuitous journey to see his gold and on the way to the gold, they cross "a beaten broad high way" (21).<sup>9</sup> Just before Disdayne appears, Mammon takes Guyon "through a darksome narrow strait,/ To a broad gate, all built of beaten gold" (40). In stanza 35, there is a particularly horrific description of the underworld slaves surrounded by furnaces and melting the gold. We learn that "Deformed creatures,

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Such as a lamp, whose life does not fade away:  
Or as the Moone cloathed with cloudy night,  
Does shew to him, that walkes in feare and sad affright.  
(29)

<sup>9</sup> This "broad high way" recalls the "broad high way" (I. iv. 2) that leads to the House of Pride.

horrible in sight ... melt the golden metall, ready to be tride" (35). The blending suggests metamorphosis and deformity, a characteristic of Acrasia's victims in the Bower of Bliss.

The golden apples of the Garden of Proserpina are compared to "those which Hercules with conquest bold/ Got from great Atlas daughters" (viii. 54). Comes interprets the apples "as symbols of wealth which test men's souls" (*Var.* ii 264). While this allusion to Hercules' eleventh labour suggests the testing of Guyon's soul, it also hints at the futility of such tests. Hercules holds up the world during this labour and yet, ultimately, the apples are returned and everything is back to normal. What has been gained from this labour? We might well ask the same question of Guyon at the end of the canto, and even the end of the book.

Guyon barely makes it through his time in the Cave of Mammon. We learn that Guyon's "vitall powres gan wexe both weake and wan,/ For want of food, and sleepe, which two vpbeare,/ Like mighty pillours, this fraile life of man" (65). The pillars suggest the Pillars of Hercules, an allusion which evokes one of Spenser's sources for Book II: Tasso's Armida episode. Intriguingly, Tasso places Armida's palace "far west of the Pillars of Hercules," which is said to be "the most westerly point of the world" (Cain 91). In Tasso's account, "the virgin-prophetess who conducts Carlo and Ubaldo [to Armida] compares their voyage to Ulysses', who perished in the Atlantic, and (by epic prophecy) to Columbus's, characterized as a civilizer greater than Bacchus or Hercules" (91). Tasso uses the Pillars to show that

not only has the Roman Catholic empire spread past geographical boundaries that were once thought impossible, but also that Columbus is a greater man than Hercules. As such, the Pillars become a yardstick by which to measure progress.

Like Tasso, Spenser in Book II clearly has a New World agenda. However, while Spenser mythologizes English colonialism in the Americas (and its superiority to Spain), he shows that despite the pushing back of geographical parameters, human nature has not and will not gain any ground. Nowhere is this idea conveyed more effectively than in the wrecked ship "laden from far with precious merchandize" (xii. 19) that Guyon and the Palmer pass on the voyage to the Bower. We see here how Hercules serves as a figure who is not to be outdone and, instead, expresses the limitations of all men.

Despite the allusions to various other labors, the Cave of Mammon episode alludes in form and subject to Hercules' twelfth and final labor -- the descent to Hell. Traditionally, Hercules' capture of Cerberus is considered to represent "a conquest of death's power" (Fitch 34). As Fitch notes, the literary treatment of the twelfth labor has been influenced by "the religious conception mentioned earlier of Hercules as *mortis victor* and in some sense a deliverer from death" (34). But, as I have noted previously, the figure of Hercules is highly ambivalent. Within the Herculean tradition, there are "hubristic overtones" (Fitch 34) that accompany Hercules' descent to the Underworld, a sense we certainly get with Guyon in the Cave. Guyon is haughty and disdainful throughout the episode. A notable example of the disdain

which accompanies his hypocrisy can be found in Guyon's condescending attitude towards those who are interested in gold (33). Ironically, in the very same stanza, Guyon expresses an intemperate love of "armes" and "achievements braue" (33). Furthermore, Spenser emphasizes this characteristic by having Guyon meet Disdayne (41).

Guyon's physical exhaustion is made clear when he faints (66). In the same way that Guyon has not made allowances for his mental fallibility, he has not recognized his physical limitations. Nohrnberg notes that in the Cave the Herculean allusion in Arthur's battle with Maleger "appears to have been displaced from Arthur to Guyon. After conquering Antaeus, Hercules lies down exhausted" (300). Despite the intensity of the episode, Guyon's descent at the Cave of Mammon, as with Hercules' descent to the Underworld, is undercut by its complete irrelevance to anything, least of all the quest at hand. The only gain is that Guyon recognizes the vulnerability of the body, even a Faery body. This recognition later helps Guyon when he goes to the Bower of Bliss.

#### Arthur and Maleger (Canto xi)

Despite Guyon's "mortall eye" (38) in the Cave of Mammon, he is still a Faery and, thus, inappropriate to fight Maleger. As such, it must be Arthur who battles Maleger. Berger notes that Guyon cannot intercede and that "his own quest must be restricted to that activity in which his special talents will be effectual, and his special weaknesses unobtrusive. Maleger, with his show of weakness, is precisely the enemy



Guyon will never be able to comprehend" (87-88).

Arthur has a flesh and blood body, which is given form and strength by the armor he wears. Spenser emphasizes Arthur's humanity by describing his wounds. At the end of the canto, Arthur's "wounds did bleed,/ ... [and] he began to faint, and life decay" (48). By contrast, Maleger is described, from a variety of angles, as bloodless and, thus, inhuman. He is made of "such subtile substance and vnsound,/ That like ghost he seem'd, whose graue-clothes were vnbound" (20). When Arthur slays Maleger, Arthur looks for blood to "gush out of his chest" (37), but "Ne drop of bloud appeared shed to bee" (38).

Maleger is not only inhuman, but also satanic. His appearance recalls the Grim Reaper:

As pale and wan as ashes was his looke,  
His bodie leane and meagre as a rake,  
And skin all withered like a dried rooke,  
Thereto as cold and drery as a Snake. (22)

Maleger is also compared to a "wandring ghost, that wanted funerall," an "aery spirit," and a "hellish feend raysed vp through diuelish science" (39). Furthermore, Maleger's arrows (21) align him with Satan, the Prince of the Air (Ephesians 2:2). The comparison of Maleger to the captial 'S' snake evokes Satan's metamorphosis into a serpent in the Garden of Eden. He also evokes "Meleager," who greets Hercules when he arrives in the Underworld to undertake his twelfth labor.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Graves notes that when Hercules gets off Charon's ferry all the ghosts flee, except for Meleager and the Gorgon Medusa. When Hercules aims an arrow at Meleager,

The battle itself parallels Hercules' contest with Antaeus. After capturing and returning the apples of the Hesperides in his eleventh labour, Hercules wrestles Antaeus, a giant who gets stronger every time he hits the ground. Interestingly, the myth of Antaeus and the battle between Arthur and Maleger collide when "Arthur himself has remembered Maleger's Antaeus-like origins" (Nohnberg 298). Arthur remembers:

How th' Earth his mother was, and first him bore;  
 She eke so often, as his life decayed,  
 Did life with vsury to him restore,  
 And raysed him vp much stronger than before. (45)

Once Hercules figures this out, he lifts Antaeus up off the ground. Arthur overgoes Hercules because he not only lifts the monster up, but also throws him into the lake (46). The defeats of Antaeus and Maleger show that defeat of a monster requires an element of insurance, or prevention. This point may be illustrated by another of Hercules' labours: the defeat of the Hydra. It is only the combination of Hercules' cutting the heads off and Iolas' cauterizing of the wound with fire that constitutes defeat of the monster.

That Spenser alludes to Hercules' eleventh labour is apt because there is still one more labour left. In addition, there is some uneasiness about Arthur's victory, due in large part to the absence of a body. When we consider that the battle with Maleger represents the battle against disease, this uneasy victory makes sense. No matter how

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who is wearing bright armor, Meleager laughs and says "You have nothing to fear from the dead" (515).

hard the individual works to prevent and fight against disease, it cannot be dealt with in any kind of permanent way. Redemption of the body, like that of the family, is shown to be an ongoing battle.

### The Voyage to the Bower

On the way to the Bower of Bliss, Guyon encounters a number of sea monsters (23-26). In this episode, Spenser very clearly draws upon Tasso's Armida episode. One point of departure, however, as Cain notes, is the "encyclopedic list of sea monsters that Guyon and his palmer encounter" (91). Guyon encounters "Spring-headed Hydraes" (xii. 23) and we learn that there are "thousand thousands many more,/ And more deformed Monsters thousand fold" (25). The monsters, and the hydra in particular, suggest that victory over such monsters is only temporary because there are always more to battle.

The inclusion of the sea monsters is also significant because they are associated with metamorphosis and deformity. The seductive and tragic nature of metamorphosis, or blending, is underscored by the appearance of mermaids (31-31), who are of course half woman and half fish. The horror of metamorphosis is strengthened by the allusion to Latona. We are initially alerted to the myth by the mention of the "Isle of Delos" (13) in the first line of stanza 13. Spenser then gives a cursory telling of the story.<sup>11</sup> This myth provides another means by which Spenser

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<sup>11</sup> Latona, carrying her infants, went to get a drink at a fountain at Delos and was insulted by some young people. Infuriated, she turned them into frogs (Metamorphoses vi 186-91, 332-4 and the Aeneid iii 73-7).

conveys physical metamorphosis as a threat to the right ordering of the body.

### The Bower of Bliss

The gate to the Bower of Bliss provides a great deal of information about the Bower. The gate, "wrought of substance light" (43), tells the story of Jason and Medea. Medea is bloody enough to throw the pieces of her own brother into the sea for her father to retrieve. The allusion to Medea elicits the tearing apart of the body and, more importantly, the distortion of the family. Like the lust of Acrasia and Mordant, Jason's and Medea's lust leads to the destruction of families. Comes notes that "Jason gave himself up to voluptuous desire" (VI. vii) which associates him with Mordant and the other knights who come to the Bower. Medea and Acrasia are associated with each other because both are linked to Circe.<sup>12</sup> In addition to destroying her family, Medea kills Jason's new bride, Creusa. Furthermore, as Heatt contends, "the verbal links between this 'piteous spectacle' (45.7) and the 'Pittifull spectacle' (i. 40) of Amavia reveal the similarity between Medea and Acrasia, two enchantresses who use their magic arts to destroy their rivals" (Hamilton ed. 289). The gate provides an opportunity for those who come to the Bower to learn how they might avoid a similar demise. Clearly neither Mordant nor Verdant have, apparently, bothered to 'read' the gate as an index to the Bower.

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<sup>12</sup> Circe is Medea's aunt, while Acrasia's transformation of her lovers into beasts aligns her with Circe. During Guyon's destruction of the Bower, we learn that "These seeming beasts are men indeed,/ Whom this Enchauntress hath transformed thus" (85).

Once in the Bower, Guyon is subject to Acrasia's manipulation of nature. Nature is deemed insufficient so the garden is "beautifide/ With all the ornaments of Floraes pride" (50). This art, which is likened to a "pompous bride," is "halfe in scorne/ Of niggard Nature" (50). As such, art doesn't reflect nature, but rather destroys it. Acrasia's altering of nature doesn't stop with the landscape. She warps sex to seem like it is natural and carefree when it is actually the result of manipulation.

The conspicuous absence of children reveals that despite all the sexual activity, everything in the Bower is, ultimately, fruitless. Evans, who refers to Acrasia as "the mother of all forms of cerebral eroticism," (146) notes that "we see no actual love-making in the Bower, only the provocation of desire beforehand and the pleasing languors afterwards, which is why Acrasia is a force of sterility" (146). Whether it be the naked boys who play in the fountain (60), or the girls who frolick naked in the waves, or Acrasia's use of seduction to transform her lovers into a beasts, all this prurience may not even lead to sex.

The pornographic nature of sex in the Bower is perhaps best expressed by the image of the wrestling girls. They appear to be unaware of their charms, hence much of their appeal. However, Spenser conveys to the reader that they know exactly what they're doing. The girls have a choreographed routine designed to seduce the men who come to the Bower. The girls "seemed to contend,/ And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde,/ Their dainty parts from vew of any, *which them eyde*" (63) [italics

mine]. They know Guyon is watching them, as we see again when "The wanton Maidens him espying, stood/ Gazing a while at his vnwonted guise;/ Then th'one her selfe low ducked in the flood" (66). They carefully note every move so that they balance their sexual charms with seeming modesty. If the girls appear brazen, they will not be as effective in their seduction of knights. This scene contrasts with the vision at Acidale in Book VI where the naked beauties inspire poetry, not pedestrian lust. Everything in the Bower, no matter how harmless it seems, is contrived to seduce men who, in turn, metamorphose into beasts.

The devouring aspect of the Bower's brand of metamorphosis is apparent in Acrasia's seduction of Verdant. Spenser employs metaphors of eating and drinking throughout the seduction. Acrasia looks at Verdant with "greedily depasturing delight" (73) and kisses him lightly because she doesn't want to wake him up. Verdant's "lips bedewd,/ And through his humid eyes [Acrasia] did sucke his spright,/ Quite molten into lust and pleasure lewd" (73). Acrasia's hard work in seducing Verdant makes her perspire "more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,/ That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild" (78). Her lustful eyes "moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrield/ Fraile harts, yet quenched not; like starry light/ Which sparckling on the silent waues, does seeme more bright" (78). Verdant is not ready for such an attack because he is disarmed, his arms "hong vpon a tree" (80) and is, thus, particularly vulnerable to Acrasia. He is in a languid state for "his bodie he did spend:/ O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend" (80). Through Verdant, we come to understand more of

Mordant's experience in the Bower. The horrific metamorphosis of the father from man to beast, and all the disasters which ensue, provides a particularly powerful image of the tragedy of intemperance.

When the Palmer and Guyon rescue Verdant by trapping Acrasia in the net, they must keep her in "chaines of adamant" (82). However, it seems doubtful that Acrasia will be bound permanently. Evans believes that the reader is left "genuinely uncertain whether she is kept safely locked up or safely preserved in her fetters of reason" (viii). While Guyon manages to prevent the destruction of Verdant's potential family, and presumably a few others, he cannot undo the deaths of Mordant and Amavia. Ruddymane will always be an orphan and nothing Guyon can do will alter that fact. Furthermore, there is no possible way of redeeming the family once and for all because there are countless families and countless bowers.

We learn the animals in the Bower "are men indeed," and have been "turned into figures hideous,/ According to their mindes like monstrous" (85). That is, their metamorphoses indicate their inner failings. Forgetting the nobler aspects of human nature is associated, throughout the book, with intemperance, as we see in the last stanza of the book:

Said Guyon, See the mind of beastly man,  
That hath so soone forgot the excellence  
Of his creation, when he life began,  
That now he chooseth, with vile difference,  
To be a beast, and lacke intelligence. (87)

Evans writes: "Acrasia embodies the strength of our sensual nature to charm and lull

us into forgetfulness of our fallen state and to inhibit our attempts to repair it" (144-5). Another example of this lapse may be found in the cup Acrasia gives to Mordant, which Fowler argues "produces forgetfulness of divinity" (100).

However, it is not only "forgetfulness of divinity," but also the inability to recognize the base elements of human nature that stands in the way of temperance. As Evans observes: "the Bower is unnatural because [it is] seemingly unfallen" (144). A prerequisite for temperance, as it is delineated in Book II, is the ability to ascertain those aspects of the self that are divine and those that are base. A stumbling block to this understanding is, ironically, a failure of the very knight who ostensibly redeems the Bower. Guyon's own hubris, his sense of infallibility, is perhaps his greatest weakness. Interestingly, Seneca's Hercules also possesses this flaw. Fitch notes that Hercules is representative of the "mythical pattern of the hero whose very invincibility leads him to become excessive" (27).<sup>13</sup> To be reminded of divinity and aware of limitations opens up the possibility of a successful battle against those things which threaten the family and, as a corollary, the body.

Guyon cannot fulfill his quest because it is impossible to fulfill. What we do learn about the redemption of the family, however, is that family tragedy may be prevented in more or less practical ways. That is, husbands and fathers should avoid

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<sup>13</sup> Fitch, taking an archetypal tact, notes other such heroes. He cites the example of the Twins of Winnebago myth. The twins, "after overcoming all the monsters in heaven and earth, themselves become a threat to cosmic order" (27). See Carl G. Jung, ed. Man and His Symbols.



the lure of adventures that take them from their families, and certainly not visit the bowers of enchantresses that happen to cross their paths. But the most hopeful 'prevention redemption' comes in the figure of Alma. Alma's virtue and erotic potential suggest the possibility of fruitful marriage and family life at some point in the near future. The meanings of her name -- virgin, soul, nourishment -- suggest the potential for a good family life rather than the death and pain that Ruddymane's family must endure.

## CHAPTER THREE

**Book VI: Can Society Be Redeemed?**

In Book VI, the object of redemption is not England or a family, but a civilization. This civilization is threatened by the Blatant Beast, a figure of envy whom Calidore unknowingly seems to carry with him. Calidore's quest to bind the Beast is complicated because not only is it Calidore's own envy which gives rise to the Beast, but also by its nature the Beast cannot be bound indefinitely. As such, it is difficult to gauge exactly what would be accomplished by the Beast's capture. Would anything be redeemed? Before examining how particular episodes develop our understanding of this quest, the most ambivalent in the poem, it is helpful to consider what Spenser means by courtesy in Book VI.

Courtesy in the Proem and the Beginning of Canto i

Courtesy, as it is presented in Book VI, is hard to define in any inclusive sense.<sup>1</sup> One problem is that courtesy is both personal and social, both inherent and learned. Calidore, ignorant of these differences, plunges into the ambivalences of

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<sup>1</sup> The presentation of courtesy in Book VI contrasts with the presentation of holiness in Book I and temperance in Book II. Holiness clearly means faith, hope and charity. Temperance refers to the balance which results from moral and physical self-restraint. Courtesy, on the other hand, is a much more elusive concept.

courtesy, which are the ambivalences of human nature and society. In the Proem we learn that courtesy comes from "deepe within the mynd,/ And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defynd" (5). True courtesy is the outgrowth of virtue, a "bloosme" which "brancheth forth in braue nobilitie/ And spreads it selfe through all ciuilitie" (4). The public virtue of courtesy is the result of private virtue, an idea Spenser develops by contrasting true courtesy with the seeming courtesy found in many of those who "adorne" (7) Gloriana's court. This false courtesy comprises "fayned showes" (4) and is, quite simply, "forgerie" (5).

Canto i's exordium furthers the association of the court with false courtesy. Spenser uses the following verbs to emphasize the falsity of this seeming courtesy: "seemes," "beseemeth," "should." The pleonasm "matchlesse paragon" sounds suspiciously overdone and suggests that the "curteous Knights and Ladies" may not, in fact, be courteous. The exordium leads right into the introduction of Calidore at the beginning of the second stanza: "But mongst them all was none more courteous Knight,/ Then Calidore, beloued ouer all" (2). Calidore has cultivated the kind of courtesy admired by those at court. We learn that Calidore's "gentlenesse of spright/ And manners mylde were planted naturall;/ To which he add[ed] comely guize withall,/ And gracious speech" (5).<sup>2</sup> Calidore's attainment of courtly courtesy does

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<sup>2</sup> Calidore's courtesy is a mixture of both the inherent -- the "planted" -- and the cultivated or acquired. As I have noted, Spenser uses "bloosme" as a metaphor for courtesy in the Proem. Courtesy, like a flower, is both a mixture of nature and nurture.

not reveal to the reader whether or not he is genuinely courteous. In fact, the difficulty in discerning false courtesy from real courtesy is the central problem in treating the subject of courtesy. How does one distinguish between courtesy that is only superficial and that which is genuine? Furthermore, is it possible for there to be an agreeable blend of the natural and the cultivated? In Book II, Spenser addresses the relationship between nature and art from different perspectives. There can be a fruitful balance, but the two may also compete. In such a competition, the artful may undermine and overwhelm the natural, as it does in the Bower of Bliss.

#### Briana and Crudor

Courtesy between men and women is one means of exercising control and order over desire. Not coincidentally, Book VI has a number of lovers coupling in bushes. Some of the exchanges between the men and women even enter the realm of the sadistic, as with Crudor and Briana. This episode provides a model for delivering individuals, and those around them, from barbarism. Calidore precipitates this change in Crudor and Briana through force and courteous words.

Crudor insists that if Briana is to be his lady, she must provide him with a mantle "With beards of Knights and locks of Ladies lynd" (i. 15). But Crudor's insistence that Briana give him a gift undermines the potential mantle's status as a gift.<sup>3</sup> Certainly the warped chivalric relationship that exists between Briana and

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<sup>3</sup> A gift cannot be demanded because it must result from the largesse of the giver. By contrast, the Graces freely bestow the vision without a request. In Book I Redcrosse Knight must receive, without asking for, the vision from Contemplation.

Crudor reflects a superficial courtesy completely divorced from the values which ought to give rise to the loyalty and dedicated gift-giving that goes on between lovers. Crudor and Briana practice discourtesy, though they themselves consider it to be courtesy. H.S.V. Jones notes that Book VI "opens with *exempla* of discourtesy and courtesy, illustrating in Briana the discourtesy of women and in Crudor that of men" (*Var.* vi 333). As such, this episode operates like the faulty rescues that begin Books I and II, where the episode depicts a travesty of the book's central virtue.

Calidore must stop the barbarous customs that go on between Crudor and Briana because their lack of courtesy leads to great wrong-doing to others. Indeed, Calidore learns of the mantle from a squire who is himself a casualty of Briana's hunt for men's beards. Calidore stops the custom by first killing Maleffort, who carries out Briana's orders to kill for beards and hair. Maleffort is associated with force that is both unthinking and brutal, as we see when he "fiercely at him flew, and layd/ On hideous strokes with most importune might" (20). By contrast, Calidore holds back. We learn that despite Calidore's skill as a fighter "his spirite spar'd,/ Lying in waite, how him he damadge might" (20). Calidore maintains his control and is able to think rationally through his fight with Crudor. Spenser emphasizes Calidore's consistency when he compares him to "a water streame, whose swelling sourse/ Shall driue a Mill" (21). Calidore manages to conserve his strength and, as a result, is able to chase Maleffort to the castle where he slays him. At the gate, Mallefort's "carkasse tumbling downe within the dore,/ Did choke the entraunce with a lumpe of sin" (23).

Briana is furious with Calidore and taunts him by accusing him of being "no Knight at all" (25). Once again, Calidore displays restraint when he responds to Briana. Despite her rudeness to him, he gives her a brief speech about the importance of courtesy. Calidore tells Briana that "they that breake bands of ciuilitie,/ And wicked customes make, those doe defame/ Both noble armes and gentle curtesie" (26). Calidore tries to end the barbaric custom by trying to convince Briana to "forgoe/ This euill manner" (27). Calidore's words have not yet had an impact on Briana and she replies, "Vile recreant, know that I doe much distaine/ They courteous lore, that doest my loue deride,/ Who scornes thy ydle scoffe, and bids thee be defyde" (27). Calidore struggles to bear Briana's "womanish distaine,/ And did him selfe from fraile impatience refraine" (30). In books I and II, Redcrosse Knight and Guyon must destroy their foes in order to fulfill their quests. Notably, Calidore kills Maleffort, but purposely does not kill Crudor.

When Crudor sees that Calidore is going to win, he begs for mercy (39). Calidore is merciful to Crudor (40) and then makes Crudor "swear/ By his owne sword, and by the crosse thereon,/ To take Briana for his louing fere" (43).<sup>4</sup> Briana reacts courteously to Calidore, genuflecting in front of him because "his exceeding courtesie ... perst/ Her stubborne hart with inward deepe effect" (45). Her grateful thanks are described in religious terms and she speaks of Calidore as a kind of savior.

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<sup>4</sup> Here is the only instance in the poem of a sword hilt referred to as a 'crosse.' As such, Calidore's sword provides a powerful image of the Christian grace inherent in courtesy.

She adores him "as her liues deare Lord" and acknowledges that "he had to her both life and loue restord" (45). Briana is "wondrously now chaung'd, from that she was afore" (46).

Thanks to Calidore's restrained, though effective, force and courteous words, Crudor and Briana learn to be courteous. Cain notes that Calidore's sword possesses a "civilizing effect [that] parallels Orpheus's civilizing rude men with song" (171). It is, however, hard to believe that Crudor and Briana have actually been affected by Calidore's language. Clearly, force is the means by which the couple have become courteous. It is important to recognize that force is used to attain courtesy in this most successful of the book's episodes. Furthermore, there is the nagging sense that Crudor and Briana, like the Blatant Beast, cannot be redeemed forever. While force is necessary in bringing barbarism under control, force cannot remain effective for long. Furthermore, as the escape of the Blatant Beast makes clear at the end of the book, forcible courtesy works for a short time and then, inevitably, cannot be contained, and is far worse than before.

But then there is something about the whole episode that seems a little too good to be true. Tonkin notes that "the story of Crudor contains just the element of wishful thinking which any story of social goodness has to contain if it is to be accepted in our cynical world," and then adds that "Calidore is a kind of magician" (40). The absolute barbarism of Crudor and Briana and the relative ease by which Calidore manages to redeem them makes the story implausible, especially when we

consider Spenser's other depictions of deliverance in the poem. Throughout The Faerie Queene, Spenser depicts redemption as an arduous process; consequently, this easy redemption doesn't seem entirely trustworthy.

Calidore's deliverance of Briana, whose name is clearly Irish, from Crudor's barbarism also elicits English colonial exploits in Ireland. Both Briana and Crudor are associated with disdain, which suggests Irish resistance to English imperialism. That Calidore eventually wins Briana over shows how persistence and aggression in the Irish policy will bring about a semblance of civility; that is, if the English are aggressive enough then the Irish will have no choice but to give in to them. Eventually, they will recognize the civility of the English and be grateful that their country was taken over. We learn that Calidore's "exceeding courtesie" affects Briana so much that she falls before his feet and tells him that "he had to her both life and loue restord" (45). Taken without irony, this episode provides insight into the English colonial mentality. That is, a restrained and courteous, though forceful, colonial power frees people enslaved by barbarous customs. Taken ironically, which makes sense when we consider the meanings of Crudor's and Briana's names,<sup>5</sup> this episode shows the futility of trying to transform the Irish into a 'civilized' people.

### Tristram

Tristram reveals that though he lives in the forest, he is "a Briton borne,/"

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<sup>5</sup> Camden (1605) writes that Briana means "shrill voice," while Crudor means "raw, bloody, cruel" (Hamilton 628).



Sonne of a King" (27). Calidore is clearly impressed, though it is difficult to gauge precisely to what degree he is impressed for worldly reasons and to what degree he is impressed because Tristram's royal blood indicates potentially superior courtesy. Nevertheless, the encounter with Tristram ought to be helpful for Calidore because Tristram provides a good model of courtesy that is practiced outside of the court.

The forest possesses symbolic significance as a primal place that is outside of the enforced civilities of social organization. Allegorically, and indeed throughout Book VI, forests often represent places of sexual indulgence. That Tristram maintains his moral fortitude in such a place entrenches the strength of his courtesy. There are many at court who *seem* courteous, such as Calidore. He behaves with a courtesy that is more acquired than innate, as is apparent in canto i when we learn that Calidore has developed "comely guize" and "gracious speach" (i.2). Acquired courtesy isn't bad, though, in the end, it doesn't seem to work too well for Calidore. The further he gets from court, or from courtly courtesy, the more Calidore's courtesy runs out of steam. This decline suggests that Calidore's courtesy isn't as strong or as inherent as it needs to be. By contrast, Tristram, who seems to be a mere boy living in the forest, practices genuine courtesy. Calidore contrasts with Tristram, who isn't reliant on external pressures to exercise courtesy.

Tristram tells Calidore that he has lived well and has "not lewdly spent,/ Nor spilt the blossome of [his] tender years" (31). Tonkin notes that Tristram is "a kind of emblem of youthful goodness" (44). Unlike the other knights in the book, Tristram

doesn't use the forest as a place to be alone with a lady. Tonkin suggests that there are many moral lessons to be learned from the Tristram episode, foremost among them Tristram's selflessness (44). After all, Tristram is not bound by any desire to look good at court or any other of the temptations faced by Gloriana's knights. He wants to be a squire so that "from henceforth in batteilous array/ [he] may beare armes, and learne to vse <sup>6</sup> them right" (33). Tristram gives expression to the book's concern with behaving courteously to ladies while, at the same time, demonstrating knightly prowess. But then if Calidore ought to be edified by his encounter with Tristram, why then the "diminishing success" (Tonkin 51) of Calidore's ensuing adventures? It seems that Tristram exemplifies a standard of courtesy that is too demanding for Calidore and, as a result, works to reveal Calidore's limitations in practicing courtesy.

But then Tristram is not perfect. He has "greedie eyes" for arms, which reveals two things. First, it shows that even a good knight is driven, to some extent, by envy. Second, it suggests the importance of force in overcoming discourtesy. It is important to note that Spenser's rendering of Tristram's greed for arms does not undercut him or the vision of courtesy he develops. Indeed, this realistic portrayal provides an understanding of the envy that accompanies even selfless acts and,

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<sup>6</sup> The right *use* of one's gifts (and, indeed, the use of gift-giving) is a crucial concern in Spenser's exploration of courtesy. At Faery court, successful knights, such as Calidore, learn to use their personal qualities to use people. Calidore has "purchast [the] greatest grace:/ Which he could wisely vse, and well apply,/ To please the best" (i. 3). Calidore uses courtesy to get what he wants, whether it be respect for his abilities as a knight, or to woo Pastorella. By contrast, Tristram is effortlessly courteous and uses his gifts to do good for others.

paradoxically, may encourage them. Such a depiction is more useful for the poem's heuristic purposes than a strictly idealistic approach. The self-interest does not diminish, but rather enhances both the understanding of courtesy in the book, as well as the artistry with which Spenser constructs his poem.

#### Calidore with Priscilla and Aladine

Calidore gradually becomes overly reliant on the power of beautiful language, to the point where the virtue that ought to lie behind the language is lost. The separation of the *vir bonus* from the beautiful language it ought to give rise to suggests the problems posed by eloquence and, indeed, by courtesy. Eloquence ought to blossom out of innate goodness, as in the case of Tristram. The division leads to further ethical problems when Calidore takes Priscilla and Aladine home to their respective parents. Calidore ought to be discreet and not say things which would indict the lovers; however, he chooses to lie unnecessarily not just to protect Priscilla's reputation, but to make himself look better. Calidore's story for Priscilla's father is told, in large part, to brag about his own physical prowess. Cain notes that Calidore here "violates his own ideal of 'simple truth and stedfast honesty' (i. 3) (Cain 171). Thus, instead of courteous language expressing the beauty of virtue, beautiful language operates as a stumbling block to virtue. Calidore beguiles himself with his own words and, in the process, loses his discernment. Calidore's false eloquence recalls the

ridiculously 'eloquent' Hercules Gallicus.<sup>7</sup>

Calidore's love of his own voice is nowhere more apparent than when he comes across Calepine and Serena. Calidore tells Calepine stories about his favorite subject: Calidore. Calidore's behavior is discourteous both in terms of his interrupting the lovers and his bragging about his exploits. As he indulges himself in telling Calepine about his "long adventures" (22), Calidore's self-centeredness gives rise to his envy of Serena. After all, Calidore is aware that Calepine has been having a good time with his girlfriend while Calidore has nobody. All of a sudden, Calidore's envy explodes in the figure of the Blatant Beast (24).

#### Calidore and the Pastoral

While the reader experiences an extended interlude with Calepine from cantos iii through viii, we learn that Calidore has been chasing the Blatant Beast through a variety of landscapes. He has passed through "hills, through dales, through forests, and through plains" (ix. 2). Nohrnberg, noting that "Calidore's pursuit of the Blatant Beast ... takes the hero from cities to farms, and from farms into open fields," suggests that "Calidore's course reverses the development of civilization, which the development of Virgil's poetic canon was alleged to have recapitulated" (664). This devolution is reiterated again in the next stanza, only this time Spenser reverses the evolution of social organization instead of landscapes. We learn of the Blatant Beast that

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<sup>7</sup> For a brief discussion of the Gallic Hercules figure, see footnote 4 in the Introduction.

first from court he to the citties coursed,  
 And from the citties to the towns prest,  
 And from the townes into the countrie forsed,  
 And from the country back to priuate farmes he scorsed. (3)

The Beast begins at court and permeates the country. There is, of course, a poetic analogue. The Virgilian model, which Spenser clearly follows from the beginning of his literary career, is supposed to begin, not end with pastoral (Nohnberg 664). Spenser's return to Colin Clout and the pastoral takes on a sinister cast given that he is almost finished his epic, the height of poetic achievement.

In addition to suggesting that court is the heart of envy, the devolutions suggest that any move to pastoral is a move to a place that is as contrived, perhaps even more so, than court. The whole pastoral episode wryly suggests that escape to such a place is simply not possible for a courtier. While Spenser has as one of his subjects the court, the idea also operates on a deeper level. Given fallen human nature, no one can experience an idyllic pastoral life. The impossibility of returning to an idyllic countryside draws attention to the book's stated subject of courtesy. Perfect courtesy, like true pastoral innocence, is impossible given the state of the human soul. People possess ugly traits such as envy which, while they may be suppressed for a time, cannot be killed off entirely. Spenser illustrates this point most notably at the end of the book when the Beast, after his capture, escapes.

The shepherds are not familiar with the Blatant Beast (6) because there is no Blatant Beast without Calidore (or his counterpart Artegall). Calidore is charmed by

the pastoral life and wants to stay. He claims to want to stay because life amongst the shepherds is "free and fortunate,/ From all the tempests of these worldly seas" (19). He naively assumes that, if only he could find the right location, it would be possible to live a life without problems. This lack of self-understanding, or understanding of humanity, blinds him from seeing the true source of the Beast: his own envy.

Furthermore, any semblance of noble motives for staying in pastoral are undercut by Calidore's desire for Pastorella. From the first time he sees her, Calidore is "surprisd in subtile bands/ Of the blynd boy, ne thence could be redeemed" (11). For all Calidore's waxing on about his love of the noble pastoral life, what he really wants is a chance with Pastorella. Tonkin writes that for Calidore "it is not arcadia pure and simple that attracts him: in fact his arcadia, his 'harts desire', is really the girl" (117).<sup>8</sup>

Calidore has, of course, abandoned his quest because he wants to remain in pastoral. Canto ix's exordium draws attention to Calidore's truancy from his quest. We learn that "great dishonour and defame" (ix. 1) will befall Calidore's reputation. The narrator spells it out more explicitly in canto x's exordium when Calidore is accused of being "Vnmyndfull of his vow" (x. 1) to Gloriana. Calidore's sojourn in pastoral is keeping him away from not only his quest, but also any participation in the

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<sup>8</sup> Pastorella, like the pastoral itself, turns out to be an acquired rather than a true name. As such, Calidore's yearning for Pastorella reveals that he is attracted by a woman, and by a landscape, that seems arcadian but is, in fact, courtly. Furthermore, the traditional association of the pastoral genre with courts adds further credibility to this connection.

events of the world.

While the conversation between Calidore and Melibee exposes the limitations of the court, it also reveals the limitations of the pastoral. Melibee's story about his past at court, which he says was a "youth [spent] in vaine" (25), sheds light on the pride and envy which drives the court.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Melibee's opting out of his responsibility suggests that his motives for getting out of court life aren't entirely noble. After ten years of being a knight, Melibee longs for "sweet peace, whose lacke did then appeare" (25). To reject the world entirely is both naive and selfish. Furthermore, "the picture of of self-sufficiency which Melibee paints may be all well and good for literary shepherds but it clearly has no application in the world outside" (Tonkin 119). Melibee's resolution is not to deal with the problems, but simply to remove himself from them.

Calidore talks a lot about the serenity of pastoral life while he is with Melibee. Nevertheless, for the reader there is no sense that the life he is living is particularly pleasant. Indeed, it seems more banal than tranquil. Cain notes that "Melibee is an Arcadian apologist who eloquently extols retreat. But his speech ... corresponds to Despair's" (172). If everyone opted out of society like Calidore, then there would be no development of civilization and there would be a nation of Melibeas. While the development of civilization feeds on some of the uglier aspects of human nature, this

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<sup>9</sup> Melibee contrasts with Tristram who not only withstands the temptations of youth, but also performs knightly duties.

process is inescapable in order to avoid lapsing into banal stasis at best, or worse, utter chaos.

In stanza 36, Calidore gets rid of his armour and puts on shepherd's clothes. Calidore thinks "it best/ To chaunge the manner of his loftie looke;/ And doffing his bright armes, himself addrest/ In shepherds weed" (36). Calidore's taking off his armor reveals two things. First, it shows that he possesses a superficial understanding of the world because he thinks that by changing his clothes he will relinquish all those ugly aspects of court that he so wants to avoid. Second, it shows his vulnerable spiritual state. As such, Calidore's removing of his armor recalls Redcrosse Knight's doing so in Book I. When Redcrosse takes off his arms, it is an outward sign of an inward state. That is, he has taken off his Christian armor.

While Calidore is going to need his armor in the next canto (at the same stanza -- 36), somehow his taking off his armor doesn't seem quite as dire as it did with Redcrosse Knight. Tonkin writes that while Calidore's "removal of his armour is in some sense a symbol of his error, at the same time we are aware of the fact that this armour is merely the *outward* sign of his role as the Knight of Courtesy" (122). There are differences between Redcrosse's and Calidore's respective situations. Calidore is not about to lie on the grass with Pastorella, though he manipulates his "comely guize" (i. 2) to attract Pastorella. However, the change in clothes signals Calidore's deliberate naivete and passivity in choosing a pastoral 'lifestyle.' This choice is potentially harmful since it presumes a fictitious version of reality. Calidore doesn't



take seriously the threat to the pastoral and, as a result, isn't around (and even if he were, he wouldn't be prepared) to battle the brigands. The importance of Calidore's being armed is made clear when he is armed again in canto xi in order to fight the captain of the brigands (xi. 42).

Throughout the episode, and particularly towards the end of canto ix, it becomes readily apparent that Coridon is jealous of Calidore's status as preferred suitor. When it comes to Calidore, Coridon has "many gealous thoughts conceiu'd in vaine" (38) and "euen for gealousie/ Was readie oft his owne hart to deuoure./ Impatient of any paramoure" (39). Calidore isn't envious, but then why should he be? In addition to being favored by Pastorella, Calidore is a big fish in a small pond. Certainly if Pastorella had favored Coridon, the Blatant Beast would have shown up long ago. Coridon's jealousy reveals that pastoral is not as idyllic as Calidore and Melibee claim.

### Acidale

Acidale is "an 'hill plaste in an open plaine" (x. 6) and synthesizes Eden, an Orphic landscape, and the home of the Graces. Demaray notes Acidale's Faery resonance, contending that the hill suggests "the nested, circular terraces of Glassenbury Tor" (114). The ascent, as such, suggests a potential anabasis. And like the vision of the New Jerusalem, Acidale is a place to go for a short time. Even Venus must keep her court at Cytheron (9). We learn that Venus "when she did dispose/ Her selfe to pleasaunce, vsed to resort/ Vnto this place, and therein to repose/

And rest her selfe" (9). Acidale provides a glimpse into something heavenly which, along with some poetic interpretation from Colin Clout, should inspire the knight to fulfill his quest. While Redcrosse's vision is more specifically Christian -- it is, after all, the New Jerusalem, Calidore's vision evokes the poetic.

The Graces on Acidale merge elements of the restorative process that are separated in other books. For example, in Book I Redcrosse experiences the House of Holiness and the anabasis with Contemplation separately. Together these experiences contribute to Redcrosse Knight's slaying of the dragon. By contrast, here in Book VI all of these elements merge in the dance on Acidale. On Acidale, community is implicit within the vision itself, which makes sense given the public nature of courtesy. The sheer number of dancing maidens contrasts with the individualistic experience Redcrosse has with Contemplation.

Calidore's relationship to the vision is initially problematic. Calidore knows that if he is seen, the vision will disappear for he "durst not enter into "th'open greene,/ For dread of them vnwares to be descryde,/ For breaking of their daunce, if he were seene" (11). Yet he makes his presence known and is "no lesse sory wight,/ For that mishap" (18). His selfishness is a glaring instance of discourtesy because it leads to genuine distress on the part of Colin Clout. Indeed, Colin is so upset that he breaks his bag-pipe (18). But Calidore's actions here are more than a "mishap" because he rejects the gift that the Graces have bestowed on all those who glimpse their dance in order to demand information from Colin Clout. Calidore's discourtesy

is emphasized by the ideal courtesy of the Graces he has caused to disappear. Colin says that the Graces bestow "all the complements of curtesie:/ They teach vs, how to each degree and kynde/ We should our selues demeane, to low, to hie;/ To friends, to foes, which skill men call Ciuility" (23).

Like Redcrosse with Contemplation, Calidore needs an interpreter. After the vision of the New Jerusalem, Contemplation must tell Redcrosse to go back to the world and carry out his responsibilities as a knight. Similarly, watching the dance isn't sufficient for Calidore to be inspired. He needs to be taught how to interpret or, we might even say, 'read' the episode. However, Calidore's motives for seeking Colin's commentary are mixed. Calidore doesn't desire to understand the vision in a deep way or else he would not have destroyed it, or at least he would have been more repentant afterwards. Calidore is acquisitive and he wants Colin to give him the Coles notes version of what happened so that he can possess the vision. This clumsily iconoclastic response to the pinnacle of artistic achievement, which the Graces generously provide, is barbaric. Thus, at the ideal centre of courtesy, Calidore behaves not unlike the barbarous Crudor.

Taken retroactively, however, there is a restorative aspect to the dance for Calidore. That is, once Colin has explained the dance to Calidore, the dance operates in a similar way to the House of Holiness and the House of Alma. Cain notes that the other "female quasi divinities who preside over the other allegorical cores - Caelia, Alma, Venus, and Isis" (159) allude to Elizabeth. Significantly, in Book VI Spenser

"places not an Elizabeth figure, but an unknown girl whose virtues epitomize those to be practiced in the book." Thus, the "countrey lasse" (25) inspires not only Colin Clout, but also Calidore. The beauty of the girl inspires Calidore as Caelia does Redcrosse Knight.

The intensity of Colin's words have an emotional effect on Calidore. Calidore feels the "enuenim'd sting," the "poysonous point deepe fixed in his hart," pains which cannot be alleviated (31). We learn that Calidore "with louely dart/ Dinting his brest, had bred his restlesse paine,/ Like as the wounded Whale to shore flies from the maine" (31).<sup>10</sup> The arresting image of the whale that is about to beached associates Calidore with death and, for the first time since he arrived in pastoral (and quite possibly ever), Calidore encounters something very real: the sting of death. While he has been with Melibee and Pastorella, Calidore has existed in a muted, dulled state. Thus, this pain signals a return to a deeper understanding of self and, indeed, of humanity, from which Calidore has blinded himself for so long. This pain is a good thing because it counters the complacency of Calidore's pastoral life. Significantly, it is poetry that spurs on this recognition.

Calidore goes back to the same old pastoral life. We learn that "So taking

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<sup>10</sup> It is possible to see the comparison of Calidore to a "wounded whale" as furthering the neglect of his Hercules role. Hercules saved Hesione from a whale while Calidore, by contrast, is the wounded whale and not the hero. See the *Iliad* XX. 145-8. Interestingly, Drayton "in his notes to the fourth Song of Poly-Olbion explains that St. George saved the king's daughter "as Hesione and Andromeda were delivered from whales by Hercules and Perseus" (Nohnberg 139).

leau of that same gentle swaine./ He backe returned to his rusticke wonne./ Where his faire Pastorella did remaine" (32). However, Calidore is moving towards something else, as we see when he kills a tiger. This act signals Calidore's taking up of the Herculean role once again. As Cain notes: Calidore "kills a tiger and so foreshadows the achievement of his quest" (159).

### The Brigands

The savage threat to social order that we find in the Brigand episode is foreshadowed in Serena's <sup>11</sup> capture by the cannibals. Pastorella's capture brings to the fore how the pastoral, as a state of neglect of worldly responsibility, is at all times vulnerable to barbarism. The danger of returning to the pastoral is that it does not have in place structures which, while often corrupt and driven by envy, protect people from giving in to their own natures. As such, Calidore's abandonment of his quest signals the forfeiting of his responsibility to work towards ensuring that his civilization doesn't lapse into barbarism. Calidore still harbors the illusion that the pastoral life is idyllic. He is blind to Coridon's envy, Melibee's naiveté, and his own lust. Tonkin observes that Calidore's decision to remain in pastoral includes "an attempt to discover a haven evidently not to be found by the simple exclusion of evil, an impossibility in a fallen world" (147). The Brigands' capture of Pastorella jolts Calidore into seeing

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<sup>11</sup> The name 'Serena' suggests serenity. She is, however, anything but tranquil. Calepine's search for Serena parallels, in many respects, Calidore's desire to find serenity in the pastoral. Both are guided by false appearances because the Serena Calepine strives for, or the serenity Calidore wants, does not lead to tranquility.

that the pastoral civilization is terribly vulnerable. Interestingly, the pastoral world provides a mirror of the social dynamics of the courtly world. The merchants use the Brigands, who use the shepherds, and so on. There is a hierarchy based on the domination of one group over another.

Coridon and Calidore must work together in order for Pastorella to be rescued. Such a rescue certainly makes sense in a book dedicated to courtesy. Cain observes that Coridon's and Calidore's feigned friendship "makes possible Calidore's rescue of Pastorella from the Brigants. In other words, if the hero is to achieve whatever good is possible, he must act with practical cunning antithetical to the ideal nakedness of the Graces" (178). Calidore, with all his limitations, and Coridon, who seems rather stupid, each do things which contribute to saving Pastorella. Here Spenser develops a particularly vivid rendering of the bumbling social dynamics required to hold barbarism at bay. Furthermore, at the end of canto xi, Calidore gives the goods he has plundered from the Brigands to Coridon (51), which may seem courteous but is not. Calidore gives Coridon things he doesn't value and, of course, keeps the only thing he has that Coridon wants: Pastorella. Calidore's giving Coridon the goods he has plundered recalls his giving Coridon the crown he won in their earlier wrestling match (ix. 44). In both cases, gift-giving is discourteous because it is used to show that Calidore is not only superior to Coridon in terms of physical strength, but also that Calidore still possesses the greater gift: Pastorella's affection.

When Calidore rescues Pastorella from the Brigands, he comforts her "With

gladfull speaches, and with louely cheare" (50). He demonstrates his courtesy by not only slaying the Brigands, but also by using courteous language with Pastorella. This situation does not, however, require the thought and tact needed in taking Priscilla home to her father. When we consider that the subject of the book is courtesy, the battle ought to deal with a stickier and socially more complex situation, a situation which requires tact and well-honed verbal manoeuvres. After all, rescuing a vision of loveliness from barbarians is obviously the right thing to do and can't be criticized.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Calidore's rescue of Pastorella from the Brigands encompasses both the physical and verbal requirements of a Herculean labor, a role Calidore hasn't fulfilled successfully since reforming Crudor and Briana.

### The Blatant Beast

In canto xii, Calidore finally returns to his quest. He finds the Blatant Beast in a monastery "despoiling all with maine and might" (23). While the Beast's ransacking of the monastery suggests the dissolution of the monasteries, as well as Puritan excesses, it also provides an incisive look at the destructive power of envy. Calidore has a tenacious fight with the Beast and, the harder he fights, the stronger the Beast gets. We learn that "Such was the fury of this hellish Beast,/ Whilest Calidore him vnder him downe threw;/ Who nathemore his heaury load releast,/ But aye the

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<sup>12</sup> Tonkin writes that "the first incident (with Crudor) carried few risks to reputation; the second (with Tristram) some risks; the third (with Priscilla) many risks; and the fourth (with Calepine) such risks that the Blatant Beast is able to break through and spread his poisonous scandal" (48-9).

more he rag'd, the more his powre increast" (31). Calidore must fight the Beast to hold envy, and all the ugly things which the Beast brings, at bay. However, Calidore cannot win, and all of his work will only make things worse. There is the sense that, while even well-meaning knights like Calidore ultimately make the world worse with their involvement in it, this situation is preferable to the free reign of tyrants or to doing nothing at all.

The binding and the inevitable escape of the Beast reveals that the battle against envy can't be won in definite terms. The most the individual may do is suppress envy and other traits which work against courtesy. If envy is suppressed, then some semblance of civility may be maintained. However, if individuals are unable to hold at bay this destructive element, then it will undermine their humanity and, as a corollary, the social order.

Spenser provides insight into the battle between Calidore and the Blatant Beast by alluding to two of Hercules' labours: the battle against the Hydra and the chaining of Cerberus. Calidore's fight with the Blatant Beast is said to be "like the hell-borne Hydra, which they faine/ That great Alcides whilome ouerthrew" (32). This comparison suggests the great difficulty of the battle and the need for an Iolas figure to cauterize the wounds with his flame. Calidore binds the beast with "a muzzell strong/ Of surest yron, made with many a lincke;/ Therewith he mured vp his blasphemous tong" (34). The muzzling of the Beast recalls Hercules' final labour --



the chaining of Cerberus and dragging him to the upper world.<sup>13</sup> Cain observes "the achievement of Calidore's quest reflects both the labour of 'the hell-borne Hydra, which they faine,/ That great Alcides whilome overthrew' (xi. 32) and the alternate tradition that he failed" (178).

Calidore is "like" the "strong Tirynthian swaine" (35) and his capture of the beast is "like conquest wonne" (35). The use of the word 'like' undercuts Calidore's capture of the Beast though, at the same time, it again draws attention to the tradition that considers Hercules to have failed in his labours. The allusion to Hercules entrenches Calidore's eventual failure in keeping the Beast bound. Cain observes that "the Renaissance archetype of Hercules as the altruistic hero who rids society of the monstrous is thus ironically reversed" (178).

The Beast is associated with perversion of language and, thus, of courtesy. His mouth has a "thousand tongues" that are likened to those of dogs, cats, bears, tigers (27) and, most saliently, serpents (28). One of the divisions between animals and humans is, of course, the ability to speak. The Beast perverts the gift of language and speaks "licentious words, and hatefull things" (28). The emphasis on mouths reinforces the

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<sup>13</sup> Earlier in the book, Calidore provides one of the two geneologies given for the Blatant Beast in the poem. Calidore says that the Beast "Of Cerberus whilome he was begot,/ And fell Chimaera in her darksome den" (i. 8). As such, the Beast is the offspring of two of the monsters Hercules faces in his labours, including Cerberus. In addition, both are associated negatively with language. In *Comes the Chimaera* "signifies the arts of rhetoric" (Nohrnberg 692) -- obviously in its negative connotation. Cerberus is associated with the abuse of words: slander, quarreling, Cynics and lawyers (Nohrnberg 692).

verbal nature of the threat to courtesy. Cain notes that the Beast "threatens *humanitas* - the rational, verbal, and creative values of society as conceived of in the Renaissance" (180). That is, keeping one's mouth shut is the closest one can come to controlling the envy which destroys civility. Spenser says as much in his closing stanza when he writes that the poem itself is not safe from the attack of the Blatant Beast: "Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,/ Hope to escape his venemous despite" (41).

Eventually the Beast breaks "his yron chaine" and is loosed upon the world. This time, the Beast is even worse than before: "Thenceforth more mischief and more scath he wrought/ To mortal men, then he had done before" (39). Stanza 40, which in Books I and II signals deliverance, in Book VI tells of how the Beast "raungeth through the world againe" and attacks the "most learned wits" and "the gentel poets" (40). Furthermore, the Blatant Beast suggests the beast of the apocalypse, which further entrenches the Beast's evil power.

While the book's subject is the public and comparatively secular virtue of courtesy, the temporal world is shown, by the end, to lead to nothing positive. However, it is clear that one cannot leave the world, as Melibee does, and Calidore does for a time. The only place to turn at the end of Book VI is inwards and to adopt a *contemptus mundi* philosophy. This inward turn is entrenched by the Mutabilitie Cantos, which play variations on the *contemptus mundi* theme.

## Conclusion

In considering how the *contemptus mundi* question plays out through The Faerie Queene, we must read retroactively. Rajan writes of the poem: "as we look back from a revisionary watershed the contours of the land behind seem to alter" (52). In approaching the poem retroactively, it is helpful to visualize one of Yeats' gyres. The thesis and antithesis move through one another to develop a paradoxical conclusion which, we realize when we have finished the poem, appears to have been at work throughout.

The thesis moves from engagement in the world to cynical detachment. In Book I, the Redcrosse Knight defeats the dragon which, in its most immediate sense, refers to Spain and the Papacy. Spenser does not suggest that the victory is permanent; nevertheless, it is a fight that can potentially be won. Given that there can be victory, engagement in the world is shown to be, at least sometimes, worthwhile. This engagement is given further credibility by Contemplation's recommendation of fighting for Gloriana, who is "heavenly borne" (I. x. 59). Indeed, even the more unsettling aspects of the defeat of the dragon are mitigated by the fact that St. George's defeat of the dragon has heavenly worth. Thus, despite the *contemptus*

*mundi* feel of the Contemplation episode, action is shown to have worth in Heaven.

In Book II things are not quite so clear-cut. Redemption of the body and the family is shown to be somewhat possible, if only in a preventive sense (which doesn't make it exactly redemption). While Guyon goes to the Bower on behalf of Ruddymane to redeem the family, there can be no redemption for the tragedies which ensue from Mordant's visit to the Bower. Guyon takes vengeance on the Bower for what Acrasia has done to the family but he cannot restore Ruddymane's family. We learn that the family cannot be immunized in any kind of permanent way. Guyon's only possible accomplishment is that he prevents, for the time being anyway, the permanent bestial metamorphoses of the other men in the Bower (and, as a corollary, the tragedies that would ensue for their potential families). Moreover, Book II puts forth the possibility of good things stemming from a qualified engagement in the world.

The move away from worldly involvement continues to Book VI. By now the object of deliverance is not a nation or a family, but an individual -- Calidore himself. Calidore must redeem himself from envy, an interior state of mind which arises from his interaction with others. The only way to avoid envy requires avoiding human contact completely and, thus, retreating from civilization -- not a wise option as we see in Calidore and Melibee. As such, there can be no true redemption, not even in a qualified sense. The binding of the Blatant Beast suggests that envy may be contained for short periods of time, though it cannot be banished permanently. Like Hercules,

Calidore may bind the beast, but the beast will eventually escape. Action, we learn, not just fails, but makes things worse. Spenser's choice to end the book in a monastery entrenches this conclusion, a conclusion which encompasses both an Augustinian *contemptus mundi* philosophy, and yet possesses glimmers of the giving-up-because-life-is-difficult philosophy that we have witnessed in Calidore and Melibee in cantos ix and x.

As this thesis builds through the poem, so too the antithesis in the opposing direction.<sup>1</sup> The detachment we are left with at the end of Book VI is undercut by not only the communal vision on Acidale, but also by the figures of Melibee and Calidore. The vision at Acidale contains the Graces, the country lass, Colin Clout and, if that weren't enough, a hundred naked maidens. As such, Acidale suggests sublime beauty that is implicitly communal. Furthermore, Melibee's and Calidore's retreat to pastoral shows that withdrawal from society creates problems of its own. As Rajan notes, by this point in the poem, The Faerie Queene "has made its commitments to the world of generation from which it cannot seek final disengagement" (81).

While Guyon's accomplishments are severely limited in their effects, they do lead to some good. As such, he suggests a little bit of good resulting from engagement in action. However, it is Alma, in all her vibrant potential, who suggests the most fruitful possibility for engagement in the world. She counters the sterility of

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<sup>1</sup> We may also trace the antithesis through the titular virtues of the books: holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice and courtesy. Note the gradual movement from inner virtue to more public manifestations of inner virtue.

Guyon's faeryness and infuses a sense of life and promise into Book II. Certainly Alma evokes a more promising redemption for the family than Guyon. Alma's concomitant virtue and erotic possibilities suggest a functional family at some point in the future. Thus, while Alma makes only a brief appearance, she elicits what is beautiful about human engagement and works against the growing inward turn.

The antithesis has moved from the communal vision in Book VI, to the vision of the marriageable virgin in Book II, and now to Redcrosse's interior vision of the New Jerusalem. Despite the great beauty of the other two restorative visions, somehow the Contemplation episode provides the most intensely spiritual and poignant vision in the poem. Cain observes that of all "the informing revelations serenely unaffected by time" in the poem, "the ultimate among these is Redcrosse's anagogic vision of New Hierusalem 'Wherein eternall peace and happinesse doth dwell' (x. 55)" (66). The great comfort of the vision is that despite the pain of involvement, there is always the freedom of the mind to escape and, more importantly, the promise that the pain of earthly life will eventually end. While the experience of the vision contrasts with the others in its interiority, future community is implied in the idea of the New Jerusalem. Indeed, the Geneva Bible draws attention to the community promised by the New Jerusalem in annotating Revelation 21: the city will comprise the "holie companie of the elect."

In The Faerie Queene we learn that engagement in the world almost always leads to a worse situation. But here comes the rub. We also learn that engagement is

both a prerequisite for, and an expectation that stems from, moments of grace. One has to act to be in a position to receive the grace. Then one must carry out actions inspired by the vision. There is a Herculean analogy here. Hercules can't bring back his family, yet he must carry out his labours in order to receive immortality. During the Renaissance, Hercules was often allegorized as a Christian hero. One notable example of the Christian Hercules may be found in Salutati's De laboribus Herculis. Salutati's Hercules, who "triumphed over hell in his capturing of Cerberus, who died a martyr's death, and who became a god, is conveniently analogous to Christ" (167).

While it is true that engagement creates more problems than it solves, without it there would be no grace at all. This dynamic may also be gleaned from references to the highly allusive mountains in all three books. Acidale suggests the home of the Graces, Orpheus on Rhodope, and Eden. In the Bower of Bliss we encounter a mountain that is compared to Parnassus, Rhodope, Tempe, Ida and the Garden of Eden. Despite the sinister connotations, these places also carry connotations of perfection and inspiration, suggesting that human accomplishment will be accompanied by great difficulty. When Contemplation shows Redcrosse Knight the vision of the New Jerusalem, the mountain is described as a synthesis of Sinai, the Mount of Olives, and Parnassus. The idea emerges from these allusions that inspiration must be carried out in action, though it will be necessarily accompanied by pain and suffering.

The most evocative of these allusions is the reference to the Mount of Olives in the vision of the New Jerusalem. Had Christ not gone through with the

Crucifixion, there would have been no Resurrection and, therefore, no redemption. Action, then, cannot be disengaged from the interior, spiritual world. The tension is really only resolved when the individual reaches the New Jerusalem. This conclusion is furthered in the Mutabilitie Cantos as the earthly world is depicted as completely antagonistic to the good spiritual life. Cain observes that "underlying the last two stanzas of the Cantos is the Augustinian metaphor, central to medieval culture, of Christian man as a pilgrim seeking his heavenly home while journeying through the world's tribulations" (184). Spenser ends the Cantos with a prayer: "O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Saboaths sight" (The VIII. Canto, vnperfite 2).<sup>2</sup> This play on words suggests that only in eternity does action lead to good.

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<sup>2</sup> Spenser puns on the Hebrew 'Sabaoth,' which means armies or hosts, and 'Sabbaoth,' which means rest (Cain 183).



Appendix A

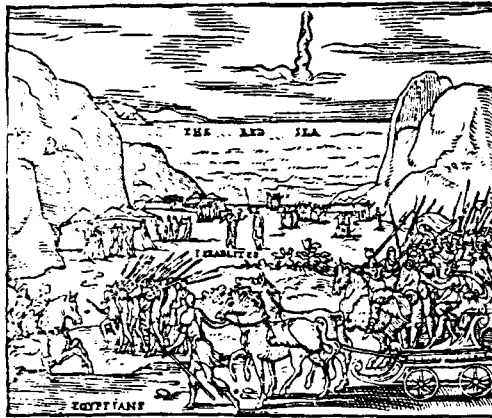
THE  
 NEW TESTAMENT  
 OF OUR LORD  
 IESUS CHRIST,

Conferred diligently with the Greke, and best approved  
 translations in diuers languages.

EXOD. XIII, VER. XIII.

FEARE YE NOT, STAND STIL, AND BE-  
 holde the saluacion of the Lord, which he wil shewe to you this day.

Great are the troubles of the righteous:



but the Lord delivereth them out of all trouble.

THE LORD SHAL FIGHT FOR YOU:  
 therefore holde you your peace, EXOD. 14, VER. 14.

AT GENEVA.

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M. D. LX.

Appendix B



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