To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Robin Renée Killman entitled "Reflections of the Pléiade Aesthetic in Edmund Spenser's Minor Poems." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Bain T. Stewart

Bain T. Stewart, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

John W. Fisher

D. Allen Carroll

Paul Barrette

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

REFLECTIONS OF THE PLÉIADE AESTHETIC IN EDMUND SPENSER'S MINOR POEMS

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Robin Renée Killman

December 1985

ABSTRACT

The sixteenth-century French writers known as the Pléiade provide an important background for understanding Edmund Spenser's philosophy of poetry. These poet-scholars viewed poetry as a serious vocation and so wrote extensively about what poetry ought and ought not to be. We know that Spenser was acquainted with their ideas in his schooling at the Merchant Taylors' School and that some of his earliest poems were translations of poems written by members of the Pléiade.

This study examines the relationship between Spenser's minor poetry and the ideas presented in the writings of the Pléiade's greatest spokesmen: Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, and Pontus de Tyard. These men regarded the poet as a figure who was chosen by God and whose song was a source of power and order in the affairs of men. Further, they believed that the poet's special status obligated him to polish the expression of his vision. They, therefore, developed extensive ideas on the poet's use of imitation (through what they called the "traducteurs," "translateurs," "paraphrastes," and the "imitateur") and of invention (with emphasis upon versification, imagery, and the selection of language).

These ideas are reflected in Spenser's poetry, especially in his minor poetry, which shows the development of his aesthetic philosophy. This study concentrates on the minor poetry from the late 1560's to the early 1590's, tracing the reflection of these concepts

through three groups of poems: (1) poems of the late 1560's--"Visions of Bellay," "Visions of Petrarch," "Ruines of Rome," and "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie"; (2) poems of the late 1570's--The Shepheardes Calendar, "Prosopopoia," "Teares of the Muses," and "Virgils Gnat"; (3) poems of the late 1580's--"Muiopotmos" and "The Ruines of Time." The final chapter applies the philosophy of the Pléiade to Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, which was written during the time of Spenser's masterpieces. In examining Spenser's mature aesthetic, it becomes clear that, like the Pléiade, Spenser uses his philosophy of the vatic artist and his most refined imitative and inventive skills to resolve for his audience the tensions between life and art, the actual and the ideal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Studies of Spenser's Aesthetic	1
	Spenser and the Pléiade	10
	The Aesthetic of the Pléiade	15
	The Pléiade Aesthetic and Spenser's Minor Poetry	23
II.	"TROUBLED PUDDLES": PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST	25
	Renaissance Views of the Poet	25
	Divine Origins of the Poet	32
	The Imagination of the Poet	63
	The Power of the Poet's Song	80
III.	"TO SPEAKE IT FITLY FORTH": THE POET'S CRAFT	109
	The Poet's Labors	111
	The Pléiade's View of Imitation	114
	The Pléiade's View of Invention	121
	Spenser's Craft: Imitation and Invention	141
	Versification	148
	Imagery	153
	Language	158
IV.	"BEAUTY'S BURNING LAMP": COLIN CLOUTS COME HOME AGAINE AND THE MATURITY OF SPENSER'S AESTHETIC	169
	The Maturing of Spenser's Aesthetic	169
	The Figure of the Poet in Colin Clouts.	182
	Imitation and Invention in Colin Clouts	199
	Versification	202
	Language	207
	Imagery	215
	Conclusion	225
BIBLIOGRAPHY		230
VITA		240

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

O pierlesse Poesye, where is then thy place?
If nor in Princes pallace thou doe sitt:
(And yet is Princes pallace the most fitt)
Ne brest of baser birth doth thee embrace.
Then make thee winges of thine aspyring wit,
And, whence thou camst, flye backe to heauen apace.
Spenser, The Shepheardes Calendar, "October"

Comblés de segrés divers,
Ils chantent par l'univers
D'une vois où Dieu abonde,
Et l'ardeur de leur faconde
Sert d'oracles, et sont faits
Les ministres plus parfaits
De la Deité parfonde.
Ronsard, L'Ode à Michel de L'Hospital

Studies of Spenser's Aesthetic

Richard Helgerson in his examination of Spenser's idea of a literary career[1] concludes that one of Spenser's greatest contributions to English letters was his formation of the notion of poetry as a legitimate vocation for a mature, responsible man. Not only does Helgerson see Spenser as a seminal writer of the period in terms of technical and prosodic influence, but he further asserts that while Daniel and Drayton could more easily call themselves "professional

---

[1]Richard Helgerson, "The New Poete Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career," PMLA, 93 (1978), 893-911.

poets" because Spenser had preceded them, they, like most of their contemporaries, neither approved nor followed what he sees as Spenser's radical conception that a poet and his poetry need not necessarily be the toys of fools, the vehicles of vanity, nor the idle means of entertainment and passing the time. He concludes:

> What is surprising is that without denying either the humanistic or the romantic side of his cultural heritage and in a country that had known no major poet for two hundred years, Spenser could have created a body of work sufficient to give form and substance to an ideal that other men entertained only in the realm of hypothetical speculation. Despite the pressures of his generation, Spenser took poetry beyond repentance and, in so doing, gave England its first poet.[2]

In taking this position Helgerson both gives lip-service to a generally accepted consensus and implies a new evaluation of the English Renaissance's premier poet. While all critics would agree that Spenser was a great man of letters whose publication of The Shepheardes Calendar in 1579 is one of the sure hallmarks of the renascence of English literature to follow, few seem to have speculated in systematic terms on how his concepts of poetry and example as a professional poet helped to stimulate the atmosphere of literary creativity around him. Indeed, beyond some general speculation across the wide range of Spenserian scholarship concerning his lost treatise "The English Poete" (which E. K. mentions in the argument to "October" in The Shepheardes Calendar), there has been little attempt to reconstruct Spenser's theory of poetry as an

---

[2]Helgerson, p. 908.

art and of the poet as the artist. Even Helgerson, who advances Spenser's claim to literary fame on the basis of his concept of the poet, examines that conception primarily in vocational terms and not in the terms of his overall aesthetic.[3]

Before the middle of this century commentary on Spenser's notions of what ought or ought not to be included in the work of poetry came chiefly through notes on particular passages, descriptively setting forth the contents of his art. Such comments about Spenser as those collected in the The Spenser Variorum do little more than assert that certain qualities do exist within his work.[4] The editors, having commented on their presence, make no effort to adduce from those qualities a general aesthetic system that Spenser may have developed.

Most studies in Spenserian art that appeared before the middle of this century satisy themselves with describing the qualities and techniques that make up his verse and either leave those descriptions to speak for themselves or examine them in terms of critical generalizations current in Renaissance ideas. When Ida Langdon announces that her examination provides Materials For a Study of Spenser's Theory of Fine Art, she does just that. She carefully

---

[3]In addition to the above article, Helgerson has offered further examinations of the Elizabethan "laureate" in "The Elizabethan Laureate: Self-Presentation and the Literary System," English Literary History, 46 (1979), 193-220.

[4]The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, et al., 11 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1932-1957).

collates selections from Spenser's verse under various headings from the "Power of Poetry" to "Landscaping," but she offers almost no theoretical exposition beyond a general introductory essay.[5] Even so rich and singular a study as W. L. Renwick's Edmund Spenser: An Essay in Renaissance Poetry does no more than to give an overview in a single chapter of imitation as a general Aristotelian theory behind composition and art, and then to relate this mimetic concept to the matter of poetry. Thus, while asserting that his study is concerned more with "ideas than with events--or rather with a body of ideas whose assimilation was the most important event in the artistic life of this particular poet--and most of all with those ideas about the way of writing which Spenser would learn from his masters and discuss with friends at school and University,"[6] Renwick is also conscious of the burden of reconstructing a poet's creative theories. He concentrates on the ideas and critical tastes that Spenser would have encountered and not on formulating Spenser's interpolation of the critical milieu in his work. Thus, until very recently such studies have failed to investigate whatever self-conscious sense of creative principles Colin's maker may have had.

In 1933, however, B. E. C. Davis obviously has a different purpose in mind in addressing Spenser's use of diction, his style,

---

[5] Materials For A Study of Spenser's Theory of Fine Art (Ithaca, New York: R. Wagner and Sons, 1911).

[6] W. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser: An Essay in Renaissance Poetry (London: Edwin Arnold, 1925), p. 6.

and his versification. He does relate the particular features of Spenser's style to Renaissance beliefs and practices. In Chapter Three, which covers the all-inclusive topic of humanism, after listing instances within the poems where Spenser uses the concrete to teach an abstract truth, Davis concludes that Spenser's poetry "is circumscribed by the taste and beliefs of his age," that his artistic productions embodied the humanistic notion of the "art of right living."[7] Such critics as Renwick, Davis, and a host of others have added greatly to the dimensions of our understanding of Spenser as partaker of the Renaissance and as individual poet.

As literary criticism has become more self-conscious, theorists have become more interested in divining in our forbears the critical seeds of our present tastes and opinions. Consequently, Spenserian studies in the last fifteen years have become more and more interested in what the man who created in Colin Clout one of literature's most unforgettable poet figures perceived for himself and his fellows as the role of a poet. These recent studies have fallen into three general categories: (1) the poet as a conduit of imaginative power; (2) the poet as hero, and (3) the poet as he appears in individual poems.

As early as 1961, Harry Berger, began exploring Spenser's use of the imagination as a creative force.[8] His initial study, along

---

[7]B. E. C. Davis, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Essay (London: University of Cambridge Press, 1933), p. 64.

[8]Harry Berger, Jr., "Spenser's Gardens of Adonis: Force and Form in the Renaissance Imagination," University of Toronto Quarterly, 30 (1961), 128-49.

with several others over the next decade, concentrated on the human imagination as a power capable of primary creation and on the mind of the poet as the vehicle through which that germinative force was exercised.[9] Berger's position, a radical departure from the conventional understanding that sixteenth-century orthodox theology precluded any primary creation except by God himself, would have been heretically foreign to such a representative Elizabethan as Spenser.

Thomas H. Cain's analyses of Spenser's use of the Orpheus figure reflect Berger's interest in the exaltation of the imagination as a first-cause creator.[10] However, while Berger seeks to establish Spenser's belief in the poet as a "maker" through psychological approaches to the workings of an artistic mind, Cain establishes the potency of the poet by studying the use of received myth. Both critics set forth irrefutably that there is in the corpus of Spenser's work a concrete belief in the poet as a figure of singular imminence and social efficacy.

While these critics have come to recognize the creative powers vested in Spenser's poet figures, others such as Richard Mallette[11]

---

[9]See particularly, Berger's essay on "The Prospect of the Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry," Studies in English Literature, 1 (1961), 93-120, and "The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World," Centennial Review, 9 (1965), 36-78.

[10]Thomas H. Cain, "Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus", University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1971), 24-47; "The Strategy of Praise in Spenser's 'Aprill,'" Studies in English Literature, 8 (1968), 45-58.

[11]Richard Mallette, "Poet and Hero in Book VI of the Faerie Queene," Modern Language Review, 72 (1977), 257-67.

and Louis A. Montrose[12] have examined the poet as the true hero figure in Spenser's poetic cosmos. Mallette's concerns are purely those of interpreting Spenser's heroes and their quests as metaphors for the artist and his drive to create and to understand the role of his creativity. He concludes his examination:

> The pastoral world, the youth of Calidore, and the poet's work share a fragile beauty that cannot be protected. And yet poets and heroes must and will continue to quest. Buried deep within every man lies the hidden nursery of virtue, planted in the remote past of the race. The very attempt to discover it, the awkward process of making virtue a part of fallen experience, is the aim of the courteous man and the mission of the responsible poet.[13]

Like Mallette, Montrose agrees that much of Spenser's presentations of courtship and courtesy are metaphoric representations of the activities of the poet himself. He disagrees, however, with the opinion that Spenser saw any real value or possibility of accomplishment for the creative writer in the sixteenth century. Rather, Montrose postulates that Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar in particular gives bitter expression to the discrepancies between the "Myth of the Poet" that Spenser desired to believe in and the duties of the poet as he performed them every day. While this decrepancy comes as no surprise to any student of the period, Montrose asserts

---

[12]Louis A. Montrose, "'The perfect paterne of a Poet': The Poetics of Courtship in The Shepheardes Calendar," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 21 (1979), 34-67.

[13]Mallette, p. 267.

that it is Spenser's recognition of this that gives his configuration of the poet a special fire; for Spenser's poet learns to desire not transcendence of time, but endurance through it, a victory achieved solely through the creation of his poetic art.[14]

In addition to these studies, several other critics have examined the depiction of the verbal artist and his artistry as they appear in individual poems. Chief among these are John W. Moore's interpretation of Colin in the January eclogue of The Shepheardes Calendar as a novice in a quest for artistic perfection,[15] and Robert A. Bryan's brief discussion of the poet as a cleanser in the "Mother Hubberds Tale."[16] Kenneth John Atchity also examines "Prosopopia" as a showcase for a poet who not only has poetic wares to sell, but who also accomplishes his task by embedding his comments on the figure and fate of poets in the more obviously explicated political allegory.[17] Atchity, like Judith Dunidas,[18] observes that for Spenser order in the cosmos is at least in part the result of the ordering force of art: "Poet, narrator and Mother Hubbard form a mutually reciprocal alliance which leads directly to the

---

[14]Montrose, p. 63.

[15]John W. Moore, Jr., "Colin Breaks His Pipe: A Reading of the January Eclogue," English Literary Renaissance, 5 (1975), 3-24.

[16]Robert A. Bryan, "Poets, Poetry and Mercury in Spenser's 'Prosopopia: Mother Hubberds Tale,'" Costerus, 5 (1972), 27-33.

[17]Kenneth John Atchity, "Spenser's 'Mother Hubberds Tale': Three Themes of Order," Philological Quarterly, 52 (1973), 161-72.

[18]Judith Dunidas, "'Muiopotmos': A World of Art," Yearbook of English Studies, 5 (1975), 30-38.

characteristic impact of the poem . . . until poetry itself, as an ordering principle, has been embodied in triple depth in the satiric fable."[19]

Turning from the "portrait of the artist" studies to the art itself, A. Leigh DeNeef examines Spenser's "The Ruines of Time,"[20] a late minor work elegizing Sir Phillip Sidney. In a poem which he says is often dismissed as nothing more than a commissioned eulogy, De Neef finds a poetic statement of Spenser's aesthetic principles--a sort of imagistic rendering of the dead Sidney's own Apologie for Poesy. DeNeef's discussion implies, further, that the strategies used here were not simply a means of showing greater honor for the dead patron, but can also provide a "useful poetic paradigm for approaching Spenser's more covert literary assumptions in larger and more successful poems."[21]

Even so limited a survey as this makes it plain that recent scholarship has begun to uncover Spenser's aesthetic principles for poetry. And yet, there is still a lack of a systematic articulation of what his theories are and how they are embodied in his poetry. The confusion results in part from the chaos that seems intrinsic to the Renaissance literary milieu. As an era which saw a meteoric expansion of literary activity and of interest in literary theories,

---

[19]Atchity, p. 171.

[20]A. Leigh DeNeef, "'The Ruines of Time': Spenser's Apology for Poetry," Studies in Philology, 76 (1979), 262-71.

[21]DeNeef, p. 71.

Spenser's age produced an ocean of critical opinion whose every wave seemed to press to the surface a new aspect or quality which was to supercede the importance of the preceding undulation. The surface of this sea was brilliant with the enthusiasms for newly discovered ideas, but so ever-changing that, beyond the recognition that the idea had emerged in the sunlight only a moment before, the fluidity and flux fought all efforts to impose order or pattern. And so critics have quite rightly persisted in measuring Spenser's verse against the theoretical principles that rode the crests of critical interest.

Spenser and the Pléiade

Studies in the Renaissance have long since mapped out the movement of these ideas from the intellectual waters of Italy across France, finally to break with crashing force on the literary coasts of England. Hence, it seems remarkable that while casting about for markers to help illuminate the depths and channels or Spenser's aesthetic, many critics have overlooked a most important set of indicators--the reflections in his poetry of the ideas of the Pléiade, a group of French writers who flourished in the middle years of the sixteenth century. More than merely sharers in the common ideals pervading Renaissance Europe, the writers of the Pléiade were on the forefront of the movement to establish poetry as a serious and sacred art in its own right and so, at the very least, as P. O.

Kristeller puts it, were the "channels" through which many new ideas were transmitted to England at large.[22]

Further, in an age when many of the greatest creative geniuses (Spenser and Shakespeare included) did not deliberately set down a systematic statement of aesthetics, the Pléiade as a group and as individuals consciously set out to frame a poetic that would not only describe the nature of their own efforts but also prescribe for others how similar ends might be achieved. While England saw no formal publication of an ars poetica before George Gascoigne's Certayne Notes of Instruction (1575), Du Bellay's Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse was published in 1549 and was in circulation in England soon after.[23] The Deffence was composed not by a humanist pedagogue who merely played with poetry as an amusing toy, but by a successful verbal artist with a serious dedication to poetry. As Renwick has pointed out, the combination of a successful, practicing artist and a serious theorist made Du Bellay's poetics irresistible to the young poet Spenser, for not only could he be fired by the theories of the poetics, but he could also observe the new life that the practice of these theories had given French poetry: "He had before his eyes the example of France, newly made illustrious by men yet living, by a group of poets whose situation and whose problems

---

[22]P. O. Kristeller, The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 19.

[23]Renwick, Spenser, p. 25.

were almost exactly his own, and whose experience, solutions, and methods were clearly set forth by themselves."[24] Further, Sears Jayne has observed that "the whole rejuvenation of English poetry which began with Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar was a product of French inspiration, and Spenser's interest in the Pléiade was only the first symptom of what became the normal relationship between poets in France and England."[25]

That Spenser was aware of the Pléiade's theory and practice seems beyond dispute. As a student at the Merchant Taylors' School, Spenser found himself in the enviable position of being a student of the progressive Richard Mulcaster, one of the earliest advocates in England of the Continent's new poetry. Although The Elementarie, Mulcaster's treatise on the education of young gentlemen and their skills as writers, was not published until 1582, it is clearly the compilation of his years of experience at Merchant Taylors' and later as highmaster at St. Paul's. This work, along with his earlier piece, The Positions, evidences Mulcaster's concurrence with the two primary poetic concerns of the Pléiade. The first of these is that poetry is a sacred art bestowed by divinity and demanding that the recipient devote his life energies to the perfection and expression of that gift. In Positions Mulcaster urges other educators

---

[24]Renwick, pp. 24-25.

[25]Sears Jayne, "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Comparative Literature, 4 (1952), 233.

to minister to boys gifted with poetic talent, so they might better fulfill the calling of their art.[26] Second, in addition to reflecting the usual humanist veneration for Latin, Mulcaster's Elementarie goes further to advise that every schoolboy should be fluent in the reading, writing (which included emphasis on spelling), and grammar of his own tongue.[27]

Like du Bellay's Deffence and the even earlier Dialogo delle Lingue of Sperone Speroni (on whose ideas du Bellay leaned very heavily), Mulcaster argued that all languages have the potential for beauty and the capacity for great literary accomplishments: "No one tung is more fine then other naturellie, but by industrie of the speaker, which . . . endevoreth himself to garnish it with eloquence and to enrich it with learning."[28] Further, Mulcaster believed that it was the ethical and patriotic duty of every writer to strengthen his native language in literary usage:

> For is it not indeed a marvellous bondage, to becom servant to one tung, with the gain of most time? our own fredom, the Latin tung remembering us, of our thraldom and bondage? I love Rome, but London better, I favor Italie, but England more, I honor the Latin, but I worship the English.[29]

---

[26]Richard Mulcaster, The Positions (1581), ed. R. H. Quick (London: Longmans, 1888), p. 269.

[27]Richard Mulcaster, The First Part of the Elementarie (1582), ed. E. T. Campagnac (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 62.

[28]Mulcaster, Elementarie, p. 253.

[29]Mulcaster, Elementarie, p. 254.

Thus, Mulcaster's Elementarie reflects the Pléiade's devotion to the use of vernacular in literature, their belief in the high position of the poet in society, and their notion of the sanctity of the works that such an artist produces.

Needless to say, by introducing his students to the Pléiade's ideas about a vigorous vernacular literature Mulcaster created the opportunity for them to become acquainted with all of the group's notions. Renwick asserts that Spenser

> . . . was the pupil of a man who belonged to the same school of thought as the Pléiade and shared many of their ideas, and while under his care he translated certain sonnets of du Bellay for Jean van der Noodt, a fanatical propagandist of Ronsard and the new poetry. Long afterwards when he was a poet of established position, he was still sufficiently interested to remodel these translations and add a eulogy of his original. The admirer of du Bellay could not fail to know of Ronsard, so often hailed by du Bellay, in verse and prose, as friend and chieftain, and . . . Sir Phillip Sidney must have talked of the great French poet who was in high favour at the court of Charles IX during his sojourn in Paris. Gascoigne's Certayne Notes of Instruction . . . is in large part a version--lacking it is true, some of the most characteristic and challenging passages--of Ronsard's Abbregé de l'Art François and every English critic down to Ben Jonson shows evident signs of acquaintance with the French ideas. Spenser could not fail to know this movement, and could not fail to be interested.[30]

While it would be a deceptive simplification to assert that the Pléiade's precepts and practices were the ultimate sources for all of the artistic beliefs that inform Spenser's poetry, it is an

---

[30]Renwick, Spenser, p. 25. Ronsard's work referred to by Renwick first appeared in Paris in 1565.

equally deceptive injustice to fail to use one of the most consciously developed aesthetics of the Renaissance to help interpret Spenser's distinctive concept of the poet-artist. Thus, A. C. Satterthwaite in Spenser, Ronsard, and du Bellay would agree with Saintsbury, although he seems to feel no need to provide any new evidence and relies on the testimonies of such critics as Sidney Lee, Louis B. Friedland, Jefferson B. Fletcher, and W. L. Renwick to support his contention that there is an indisputable connection between the ideas of Ronsard and his fellows and the ideas of Spenser.[31] After placing the burden of proof on his predecessors, he goes on to examine the approaches of the three poets toward conventional Renaissance themes: mutability, time, fame, and the neo-platonic world view.

The Aesthetic of the Pléiade

George Saintsbury in his monumental History of Criticism says, in assessing the role of the Pléiade's critical theories, that "the manifestoes of its three greatest spokesmen sometimes lack the schematics and comprehensiveness of their later English cousins; yet the aesthetic discussions of du Bellay, Ronsard, and Jacques Peletier retain their greatness and importance because they were some of the first pieces of revolutionary criticism and because as such they

---

[31] A. C. Satterthwaite, Spenser, Ronsard, and du Bellay: A Renaissance Comparison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 9.

were so germinal."[32] Because the Pléiade, or New Swans, as they referred to themselves, was a loosely-defined group whose membership beyond a certain inner core was variable in both theory and practice, some limits need to be set.

Beyond all dispute, Joachim du Bellay was the senior member of the conclave, though not its liege lord. That position belonged by consensus to the more inspired intellect and poet Pierre de Ronsard. Beyond these two, the other members vary according to the tastes of the accounter. As a host of critics have noted, not the least Henri Chamard in his historical study Histoire de la Pléiade, the term "Pléiade" itself was used by Ronsard to apply to seven brilliant contemporary poets who embodied in their poetry the stellar excellencies of the ancients. Chamard quotes from Ronsard's "L'Epistre au Lecteur" of 1556: "Il me souvient de'avoir autrefois accomparé sept poëtes de mon temps à la splendeur des sept estoilles de la Pléiade, comme autrefois on avoit fait des sept excellens poëtes Grecs qui flourissoient presque du mesme temps."[33] Chamard continues to point out that even in Ronsard's day there was some instability about which poets belonged to this magnificent seven. Critics and historians, however, have generally accepted as members Ronsard; du Bellay; Jean-Antoine de Baïf, fellow student at Coqueret

---

[32]George Saintsbury, A History of Criticism (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1949), II, 221.

[33]Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade (1939; rpt. Paris: Didier, 1961), I, 1.

and lifetime advocate of the group's principles; Rémy Belleau and Etienne Jodelle, two lesser poets; and Pontus de Tyard, the philosopher and theorist.[34] Of the remaining members, Pontus de Tyard offers through his philosophical dialogues the best theoretical background for the group's poetic philosophy. Coming to the group from outside of the Coqueret association, Pontus de Tyard championed the poetic innovations of the Pléiade and chose to ally himself with the new group. His incisive discussions of poetic theory and technique both of his comrades in the Pléiade and other writers in the French Renaissance give his judgments objectivity and perspective.[35] Although modern criticism finds his poetry average, Pontus de Tyard was held in high esteem by both Ronsard and du Bellay and by the other members of the group. Further, critics such as Patterson, Castor and Saintsbury acknowledge that Pontus de Tyard's Solitaire Premier provides one of the most complete discussions of the neoplatonic philosophy which underlies much of the group's aesthetic.[36] Chamard notes of the Solitaire that "on ne pouvait mieux définir et plus justement reconnaître les sens et la portée de la revolution accomplie depuis

---

[34]Chamard, I, 5.

[35]W. F. Patterson, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory: 1328-1630 (1935; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), I, 428.

[36]Patterson, I, 426-29; Castor, pp. 30-33.

peu par la Pléiade à ses débuts."[37] Indeed, John Lapp describes Pontus de Tyard as a "writer, who, although not a major figure of his time, was at least a catalyst in this exciting chemistry; one who, although neither a great poet nor a great philosopher, shared and in a measure foreshadowed both the poetic theories of Ronsard and du Bellay . . . ."[38] While the exact make-up of the Pléiade is sometimes disputed, Pontus de Tyard is always included in any reckoning of membership.[39]

A just formulation of the Pléiade's critical theories may be derived from the works of its three greatest spokesmen. Du Bellay fired the group's earliest manifesto in the heat of artistic conflict with Sebillet's Art poetique françoys of 1548. While it has the ardor of a new cause, it also bears the blemishes of haste and prematurity. In general, Ronsard, who wrote no sustained Deffence confined his critical opinions to a brief treatment known as the Abbrégé de l'Art Poetique françois (1565) to the prefaces to several of his poems, most notably the "Epistre au Lecteur" precedes the Trois livres du Recueil des nouvelles Poësies (1564), and like du Bellay, to the poetry itself. Tyard, whose Solitaire of 1552 has been judged by many as the most comprehensive formulation of the

---

[37]Chamard, III, 147.

[38]John C. Lapp, ed. The Universe of Pontus de Tyard: A Critical Edition of "L'Univers" (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. xi.

[39]See Chamard, I, 10; Clements, p. xvi; Patterson, I, 426.

neoplatonic philosophy underlying the group's poetic theories, provides helpful background for understanding the controversial new aesthetic.

It would be folly to attempt to retrace the critical footsteps of men who have devoted lifetimes of study to the Pléiade and to writing definitive assessments of the school's theories and practices. No greater and more meticulous historical examination of the Swans' inception, development, philosophical background, influence, and reputation could be hoped for than Henri Chamard's previously cited four-volume Histoire de la Pléiade. These volumes contain a most careful recounting of each individual's literary development and a helpful presentation of each individual's maturation within his milieu. While Chamard offers some critical assessment, as such a study cannot help doing, he provides also a repository of critical opinions, conveniently gathered under the appropriate subject or theme. Such a historical perspective helps to inform the examination of the group's aesthetic in two other seminal studies. In The Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade (1942) Robert J. Clements, relying on Chamard as well as the texts themselves, attempts to present a Pléiade aesthetic couched in Renaissance critical terms. His study of the Brigade's[40] poetics examines the arguments of truth

---

[40]This term is used by Ronsard to describe himself and his fellow scholars at Dorat's Coqueret. He later says that the great seven came from the Brigade, a fact which Chamard notes and uses as his temporal marker to conclude that the term "Pléiade" was applied only after 1556. (Chamard, I, 5-6). Other critics seem to use the terms interchangeably.

versus sincerity, art versus nature, and sweetness versus utility. While his insights seem to be beyond reproach, the overlapping of his schema makes systematic conclusions difficult.

Building on Clements' work, Graham Castor in Pléiade Poetics (1964) attempts to recast the aesthetic from still another perspective of Renaissance theory--that of the role of the imagination. Castor cites Henri Weber's argument that the real fountainhead of the new French poetry was the conflict between the dogmas of "imitation" and "inspiration," and agrees with his feeling that it was the humanist "orgueilleuse confiance dans les forces de l'individu" which led the poets of Coqueret to a militant espousal of divine inspiration:

> . . . le caractère sacré reconnu à l'inspiration
> est une defense de la liberté du poète contre
> l'esclavage de la vie de cour et la poésie officielle,
> à laquelle il se trouve contraint par les
> exigences de sa situation materielle.[41]

Castor, however, goes still further and maintains that modern failure to understand the Pléiade's position on the necessity of both imitation and inspiration comes solely from a lack of comprehension of how these terms were conceived in sixteenth-century Europe and how both of these terms affect the operation of a third Renaissance literary dictum on the necessity of "invention." Castor's examination concentrates on a clarification of these terms in general Renaissance

---

[41]Henri Weber, La Création Poétique au XVIe Siécle en France de Maurice Scève à Agrippa d'Aubigné (Paris: Didier, 1956), I, 108.

understanding, on noting the evidence of their operation in the works of the French, and on showing that evidence in the embodiment of the Pléiade's aesthetic.

These critics provide perceptive insights into the ideas of the members of the Pléiade regarding the role of poetry as a sacred art and the place of the poet as its revered practitioner; however, in order to examine the relationship between the Pléiade and the poetic theory and practice of Edmund Spenser, a systematic statement of the Pléiade's position must be formulated in three areas: the nature of the poet, the poet's craft, and the poet's vision.

First, whatever technical practices the school arrived at as means for their ends, the basis for those practices was their image of the figure of the poet. Their belief in the poet as a man of philosophical and social elevation is sometimes conveniently dismissed as nothing more than a dramatic posture designed to feed the typical courtier's greed for advancement and preferment. However, as closer examination will show, this veneration stemmed from a deep-seated philosophical understanding of poetry and accounted not only for the content of their work, but also for the vehicles through which their message was communicated. Understanding of their vision of the poet as an ideal and an actuality makes clearer the tensions reflected in these poems between clarity and obscurity and between artistic images and rustic vernacular.

Further, the perspectives of these studies also illuminate the second area of the Pléiade's aesthetic concern--the poet's craft.

In a culture that had for the last two hundred years enjoyed and endured the poetry of the "grand rhetoriquers" and the lesser lights that imitated them, the means that a poet should use to produce his art was a highly-controversial topic. As Castor and Weber have shown, the theories that undergird the execution of their actual poetic practice turned upon the concepts of inspiration, invention, and imitation. For it is within the parameters of these terms that the Pléiade went on to choose specific verbal tools that would implement those theories in their art.

Finally, any consideration of their poetic credos must examine what things the Pléiade considered as viable components of the poet's vision. As further discussion will make clear, the Pléiade effected a difficult solution to one of the century's literary conflicts--whether art or nature is the proper province for poetry. While Clements develops at length that quantitatively the works seem to show a preference for nature,[42] Castor corrects this myopic interpretation by pointing out that the Pléiade held the two opposites in forced reconciliation, creating a tension that even today gives their verse much of its emotional power.[43] On the basis of this tense compromise the very "stuff" of their poetry was selected, and from their convictions on the ethical obligations of the poet figure that "stuff" was shaped and polished into the final products.

---

[42]Clements, p. 252.

[43]Castor, pp. 46-48.

The Pléiade Aesthetic and Spenser's Minor Poetry

Having discussed critical perspectives often taken toward England's Spenser, and the need for a comprehensive articulation of his theories, and having established the importance of the French Pléiade as an aesthetic template against which to check Spenser's own poetics, we must now set the boundaries of our discussion of Spenser. Since most critics assume that Spenser's earliest contact with the ideas of the continent's literary avant-garde was as a schoolboy at Mulcaster's academy, it seems logical that the simplest and clearest examples of the Brigade's theories might be present in his earliest works. Several of Spenser's earliest pieces published in The Complaints in 1591 are translations or imitations of du Bellay or other continental writers.

Evidence of the Pléiade does not rest only here, however; his acquaintance with their precepts can be seen not only in these immature schoolboy exercises, but also in the works of the late seventies and early eighties; "Prosopopia," "The Teares of the Muses," "Virgil's Gnat," and The Shepheardes Calendar all bear the unmistakeable impress of their theories and aesthetic approaches. Later, in "Muiopotmos" and "The Ruines of Time," Spenser continues to hammer out the filligree of his own art, and the credos of the Pléiade make his intentions and purposes more apparent. Thus, an examination of Spenser's minor pieces in light of these French critical theories will make Spenser's aesthetic more tangible and will also help us to

understand the development of the critical theory that made possible the beauty and endurance of Spenser's more mature works, The Faerie Queene, The Epithalamion, and The Fowre Hymnes. Chapter II deals with the nature of the poet: his divine origin, the importance of the imagination, the power of his song. Chapter III turns to the Pléiade's conception of the poet's craft (his labors, the importance of imitation and invention) and Spenser's reflection of that craft in the earlier minor poems. The final chapter of this study examines Spenser's concepts of the figure of the poet, the poet's craft, and the poet's vision as they are embodied in the minor piece of his fullest maturity, Colin Clouts Come Home Againe. The goal of this chapter is to make clear the distillation of the Pléiade's ideas in his most mature aesthetic.

As Satterthwaite is quick to point out in his own comparison, the purpose of such a study is not to establish debts, borrowings, or sources between Spenser and the Pléiade. Rather, the aim of this examination is to so place Spenser within the arc of his fellows' light that the resulting cast of shadow and illumination will enable us to conceive his stature more accurately.

CHAPTER II

"TROUBLED PUDDLES": PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

Renaissance Views of the Poet

Euterpe, Muse of music and lyric poetry, laments in "The Teares of the Muses":

> The sacred springs of horsefoot Helicon
> So oft bedewed with our learned layes,
> And speaking streames of pure Castalion,
> The famous witnesse of our wonted praise,
> They trampled haue with their fowle footings trade,
> And like to troubled puddles haue them made. (11. 271-76)

In so doing, she gives poignant articulation to one of the most perplexing questions of the Renaissance: the nature and role of the poet.

Writers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could read denunciations, dating as far back as the ancient Greeks, which describe the poet as a "deceiver" or "distorter" whose place in any harmonious order was disruptive and undesirable. Further, Spenser and his counterparts could easily look around them at court for more contemporary evidence that poetry seemed often a paltry toy used by courtiers and versifiers for idle pleasure or aid in self-advancement. Juxtaposed against this view, however, was the equally ingrained notion of the poet as a figure of priestly isolation, elevated by a special link with the divine mind, and having a vital role in the smooth operation of a well-ordered society. These two strains are clear to any reader of the Renaissance literature,

whether in Italian, French, English, or even Latin. It is through the pained and often confused wonderings of poets such as Spenser, Ronsard, and du Bellay about this apparent paradox that both the poets of the Pléiade and Spenser are able to perceive in their notions of a "true poet" a resolution to the dichotomy, however tenuously maintained.

At least as early as Pindar's Pythian Odes,[1] writers of verse have lamented the place of poetry in society. Plato urges in the Ion that poets be excluded from the perfect society because they are deceivers; Pindar grieves that his fellow writers are hirelings; Boethius in despair wonders why the gods suffer any of the Muses to come near Man because they "foster sorrow by poisonous deceits."[2] The medieval Schoolmen, building on the suspicions of poetry held by both their classical and ecclesiastical forbears, set up poetry as a "handmaid" to ethical and moral teaching, simultaneously moralizing and allegorizing classical literature.[3]

In the Renaissance, as the literature of antiquity was being rediscovered, poetry appeared in the lineaments of a pliable toy whose lines and textures could be suitably manipulated to satisfy

---

[1]Alexander F. Murrison, trans. and ed., The Odes of Pindar Rendered in English Verse (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1933), XI, 41-44.

[2]Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, as translated by Robert J. Clements, in "Poetry and Philosophy in the Renaissance," Comparative Literature Studies, 8 (1971), 2.

[3]Robert J. Clements, "Poetry and Philosophy in the Renaissance," Comparative Literature Studies, 8 (1971), 4.

the desires of its makers at the moment. Thus, early humanists fresh with new learning and ideas to be disputed or disseminated could couch their thoughts in verse--and poetry became a pleasant teacher. This notion, which Sidney later argues for in an Apology for Poetry, was apparent even earlier to the vanguard humanist movements in Italy and France. Renaissance writers seemed to realize en masse that the ancients numbered many "Sunday poets." Plato, for example, admits in the Republic that laws could be given in verse; Pythagorus set his treatises up in verse, along with Empedocles, Theophrastus, Heraclitus, and Diogenes.[4] With delight the Renaissance adopted poetry as a vehicle through which to vend its wares, whatever the particular proprietor might be selling.

That this discovery occurred in the midst of a court environment is, as Daniel Javitch has shown, inevitable, given the Renaissance system of patronage.[5] The arts have never been self-supportive, and in a society where money came from court, it was natural that most learners and, consequently, writers of verse be connected in some way with the court and its nobility. Further, having seen that writers of antiquity had used poetry according to their individual concerns, Renaissance courtiers found it only natural to use poetry

---

[4]Clements, "Poetry," p. 4.

[5]Daniel Javitch, "Poetry and Court Conduct: Puttenham's 'Arte of Englishe Poesie' in the Light of Castiglione's Cortegiano," Modern Language Notes, 87 (1972), 865.

for their interests: preferment through flattery of superiors or literary distinction through flattery of a woman. It became a mark of social grace and a testimony to correct schooling to be able to versify, to demonstrate one's thoughts on a given subject in a poem patterned after a decorously chosen classical model. Thus, by the 1550's the courts of Italy, France, and England teemed with Renaissance "gentlemen" who evidenced both their learning and their courtliness through composing "prettye verses."

Rising against this tide, however, came the second wave of humanists, first in Italy and then in France, whose work was distinguished by their emphasis on linguistic and rhetorical questions.[6] Beginning in Italy, they clustered around the courts of their patrons--the Medicis--in "academies" which discussed, argued, outlined, and practiced techniques of writing. The earliest of these was in Florence, the famous Platonic academy of the mid-fifteenth century which numbered Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandolla as its members. These men and their ideas were germinal not only for much of sixteenth-century Europe's neoplatonic thought but more immediately for the rapid spread of the "academic" system throughout Italy. Ultimately, the academies spread to France--either through the normal intercourse between the two countries, or because of family linkage between the Medici rulers in Italy and the Valois

---

[6]Francis Yates, The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century (London: Univ. of London Press, 1947), p. 1.

kings in France, or through a combination of the two. Regardless of its means of transmission, the "academic" movement took with it to France not only the particular thoughts of the Academies but also their general attitude that language and rhetoric were serious concerns, demanding and due the lifetime study and practice of serious men. For these humanists, poetry was a legitimate concern which justified itself as a proper vocation, just as the church, the law, the military, or philosophy could justify themselves as respectable vocations. Petty idlers and preferment-seeking courtiers had no place within the walls of these academies.

Hence, when Jean Dorat began his Collège de Coqueret, he attracted to him not well-to-do Renaissance gentlemen who wanted to complete a "finishing school" education, but a group of serious students of language, literature, and philosophy. They sought from their master and from one another an atmosphere which both dispensed knowledge of language theory and also nurtured a critical practice of those precepts.[7] From almost the beginning of their studies there, Ronsard, du Bellay, Jean-Antoinne de Baïf, and their fellows felt themselves to be the champions of a new kind of literary practice. From this coalition emerged in 1549 du Bellay's Deffence et la Illustration de la Langue Françoyse, the clarion call, despite its faults of rashness and immaturity, for disciples of a newly arrived school of poetry. This group of scholar-poets became the nucleus

---

[7] Yates, pp. 14-15.

for the Brigade of poets which later became known as the French Pléiade.

By the 1550's, then, both Italy and France had established traditions of disciplined academies whose concerns centered on the importance of the poetic art and the techniques through which that art was executed. Consequent to this serious attitude toward poetic activity was the academies' equally serious view of the artist who practiced such poetry. This disciplined perspective, however, had not yet established its place across the channel in England. The 1550's there had witnessed the work of early Tudor writers such as Skelton, Wyatt, and Surrey, who certainly had experimented with some verse forms and poetic themes from Continental literature. There was as yet, however, no deliberate discussion of either aesthetic aims or linguistic strategy that could identify such writers as having the "professional" and linguistic concerns of the Italian and French poets.

As Richard Helgerson makes clear,[8] Spenser's presentation of himself in 1579 as a man who has deliberately accepted his "calling" as a Poet was a stance that set him apart from the writers of verse who had preceded him. Helgerson argues quite convincingly that while the early English humanists had certainly produced verse, they had done so for a variety of reasons that were far removed from their

---

[8]Richard Helgerson, "The New Poete Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career," PMLA, 93 (1978), 893-911.

veneration for poetry as a worthwhile pursuit for its own sake. Poetry was either a tool for the preachments of philosophy or theology or it was a toy to flatter potential patrons or lovers. But in every case, when the writers had satisfied their particular concerns, they stepped away from poetry to their "real" interests: as courtiers, theologians, academics, or even soldiers. From the vantages of these socially sanctioned vocations, they excused poetry as a weakness and promised not to repeat the offense again.[9] Only Spenser, consciously and with the tactical fanfare of a Madison Avenue ad campaign, announced himself as the "new Poete." Even the most casual reader of The Shepheardes Calendar cannot help noticing the painstaking attention that "E. K." continually draws outside the frame of the verse to the poet who creates it. And in so doing, The Shepheardes Calendar marks, for the first time in England, the intentions of a man to perfect the poetic art in his own language without offering apologies for the effort. It is this seriousness of intent which immediately links Spenser's poetic efforts with those of the Pléiade in France. For not only does Spenser share their sense of the poet's place and purpose, but the portraits of poetic artists which appear in his poetry depend for their delineation and substance upon the concepts reflected in the Pléiade's notions of the poet as a vatic speaker whose place was elevated, whose mind was fired by a special vision and understanding, and whose articulation

---

[9]Helgerson, p. 894.

had power sanctioned by God. True poets could be recognized by their embodiment of these peculiar and dignified qualities in their attitude toward and practice of their art. Failure to evidence these attributes was the sure mark of a mere versifier.

Divine Origins of the Poet

The divine origins of poetry was by no means a doctrine new to any segment of Renaissance learning, Continental or English. Horace had first popularized the notion that certain poets such as Orpheus spoke with divine sanction. The poet's place was that of "priest and interpreter of the gods, who civilized primitive savage man and taught him how to live peaceably with his fellows."[10] In The Epistles, Horace writes:

> Silvestres homines sacer interpresque decorum
> caedibus et victu foedo deterruit Orpheus . . . .
> fuit haec sapienta quondam,
> publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis,
> concubitu prohibere vago, dari ura maritis,
> oppida moliri, leges incidere ligno;
> sic honor et nomen divinis vatibus ataque
> carminibus venit.[11]

While the writings of Horace were known in the Middle Ages, Castor reports that they went almost ignored until they were newly examined by French theorists in the mid-sixteenth century. Jacques Peletier, later numbered as one of the seven Swans, had translated Horace's Ars

---

[10] Graham Castor, Pléiade Poetics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 26-27.

[11] Horace, The Epistles, ed. A. S. Wilkins (1885; rpt. London: Macmillan & Co., 1950), p. 7.

Poetica in 1544 although it did not attain wide distribution until sometime later.[12]

Attention was refocused on the Horation ideas by Sebillet's L'art poétique françoyse which appear in June 1548. Sebillet's report that Orpheus' song illustrated the heights and strengths of God not only gives voice to the Christianization of pagan myth that had emerged from the Middle Ages but also intimates the direct link which he sees between the power of poetic song and the divine mind: "comme en tous les ars ceste estincelle du feu divin à l'approcher de l'esprit son semblable, rend lumiére, par laquele ell' est evidemment cognue; aussi en l'art Pöetique (me soit permis de nommer art ce que plus proprement j'appelleroie divine inspiration) reluyt elle en plus vive et plus apparente splendeur."[13] The Art then depicts long-held notions that poets could interpret the gods to other men because poets shared in part of the divine mind. Further, medieval scholarship had neatly linked works such as Horace's with biblical inspiration and so could see Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, et al. as further instances of divinely inspired mediators making plain the ways of God to man.

---

[12]Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade (1939; rpt. Paris: Didier, 1961), I, 78.

[13]Thomas Sebillet, L'art poétique françoyse, ed. F. Gaiffe (Paris: Sociéte des Textes Français Modernes, 1910), p. 102. The references to Sebillet are cited or quoted in Castor's Pléiade Poetics.

A. H. T. Levi helps to explain how the Pléiade adaptation of this theory fused the Horation myths with the currently popular neoplatonic philosophy. According to Levi, the Pléiade, and in particular Ronsard, linked this idea to strains of neoplatonic philosophy popularized by Ficino's commentary on the Symposium. This world view asserted that God is the center of the universe, surrounded by four concentric circles of decreasing immanence: "mens," "anima," "natura," and "materia." Each creature is endowed with a proportion of the divine and so desires to be reunified with its origins. The soul's ascent is stimulated by one of four divine frenzies or furies: poetic (Muses), mystical (Dionysus), prophetic (Apollo), or erotic (Venus). The Pléiade saw in this philosophy aspects which could help them redefine the function and substance of poetry:

> . . . both the prose and verse which attempt to define Ronsard's poetic aims, as well as much of his poetic practice elsewhere, take up strands in a traditional neoplatonist philosophy which was both familiar and popular in France during the 1540's and 1550's. By and large Ronsard found certain elements of that philosophy helpful in his desire to redefine the function of poetry and the status of the poet, as in his ambition to communicate the secrets of the cosmos, often wrapped up in a fable, in the interests of the moral and religious edification of his public.[14]

Sebillet's treatise went on to assert that as partakers of the divine mind, poets were born, not made, and so he passed without further aesthetic considerations to the technical forms of the

---

[14] A. H. T. Levi, "The Role of Neoplatonism in Ronsard's Poetic Imagination," in Ronsard the Poet (London: Methuen and Co., 1973), pp. 123-24.

grand rhétoriqueurs of the early French Renaissance.[15] The students at Coqueret, however, saw in Plato's four furies the separate functions of the poet. For them, the poet became the ultimate amalgamation of these highest aspirations of man. Only extraordinary men could really be so touched by the divine, and the poet became the "high priest" of humanity who possessed not only superior abilities but also a more onerous responsibility.

To the students at Coqueret such a laissez faire position as Sebillet's was an ultimate diminution of their priestly art and thus, in April 1549, du Bellay issued his Deffence. As Castor, Keating, Chamard and Patterson are quick to point out, the Deffence addresses itself to the question of language as the tool of great poets and not to the nature of the great poet himself because of du Bellay's outrage that one who professed to see the divine in the poetic art, as Sebillet had done, could use that special gift as an excuse for abandoning the effort to perfect his art. For the Pléiade, it is precisely because of the specialness of the poet's gift that he must make himself worthy to give expression to it. Thus, the Deffence outlines in Book II what the true poet must do to make himself a worthy vessel. Mediocrity is excusable in other vocations, but it is not in poets. The very excellence of their art marks them as oracles of the divine. The true poet must evince "cette ardeur & allegresse d'esprit qui naturellement excite les poëtes, & sans la quelle toute

---

[15] Castor, p. 28.

doctrine leur seroit manque & inutile" and must remember that "aux autres ars et sciences la médiocrité peut mériter quelque louange: mais aux poëtes ny les dieux, ny les hommes n'ont point concedé estre mediocres."[16]

If the earliest of the group's manifestoes does not articulate the issue directly, their later treatises and poetry depict the vatic role of the poet in lucid terms. Ronsard, in L'abbregé de l'art poëtique, states clearly:

> Car la Poësie n'estoit au premier aage qu'une Theologie allegoricque, pour faire entrer au cerveau des hommes grossiers par fables plaisantes & colorées les secretz qu'ilz ne pouvoyent comprendre, quand trop ouvertement on leur descouvroit la verité. . . . Pour ceste cause ilz sont appellez Poëtes divins, non tant pour leur divin esprit qui les rendoit sur tous admirables & excellens, que pour la conversation qu'ilz avoyent avecques les Oracles, Prophetes, Devins, Sybilles, Interpretes de songes, desquelz ils avoyent apris la meilleure part de ce qu'ilz sçavoyent: car ce que les oracles disoyent en peu de motz, ces gentilz personnages l'emplifioyent, coloroyent & augmentoyent, estans envers le peuple ce que les Sybilles & Devins estoyent en leur endroit.[17]

---

[16]Joachim du Bellay, La deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse, ed. Henri Chamard (Paris: Didier, 1948), p. 105.

[17]Pierre de Ronsard, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Paul Laumonier. (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1931-1959), XIV, 4. Many of the references to Ronsard, du Bellay and Pontus de Tyard in this chapter are cited in W. F. Patterson, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory: A Critical History of the Chief Arts of Poetry in France (1328-1630), 3 vols. (1935; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966). Quotations follow the original French text.

L'abbregé gives in succinct form what runs throughout Ronsard's poetry like a leitmotiv. In the greatest of his Pindaric odes, Ode à Michel de l'Hospital (1552), Ronsard speaks of the poet's vatic gift through Jupiter. As Patterson has demonstrated, the speech of Jupiter seems to parrot the famous divine fury passages of Plato's Ion and Phaedrus:

> Comme l'Emant sa force inspire
> Au fer qui le touche de pres,
> Puis soubdain ce fer tiré, tire
> Un aultre qui en tire apres:
> Ainsi du bon filz de Latonne
> Je raviray l'esprit à moy,
> Luy, du pouvoir que je luy donne
> Ravira les vostres à soy:
> Vous, par la force Apollinée
> Ravirez les Poëtes saincts,
> Eulx, de vostre puissance attaincts
> Raviront la tourbe estonée.
>
> Affin (ô Destins) qu'il n'advienne
> Que le monde appris faulcement,
> Pense que vostre mestier vienne
> D'art, & non de ravissement:
> Cét art penible, & miserable
> S'eslongnera de toutes pars
> De vostre mestier honorable,
> Desmembré en diverses pars,
> En Prophetie, en Poesies,
> En Mysteres, & en amour,
> Quatre fureurs, qui tour-à-tour,
> Chatouilleront voz fantasies.
>
> Le trait qui fuit de ma main
> Si tost par l'air ne chemine,
> Comme la fureur divine
> Vole dans un coeur humain:
> Pourveu qu'il soit prepare,
> Pur de vice, & reparé
> De la vertu precieuse.
> Jamais les Dieux saincts & bons
> Ne respandent leurs saints dons
> Dans une ame vicieuse . . . .

Celuy qui sans mon ardeur
Voudra chanter quelque chose,
Il voira ce qu'il compose
Veuf de grace, & de grandeur:
Ses vers naistront inutilz,
Ainsi qu'enfans abortifz
Qui ont forcé leur naissance:
Pour monstrer en chacun lieu
Que les vers viennent de Dieu,
Non de l'humaine puissance.[18]

That this prophetic role is not one that can be attained by human aspiration alone, Ronsard makes clear in the Élégie à Jacques Grévin (1561) when he speaks of the foreordination of true poets:

Dieu les tient agitez, & jamais ne les laisse,
D'un aguillon ardant il les picque & les presse.
Ils ont les pieds à terre & l'esprit dans les Cieux.
Le peuple les estime enragez, furieux,
Ils errent par les bois, par les monts, par les prées,
Et jouyssent tous seuls des Nymphes & des Fées.[19]

Further, Ronsard makes it clear in the Hymne de l'automne (1563) that the poet is a "chosen vessel" of God whose art comes from a spiritual source and consequently takes on an exalted value:

Car la gentille Euterpe ayant ma dextre prise,
Pour m'oster le mortel, par neuf fois me lava,
De l'eau d'une fontaine où peu de monde va,
Me charma par neuf fois, puis d'une bouche enflée
(Ayant de sur mon chef son haleine soufflée)
Me herissa le poil de crainte & de fureur,
Et me remplist le coeur d'ingenieuse erreur,
En me disant ainsi: Puisque tu veux nous suivre,
Heureux apres la mort nous te ferons revivre,
Par longue renommee, & ton los ennobly
Acablé du tombeau n'ira point en obly.[20]

---

[18]Ronsard, III, 142-43, 145, 11. 409-42; 467-77.

[19]Ronsard, XIV, 196-97, 11. 98-104.

[20]Ronsard, XII, 49, 11. 50-60.

Finally, Ronsard's Discours: responce aux injures et calomnies de je ne sçay quels Predicans, et Ministres de Geneve makes it clear that while the poet shares a vatic source with the prophet's, their ultimate purposes are diverse. The prophet is an oracle of practical wisdom, and while the poet may share in that experience, he is above all, a Seer of Beauty whose special endowment provides him with a peculiar vision of and approach to the world:

> En l'art de Poësie, un art il ne faut pas
> Tels qu'ont les Predicans qui suivent pas à pas
> Leur sermon sceu par cueur, ou tel qu'il faut en prose,
> Où toujours l'Orateur suit le fil d'une chose.
> Les Poëtes gaillards ont artifice à part,
> Ils ont un art caché qui ne semble pas art
> Aux versificateurs, d'autant qu'il se promeine
> D'une libre contrainte, où la Muse le meine. . . .
> As tu point veu voller en la prime saison
> L'Avette qui de fleurs enrichist sa maison!
> Tantost le beau Narcisse, & tantost elle embrasse
> Le vermeil Hyacinthe, & sans suivre une trasse
> Erre de pré en pré, de jardin en jardin,
> Portant un doux fardeau de Melisse ou de Thin.
> Ainsi le bon esprit que la Muse espoinçonne,
> Porté de la fureur sur Pernasse moissonne
> Les Fleurs de toutes pars, errant de tous costés . . . .
> Tels ne furent jamais les versificateurs,
> Des Muses avortons, ny tous ces imposteurs,
> Dont l'ardente fureur d'Apollon n'a saisie
> L'ame d'une gentille & docte frenaisie:
> Tel bien ne se promet aux hommes vicieux,
> Mais aux hommes bien nes qui sont aymés des cieux . . . .
> Je suis fol, Predicant, quand j'ay la plume en main:
> Mais quand je n'escri plus, j'ay le cerveau bien sain . . .
> Ny tes vers ny les miens oracles ne sont pas,
> Je prends tanseulement les Muses pour ébas:
> En riant je compose, en riant je veux lire,
> Et voyla tout le fruit que je recoy d'escrire:
> Ceux qui font autrement, ils ne sçavent choisir
> Les vers qui ne sont nés sinon pour le plaisir.
> Et pour ce les grands Roys joignent à la Musique,
> (Non au Conseil Privé) le bel Art Poëtique.[21]

---

[21]Ronsard, XI, 160-63, ll. 869-76; 880-89; 893-98; 905-06; 921-28.

That this notion of the priestly bard was not a youthful idealization as some critics insist can be attested to by the Élégie I, au Roy. Published in 1584 in the final edition during his life, this moving elegy reaffirms his faith in what Patterson calls the poet's "glorious role as the priest of Beauty."[22]

Nor was Ronsard the only poet who so whole heartedly subscribed to this theory. As Castor has made plain, the doctrine of "divine fury" which had first been discussed by Plato was almost a commonplace among poets of the century. But among the poets preceding the Pléiade, it appeared chiefly as a means of conventional metaphoric ornamentation and not as an element of doctrine which informed larger aesthetic practice.[23] Among the members of the Pléiade, the concept was the bedrock of their aesthetic doctrine, for they asserted that the poet's divine sanction elevated his vision of and intercourse with the universe, elevating his soul to its original position. Consequently, the poet's articulation of his vision would elevate the souls of his hearers, and thus, like the prophet, he had an intermediary position to fulfill. Pontus de Tyard (whom many critics, Chamard and Patterson included, see as the philosopher of the group) gives cogent expression to the mediating aspect of the poet's role in his Solitaire Premier, ou, Discours des Muses, et de la fureur Poëtique (1552). The Solitaire Premier is a dialogue

---

[22]Patterson, II, 518.

[23]Castor, p. 29.

between a poet and Lady Pasithée about the origins of poetry and its present function. The poet repeats for the Lady the myth of Phoebus speaking through seers to a mankind which is weak physically, mentally, restless, and miserable in spirit. Only the exercise of reason, understanding, and wisdom gives man the desire to rise to an Eternal Good. Hence, man may rise above his station by a love of Truth and Virtue. The presence of Beauty can ravish the soul of man and thus inspire him to a desire for a higher level of living. Unable to attain these heights on his own, ordinary men must rely on the enablement of poets who can "see" for them in order to apprehend the realms above. Poetry, then, becomes the vehicle through which Heavenly Truth and Heavenly Beauty can be conveyed to earth:

> La fureur Poëtique procede des Muses (dy-je) et est un ravissement de l'Ame, qui est docile et invincible: au moyen duquel elle est esveillée, esmuë, et incitee par chants, et autres Poësies, à l'instruction des hommes. Par ce ravissement d'Ame, j'enten que l'Ame est occupée, et entierement convertie, et intentive aux saintes et sacrées Muses, qui l'ont recontrée docile et apte à recevoir la forme, qu'elles impriment, c'est à dire, l'ont trouvée preparée à estre esprise de ce ravissement, par lequel estant esmeuë, elle devient invincible, et ne peut estre souillée, ou vaincue d'aucune chose basse et terrestre: mais au contraire surmonte et surmarche toutes ces vilitez. D'avantage elle est esveillee du sommeil et dormir corporel à l'intellectuel veiller, et revoquée des tenebres d'ignorance à la lumiere de verité, de la mort à la vie, d'un profond et stupide oubly à un resouvenir des choses celestes, et divines. . . . Aussi n'entreprenne temerairement chacun de heurter aux portes de Poësie: car en vain s'en approche, et fait ses vers miserablement froids celuy, auquel les Muses ne font grace de leur fureur, et auquel le Dieu ne se monstre propice et favorable.[24]

---

[24]Pontus de Tyard, Oeuvres: Solitaire Premier, ed. Silvio F. Baridon (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1950), pp. 21-22.

Thus, the Pléiade embodied in their theoretical and poetic expressions a veneration for the place of the poet which went beyond the traditional metaphors and myths of their predecessors. Like the Italian academies that they learned from du Bellay, Ronsard, Pontus de Tyard and their fellows shared a serious concern for the aesthetics of poetry and a belief that all academic studies had by nature ethical ramifications. For them, the myth that the poet is inspired by a foreordained and almost irresistible divine fury meant that (1) the poet's place was elevated above other men, (2) he was an intermediary between God and man, and (3) he was endowed with a heightened understanding because of his elevated vision of reality.

Spenser's acquaintance with the notion of the divine origins of poetry surfaces throughout his work, from his earliest schoolboy translations to the most mature of his minor pieces. Because of the liberality of Mulcaster's own education, he was quite instrumental in introducing his students to the works of contemporary Continental writers who espoused tenets similar to his about the importance of writing, standardized orthography, and the invigoration of the vernacular. Hence, the four pieces from Spenser's days at Merchant Taylors' School in the late sixties show direct ties to the Continental writers. Of the four, three are outright translations, two of du Bellay, one of Petrarch. The only original piece, "Visions of the World's Vanitie," is an example of the visionary, emblematic

poetry popular at mid-century which Renwick links specifically to Continental writing trends.[25]

"The Visions of Petrarch" is a translation of one of Petrarch's allegorical meditations on the death of Laura. Renwick records that the original piece had served as one of the main sources fo the fad for emblematic poetry and that Clement Marot had translated the piece into French. It is from the French version that Spenser worked.[26] Already exhibiting his bent for experimentation, Spenser translates the twelve-line stanzas as sonnets and links the whole to Lady Carey, to whom it is later dedicated. While most of the poem's seven stanzas contain the usual emblems of temporal mutability, the fourth stanza voices an unmistakable comment on the place of the Muses' song. The stanza begins with the image of water running from a rock and forming a spring. The image calls immediately to mind the water which sprang from the rock in the desert at Kadesh for the children of Israel. The water was miraculously provided by God in order to silence the complaints of the wanderers. Thus, the image carries with it the suggestion of divine origins, a notion consonant with the idea that poetry's well-springs are at once divine and miraculous. The vision continues by noting that "whereto approached not in any wise/The homely shepheard, nor the ruder clowne;/But many Muses, and

---

[25]Edmund Spenser, Complaints, ed. W. L. Renwick (London: Scholartis Press, 1928), p. 255.

[26]W. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1925), p. 259.

the Nymphes withall/That sweetly in accord did tune their voyce/To the soft sounding of the waters fall."[27] Here, the poet offers a conflation of the Platonic notion of divine inspiration with the Horation myth of the Muses as original recipients of the divine quality, for earthly singers, be they sweet-singing shepherds or entertaining clowns, cannot approach the spring. That the speaker aligns himself with the immortal Muses and not with the lowly mortals seems clear from his joy at the vision of the Muses singing at the spring. In the midst of his partaking of his "chiefe delight," however, the vision takes on a nightmarish quality, for the earth opens up and swallows spring, singers, and song, leaving the speaker to grieve the sudden loss of such pleasures.

The presence in even this fledgling composition of such a vision is important for several reasons. First, the selection of this canzone for translation and later inclusion in the Complaints indicates the older Spenser's awareness of emblems present in the original which he could manipulate to comment on his own particular interests: the death of Sidney, the beauty of Lady Carey, the political fortunes of Leicester. That Spenser intends the reader to interpret this particular stanza as a comment on the precarious place of poetry seems logical when one considers the conclusions of the poem.

---

[27] Edmund Spenser, Poetical Works, ed. J. C. Smith and E. D. Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1912), p. 526, ll. 45-49. All further citations from Spenser will be documented parenthetically with page and line numbers from this text.

Having left the separate visions, the speaker returns his attention to his auditor, Lady Carey, and reminds her that her beauty, like each of the visions, will fall prey to the mutability of time. He urges her to "loath the base world" and think of heaven's bliss. The unspoken implication is that poetry can lift her above these ravages if she will play her part in succoring the Muses through patronage. Thus, even such a school piece as this indicates Spenser's awareness of the notion of the divine origins of poetry and the mystical separation of the poet from other men. It foreshadows Spenser's view of himself as one of the "elect" and gives voice to his concern about poetry's current lack of veneration.

While the 1591 publication of the Complaints separates "The Ruines of Rome" and "The Visions of Bellay," Renwick feels the poems belong together.[28] The "Visions" are translations of du Bellay's "Songe: ou, Vision," a fifteen-sonnet collection appended to Les Antiquitez des Rome and published on the poet's return to Paris from Italy in 1558. Du Bellay's "Songe" has been called a "world of unbridled imagination and total unreality."[29] It contains a series of mysterious images of grand palaces, baths, and other public structures of almost unutterable beauty which are completely destroyed by the northern barbarians. While du Bellay certainly intends that the

---

[28] Renwick, Spenser, p. 180.

[29] Keating, p. 56.

annihilation of the great structures symbolizes Rome's fall from the height of civilization, Chamard regards du Bellay's treatment as primarily nationalistic; he sees in the fallen pride of Rome grave possibilities for his nation.[30] Keating is also quick to add that there are embedded throughout these melancholy reflections specific references to catastrophes occurring during du Bellay's stay in the city.[31] The puzzles may have been clear symbols of sixteenth-century events to du Bellay's audience, but to modern readers, most allusions are lost.

Spenser's "Visions" follows his original closely with an opening series of stanzas evoking the grandeur of ancient Rome. As in du Bellay's work, the speaker is awakened from sleep by a supernatural visitor and is called by name. This personal election echoes the experience of St. John in the book of Revelation (which du Bellay had been reading) and underscores the Pléiade notion that the poet is a chosen vessel of God who cannot help speaking the divinely imparted message. Renwick notes at line eight that the ghost's command for the speaker to look "to heaven from whence all good gifts come" is an unhappy interpretation on Spenser's part.[32] But Spenser's allusion here to James 1:17 is quite possibly a clever

---

[30]Chamard, II, 45.

[31]Keating, p. 58.

[32]Renwick, Spenser, p. 258.

link once again to the gift of the poet's message from the divine. Throughout the stanzas that follow, the speaker says that he is "overwhelmed" by the visions, and in stanza four Spenser retains du Bellay's own term, "ravished." The use is a reflection of Pontus du Tyard's Platonic notion that the poet's oracular link with the divine vision raises him often to ecstatic heights.

More interesting are stanzas eleven and twelve, which contain images differing slightly from those preceding. In stanza eleven, the speaker sees an aromatic fire on a hill out of which flies a great white bird. The bird wings its way upward through the smoke to heaven and at the throne of God sings a beautiful song while the fire casts thousands of beams of light in all directions. But a silver dew drops on the fire extinguishing it, and the bird falls from heaven. Renwick notes that Spenser mistranslates du Bellay's allegory of the Donation of Charlemagne and mangles the clarity of the passage.[33] But Spenser may have been constructing another play on the symbols of the original.

As Robert Clements says in his article on Renaissance poetry and iconography, the swan was a commonplace metaphor for poets of the Italian and French academies. Not only was the bird associated with Apollo, god of music, poetry and prophecy and thus possessing prophetic powers itself, but it was thought to have a beautiful voice that was heard in song only at its moment of death. In

---

[33]Renwick, Spenser, p. 259.

addition, Renaissance poets saw the whiteness of the swan's plumage as representative of its purity and its integrity, and they believed that its song possessed such power that it impelled other birds to stop singing.[34] No less an authority than Alciati's Emblemmata (1551), the most influential emblem book of the age, known to writers of the Pléiade and to Spenser himself, contained a plate and explanation of the Swan.[35] It would seem incredible that the stanza could not reflect the poet being raised to heaven by the divine fire and so giving forth his song (which causes the fire to die away until the next moment of ecstasy) before being dropped back to mortal earth. Whether du Bellay's version reflected a dual allegory or not, Spenser surely intends for the vision to reflect the vatic nature of the poet-swan, particularly in light of his distortion of the original.

Immediately on the heels of this vision, comes the twelfth stanza, which begins like the "Vision of Petrarch" with the Old Testament image of a spring bursting forth from the rock. The stream is crystal clear, and the speaker says that art and nature have together assembled all that is pleasant in its waters. From its movement, a noise "alluring sleepe" trembled forth, of "manie accords more sweete than Mermaids song" (p. 525, ll. 161-62). Like the "Vision of

---

[34] Robert Clements, "Iconography on the Nature and Inspiration of Poetry in Renaissance Emblem Literature," PMLA, 70 (1955), 784-85.

[35] Clements, "Iconography," p. 784.

Petrarch" this scene too ends abruptly with a troupe of raucous "satyres" routing the place, fouling the waters of the stream, and driving away the Nymphs who listen to the song. If the water from the rock is indeed the divine origins of poetry, which seems likely considering the use of this same metaphor by writers to symbolize Christ, the Logos made flesh, then the stanza offers some telling commentary on the writers' vision of the current state of poetry. Poetry's divinely intended sweetness and succor had been enjoyed by a special few who had separated themselves and lingered around the spring of its origins; its effects had been spoiled, however, by the ravining hordes who drove off the true appreciators of the song and fouled the glory of its music.

"The Ruines of Rome" is translated from du Bellay's Les Antiquitez de Rome, a collection of thirty-two sonnets which du Bellay uses to underscore the discrepancies between the grandeur of classical Rome and the incivility of the Renaissance Rome from which the had so recently returned. Like his model, Spenser's poem begins with an invocation to the heavenly spirits of ancient Rome who live on through the "fairness" of their verse. The speaker prays that his own verse might be imbued with their "antique furie" so that he may with "sacred horror sing/Your glorie, fairest of all earthly things" (p. 509, ll. 13-14). The sonnets then chronicle the rise of Rome to glory and the contrast with her present state of ruin and chaos.

In stanza seven, the speaker observes that Rome herself has become but a device of the poet, a "people's fable" to teach the lesson of excessive pride. The poem closes with the speaker asking the ruins if they hoped that his verse might give them immortality since their own monuments of marble are not everlasting enough. He answers by saying that since Phoebus has given him his lute he will not cease to sing the glories of the "olde antiquities." The poet offers to become, then, the intermediary between an act of God (punishment of Rome for her excessive pride) and the masses of mankind who need to understand the import of the message. Du Bellay in Antiquitez de Rome is content to let the sonnets speak for themselves as a vatic message on the moral implications of Rome's present state when compared to her past glories. That his "forth-telling" was clearly understood is attested to by the outrage which ensued in the Italian circles he had vacated. Spenser, however, appends to the sequence an envoy which lauds du Bellay himself, a poet excelling all others (the primacy of a "true poet") and as such gaining immortality for himself.

The last of Spenser's earliest compositions is "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," a series of twelve sonnets which set out to illustrate the vanity of earthly ambition because of the power of the small to affect the mighty. While the series here deals with emblems associated with juxtaposition of the powerful with the insignificant and so does not address the power of the poet which comes directly from God and cannot be usurped, it does begin

characteristically with the poet's spirit being overwhelmed by a vision which comes upon him. He reports that he was "in minde embraced" (p. 521, l. 11) and that the sights "empassion[ed him] full nere" (p. 509, l. 12). The speaker, true to his position as an oracular intermediary, warns "the ladie" to whom the poem is directed to heed the import of the message so that it can in her life "bring things better forth" (p. 509, l. 14).

These earliest compositions, despite both their pedantic approach to translation and their pedestrian use of imagery, show that Spenser was early aware of the Pléiade's almost religious espousal of the vatic qualities of the poet. Not only do the original models which Spenser chose to translate and later to include in a volume designed to gain favor with court patrons contain specific symbols of the priesthood of true bards, but Spenser's manner of presenting the materials in translation indicates his awareness of the symbols' connection with the underlying aesthetic doctrine. Finally, even "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," the original piece of the group, evinces a schoolboy's attempt to capture in his own expression the elevated stature of the poet-bard who interprets the acts of god for mortal men.

The Shepheardes Calendar, the greatest of Spenser's minor pieces, offers the most developed portrait of the special role of the vatic poet. The poem offers an elaborate external framework which draws attention to Spenser's serious claims for himself as artist and for the poem as art. The twelve eclogues explore a

variety of facets concerning the poet and poetry. Louis A. Montrose has said of the Calendar:

> In The Shepheardes Calendar, Spenser inventories and analyzes the heritage of the English poet; he assesses the aims and resources, the limitations and the dangers, of the poetic vocation. The poem is a vehicle for the highest personal aspirations and public significance that a poet can claim: a vatic role, sanctioned by the artistic and ethical idealism of Renaissance Humanism but frustrated by the constraints of a social order controlled by powers for whom poetry is, at worst morally corrupting and politically subversive; at best, a useful instrument of policy or an innocuous diversion.[36]

The unifying persona of the eclogues is a shepherd-poet, Colin Clout, who unites in himself both the poet's role as literary artist and his uniqueness as a prophet-priest.[37] The eclogues alternate between scenes which discuss the shepherd as priest and pastor and those which discuss the shepherd as poet/singer. The core of the series, the "June" and "July" eclogues, juxtaposes two dialogues about the proper conduct of shepherd-poets (June) and the proper conduct of shepherd-priests (July), each attempting to gain some definition of the line and composition of the figures they discuss through their proximity with each other. Thus, throughout the Calendar we are presented vignettes of Colin's struggle to understand himself as mortal singer and as a priestly bard. The

---

[36]Louis A. Montrose, "'The perfecte paterne of a Poet': The Poetics of Courtship in The Shepheardes Calendar," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 21 (1979), 35.

[37]Montrose, p. 47.

implications of these struggles are complex and hotly debated; a complete resolution of the problems of interpretation associated with the Calendar is beyond the scope of this study. Keeping in mind, however, the strenuous emphasis that the Pléiade placed on the poet's role as priest, we can see throughout the eclogues Spenser's reflection of the same views.

Colin is conscious throughout that there is an imperative outside himself which demands that he give voice to his song. The Calendar opens in "Januarye" with Colin deep in personal despair. His love for fair Rosalind goes unrequited, and she rejects both his courtship and his music. Obsessed with his personal troubles in love and feeling rejected as a messenger of God, since the gods have not chosen to intervene to solve his woes, Colin breaks his pipe, the symbol of his divine vocation, and vows to sing no more. That Colin consorts with the gods is evident in his petulant despair that his pipe had pleased Pan (p. 421, l. 67) but had failed to please Rosalind. As John W. Moore has observed, his rejection of his art appears as a childish effort to "get even" with the gods who have chosen not to stand by their messenger in his moment of need.[38] It nonetheless indicates that Colin from the outset has at least a glimmering awareness that his art stems from a special source. The idea is repeated in "June" when Colin complains to Hobbinoll that

---

[38] John W. Moore, Jr., "Colin Breaks His Pipe: A Reading of the 'Januarye' Eclogue," English Literary Review, 5 (1975), 8-9.

the gods pursue him from "coste to coste," angered by his laying aside his art (p. 441, ll. 14-16).

Not only is Colin aware of the elevation of his place among shepherd-singers, but his fellows give testimony to the superiority also. In response to Thenot's urging in "November" to take up song again, Colin tells Thenot to look to his own pipes and sing himself. Thenot, however, demurs, saying that the titmouse should remain silent before the nightingale, the sovereign of song: "And I unfitte to thrust in skilfull thronge,/Should Colin make judge of my fooleree,/Nay, better learne of hem, that learned bee,/And had been watered at the Muses well:/The kindly dew drops from the higher tree,/And wets the little plants that lowly dwell" (p. 460, ll. 27-32). Thenot's reply not only incorporates once again the image of the divine wellspring of inspiration from whence comes poetry, but it introduces the new image of the nourishing dew which, falling from heaven onto the heads of the great singers such as Colin, is transmitted by them to creatures of lowly station. The metaphor gives visual embodiment to Ronsard's assertion that poets provide for mortal men what mankind cannot take from the hands of the gods.

In "Aprill," Hobbinoll tells Thenot that Colin's song "out-went" (p. 431, l. 16) all others and laments Colin's decision to forsake his special art. Further, in introducing Colin's "laye of fayre Elisa," Hobbinoll tells Thenot that it was composed by Colin at a "spring" and its music is "tuned" to the "waters fall" there,

thus repeating the spring images used in the early complaint pieces. Later in "June" when Hobbinoll counsels Colin to resume the pleasures of his pipe, he reminds Colin of the former greatness of his art: even the Muses could not be outdone by his song (p. 442, ll. 62-64). But Colin, true to his place as an intermediary between god and man and despite his breach with his art, corrects Hobbinoll by reminding him of the myth of Pan and Phoebus. Arguing over who possessed the greatest power of song, the two divines made Midas their judge. Being "corrupted with partial affection," as E. K. helpfully explains in the gloss, Midas undeservedly chooses Pan and so is punished by Phoebus. Colin's implication seems to be that ambition alone will not raise one to the heights of a true poet; that distinction can come only from divine sanction. Hence, Colin, doubting the power of his own skills, advises his fellow shepherds to content themselves with their flocks and fields. They can be content with that, but Colin ruefully acknowledges that such a refuge is not available for him when he says "but since I am not, as I wish I were" (p. 442, l. 105).

"October" offers the most extended treatment in the Calendar of the poet and his art. Once again Spenser intimates his acquaintance with the notion of the poet's divine place through the use of allusion and image. The eclogue opens with Cuddie's despair that his art fails to gain him fame and praise in this world. Piers is the mouthpiece who articulates the glorious role of the poet, gently reminding Cuddie of his artistic lineage and inherent dignity.

Initially, Piers reproves Cuddie for desiring temporal fame, telling him that the "glory [of his vocation] is greater than the gayne" (p. 457, l. 20) while extolling the honor that one gains in being the mediator between the "lust of lawlesse youth" and the moral "restraint" motivated by good advice. As if Piers' speech is not clear enough reflection of Spenser's thought, E. K.'s gloss alludes to Plato's de Legibus where men were "ravished" by poets' skills at the "panegyrics" and so called them "Vatem," a label which has since been appended to other makers of serious verse.

Later, after a lengthy discussion concerning the decline in "worthies," who, as subjects of poetry, could be modelled by the artists to inculcate virtue and the ways of god in man, Piers wonders aloud about the place of poetry in a reality far below the divine ideal from which it comes. Using again the image of the bird in flight, Piers urges poetry to use the wings of art to "flye back to Heaven" from "whence [it] camst" (p. 457, l. 84). Cuddie's response is that his mortal wit cannot make such a flight; his unperfect skill ("pieced pyneons") will not lift him up. Only Colin is "fit to scan such a famous flight" (p. 457, l. 88) for he can "sing as soote Swanne" (p. 457, l. 90). The return here to the emblem of the Swan is telling, for it calls to mind for Renaissance readers the myth of the Swan's divine associations in its song and in its prophetic qualities and provides in metaphoric terms an image of the transcendence of Colin's art above his fellows.

Thus, Cuddie's final frenzied speech prating about what poetic works he might accomplish were he under the catalytic influence of wine performs two functions. First it is reminiscent of the divine ecstasy which the Pléiade posited as the starting place of all poetic art. Here, however, the counterfeit inspiration used by pretenders such as Cuddie seems but an ironic foil to the divine fury which overtakes true bards such as Colin. That Spenser meant his readers to be reminded seems even clearer in light of "Cuddies Embleme" and E. K.'s correspondent gloss. The emblem, which E. K. says signifies the "whole Course" of the eclogue, symbolizes the "diuine instinct and unnatural rage passing the reache of comen reason" (p. 458) that is behind all poetry. Piers' response makes manifest that the emblem reflects the Pléiade's attitude and not just a culturally absorbed literary decoration.

Other echoes of the Pléiade's vatic artist are found in the other complaint pieces which intervene between the composition of The Shepheardes Calendar and Spenser's mature compositions of the early nineties. Of these five pieces, three ("Prosopopoia," "The Teares of the Muses," and "Virgil's Gnat") seem to have been written in the first two years after the publication of The Shepheardes Calendar while "Muiopotmos" and "The Ruines of Time" are thought to have been written on the brink of the appearance of his best poetry.

"Prosopopoia: Mother Hubberds Tale" has until very recent scholarship been dismissed as a satiric allegory whose primary

interest for critics has been limited to its evidence of Spenser's developing allegorical techniques or its mask of historical political figures. The tale, however, offers beyond these considerations further indications of Spenser's developing reflection of the poet as a priestly agent. As Robert A. Bryan has said in his examination of the poem's implications for Spenser's developing aesthetic: ". . . 'Mother Hubberds Tale' is about the poet as cleanser, as priest, and as shepherd in society; the poem is an exumplum of how good poetry can reorder a society fallen into chaos."[39] Kenneth John Atchity concurs with this view when he observes that: "in 'Mother Hubberds Tale' the poet is conceived as guide, instructor, ruler and above all, healer."[40] In a society that is sick with chaos and confusion (p. 495, ll. 1-11), Spenser throughout the poem has an extraordinary figure who restores appropriate serenity. The sick poet-narrator can only be calmed by the tales of Mother Hubberd who "farre surpas[es]" her fellows in her abilities; in her story of chaos caused by the usurping fox and ape, order is the result of direct divine intervention of Jove exercised through his agent, Mercury.

---

[39]Robert A. Bryan, "Poets, Poetry, and Mercury in Spenser's 'Prosopopoia: or Mother Hubberds Tale,'" Costerus, 5 (1972), 27.

[40]Kenneth John Atchity, "Spenser's 'Mother Hubberds Tale': Three Themes of Order," Philological Quarterly, 52 (1973), 162.

"The Teares of the Muses," generally thought to have been written around 1579-1580 and revised later, is, as Renwick has put it, a "literary manifesto" directed "against those general enemies comprised in what Ronsard called le Vulgaire--that is, all the enemies of the new school of learned poetry inaugurated by the Pléiade in France and the Sidney-Spenser group in England."[41] Its ascerbic presentation of the present state of poets and poetry is reminiscent of both du Bellay's La poete courtizan (1558) and of Ronsard's Michel de l'Hospital (1552). All three poets define by their satiric descriptions of the poets at court a sense of what they feel their fellow practitioners ought to be. Spenser's Muses, then, bewail the current state of poetry and long for poetry's return to its rightful place in the cosmic order.

Quite clearly, all the Muses lament the debasement of an art as sacred and divine in source as poetry. The poem's narrator begins by saying that the sorrowing of the Muses has permeated creation, for as the Muses are the sources of song, those who drink from their springs have absorbed their frenzied grief: "And all that els was wont to worke delight/Through the diuine infusion of their skill . . . ./Was turned now to dismall heauiness . . ." (p. 480, 11. 37-38, 41). The court versifiers are not true poets because "[they] rime at riot, and doo rage in loue,/Yet little wote what doth thereto behoue" (p. 484, 11. 395-96). Hence Polyhymnia laments that:

---

[41]Renwick, Spenser, p. 204.

> Whilom in ages past none might professe
> But Princes and high Priests that secret skill,
> The sacred laws therein they wont expresse,
> And with deep oracles their verses fill;
> Then was shee held in soueraigne dignitie
> And made the noursling of Nobilitie.
> (p. 486, 11. 559-64)

Not only have these usurpers forgotten the heights from which their art emanated, but they have also failed to appreciate the presence of the gift in either themselves or in others so that Calliope seems justified in wondering: "What bootes it then to come from glorious/Forefathers, or to haue been nobly bredd?" (p. 486, 11. 445-46). These "losels" (as they are termed over and over again) "all otherwise they doo esteeme/Of th' heauenly gift" (p. 481, 11. 85-86) and have overturned the "royall thrones [of the Muses] which lately stood/In the hearts of men to rule them carefully" (p. 483, 11. 313-14). Not only do they vault themselves to places to which they merit no entrance, but as Clio reports: "The sectaries of my celestiall skill,/That wont to be the worlds chiefe ornament . . . ./They underkeep, and with their spreading arms/Doo beat their buds, that perish through their harmes" (p. 481, 11. 73-74, 77-78).

Finally, the Muses grieve because such wastrels in labeling their useless efforts poetry, deceive men and so prevent them from receiving the benefits of true art. For these base imitations teach no lessons from history so "succeeding ages haue no light" (p. 481, 1. 103), nor do they inspire readers to imitate virtue for

> Who would even care to doo braue deed,
> Or striue in vertue others to excell,
> If none should yeeld him his deserued meed,
> Due praise, that is the spur of doing well?
> For if good were not praised more than ill,
> None would choose goodnes of his owne free will.
> (p. 485, ll. 451-56)

Thus, the most serious fault of such pretenders is that in abrogating the vatic responsibilities inherent in a poet's role, they have at the same time succeeded in debasing the vates' art:

> They to the vulgar sort now pipe and sing,
> And make them merrie with their fooleries,
> They cherelie chaunt and rymes at random fling,
> The fruitfull spawne of their ranke fantasies:
> They feed the eares of fooles with flattery,
> And good men blame, and losels magnify:
> All places they doo with their toyes possesse,
> And raigne in liking of the multitude,
> The schooles they fill with fond new fanglenesse,
> And sway in Court with pride and rashnes rude;
> Mongst simple shepheards they do boast their skil,
> And say their musicke matcheth Phoebus quill.
> (p. 483, ll. 319-30)

The complaint piece which appears to have been written last and thus was created as a break from his composition of the Faerie Queene bears in some ways greatest resemblance to the juvenile pieces published in the same volume. "The Ruines of Time" was designed to elegize two of Spenser's patrons, the Earl of Leceister and Sir Phillip Sidney. Most critics have dismissed its appearance as "hurried and disjointed,"[42] a collection of fragments loosely modelled after du Bellay's structure in Les Antiquitez de Rome and brought together for elegiac purposes only when Spenser was faced with the

---

[42] Renwick, Spenser, p. 189.

publication deadlines for the Complaints volume. Recently, as scholars have begun to rethink standard assessments of all of these complaint pieces, some critics have seen a larger scheme at work in the poem. A. Leigh De Neef seems the poem as a clever elegy of Sidney which does honor to the dead poet by embodying his aesthetic principles in the fabric of the poem itself: "Spenser unifies the seemingly disparate parts of the poem by a consistent focus on the function of poetry, and in so doing, he pays the dead Sidney the highest of literary compliments by demonstrating in practice some of the theoretical presumptions set forth in the 'Apology for Poetry.'"[43]

"The Ruines of Time" is a poem with a complex structure which consists of the narrator's encounter with the ghost Verlame and her lament for her city; Verlame's lament for the family of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; and finally, a general lament for those unsung by poets. The poem ends with a series of twelve emblems for instruction of the narrator, an envoy to Sidney, and an envoy to the Countess Pembroke to whom the work is dedicated. While all four sections make clear that those who wish for immortality must patronize poetry, they also stress an undercurrent of what the poet's duty is. When Verlame interrupts her lament for the members of the Dudley family to call for Colin Clout, she points to one of the poem's major

---

[43] A. Leigh De Neef, "'The Ruines of Time': Spenser's Apology for Poetry," Studies in Philology, 76 (1979), 262.

themes: the instruction of the poet-narrator in his rightful responsibility. She accuses:

> Ne doth his Colin, carlesse Colin Cloute
> Care now his idel bagpipe up to raise,
> Ne tell his sorrow to the listening rout
> Of shepheard groomes, which wont his songs to praise:
> Praise who so list, yet I will him dispraise,
> Until he quite him of this gueltie blame:
> Wake shepheards boy, at length awake for shame.
> (p. 474, ll. 225-31)

Thus the Colin who at the close of The Shepheardes Calendar once more hung up his pipe has yet to resume his place of responsibility mandated by his gift of divine poetry. And the poem seeks through its centering around those in need of poetry's immortalizing song to reinforce the vatic obligations of all true bards. De Neef observes that "the obligation of the poet as Spenser depicts it in the 'Ruines' is considerably clearer: neither civilization as a whole nor its individual leaders can have any patterns of action to imitate unless the poet provides them."[44]

The Imagination of the Poet

Both Spenser's and the Pléiade's doctrine of the necessity of the poet in the civil order stemmed from their convictions that the poet possessed mental faculties of heightened capacity. His touch of the divine not only elevated his soul and the souls of his audience, but it did so primarily because of the special endowment that was

---

[44] De Neef, p. 266.

placed on the poet's sensibility, his imagination, and his reason. Grahame Castor's lengthy study has made plain the conflation of Platonic and Aristotelian thought in the Renaissance ideas of the functions of the mind. The senses were the means of apprehending both experience and knowledge. The images of particulars were picked up by the imagination and transferred in terms of a composite of the separate sensations to the mind's highest faculty, the reason. Purely Platonic philosophy saw the imagination as the means by which the ultimate reality of the Ideal might be perceived. The senses could only apprehend the "seeming" of the world of forms. Aristotelian thought, which had been subtly superimposed on the Platonic by the Italian academicians such as Ficino and Pico de Mirandolla, saw imagination as the bridge between the ultimate reality of the physical world and the intellectual reality of the ratiocinative.[45] Thus, to sixteenth century thinkers, the imagination was the center towards which the external world was directed and through which the higher world of thought, or contemplation, as Ficino put it, might be attained.

Unfortunately, part of this doctrine was the corollary that in Man's fall from the splendour of grace his faculties had been somewhat diminished and both the senses and the imagination were prey to desire, passion, wish. Hence, if the imagination failed in

---

[45] Castor, p. 139.

its function to report the material of the senses to the reason, then the products of the imagination could produce vice and not virtue. True bards, however, because of the divine touch on their mental faculties, could see beyond the base and tempting surfaces of sense experience and so through the art of their imaginations gain contact with the ideals of love and beauty behind the forms. Their specially endowed imaginations, then, allowed them to fulfill their priestly functions. Where the minds of mortal men could not reach because of the limitations of their debased faculties, the imagination of the poet could go and so "make it flesh." Both Ronsard and du Bellay mention the special gifts of the poet. Du Bellay speaks of the "doué d'une excellente felicite du Poëte" of the poet in the Deffence,[46] and Ronsard asserts in L'abbregé that the poet possesses "les conceptions hautes, grandes, belles, et non trainantes à terre."[47] Late in life, Ronsard returns to the idea in his "Preface sur la Françiade, touchant le Poëme heroïque" (1587) where he says the poet "auras les conceptions grandes et hautes."[48]

Levi explains that the imagination is the faculty by which the poet is "innately endowed with the numerical proportions which underlie the cosmos" and can "reconstitute with his [the poet's] own

---

[46]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 138.

[47]Ronsard, XIV, 5.

[48]Ronsard, XVI, 332.

mind the external world."[49] He goes further to say:

> The poet rediscovers withim himself what is true in the external world and reconstructs from what he finds within himself the metaphysical essence of the cosmos, so penetrating its secret forces and properties, which Dorat was to teach Ronsard to communicate in fables and myths. The psychology is neoplatonist, and it explains why Ronsard so often has recourse to neoplatonist theory to expound the poet's function and status. The psychology enables Ronsard to assume that poetic inspiration must necessarily enjoy prophetic status, because poetic invention is a rediscovery of universal cosmos and divine laws.[50]

Both Jacques Peletier du Mans in his art poétique and Pontus de Tyard in the Solitaire Premier espouse similar concepts of the role of the imagination. Pontus de Tyard's Solitaire gives fullest voice to the Ficinian neoplatonism which underlay their conceptions of the poetic imagination. The impetus of divine poetry on the imagination draws the mind upward to unite with its original source and so helps material man towards ultimate transcendence of the material:

> Le fond, lequel l'ame ruinant ça bas a rencontré, a esté le corps, auquel elle se delecte et affectionne tant fermement, que pour les divers et contraires objets rencontrez, elle est contrainte de separer, et distribruer ses puissances en diverses et contraires actions, tellement, que la superieure partie de soy est endormie, et (comme on pourroit dire) estonnée de si lourde cheute: et l'inferieure toute agitée et elancée des perturbations, d'ou s'engendre un horrible discord et desordre disposé en trop improportionée proportion. Incompatible par ce point semble estre en toute

---

[49] A. H. T. Levi, "The Role of Neoplatonism in Ronsard's Poetic Imagination," in Ronsard the Poet, ed. Terrence Cave (London: Methuen and Co., 1973), p. 145.

[50] Levi, p. 145.

> juste action si par quelque moien cest horrible discord n'est transmué en douce simphonie, et ce desordre impertinent reduit en egalité mesurée, bien ordonnée, et compartie. Et de ce faire est pour son peculier devoir la fureur Poëtique chargée, resveillant par les tons de Musique l'Ame en ce, qu'elle est endormie, et confortant par la suavité et douceur de l'harmonie la partie perturbée, puis par la diversité bien accordée de Musiciens accords chassant la dissonante discorde, et en fin reduisant le desordre en certaine egalité bien et proportionnément measureé, et compartie par la gracieuse et grave facilité de vers compassez en curieuse observance de nombres et de mesures.[51]

The poetic imagination is not an option or an embellishment to the basic order of things; rather it is a fundamental component of a successful temporal order which allows men caught in the jaws of mutable temporality help in glimpsing the immutable divine for which they were originally meant. The imagination of the poet, then, as Ronsard says in L'ode à Michel de l'Hospital, is the interpreter of the gods: "Ceulx là que je feindray Poëtes/Par la grace de ma bonté,/Seront nommez les Interpretes/Des Dieux, & de leur volunté."[52]

Further, as both Castor and Levi agree, the Pléiade's adoption of the neoplatonic notion of the exalted poetic mind was stated in their earliest, most optimistic years as a tenet demanding outright critical belief. As their verse and art matured, however, the philosophical system became a kind of mythological symbol for the

---

[51] Pontus de Tyard, pp. 18-19.

[52] Ronsard, III, 145-46, 11. 477-80.

seriousness with which they regarded their art, their talent, and their just rewards. Ronsard and du Bellay, like Pontus de Tyard, relied on the neoplatonic philosophy which underlay their conceptions of the poetic mind as a "mythology on which [they] drew for the articulated structure of [their] imaginative universe in order to communicate [their] own poetic vision of the world and [their] experience."[53]

Spenser's poetry reflects the same apotheosis of the poetic imagination. From his early translation pieces to the end of his career, the poetic imagination rises above the mortal state and grasps for other men truths beyond their abilities to apprehend. In "Visions of Bellay," the entire structure of the poem is based on a series of icons placed within the mind of the narrator by a heavenly apparition. Not only is the persona here given the contents of his message, but he is also provided with the significance of that message. The ghost instructs him that the visions are symbolic of the inevitable decay of all things temporal and that only God surpasses time. Having seen both the vision and the interpretation, the persona can now articulate these for humanity's edification. Similarly, in "Visions of Petrarch," the persona, after having related another series of icons, turns explicity to his dual audience, readers at large and the Lady to whom the poem is addressed in particular. To humanity in general, the persona seems to wish that he

---

[53]Levi, p. 149.

might be free from the burden of his spirit, which is "vext with sights" which "molest" his peace (p. 526, l. 92). There is no moral instruction that readers should experience, only the implication that they experience these troubling sights vicariously through the sensitized soul of the poet persona. To the Lady, he urges proper attention to the message of the icons so that she might "loath this base world" and gain contemplation of "heauen's blis" (p. 526, l. 96).

In both "Ruines of Rome" and "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" the same pattern of the poet's imagination receiving a heavenly apprehension and interpretation is used again. The pieces, however, make the poet's elevation more explicit. In "Ruines of Rome" the persona invokes the heavenly spirits of Rome and prays that his "shrieking yell" may scale the reaches between their celestial abode and his place in darkest Hell (p. 509, ll. 1-10). His voice is the vehicle for bridging the gap between the supernatural realm and the arena of mortality. Even clearer is Spenser's "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," where the persona reports that his spirit shook off her "earthly prison" and "began to enter into meditation deepe/ Of things exceeding reache of common reason" (p. 509, ll. 2-4). Once again, the heavenly overtakes the earthly and the mind of the poet is consumed by a series of emblems on the vulnerability of the mighty. The poem concludes with the interpretation of the emblems for the audience: "And ye, that read these ruins tragicale/Learne by their losse to loue the low degree" (p. 522, ll. 163-64). The poem closes with the poet's advice for future action: "If that

fortune chaunce you up to call/To honours seat, forget not what you be" (p. 522, ll. 165-66). Even at his most elementary, then, Spenser incorporates into his verse an admiration of the heightened abilities of the poet, whose mind moves in realms that are unapproachable to other mortals.

This notion is clearly at work in the eclogues of The Shepheardes Calendar. Hence, when Colin Clout balefully surveys the winter landscape and claims that it is "made a myrrhour, to behold my plight" (p. 421, l. 20), he is indulging in the pathetic fallacy, but he is also giving expression to the gift of his poetic imagination--the ability to look beyond the forms of the material world to a cosmic ideal. True enough, here Colin's vision is skewed and his perspective holds no message for humanity. In "Januarye" Spenser introduces a common theme of the Calendar and of the Pléiade philosophy, the mind of the poet perverted from its rightful purpose. Colin's mind is obsessed by his love for Rosalind, and so he wrongfully "reads" the implications of what his senses observe. Here his imagination has become slave to the desires of the senses and as such has lost its spiritual elevation. While others may exist in this diminished capacity without an all-encompassing jolt to the social order, when the imagination of the poet is thus enslaved, serious consequences result. In this eclogue even his shepherding duties are neglected, and those whom he is supposed to nurture and nourish are in a state of debasement: "Thou feeble flocke, whose fleece is rough and rent/Whose knees are weake through fast and euill

fare:/Mayst witnesse well by thy ill gouernment,/Thy maysters mind is ouercome with care" (p. 422, ll. 43-46).

That Colin's vision has not always been so incapacitated is made clear by the songs which he has made in the past. In "Aprill," Hobbinoll reports to Thenot that the greatest of all singers has currently put up his pipe over unrequited love. In fact, Hobbinoll confides that Colin's "madding mynde is starte" (p. 421, l. 26). He then sings for Thenot the "laye of fayre Elisa," which is not structured as a series of visions like his juvenile poetry, but as a single vision of the poet's emblem of great beauty. The lay begins with Colin's call to the Muses to "look" at Elisa as a candidate for their greatest praise. The following stanza opens with the imperative "See" and then he supplies what they are to see: not just Elisa sitting on the green but Elisa (and the poet supplies the interpretation) "like a mayden Queene" (p. 432, l. 57). He goes on to question them: "Haue ye seene her angelick face,/Like Phoebe fayre?" (p. 432, ll. 64-65). Not only does the imagination of the persona see in Elisa beauty and grace worthy to be praised, but his articulation of those qualities causes his audience to see these virtues in her also. Even the Muses and Nymphs are so moved by Colin's vision that they sing a song of honor to Elisa. Further, this is the same service which the poet Spenser seeks to perform for his "fayre Elisa," Queen Elizabeth: to use his poetic imagination to grasp her beauties that are beyond the ken of other men. At the close of Hobbinoll's recitation, Thenot concurs that it is a great

pity for one who can make a song of that power to be "in such taking,/ For naught caren" (p. 433, 11. 156-57). Even this shepherd realizes the loss that results in the absence of such an imagination.

Colin's failure to offer a free imagination to the Muses because of his grief over Rosalind is emphasized throughout the Calendar. In "June," Colin tells Hobbinoll that since his mind can no longer be moved on to create the song it once made, the other shepherds must "beare witnesse all of thys so wicked deede (p. 442, 1. 108); his imagination has faltered and so there is no great bard to record the sorrow, only the lowly singers that were once subservient to his skill. Consequently, in "August" Cuddie rehearses for the other shepherds the song of Colin's love for Rosalind; Colin has shut himself away from his art. In "October," we once again have a discussion of poetry among the lesser singers while the chief poet is absent. While Cuddie laments the indignities that true poets must often suffer, Piers reminds him that nonetheless the imagination of the poet is necessary in the social state. The poets must sing of heroic deeds (p. 457, 11. 37-42), of great beauty (p. 457, 11. 43-48), of virtuous actions (p. 456, 11. 19-23). When Cuddie replies that their fellow poets have allowed their verse to diminish because there are no current examples worthy of praise, Piers replies, "O pierlesse Poesye, where is then they place?" (p. 457, 1. 80).

This line is most often interpreted as Piers' accession to Cuddie's pessimism that poetry has indeed lost its place in the present state. The discussion which follows concerning Colin's power

of imagination provides another perspective from which to interpret Piers' speech. First, Cuddie says that if only Colin were present he could fashion worthy song, even in the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. Other singers' skills are too "weake and wanne" and cannot rise to the challenge. Second, Piers comments that love which currently has Colin enslaved and powerless to engage imaginative song can teach Colin to "climb so hie" (p. 457, 1. 90), to "rayse [his] mynd aboue the starry skie" (p. 437, 1. 94). Thus, Piers' question is not just a defeated rhetorical question on the status of poetry, but a question to Cuddie: "Where is poetry's place, if not here in the imperfect, temporal world?" The imagination of the true bard will see beyond the impossibilities of the present to the verities of the cosmic design that overlies them. Only Colin is recognized to have had this power, a power which he will regain once his imagination reasserts the proper perspective on his love for Rosalind.

November's elegy for Dido is clear demonstration that Colin's imagination has begun to reassert its proper position of authority. Thenot begs Colin to sing so that his "endles souenaunce/Emong the shepheards swaines may aye remaine" (p. 461, 11. 5-6) and then requests that Colin give voice to Thenot's grief for the fallen Dido. Acknowledging Colin's superior ability, Thenot offers him a "kidde or Cossett" as reward if he will help Thenot express his grief. As in "Aprill's" celebration of Elisa, Colin orchestrates the mourning of Dido. Following the conventions of pastoral elegy, Colin

exercises the full range of his art from the invocation of the Muses and heavenly spirits, to the interrogation of the dieties in pastoral terms, and the evocation of the grief of Dido's admirers. The elegy closes with the traditional offer of consolation. Dido "nis dead, but unto heauen hent" (p. 462, l. 169), so grief is pointless and based only on what "seems" to be to the senses. With the imagination of the poet, Colin says: "I see thee blessed soule, I see,/ Walke in Elisian fieldes so free" (p. 462, ll. 177-78). Further, Dido is lifted from the dangers and unpleasantness of mortal life and is now the object of songs divine just as she was once the object of earthly song. With that the poet's imagination has completed its task and so Colin says: "O happy herse/Ceasse now my song; my woe now wasted is./O joyfull verse" (p. 462, ll. 200-202).

Colin's imagination has certainly exercised efficacious song, for Thenot is so moved by the beauty of the song itself and by the vision it articulates that he is caught in an emotional confusion. He tells Colin: "Ay francke shepheard, how bene thy verses meint/ With doolful pleasaunce, so as I ne wotte,/Whether reioyce or weepe for great constrainte?" (p. 462, ll. 203-205). The poet's imagination has intervened and so made it possible for Thenot to reach beyond his understanding of the finality of death and gain sight of the possibility outside it. This is the mission that Colin's capacities obligate him to fulfill if he will only be obedient to it. Richard Malette has observed in his discussion of the elegy that it is a focal point in the Calendar of the imaginative power of the gifted poet:

> More than anywhere else in the Calendar, then, Colin proves that by rigorous observance of the demands of his craft, and by discipline over his human frailties, he is capable of visionary utterance that helps explain to his peers the mysteries of life and death . . . . His poetic gifts have provided him with the means of ascent, the ladder to the vision that, in his love life, he is incapable of achieving.[54]

However, Spenser is evidently not offering Colin's November flight of song as a once-and-forever solution to the problems which confront the poetic imagination. In "December" Colin is once more enslaved to his passion and so has lost the freedom of earlier days. Like his chained imagination, he no longer roams at will throughout the range of the pastoral experience (p. 464, ll. 19-36). How the poet gains liberty in his imaginative expression is one of the questions that Spenser continues to explore as his artistic vision ripens.

The height of the true poet's understanding is made even clearer in the minor pieces which followed the composition of The Shepheardes Calendar. In "The Teares of the Muses," the nine sisters bemoan the incapacity of mortal men to attain to the ideal without the help of the poet's insight. Clio wails that the courtiers are "Base minded . . . that wont intelligence:/For God himselfe for wisdome most is praised,/And men to God thereby are nighest raised" (p. 481, ll. 87-90). Because they neither perform virtuous deeds

---

[54] Richard Mallette, "Spenser's Portrait of the Artist in The Shepheardes Calendar and Colin Clouts Come Home Againe," Studies in English Literature, 19 (1979), 31.

nor create divinely inspired songs of the deeds of others, future ages will "haue no light" (p. 481, l. 103). Melpomene in finding that there are no great bards present on earth observes that common man is the "most miserable creature under skye/Man without understanding doth appeare" (p. 481, ll. 127-28), bereft of "reasons skill" (p. 481, l. 139) and wanting the "staffe of wisdome" (p. 481, l. 140). Further, she likens humanity without the presence of the poet's voice to "a ship in midst of tempest left/Withouten helme or Pilot her to sway" (p. 483, ll. 253-56). Erato, having catalogued the faults of the rank brood of courtiers currently turning out verse, draws a clear distinction between that sort of making and the voice of a vatic bard: "Such high conceit of that celestiall fire/ The base borned brood of blindnesse cannot gesse,/Ne euer dare their dunghill thoughts aspire/Unto so loftie pitch of perfectnesse" (p. 484, ll. 391-94). Further, Urania sees but little difference between the levels of living endured by mortals without the light of the poetic imagination and the beasts of the fields: "What difference twixt man and beast is left,/When the'heuenlie light of knowledge is put out,/And th'ornaments of wisdome are bereft?" (p. 485, ll. 493-522).

Finally, Polyhymnia completes the sisters' speeches by setting forth to her audience a pattern of the perfect poet, Elisa. Spenser, of course, by naming his pattern for his sovereign cannot only create an appealing symbol for his vatic artist but in so doing please his ultimate patron. In the person of Elisa, Polyhymnia finds all of

the qualities which are so lacking in the common versifiers. Because Elisa exists above her peers as the "ages ornament," a "myrrour of her Makers' majestie," seeing on exalted levels what others cannot, her presence is a beam of light to others. By contemplating her presence they are "thereby fild with happie influence" (p. 486, l. 586) and are "lifted up aboue the worldes gaze" (p. 486, l. 587). Elisa becomes, then, not just an emblem of the perfect poet, but a symbol of the poetic imagination itself, for she is not only a force for creating beauty herself, but her presence causes the creation of beauty in those who will look upon her.

Even in such fanciful pieces as "Virgils Gnat" and "Muiopotmos" there runs a strain which gives testimony to the elevated imaginative powers of the poet. Having invoked the favor of the gods and the Muses in traditional poetic style, the speaker of "Virgils Gnat" records that he is lifted up out of the mortal realm by his reliance on the Muses: "Professing thee I lefted am aloft/Betwixt the forest wide and starrie sky" (p. 487, ll. 34-35). From that station, he can gain the perspective necessary to properly sing his song. Similarly, the singer of the fate of the butterfly in "Muiopotmos" recognizes his inability to craft his tale of Clarion and Aragnoll unless the imaginative power is endowed to him from above: "Vouchsafe, O thou the mournfulst Muse of nyne. . . ./Reuele to me, and all the meanes detect,/Through which sad Clarion did at last declyne/To lowerst wretchednes" (p. 516, ll. 10, 13-15).

Finally, in "The Ruines of Time" Spenser returns to the familiar formula of his earliest translations and verses. Here, the mind of the persona sees the vision of Verlame lamenting the fall of her city, a fall that has never been recorded by poet or singer. She curses the failure of princes to patronize art (causing their existence not to be immortalized by the practitioners of art) along with artists such as Colin Clout who have the imaginative powers to remember the fallen ancients but fail to do so. The events which follow the dissipation of the vision most clearly indicate the importance placed on the presence of the poet's imagination. The persona, though unable to see the ghost of Verlame any longer, is yet held under her spell. He sits mesmerized "through inward sorrow wexen faint" (p. 476, l. 472), born senseless (l. 475) through his overcharged imagination's encounter with the vision. Other men, the poem tells us in the beginning, pass the place of Verlame's ruin without knowing of her memory or without seeing any monument. Only the persona, whose imaginative capacities attune him to the spirit of the spot, is overtaken by the lamenting genius.

Further, having come into contact with the apparition, he cannot free himself until he understands the implications of the vision for himself:

> Whose wordes recording in my troubled braine,
> I felt such anguish wound my feeble heart,
> That frozen horror ran through euerie part.
> So inlie greeving in my groning brest,
> And deeplie musing at her doubtfull speach
> Whose meaning much I labored forth to wreste.
> (p. 472, ll. 481-86)

His mortal reason may have difficulty with the implications, but his imagination once more intervenes with a series of twelve pageants. The first six repeat the general lesson of Verlame's complaint: the decay of all antiquities. The final icon of the first group, an emblem of the Dudley family, ties the first six to the second group, which centers around the death of Sir Phillip Sidney. Between the two groups, the persona once again is troubled with lack of understanding: "all my senses were bereaued quight,/And I in mind remained sore aghast" (p. 477, ll. 577-78). But this time a voice tells him quite clearly to behold the examples and so to learn that "all is vanitie and griefe of minde" (p. 477, l. 583). Hence, once more Spenser evidences in the structure of his poetry a reflection of his faith in the superlative imagination of the poet-artist. For it is the imagination which envisions the visionary emblems and which translates those icons to the reason. The example that is learned, then, is learned by its embodiment in art, not by the poet's encounter with the actual events themselves. He knows of the ruins of the city prior to the vision of Verlame, the death of Leicester, and the death of Sidney. But only when these are embodied in art and apprehended by the imagination of the poet does the persona profit from them. And so Spenser reinforces once more the necessity of the uplifted imagination to the lives of common man.

The Power of the Poet's Song

Spenser also reflected in his poetry the Pléiade's faith in the efficacy of the poet's art. For members of the Pléiade believed not only that their origins and imaginative forces were superior to those of other men, but that the artistic product of those origins and imagination had an undeniable and productive impact on the social order. The concept arises from the Pléiade's affirmation of the poetic succession. According to ancient myth, all poets succeeded from a six-member pantheon of first poets, who because of their half-god/half-man stature could sing with a potency that changed nature around them. The poetry of these figures was in perfect concord with the harmony of the cosmos. In L'ode à Michel de l'Hospital, Ronsard records the passage of the divine gifts of these early poets to ordinary men:

> . . . les Poëtes divins,
> Divins, d'autant que la nature
> Sans art librement exprimoient,
> Sans art leur nayve escripture
> Par la fureur ilz animoyent.[55]

From these divine poets their art was passed to "la jeune bande/Des vieux Poëtes humains," the poets of classical Greece and from thence to the ancient Romans and so on. Ronsard returns to the notion in L'abbregé where he first discusses the "Poëtes divins" and then turns to the first human poets:

---

[55] Ronsard, III, 149, ll. 548-52.

> les seconds poëtes que j'appele humains, pour estre plus enflez d'artifice & labeur que de divinité. A l'exemple de ceux cy, les poëtes Romains ont foisonné en telle fourmiliere, qu'ilz ont apporté aux libraries plus de charge que d'honneur, excepté cinq or six desquelz la doctrine, accompagnée d'un parfait artifice, m'a tousjours tiré en admiration.[56]

Clearly, Ronsard sees a diminution of the divinity of the human poets' songs which he says in de l'Hospital is

> Degenerant des premiers,
> Comme venuz les derniers,
> Par un art melancholique
> Trahissoyent avec grand soing
> Leur vers, esloignez bien loing
> De la saincte ardeur antique.[57]

This same idea is found in du Bellay's Divers jeux rustiques. This diminution of the power of the divine song as it passes from age to age can be removed only by the poet's liberation of his imagination to the "furies" which visit him and by his total dedication to his art. Thus, du Bellay's Deffence of the French language as a suitable medium for great art is tacitly based upon his understanding that having received the gift of poetic endowment, any writer could articulate powerful song if he consecrated himself to polishing both his abilities and his tools for the production of that art. Thus, the Pléiade's vehemence on the poet's perfection of his art was based on the two-fold foundation of their belief in the priestly nature of the poet's origins (practice of his art was a sacrament of his faith)

---

[56] Ronsard, XIV, 5.

[57] Ronsard, III, 150, ll. 573-78.

and on their conviction that such artistic perfection made possible the dynamic poetry of all divine artists.

The Pléiade's belief in the dynamic force of the poet's art was tied also to their conception of poetry and music as interchangeable arts. As Brian Jeffrey makes clear, music and poetry were often regarded as related arts, metaphors for one another.[58] This interchange was particularly true of the Pléiade, who espoused the Platonic philosophy of the harmony of the universe, the music of the spheres, and the innateness of the harmonious components in every aspect of creation. Thus, the members of the Pléiade frequently interchange the terminology, mythology, and symbolism of music and poetry when discussing their theories. Jeffrey posits:

> Very simply and very importantly if [they are] considering music as poetry, or poetry as music, then immediately the whole range of classical mythology dealing with music becomes available to [them] to apply to poetry and to [their] own endeavors. [Their] store of imagery immediately becomes richer. [They] can take over the legends about Orpheus moving the trees and plants, about the power of music over the passions, and so on . . . . [their] treatment of these musical myths, by their relevance to poetic creation, is central to the whole important function of mythology in poetry.[59]

Ronsard, the chief explicator of the ethical value of art and music, saw in music and poetry the possibility of man re-framing the cosmic harmony in his own creations. Hence, the harmonies present

---

[58]Brian Jeffrey, "The Idea of Music in Ronsard's Poetry," in Ronsard the Poet, ed. Terrence Cave (London: Methuen and Co., 1973), p. 225.

[59]Jeffrey, p. 225.

in the art of a great bard are but symbolic of the harmonies of Nature and the apprehension of this bit of cosmic concord would, therefore, move virtuous men to "reverent rapture." Poetry could not only reproduce in the temporal world monuments to an eternal harmony and thus erect bits of order throughout the present sphere, but the presence of these symbols could also produce order in their surroundings (both in man and in physical Nature) by the dynamism of their being.

Even as early as 1550, Ronsard had in Ode à son luc spoken of the therapeutic powers of art:

> O de Phebus la gloire, & le trophée,
> De qui jadis le Thracien Orphée
> Faisoit arrester les vens,
> Et courre les bois suivens,
> Je te salue ô Luc armonieus
> Raclant de moi tout le soin enuieus,
> Et de mes amours trenchantes
> Les peines, lors que tu chantes.[60]

His Préface sur la musique au Roy François II goes even further to establish the ethical necessity of song:

> Sire, tout ainsi que par la pierre de touche, on esprouve l'or s'il est bon ou mauvais, ainsi les anciens esprouvoyent par la Musique les esprits de ceux qui sont genereux, magnanimes, et non forvoyans de leur premiere essence: et de ceux qui sont engourdiz paresseux, et abastardiz en ce corps mortel, ne se souvenant de la celeste armonie du ciel, non plus qu'aux compagnons d'Ulisse d'avoir esté hommes, apres que Circé les eut transformés en porceaux. Car celuy, Sire, lequel oyant un doux accord d'instrumens ou la douceur de la voix naturelle, ne s'en resjouit point, ne s'en esmeut point et de teste en piedz n'en tressault point, comme doucement

---

[60] Ronsard, II, 162, ll. 121-28.

> ravy, et si ne sçay comment derobé hors de soy: c'est signe qu'il a l'ame tortue, vicieuse, et depravée, et duquel il se faut donner garde, comme de celuy qui n'est point heureusement né. Comment pourroit on accorder avec un homme qui de son naturel hayt les accords? celuy n'est digne de voir la douce lumiere du soleil, qui ne fait honneur à la Musique, comme petite partie de celle, qui si armonieusement (comme dit Platon) agitte tout ce grand univers. Au contraire celuy qui luy porte honneur et reverence est ordinairement homme de bien, il a l'ame saine et gaillarde, et de son naturel ayme les choses haultes, la philosophie. . . . et brief en tous offices honorables il fait tousjours apparoistre les estincelles de sa vertu.[61]

The Poet's song is necessary, therefore, because its presence provides surcease from chaos and the imposition of cosmic harmonies on the temporal level, and also because the figure of the poet himself helps to transfer order to the mortal arena. As a divinely chosen vessel, a man in touch with the divine, the true poet must be a repository for virtue, a temple worthy of being inhabited by the spirits of the gods. In the Abbregé Ronsard calls the poet to a high lifestyle which embodies the qualities of the Originator of his poetic talents:

> Or pour-ce que les Muses ne veulent loger en une ame, si elle n'est bonne, saincte, & vertueuse, tu seras de bonne nature, non meschant, renfrongné, ne chagrin: mais animé d'un gentil esprit, ne laisseras rien entrer en ton entendement qui ne soit sur-humain & divin. Tu auras en premier lieu les conceptions hautes, grandes, belles . . . . Si tu entreprens quelque grand oeuvre tu te monstreras religieux & craignant Dieu, le commençant ou par son nom ou par un autre qui representera quelque effect de sa majesté, à l'exemple des Poëtes Grecs. . . . Car les Muses, Apollon, Mercure, Pallas et autres telles deitez ne nous representent autre chose que les puissances de Dieu, auquel les premiers hommes

---

[61] Ronsard, XVIII, 22.

> avoyent donné plusiers noms pour les divers effectz de son incomprehensible majesté. Et c'est aussi pour te monstrer qui rien ne peut estre ny bon ny parfaict, si le commencement ne vient de Dieu.[62]

He goes on to advise how the gift of the divine song may and may not be employed:

> Sur toutes choses tu auras les Muses en reverence, voire en singuliere veneration, & ne les feras jamais servir à choses deshonestes, à risées, ny à libelles injurieux, mais les tiendras cheres & sacrees, comme les filles de Juppiter, c'est à dire de Dieu, qui de sa saincte grace a premierement par elles faict cognoistre aux peuples ignorans les excellences de sa majesté.[63]

Hence, for proper order to be present in the everyday world, the poet must not only occupy his lawful place but he must also use his song as it was meant to be. Without these, there can be no harmonious state, and ultimately all men will suffer.

In addition to being a force of order in a world that tends toward disorder, poetry was conceived by the Pléiade as a means of providing stasis in the midst of change. Art could circumvent both the ravages of time and the captivity of death. While this notion, like their other Platonic and neoplatonic concepts, was by no means original or even peculiar to them, it takes on new vigor as a tenet of their new aesthetic religion. The poet's song could both <u>blazon</u> one's fame among one's contemporaries and perpetuate one's memory throughout the ages. As Clements has shown, the Pléiade so

---

[62] Ronsard, XIV, 5-6.

[63] Ronsard, XIV, 4.

universally adopted the credo that every writer's work is replete with evidence of this belief.[64] Every aspect of their technical criteria was connected in some way with their conviction that anything associated with poetry would be glorified by the union. Du Bellay in part urges his fellows to write in French because the art's use of a language as its medium glorifies the language itself. Vernacular composers, then, were immortalizers of their own tongues, giving them the same sort of life and vigor that characterize the languages of the ancients. They also memorialized the virtues and valiant acts of mankind so that these models might exist for eternity. Thus, the ability of art to "eternize" becomes a support for its ability to provide order.

The Pléiade's faith in poetry as a power passed, like the gift of fire, from gods to men to enlighten man's existence is most clear in their recurring use of the original poet-divines as the ultimate symbol both of the ideal poet and of the quintessential force that their art could have. Of the half-dozen original poets that Ronsard listed in Ode à Michel de l'Hospital only one figure reappears again and again in the fabric of the group's poetry, Orpheus. Already the subject of a strain of mythology of tremendous diversity and quality, Orpheus became the Pléiade's portrait of an artist made manifest. In early Greek literature, as John Warden's

---

[64] Clements, pp. 45-47.

collection of essays makes clear, Orpheus was the amalgamation of a series of tales: Orpheus as member of the Argonauts' crew; Orpheus as the divine singer; Orpheus as lover and rescuer of Eurydice; and Orpheus as shaman who visits the realms of the dead and whose severed head continues to prophesy after death.[65] He was for the Renaissance the archetypal figure of the priest, the poet, the lover, and the heroic adventurer united into one.

I. D. McFarlane in his essay on Ronsard's poetic vision asserts that Ronsard willingly gives space in his poetry to the myths connected to the origins and place of poetry: namely those of Bacchus, Apollo, Mercury, the Muses and Orpheus.[66] Further, MacFarlane observes that Orpheus' role in Ronsard's poetry is "broadly based":

> He is associated frequently with adventure (the Argosy), but also with the arts, especially music and poetry, and he prolongs the Orphic tradition of initiatory knowledge of the universe; . . . art is seen as a means of compensating for, even of forgetting, the failure in his "real" life.[67]

Finally, McFarlane reminds us that Ronsard's use of the Orphic myth "stresses [his] artistic, creative significance" and that "one of the most striking features of Ronsard's poetic world is the impressive presence of the representatives of poetry."[68]

---

[65] John Warden, Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. viii-ix.

[66] I. D. McFarlane, "Aspects of Ronsard's Poetic Vision," in Ronsard the Poet, ed. Terrence Cave (London: Methuen and Co., 1973), p. 70.

[67] McFarlane, p. 71.

[68] McFarlane, p. 71.

The figure of Orpheus embodies several key tenets espoused by the Pléiade concerning the figure of the poet and the power of his art. First, Orpheus was a man of action and a man of contemplation. He was a singer and a shaman, both roles that emphasize the mental faculties; but he also accompanied Jason on the quest for the Golden Fleece, and searched for Eurydice on his own. Second, his imagination was oracular and he was believed to have embodied the fruits of that prophetic gift in religious teachings that were passed to others.[69] Because his wisdom was oracular it was partially revealed and partially concealed through enigmatic language or imagery. His audience's response to the power of his song on an intuited, emotional level, not on the level of understanding and reason.[70] Third, he could sing by divine birthright, and his song was always a force for order. When he sang in the wilderness, he is said to have tamed trees and birds. Thus, for the Renaissance users of the myth, he became a humanist symbol of the civilizing power of art.[71] Fourth, his song overcame the powers of death and time. As such it could not only revivify the dead Eurydice, but it could also confer immortality upon his companions on the Argosy.

---

[69]Warden, p. viii.

[70]Patricia Vicari, "The Triumph of Art, the Triumph of Death: Orpheus in Spenser and Milton," in Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth, ed. John Warden (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 207.

[71]Warden, p. xii.

Finally, united with Ficinian neoplatonism, Orphean myth was a means of uniting the doctrine of Eros with the power of the divine song. It is a distinctly Pléiade adaptation which suppresses this aspect of the symbol while emphasizing Orpheus as the priest-singer.[72]

From this central Orphean symbol the Pléiade justified not only the glory of the poet as a social member without peer but also the absolute necessity of song to any ordered society. The Pléiade could look beyond the vagaries of Fortune which sometimes allowed true poets to exist without honor or remuneration while versifiers were unworthily preferred. An order which did not receive the true bards would suffer the consequences: disorder in the political state, diminution of the national art forms, instability in the ruling house. A true bard might suffer penury, ill fame, and lack of appreciation just as Orpheus had been attacked by the Bacchantes, beheaded, and scorned. As the Pléiade would have been quick to note, however, the head and the singer's lyre floated down the Hesbros and into eternity still singing. The poet might suffer, but his song lived on. The power of his art to confer immortality on deserving patrons and on himself was a beacon of hope that would sustain him through despairing periods of worldly neglect or unceasing creative labor.

---

[72]McFarlane, p. 70.

Finally, the myth of Orpheus established two of the primary dicta of the Pléiade's poetic craft: the balance between art and nature; the balance between obscurity and clarity. Both of these became the critical fountainheads for the specifics of their aesthetics of craftsmanship. Of all the myriad allusions that evidence the Pléiade's reliance on the symbol of Orpheus as the embodiment of their belief in the power of song, none is more comprehensive than Ronsard's L'Orphée, his one sustained treatment of the Myth:

De jour en jour suyvant s'amenuisoit ma vie,
Je n'avois de Bacus ny de Ceres envie,
Couché plat sur la roche, & de moy ne restoit
Qu'une voix qui ma femme en mourant regretoit,
Quand, oyant d'Helicon ma pleinte si amere,
Aveques ses huit soeurs, voicy venir ma mere,
Qui me leva de terre & repoussa la mort,
Qui desja de mon coeur avoit gaigné le fort.
Mon fils, ce me disoit, l'amour qui est entrée
Dans ton coeur s'en fuyra en changeant de contrée:
En traversant la terre, & en passant la mer,
Tu perdras le soucy qui vient de trop aymer.
Pour ce, si le desir de louënge t'anime,
Reveille la vertu de ton coeur magnanime,
Et suy les nobles Preux, qui loing de leur maison
S'en vont de sur la mer compagnons de Jason.
Ainsi pour me garir me disoit Calliope,
Ainsi, fuyant amour, je vins en cette trope,
Non tant pour voir la mer, ses vens & ses poissons,
Que pour te voir, Chiron, et oyr tes chansons.
A tant se teut Orphée, & les bestes sauvages
Erroient devant la porte: oyseaux de tous plumages
Volletoient de sur luy, & les pins, qui baissoient
Les testes pour l'oyr, devant l'Antre dansoient,
Tant leur plaisoit le son d'une si douce Lyre,
Que depuis dans le Ciel les Dieux ont fait reluire.[73]

---

[73] Ronsard, XII, 141-42, ll. 325-50.

Jeffrey has pointed out the significance of these lines which are spoken by Orpheus at the close of the poem after his adventure into the Underworld and the second loss of his wife:

> Orpheus, the most famous of mythological musicians, has lost his love Eurydice; yet he still sings, serves the Muses, travels, aims at fame, is the companion of the great, listens to other poets (musicians), makes nature listen to him--and eventually will gain divine immortality. Poetry (or music) in this poem has a number of functions: it is a purpose, a pleasure to the listener, an encouragement to valiant enterprises, a comfort to the singer himself (lines 221-2, "Sans cesse je pleurois, soulangeant sur ma Lyre,/Bien que ce fust en vain, mon amoureaux martyre"). Ronsard who compared himself to Orpheus on more than one occasion, in recreating this classical myth in France, is using it for his own idea of what poetry is, or should be . . . .[74]

Clearly, then, poetry possesses an ethical imperative in its power to move Nature, men, political states and changes of all kinds. As the force of the gods, the poet's song not only gave to mortal men a vision of the eternal world beyond the temporal, but it helped for the moment in imposing the beauties of that world upon the vagaries of the present.

The works of Spenser's minor poetry are shot through with these same gossamer threads of the transforming power of the poet's song. Like the Pléiade, Spenser's use of the poet's glorious voice indicates more than a casual repetition of the popular themes of the bard's potency. Just as the Pléiade took the neoplatonic concepts and embodied them anew in their fight to enshrine poetry in a place

---

[74] Jeffrey, p. 228.

of honor as a professional, serious, and needful discipline, so too did Spenser, the first in a line of professional English poets, weave the efficacy of true poetry throughout his works.

Even Spenser's earliest pieces reflect the power of poetry to overcome the disordering powers of time and death. In translating du Bellay's Antiquez and "Songe" into the "Ruines of Rome" and "Visions of Bellay," Spenser faithfully recaptures the apocalyptic emphasis of his originals. Chaos seems imminent until the persona's poetry imaginatively embodies the visions and thus saves the grandeur of Rome and the glory of the mighty from the fell hand of change. That Spenser is conscious of the power imputed to the poet's song is made clear by the original envoy which he appends to his translations of the "Songe":

> Bellay, first garland of free Poesie
> That brought forth, though fruitfull of braue wits,
> Well worthy thou of immortalitie,
> That long hast traveled by thy learned wits,
> Old Rome out of her ashes to reuiue,
> And give a second life to dead decayes.
> (p. 514, 11. 449-54)

The same patterns are played out again in "Visions of Petrarch" and his original "Visions of the Worlds Vanities"; only the poet's power to sing of the sights that his heightened imagination encounters can intervene between catastrophe and calm.

In addition, by the time of the Shepheardes Calendar, Spenser has begun to express the importance of poetic song through metaphors reflective of those of the Pléiade. In a work which announces itself to be not only the herald of a "new Poete" but also the herald of a

new kind of poetry, it is not surprising to find much emphasis on the force and importance which that poetry possesses. Like the lists of poet-succession in the treatises of Ronsard and du Bellay, Spenser incorporates from the outset references to his poetic heritage; E. K.'s epistle to Harvey links the Shepheardes Calendar to Chaucer and through him back to Virgil and places him in the pastoral tradition from Theocritus through Marot and Sanzarro and "other excellent . . . Italian and French poetes"; the eclogues themselves continually point back to Chaucer or Virgil, thus making sure that the writer's linkage with great bards of the past is unmistakeable. Spenser, then, labors consistently in the Shepheardes Calendar to proclaim himself as Orpheus' successor just as Ronsard had done in order to advertise himself as a new star and to explore the possibilities of his place in that role.[75]

Further, following on his early translations and imitations in using structure to accentuate his faith in song, Spenser couches his first efforts in pastoral eclogues. As the studies of Cullen, Alpers, and Cain have shown, not only did this decision coincide with accepted decorum for a novice poet, but it also helped to establish the aesthetics which would underlie this new poetry.[76] Alpers

---

[75]Thomas Cain, "Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus," University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1971), 28.

[76]See Patrick Cullen, "Imitation and Metamorphosis: The Golden Age Eclogue in Spenser, Marvell, and Milton," PMLA, 84 (1969), 1559-61; Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of the Pastoral," College English, 34 (1972), 352-55; and Thomas Cain, "The Strategy of Praise in Spenser's 'Aprill,'" Studies in English, 8 (1968), 49-51.

has demonstrated that by choosing pastoral and linking himself to the Virgilian tradition, Spenser was consciously aligning himself with a kind of poetry which gave pre-eminance to the voice of the poet: "Virgil's pastoral poetry is not a vision or dream, but speech and song, and its hallmark is a sense of the contingency of human utterance: that it is always dependent on the speaker's (or singer's) situations, powers, and limitations."[77] This pastoral contingency mirrors the emphasis of both du Bellay's Rustiques and Ronsard's Hymnes. Cain goes on to say that the pastoral was a popular mode with great Renaissance writers because it relied upon a "logos figure" who was central to the structure of society and on whom society's stability depended.[78] The entire genre centers around aesthetic powers which can cause all nature, all passions, and all disorder to stop and to listen.[79] Finally, as Alpers irrefutably demonstrates, serious writers like those of the Pléiade and Spenser were attracted to the pastoral because it allowed them to put into practice their aesthetic notions of the necessity of poetic song: "At the center of the pastoral is the shepherd-singer. The great pastoral poets are directly concerned with the extent to which song that gives present pleasures can confront if not transform and

---

[77] Alpers, p. 355.

[78] Cain, p. 27.

[79] Alpers, p. 358.

celebrate, then accept and reconcile man to the stresses and realities of the situation."[80]

Automatically linked with this was the Orphean figure so popular in much of Renaissance literature. As Cain has shown, the use of Orpheus by the Pléiade and by Spenser is not in itself distinctive or significant. Almost every writer of the age at some time incorporated him into his work, as a mystic thinker in Ficino, the powerful Contemplative in Boethius, the mythological shaman in a score of other works. These writers, however, fused the artist Orpheus with the priestly mystic and created through him an icon for their own religious aesthetic. Orpheus was the ultimate symbol of the artist who charmed, controlled, transformed and created; both Ronsard and Spenser were primarily interested in him as poet triumphant.[81] Colin Clout becomes Spenser's Orpheus, the apotheosis of the poet and his song.

While Colin can protest his inadequacy to his "calling" in "Januarye," "June" and "December," he is obviously an Orphean successor in the "Aprill," "August," "October" and "November" eclogues. Quite clearly, April's "Laye of fayre Elisa" is Spenser's most effective statement of Colin as the new Orpheus. Here, reported by Hobbinoll, the lay masterfully demonstrates the power of song to provide order on all levels of human existence. Alpers says that April's

---

[80] Alpers, p. 353.

[81] Cain, pp. 24-25.

lay is from beginning to end a celebration of song, procession, dance, the primeval rhythms of existence.[82] Not only has the imagination of Colin, like Orpheus, called the natural and human realms in order that they may offer praise to Elisa, but Colin in constructing Elisa as the object of worship creates an artistic symbol which operates on several levels simultaneously. Colin orders life as poet/artist and Elisa orders life as ruler/queen. How these two modes of order are interrelated is made clear as the lay unfolds.

Elisa is said in the lay to be the daughter of Syrinx and Pan, two mythological figures whom E. K. kindly tells us were associated with the first song piped from reeds. Hence, she is partaker in Spenser's divine poetic succession. Further, Elisa receives branches from the Muses (p. 432, ll. 100-10) and receives homage from the Graces (ll. 110-16), thus unifying her place as leige lord of both the world of art and the world of actuality. In her, harmony between contrary realms of life is achieved. She is the golden age messiah whose presence bears reconciliation. She becomes, then, not only a counterfeit of Elizabeth I, but an imaginative embodiment of art as ruler. Cullen posits that Spenser represents in Elisa song, harmony, the divine artist as well as the divinely annointed ruler and by doing so

> . . . represents the order of art and the order of the ruler and the body politic as corresponding extensions of divine

---

[82] Alpers, p. 363.

> order, and as corresponding aspects of the new golden age. . . . it also suggests by analogy a continuation of the allegory of Elisa as Song, Elisa as divine art, that is, the power of the artist as well as ruler to reorder and perfect life into one harmonious and golden whole.[83]

The lay's symphonic movement from the supernatural realm of the Muses and Graces to the mortal realm of the shepherdesses to the natural realms of the flowers on the green demonstrates that every level of the cosmos realigns itself with Elisa's presence, and they do it at the command of Colin. Here, then, is the aesthetic dogma of the Pléiade made manifest. The divine harmonies of song assert a re-ordering force on the cosmos by virtue of their presence, but the mortal singers who are in touch with these harmonies must speak the order into existence through the exercise of their imaginative powers. Cullen concludes:

> Spenser has taken the golden age eclogue's theme of the world remade and made it into an allegory of the transforming power of song, art--an allegory, too, of the interrelation of the social and artistic order, and an allegory of the new age of song . . . . Elisa is certainly more than Elizabeth I . . . . [She] signals a new golden age of song, a return of the Muses.[84]

The lay is, according to Cullen, "an allegory of the ordering power of orphic art and the body politic, and an allegory of the new golden age of poetry heralded by his work."[85]

---

[83]Cullen, p. 1563.

[84]Cullen, p. 1562.

[85]Cullen, p. 1570.

In "June" Hobbinoll speaks of Colin's ability to charm his surroundings like Orpheus:

> Colin, to heare thy rymes and roundelayes,
> Which thou were wont on wastfull hylls to singe,
> I more delight, then larke in Sommer dayes:
> Whose Echo made the neyghbour groues to sing:
> And taught the byrds, which in the lower spring
> Did shroude in shady leaues from sonny rayes,
> Frame to thy songe their cheerful cheriping,
> Or hold theyr peace, for shame of thy sweete lay.
> (p. 442, ll. 49-56)

Further, Hobbinoll asserts that Calliope when she first heard Colin's song abandoned her own song to follow his. Even the mother of Orpheus, therefore, recognizes the kinship and supremacy of Colin's song. But the "June" eclogue, like "Januarye," pictures not the poet triumphant but the poet perplexed. Colin's imagination is fettered, and his song goes unsung. Spenser is no idle dreamer; the paradox within which he places his shepherd-singer reflects exactly the same problems which Ronsard and du Bellay articulated when they outlined the qualities inherent in a true bard with vatic song and at the same moment bewailed the hardships that such priests of beauty often endure. They too, like Colin, often have their perspective blurred, their passions ungoverned, and their transcendent imaginations in bonds. While the pastoral offers a perfect background for the epitome of the divine singer to act against, it is not a utopian world which excludes the real forces of disorder and entropy against which art must act.

In "August" we once again receive a second-hand account of Colin's power in song. Having judged Perigot's and Willye's

traditional singing match, Cuddie offers to perform Colin's verse as a model for them to emulate. The other shepherds acknowledge the undeniable supremacy of Colin's song, a sestina of "doolful verse" about Rosalind. Not only does this song once again rely on Colin's orchestration of all levels of the cosmic order to express his grief, but this time we have the obvious hand of the artist at work as he sets his grieving imagination to the manipulation of the highly artificial sestina form. Alpers points out that the intricate form calls attention to itself and to its maker's skill with words. The audience becomes doubly aware of the power of the artist, both the power of his imagination and the technical perfection which frames the imaginative picture.[86]

If "August" suggests Spenser's reliance on the Orpheus figure through Colin's song is quieting the birds and hushing nature, "October" accomplishes the same by picturing the disorder present when poetic song is not occupying its rightful place. In "October" the great bard of the Calendar's order has displaced himself from his vocation, and the poetasters who remain have none of the qualities of Orphean succession. Colin is spoken of as a Swan, whose voice in mythology caused other birds to stop singing. He is absent and the other poets present are but "peacocks" (p. 457, ll. 32-37) who make luxurious rhymes but are not rewarded because their

---

[86]Alpers, p. 362.

work has no effect. Only Cuddie seems to be close to Orpheus' line of descent, for Piers says:

> Soone thou gynst to sette thy notes in frame,
> O how the rural routes to thee doe cleaue:
> Seemeth thou dost their soule of sense bereaue,
> All as the shepheard, that did fetch his dame
> From Plutoes balefull bowre withouten leaue:
> His musicks might the hellish hound did tame.
> (p. 457, 11. 25-30)

But Cuddie recognizes that his song is far down the succession and, as Cain has pointed out, has suffered attrition of the divine poet's potency.[87] He can only experience the poetic frenzy when his imagination is loosened by wine (p. 458, 1. 110), and so the state of poetry itself has become disordered by Colin's absence from his rightful place.

That Colin does yet possess a power of poetic song which can transform man and nature we observe directly in his performance of the elegy for Dido in "November." The only one of his three great songs which we see him perform, the "November" elegy, once again evinces Colin's skill to order the Muses, the shepherds, memory, grief, and consolation. His song's power encompasses the range of human experience and has impact on them all. At its close the grieving Thenot no longer knows whether to celebrate or mourn. He is the epitome of man transformed by song. Isabel MacCaffrey says:

> The growth of Colin's own fame is signified, in the action of the Calendar, by the presence of three songs, performed by his friends and betokening the true power of art. It

---

[87] Cain, p. 29.

> cannot effect literal changes in the world of nature, but in its imagined worlds, perfect harmony, can reign, to be recreated each time the song is sung for our instruction and delight . . . . The poem is a kind of charm, evoking in imagination the correspondence of microcosm and macrocosm. . . .[88]

In the "December" eclogue, as the discrepancy widens between the literal and imaginative worlds, Colin comes to a moment of truth. In interpreting the Shepheardes Calendar, critics have attempted to elucidate Colin's symbolic abandonment of the tools of his trade once again at the Calendar's close. Most have compared Colin's behavior to his breaking of the pipe of "Januarye" and have been confused by the implications of his actions. If his destruction of his pipe in "Januarye" signifies his forsaking his gifts while under passion's sway or until passion and experience temper his artistic vision, then what are we to make of his leaving the pipe behind once these experiences are gained? Further, if we say the forgotten pipe is simply a symbol of the poet's completion of the pastoral or "novice" stage of his career, are we guilty of oversimplifying and thus overlooking the central symbolic implications of the text?

The solution seems to be a combination of the two answers. This conclusion must be viewed in light of the perplexities which the works of Ronsard, du Bellay, and other members of the Pléiade illustrate concerning the necessity of the poet's song to a stable

---

[88] Isabel MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 103.

order and the apparent insistence of circumstance ("Fortune") on emasculating the power and place of that song. It is not that Colin's song can have no potency, for clearly in "Aprill," "August," "November" it does, but Colin and even lesser poets like Cuddie must give voice to their songs in the face of their overmastering passions, wrongful preferment, lack of remuneration. They must allow their songs to transcend the experiences of pain and deprivation, and they must fit their songs to these experiences. Like Orpheus, they must leave taming the pastoral trees and winning shepherds' singing matches and frame their songs to win the Eurydices from Hades or provide "sweete concorde" for the weary Argonauts so that their adventure might be completed. Hence, Colin in hanging his pipe on the tree alludes to the children of Israel in captivity who hung their harps upon the trees, unable to sing in a strange land. Colin has been matured and tempered by his pastoral experience, but the pastoral retreat is a strange land where his song cannot perform its vatic function, so his act symbolizes his progress to another mode of imaginative experience. He, like Orpheus, must link the world of action and actuality with the transforming power of his song, and he leaves the pastoral behind to do exactly that.

Spenser's later minor poems tend to reflect the shift signified by the end of the Shepheardes Calendar. In "Prosopopoia" Spenser constructs two-dimensional allegory of the poet's song. Just as Mother Hubberd's imagination is necessary so that the vices of society can be actualized for the sickened society resulting from

Astraea's flight from the realms of man, so is Mother Hubberd's "song" or tale necessary so that order can be restored. Decay pervades all levels of the poem. The poet/persona is ill and must be soothed by pleasant tales (p. 495, ll. 23-26); the tale told by Mother Hubberd is one of a sick society. The fox and ape denigrate the church, the court, the throne, and even poetry itself:

> . . . he could fine louing verses frame,
> And play the Poet oft, But ah, for shame
> Let not sweete Poets praise, whose onely pride
> Is vertue to advaunce, and vice deride,
> Be with the work of losels wit defamed,
> Ne let such verses Poetrie be named:
> Yet he the name on him would rashly take,
> Maugre the sacred Muses, and it make
> A servant to vile affection
> Of such, as he depended most upon,
> And with the sugarie sweete thereof allure
> Chast Ladies eares to fantasies impure.
> (p. 503, ll. 809-20)

Having degraded the realm of man, they flee ultimately to the animal kingdom and usurp the lion's place of rightful authority, so insinuating chaos into this level as well. They initiate a rule with "no care of justice, nor no rule of reason,/No temperance, nor no regard of season" (p. 506, ll. 1131-32). At this point in the poem Spenser has, through the two story frames, demonstrated disorder and decay on every level of the cosmic hierarchy, from the stars themselves down to the animal kingdom. Jove, hearing of the instability, dispatches Mercury to re-establish the divine pattern.

According to Robert Bryan, Mercury performs, in this poetic allegory, the role which Spenser sees that all poets should be fulfilling, the poet-cleanser. Frequently used in mythology as a poet

figure, Mercury, according to Bryan, "fulfills the role of the poet, the shepherd-priest, the cleanser of society. . . . [he] is the figure of the poet, and his accomplishments are the accomplishments of Spenser who attempted to chastise his government in order to make it new and whole again."[89] Kenneth Atchity goes further to say that the most basic premise of the poem is the "healing power" of poetry:

> In "Mother Hubberds Tale," following Sidney and the poets of the Pléiade, Spenser accords poetry an ordering role. . . . Poetry . . . can restore order by bringing the errant individual to realize that the goals he pursues, being subject to change, are false. His pursuit of them endangers all society of which each individual is a necessary member . . . . In this Spenser shows his maturing artistic vision. . . . Mother Hubberd herself personifies order in Jove; the narrator, in Mother Hubberd; Spenser, in the narrator who has decided on the appropriateness in recalling the story; until poetry itself, as an ordering principle, has been embodied in triple depth in the satiric fable.[90]

The poem is quite simply an "exemplum of how good poetry can reorder a society fallen into chaos."[91]

Judith Dunidas sees a similar significance in the make-up of "Muiopotomos." The delicate epyllion emphasizes throughout the order and pattern of the universe which encompasses. Clarion, the mock hero, is a creature of studied and delicate beauty who lives his short, happy life not in a wild, natural garden, but in a carefully ordered paradise of flowers. Even Clarion's nemesis, Aragnoll,

---

[89]Bryan, p. 31.

[90]Kenneth John Atchity, "Spenser's 'Mother Hubberds Tale': Three Themes of Order," Philological Quarterly, 52 (1973), 170-71.

[91]Bryan, p. 27.

creates patterns and order as she weaves her deadly webs. Further, the poem emphasizes the place of art in a universe of order. Clarion, the flowers, Aragnoll's web, all the products of nature seem almost as carefully crafted as the artistic tapestries which Arachne and Minerva so carefully pattern. From the gods who create the tapestries, to Venus who creates the beautiful butterfly itself, to Aragnoll who weaves the incomparable web, every creature in the poem is a creator of ordered beauty.

Dunidas believes that to assert that the poem is simply an allegory of the transitory nature of pleasure is to grossly oversimplify the metaphoric structure of the poem and reduce it to a childish emblem-book exercise. Rather, she argues, the poem accepts mutability as a "given" of existence while it posits art as a stay again mutability's onslaught:

> In this poem, it is not the heavenly which is the answer to the shortcomings of the earthly; it is art. The mutable world of earthly beauty gives way to the immutable world of artistic beauty. And of all the qualities of art, the one which in this poem excites the most admiration is skill in making patterns . . . . In "Muipotmos," a tapestry world has similarly triumphed over raw emotion and shown that what matters is the divinely detached aesthetic point of view.[92]

"The Ruines of Time," which is thought to stand nearest Spenser's mature work in order of composition, has all of the characteristics of Spenser's belief in the power of poetry that are

---

[92]Judith Dunidas, "'Muiopotmos': A World of Art," Yearbook of English Studies, 5 (1975), 31.

scattered through his earlier work. Like the earliest pieces, the poem's structure is that of a vision apprehended by the heightened sensitivities of the poet-persona. Also, like the first efforts, this poem presents image after image of earthly decay and disorder: Verlame is but a ghost; her city lies in ruins; virtue goes unsung; the dead lie unmourned. Clearly, the universe of this poem lacks both propriety and stability.

Having enumerated the cause of her lament, Verlame then links the chaos of her state with that of the persona's. Great worthies have died in his sphere, but they too have gone unchronicled. Even Colin Clout whose divinely sanctioned imagination is capable of rightly articulating their virtue in song has neglected his responsibilities (p. 474, ll. 223-38). The allusion to Colin Clout calls to mind the shepherd-singer's leaving of his pipe at the end of The Shepheardes Calendar in preparation for singing a new sort of song. Verlame's accusation seems to imply that Colin's artistic vision is still ripening for the song that is to come. Here is the opportunity for Colin's song to "order" not the detached pastoral experiences of The Shepheardes Calendar but the actual entropy of the mortal state. He must take the eloquence of his "November" elegy for Dido and frame it to the actual passing of Leicester and Sidney. Verlame's lament, although not possessing the poetic fervor of a divine bard, serves as a template for what Colin should be doing (pp. 474-75, ll. 309-43). She is conscious that song is necessary to express grief (ll. 316-19), to praise the virtues of the dead

(11. 324-31), to celebrate the continuity of existence from the temporal to the immortal realm (11. 337-43).

Not only does song impose order on undisciplined emotions and passions, but Verlame reminds her audience that only song can overcome the tendency of the created order to oblivion and confusion. She commands the rulers to patronize worthy poets so that they themselves might gain immortality and she also indicates through her reference to Orpheus (p. 475, 11. 390-92) that such songs can change the ways of heaven. Song, then, has impact both on the divine and earthly spheres. That the act of song can provide order is made absolutely apparent by the twelve pageants at the poem's close. The poet-persona, who has obviously been neglecting his duty at the poem's outset, is moved by Verlame's lament. The pageants which follow her disappearance are clearly icons which celebrate the worthies that Verlame says should be immortalized in song. Hence, we have Leicester as the great Image of the first pageant, the Dudley coat of arms in the sixth pageant, and Sidney as the transcendent swan and harp in the seventh and eighth, and the placement of the dead nobles' ashes as stars in heaven by Mercury in the last stanza. Just as Mercury is a symbol of the potency of poetry to lift the greatness of these men to a "second life" above the powers of death and change, the poet-persona's record of the pageants themselves is an emblem of the efficacy of song. All of Verlame's complaints have been satisfied: her city has been recorded and mourned; past virtues have been set down for the profit of future

ages; the dead great have been lifted to heaven; and the poet has been freed from the debilitating disorder within himself (p. 472, ll. 29-35; p. 476, ll. 470-90) by giving voice to his omnipotent art.

Clearly, then, Spenser's poetry reflects throughout his faith in the power of the poet and in the necessity of his song in a well-ordered state. Committed to the belief that the poet was a special figure in the social fabric, a figure whose abilities sprang from capacities beyond the range of ordinary men, Spenser enriches the allegorical levels of his work with this contrapuntal emphasis on the efficacy of art and the dignity and glory of the poet who gives it expression. Like Ronsard and the other French poets, Spenser set out to undergird his serious intentions and high hopes for English poetry with a philosophic foundation that espoused both the divine nature of artists and the divine sources of their abilities. As deified figures, poets became in Spenser not tangential adornments to the social order but vital components without which no order was possible.

CHAPTER III

"TO SPEAK IT FITLY FORTH": THE POET'S CRAFT

Du Bellay's Deffence makes it clear that the poet's natural talents, although provided by God, were not sufficient in themselves to ensure that his work would achieve greatness. Indeed, du Bellay says clearly that

> la felicité de nature donée mesmes aux plus indoctes etoit suffisante pour faire chose digne de l'immortalité. Qui veut voler par les mains & bouches des hommes, doit longuement demeurer en sa chambre: & qui desire vivre en la memoire de la posterité, doit comme mort en soymesmes suer & trembler maintesfois, & autant que notz poëtes courtizans boyvent, mangent, & dorment à leur oyse, endurer de faim, de soif & de longues vigiles.[1]

These, according to du Bellay, are the "pinions" on which poetry can mount skywards. As adamant as the Pléiade was in the belief that the poet and his work had a divinely appointed and unique place in the cosmic scheme, its members were equally tenacious in their doctrine that such a specially endowed nature obligated true poets to work at their crafts.

Indeed, the unceasing emphasis which they put on matters of style and rhetoric stemmed at least in part from the philosophic

---

[1]Joachim du Bellay, Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoyse, ed. Henri Chamard (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1948), pp. 105-106.

foundation which underlay their practice of poetry. Francis Yates has observed in her study of the Pléiade and other sixteenth-century academies that a hallmark of the second great wave of humanism (which gave rise to the Florentine academies in Italy and the Pléiade in France) was the intense interest of these poet-scholars in philological and rhetorical studies. Further, they linked the potential greatness of their art to their discussions of poetic style and expression.[2] Ronsard asserted that diligent labor was also necessary in order to gain the maximum use of what the poet's link with the divine provided naturally:

> Tout ainsi que l'invention despend d'une gentille nature d'esprit, ainsi la disposition despend de la belle invention, laquelle consiste en une elegante et parfaicte collocation & ordre des choses inventées, et ne permet que ce qui appartient à un lieu soit mis en l'autre, mais se gouvernant par artifice, estude & labeur, ajance & ordonne dextrement toutes choses à son poinct.[3]

Just as the Pléiade's beliefs in the elevated stature of poetry could be traced to an identifiable philosophic substructure concerning the figure of the poet, so too can their poetic practice be delineated from their adherence to two basic perceptions of the operation of the artistic imagination. These two concepts, imitation

---

[2]Francis Yates, The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century (London: University of London Press, 1947), pp. 6-7.

[3]Pierre de Ronsard, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Paul Laumonier. (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1931-1959), XI, 14. Many of the references to Ronsard, du Bellay, Pontus de Tyard in this chapter are cited in W. F. Patterson, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory: A Critical History of the Chief Arts of Poetry in France (1328-1630), 3 vols. (1935; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966). Quotations follow the original French text.

and invention, were the currency of the poetic trade as it was understood in sixteenth-century Europe and subsumed in their denominations all of the various activities that a working poet should engage in. While contemporary critics have in the last two decades refocused attention on these terms and their importance in understanding any Renaissance aesthetic, imitation and invention are too often the subjects of contorted discussions of creative psychology that conflate modern psychological awareness with sixteenth-century usage while at the same time reminding us that delineations of and distinctions between these two ideas were not uniform in Renaissance discussions. Such confusions did exist, as Berger's and Castor's studies have made clear; it is often difficult to determine whether Sidney, Gascoigne, Peletier, or Puttenham is using these terms consistently in relationship to the usage of other theorists. Because the Pléiade as a group had as their purpose the clarification of poetic doctrine, their articulation of the roles of imitation and invention in the learning, practice, and perfection of the poetic gift is usually consistent.

The Poet's Labors

The Pléiade, like their fellow humanists, saw diligent study as the starting point of a poet's trade; their disciplined work at Dorat's Collège de Coqueret is but a formal manifestation of their all-pervasive dedication to learning. The poet might receive his

gifts of imagination and song through no personal merit, just as any Christian might receive unmerited grace, but he must be worthy of the gift through study and practice.[4]

This devotion to labor in the production of art is very clear in Ronsard's Hymnes to the four seasons. In a gathering which treats philosophy, art, poetry, and nature in an interwoven thematic texture, the one quality which unites them all is "work." The seasons are seen as tireless workers engaged in the unceasing, essential activity of the universe, the creation and preservation of life. Donald Stone in his analysis of the Hymnes sees them as the locus of Ronsard's coalescing poetic vision, the site where Ronsard lucidly envisioned the tie between the poet's divine endowment and his laborious obligations:

> It is of the utmost importance that the work of the seasons is presented here not as planting and harvesting, but as that supreme creation which was the coupling of natural forces to unleash the generative processes of all time. This essential element of the sense and significance of the hymns is of Ronsard's own invention.[5]

Further, Terrence Cave reminds us of how central this idea is to the Pléiade's general aesthetic:

> . . .the myths recounted in the four seasonal hymns imply an ethic based on exuberant creativity, which is shown to transcend ordinary moral categories. Although the mythical narratives themselves contain no explicit

---

[4]K. R. W. Jones, Pierre de Ronsard (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), p. 19.

[5]Donald Stone, Ronsard's Sonnet Cycles. Yale Romantic Studies, No. 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 111.

> references to poetic creation, they show in a particularly vigorous way how the "abundance" principle so often asserted by Ronsard in other realms is manifest in the cosmic process. Given this analogy and the overtly theoretical introductions of the third and fourth hymns, it only requires a slight shift of register to understand the seasonal cycle in terms of the poet's own activity.[6]

Thus, for Ronsard and the Pléiade, the poet's rigorous labor was but his participation in the creative work of the cosmos. Just as the labors of the natural order were rewarded with the fecund variety of Nature, so too would a diligent poet's efforts produce an abundant diversity.

Because of their belief in the value of work, the Pléiade spiced their critical statements with admonitions to would-be poets to acquire a wide range of learning. Robert Clements in his article on poetry and philosophy in the Renaissance points out that Ronsard and his fellows felt a poet must master philosophy, including natural science, astronomy, geography, civil law, medicine, magic, literature, and social mores.[7] The Pléiade's dedication to the cult of learning is clear in du Bellay's Deffence where he enumerates the preparations that the true poet takes in order to fulfill the duty thrust on him by divine appointment: (1) he must be learned in all good arts and sciences; (2) he must be versed in styles of the best Greek and Latin

---

[6]Terrence Cave, "Ronsard's Mythological Universe," in Ronsard the Poet, ed. Terrence Cave (London: Methuen & Co., 1973), p. 194.

[7]Clements, "Poetry and Philosophy in the Renaissance," Comparative Literature Studies, 8 (1971), 17.

writers.[8] The purpose of such exhaustive and unceasing study was not merely to acquire an encyclopedic repertoire of facts or knowledge; rather it was to provide an acquaintance with an encompassing array of human experiences so that the poet might by juxtaposition better employ and regard his own. As Jones' examination of Ronsard's intellectual development makes clear, variety, diversity, and expansiveness were primary concerns in the Pléiade's aesthetic.[9]

The Pléiade's View of Imitation

Growing out of and returning support to this cult of study and learning was the Pléiade's notion that the poet must perfect his art through imitation. In an age which read the classics with voracity, the sixteenth century quickly absorbed works like Aristotle's Poetics and Horace's Ars Poetics. The doctrine of imitation was pervasive, encouraging disciples to imitate if they too would be immortal. Castor, Clements, Jones and many others have since demonstrated that by and large most Renaissance practitioners in their favor either mangled or misread the idea so that Aristotle's mimesis degenerated into an excuse for rank plagiarism from either the ancients or contemporaries.[10] Castor's detailed examination demonstrates that members of the Pléiade, however, shared a more

---

[8] Du Bellay, Deffence, pp. 127-28.

[9] Jones, pp. 21-22.

[10] Clements, "Poetry and Philosophy," p. 12. See also Castor, p. 73, and Jones, p. 21.

exact, and therefore more comprehensive notion of what constituted poetic imitation.

Like many other sixteenth-century writers, the Pléiade believed in imitation in its most basic form; practicing poets could profit from imitating the work of great masters, both ancient and medieval. Castor points out that most of du Bellay's and Ronsard's contemporaries exercised this elementary level of the theory in mere translation.[11] Not only were classical critical pieces translated into Italian and French in the 1540's and 1550's, but also the poetic works of ancient poets went through the translation mill as well. Further, as W. L. Bullock's study of plagiarism and imitation in the Renaissance argues, the best Renaissance writers treated their translations as originals until well after 1550, and only in the last quarter of the century did most writers exhibit any sort of familiarity with the Aristotelian concept of mimesis.[12]

Ronsard, according to Castor, has little to say on the subject of translation as imitation.[13] He does advise young poets to be "studieux de la lecture des bons poëtes, & les apprendras par coeur autant que tu pourras" and to found one's own greatness on

---

[11]Grahame Castor, Pléiade Poetics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 65.

[12]W. L. Bullock, "The Precept of Plagiarism in Cinquecento," Modern Philology, 25 (1928), 295.

[13]Castor, p. 71.

"la leçon des bons & anciens auteurs."[14] In the preface to the 1550 volume of the Odes he announced himself to be an "imitateur des poëtes Grecs" who would "redi[t] souvent mémes mots, mémes sentences, & mémes trais de vers."[15] Du Bellay addressed the matter directly and at length in his Deffence. His categories elucidate both the affinities and distinctions which he and his fellows shared with current acceptance of imitation. The Deffence speaks of "traducteurs," who translate verbatim; "translateurs," who reproduce ideas closely; "paraphrastes," who reproduce ideas freely; and "imitateurs," who practice "innutrition," or grafting.[16]

Castor's analysis emphasizes that the Pléiade valued each of these translation modes for its use in developing a particular poetic skill. While the outright verbatim translation of "traducteurs" seems an almost worthless practice today, to artists who were endeavoring to create not only lasting art but a lasting medium worthy of that art, such an exercise was an elementary means of rendering in the native tongue new terms and means of expression. Such one-dimensional activity, however, was neither sufficient nor worthy of great poetic efforts, and it is here that the Deffence takes issue with Thomas Sebillet and his predecessors for emphasizing

---

[14]Ronsard, XIV, 6. Cited in Castor, p. 71. Quotations follow original French text.

[15]Ronsard, I, 55. Cited in Castor, p. 71.

[16]Robert J. Clements, Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade, Harvard Studies in Romance Languages, No. 18 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 264.

this level of activity: "Celuy donques qui voudra faire oeuvre digne de prix en son vulgaire, laisse ce labeur de traduyre."[17] In fact, mere translation was to du Bellay a "chose laborieuse & peu profitable, j'ose dire encor' inutile, voyre pernicieuse à l'accroissement de [la] Langue."[18]

Proper imitation, the work of "paraphrastes" and "imitateurs," which the Deffence attempts to describe through three or four chapters, however, helps fledgling poets to enrich the medium of their artistic expression and to gain a sense of the perfection of form found in accomplished poets, to learn to suit genre and mode to style and subject matter, to practice with the rhythms and music of poetic technique. Du Bellay sees true poets as

> Immitant les meilleurs aucteurs Grecz, se transformant en eux, les devorant, & apres les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang & nouriture, se proposant, chacun selon son naturel & l'argument qu'il vouloit elire, le meilleur aucteur, dont ilz observoint diligemment toutes les plus rares & exquises vertuz, & icelles comme grephes . . . entoint & apliquoint à leur Langue.[19]

He did not pretend that such imitation was an easy matter:

> entende celuy qui voudra immiter, que ce n'est chose facile de bien suyvre les vertuz d'un bon aucteur, & quasi comme se transformer en luy, veu que la Nature

---

[17]Du Bellay, Deffence, pp. 41-42.

[18]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 42.

[19]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 42-43.

> mesmes aux choses qui paroissent tressemblables, n'a sceu tant faire, que par quelque notte & difference elles ne puissent estre discernées.[20]

Castor observes that this sort of imitation never took the work simply as it stood in the original; "smaller elements" such as pithy sayings or vivid words might be borrowed exactly, but the "superficial mannerisms" of the model would not be copied. The poet should aim instead for a kinship with the author that would enable him to render the virtues and good graces of the model in his own fashion. He must engraft the greatness and perfections of other languages into his own work so that their essence becomes the essence of the French. At its highest imitation through translation was a matter of "unconscious reminiscence" which called to mind in both writer and reader the best qualities of both the original author and his imitator.[21]

The Pléiade, however, did not limit to a mere translation level their understanding of the poet's duty to imitate. Whether their expanded comprehension results from greater familiarity with Aristotle's Poetics or from a mere coincidence between their philosophic beliefs in the heightened capacities of the poet's mind and Aristotle's notion that memesis was creative is not clear. They were, nonetheless, aware of a higher form of imitation than servile copying of models. This higher level concerned their understanding of poetry and all art as an imitation of the schemes and patterns of

---

[20]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 102.

[21]Castor, pp. 67-69.

Nature, the cosmos. This aspect of imitation comes from the same strain of neoplatonism as their belief in the divinely endowed imaginative capacities of the poet. Castor explains this theory in relation to the Pléiade's neoplatonic tendency:

> . . .the fine arts, by imitating (at however many removes) the Idea of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, were making the first step on the ladder which leads from the everchanging, imperfect world of appearances up into the world of perfect and immutable Being. Through the contemplation of beauty in particulars the soul is drawn upwards (the direction in which it is its nature to move), until it attains to the contemplation of the one universal beauty, which is in God. This, of course, is the metaphysical scheme underlying Pontus de Tyard's account of the successive stages through which the soul passes when it is "ravished" by divine fury.[22]

Hence, a true poet's imitation of nature was all-encompassing; he copied the world of man, the realm of visible Nature, and the invisible Nature behind all apparent reality, the same scope inherent in Aristotle's mimetic theory. Art does not merely copy passively what is found in nature; rather it must so dynamically set forth the particulars of nature that the universals inherent in them can be apprehended by the mind; this grasp of the universals is what all art strives for. Poetry, thus, "improves upon Nature in that it sets in sharp relief the universals inhering in Nature, while still preserving the particulars intact."[23]

---

[22]Castor, p. 53.

[23]Castor, p. 54.

In imitating the universals behind the particular, the Pléiade believed that poetry created unity from multiplicity. Just as Nature brings the chaotic elements of the cosmos into harmony and beauty, so too does poetry construct concordance in its imitation of these harmonies. In the Solitaire Premier, Pontus de Tyard explains: "Nature à accordé comme une musique, & temperé les diversitez, & dissemblables princeps & elemens de tel balancement, que leur discorde accordée fait ceste belle & parfaite masse du monde."[24] Further, art operates on this same principle: "Les arts, imitans nature, apparioent si proprement les dissemblables, qu'ils ne semblent être qu'un."[25] Ronsard also addresses the "copieux diversité" of Nature which poetry should imitate. In the preface to his Odes of 1550, he argues that "je suis de cette opinion que nulle Poësie se doit louer pour acomplie, si elle ne ressemble la nature."[26]

Like Pontus de Tyard, Ronsard believed that in embodying the diversity of Nature poetry also imitated the unities and harmonies found there. Further, in asserting that poetry looked beyond the multiplicity of particulars to the universal, Ronsard and the Pléiade saw a liberation of the mind of the poet from slavish tyranny to the actual. In the 1565 Abbregé, Ronsard said, "Tout ainsi que le but

---

[24]Pontus de Tyard, Solitaire Premier, ed. Silvio de Barriden (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1950), p. 18. Cited in Castor, p. 56. Quotations follow original French text.

[25]Pontus de Tyard, p. 18.

[26]Ronsard, I, 47.

de l'orateur est de persuader, ainsi celuy du Poëte est d'imiter, inventer, et representer les choses qui sont, qui peuvent estre, ou que les anciens ont estimé comme veritables."[27] In the 1567 edition, he made the statement even stronger, ending the sentence "choses qui sont, ou qui peuvent estre, vraisemblables."[28] Hence, while the poet's divine fury might provide him with a starting place for his art, the poet himself must go for the rest of the elements of his creation (both in content and technique) to his observations of the natural world and other poets.

The Pléiade's View of Invention

This aspect of the Pléiade's notion of imitation leads to the second component governing their craftsmanship, invention. The term signifies both the power of the mental process and the products of that mental power. For in learning to suit their artistic vision to the vraisemblance of either Nature or the classical poets, they urged the poet to assimilate and re-create these "raw materials" into his own finished productions. This emphasis on the eclectic assimilation and interpolation of outside materials (whatever their source) is seen by many critics as their most revolutionary and controversial practice.[29] The poet engaged in imitation, then, so

---

[27]Ronsard, XIV, 13.

[28]Ronsard, XIV, 13, n. 178.

[29]Jones, p. 22.

that the mind might feed on what was good, and having digested the particular elements of that goodness, might transform those elements through his personal fury into some new creation. Ronsard defines invention as both process and product: l'invention n'est autre chose que le bon naturel d'une imagination concevant les Idées & formes de toutes choses qui se peuvent imaginer tant celestes que terrestres, animées ou inanimes (sic), pour apres les representer, descrire & imiter. . . ."[30] Its importance in Pléiade critical thought signifies at once their vision of the external world and the means by which the external world was ingested into their poetry.

Some critics, because of the philosophical tendencies of the time to see only God as a creator and other artists as makers, have asserted that poets of the era discounted the imaginative activity of the mind. Harry Berger's studies, however, deny the validity of this assumption and argue instead that a primary concern of Renaissance art is its emphasis on the mind's artifice. He asserts that serious poets of the Renaissance, like those of the Pléiade and the Sidney-Spenser group, saw the creative, "making" powers of the mind as a divine imperative to use them: "God expects the mind to explore itself as well as the appearances presented to it, and God therefore implants in the (poet's) mind a desire for, a delight in, the exercise of its powers."[31] In examining the development of

---

[30]Ronsard, XIV, 13.

[31]Berger, "The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World," Centennial Review, 9 (1965), 43.

the Renaissance attitude toward the imagination and its creative powers, Berger draws a clear distinction between medieval and Renaissance attitudes toward art and imagination. Medieval thinkers valued only what was reflected by the mirror of art, and so the imagination was to them of little importance in its own right; in the Renaissance, the greatest new poets saw a value in the reflector itself. They became interested in how the medium of the imagination produced the reflections that it did, for they saw in the imagination's independent dynamism "a guarantee of the mind's freedom from the tyranny of the actual world."[32] This change in vision and attitude toward the devices of a poet's imagination, the delight in artifice itself, separates the work of the Pléiade from their contemporaries.

They, like all good Ficinian neoplatonists, saw creation as an intellectual process that was being continuously carried out in the cosmos.[33] As staunch churchmen, they would have recoiled in horror at the heretical suggestion that their "creations" usurped an activity that was properly only a prerogative of God, an argument used by opponents of poetry (only God could create ex nihilo; so artists only made or feigned; hence, their work produced "lies). They nonetheless indulged themselves with vigor and delight in the

---

[32]Berger, "Imagination," p. 50.

[33]Sears Jayne, "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Comparative Literature, 4 (1952), 223.

power of their own minds to produce, from what their minds absorbed, creations that were new, embodied with a vitality and a primacy equal to the creations already existent in the world around them. Hence, while they underscored the importance of study and imitation, they were consumed with the necessity of the poet to invent, to take the world around him and re-make it in the crucible of his own mind. Thus, poets were concerned with truth, reality, accuracy, but not in a historical sense:

> Encore que l'Histoire en beaucoup de sortes se conforme à la Poësie, comme en vehemence de parler . . . descriptions . . . et autre semblables choses, où le Poëte ne doibt non plus que l'Orateur falsifier le vray, si est-ce quand à leur sujet ils sont aussi elongnez l'un de l'autre que le vraysemblable est elongné de la vérité. L'Histoire reçoit seulement la chose comme elle est, ou fut, sans desguisure ny fard, & le Poëte s'arreste au vraysemblable à ce qui peut estre, & à ce qui est desja receu en la commune opinion. . . . Il faut que l'Historien de poinct en poinct, du commencement jusqu'à la fin deduise son oeuvre, ou le Poëte s'acheminant vers la fin, & redevidant le fuzeau au rebours de l'Histoire, porté de fureur & d'Art . . . et sur tout favorisé d'une prevoyance et naturel jugement, face que la fin de son ouvrage par une bonne liaison se raporte au commencement.[34]

Pontus de Tyard in the Solitaire Premier lucidly articulates the burden on the poet to aim for "independent inventions":

> . . .il est trespertinent que l'on adjouste quelque chose du sien à la discipline, quel'on tient en memoire, et que l'on l'enrichisse de ses propres inventions: non toutesfois qu'il soit permis de s'esgarer temerairement en ses inventions, et indifferemment les approuver: mais bien, apres avoir avec la dexterité de l'entendement tournoyé autour des choses inventées . . .

---

[34]Ronsard, XVI, 34.

> discerner, avec jugement bien instruit, les bonnes des frivoles: et rejettant cestes, choisir les bonnes et loüables. . . .[35]

Even du Bellay, whose adamant insistence upon imitation in the Deffence would seem to indicate different inclinations, is quick to assert in the preface to the second edition of L'Olive that readers "trouverront qu'en mes escriptz y a beaucoup plus de naturelle invention que d'artificielle ou supersticieuse immitation."[36] Ronsard, throughout his life, insists upon the enhancement that an idea receives when it is couched in a felicitous expression. As late as the preface to the Franciade (1587) he reminds his audience:

> . . .telle contrainte en meditant & repensant fait le plus souvent inventer d'excellentes conceptions, riches paroles' phrases elabourees, tant vault la meditation, qui par longueur de temps les engendre en un esprit melancholique. . . .[37]

The Pléiade, then, espoused inspiration as the source of the original idea, imitation and study as the proving grounds which prepared a poet's skills to work with the inspired idea, and invention as the implementation of artistic genius which made the artifact uniquely the poet's own. Consequently, the writers of the Pléiade saw invention as affecting every aspect of poetic creation, from rhyme and rhythm down to poetic style. In many of their

---

[35]Pontus de Tyard, Premier, pp. 55-56.

[36]Du Bellay, Oeuvres Poétiques, ed. Henri Chamard (Paris: Edouard Cornely, 1908), I, 11.

[37]Ronsard, XVI, 348.

beliefs, they differ little in spirit from their predecessors or their contemporaries; all rhetoric books urged invention in classical tropes, word play, suiting genre to content, and so on. But in at least three areas, the Pléiade's inventive concerns echoed throughout the poetry of Renaissance Europe. They shared as a group an intense interest in experimentation with the musical, aural qualities of verse, with the imagistic texture of the verse, and with the diction of the verse. While some of their enthusiasms for practice and change in these areas were wrongheaded and impractical, their radical experimentation nonetheless expanded the limits and possibilities of poetry.

Ronsard and du Bellay shared with the other members of the Pléiade a horror of the paucity of verse forms used in sixteenth-century France. Throughout their careers, they composed in a variety of genres which ran the gamut of sixteenth-century verse possibilities. While their activities in almost every case added depth and texture to the various forms, their practice in itself is not distinctive to their group.[38] They did, however, contribute greatly to the material of poetry through their attention to the aural qualities of verse. Certain members of the group were more radical or more vocal in their expressions on the link between music and poetry, but the work

---

[38]The Pléiade's use of and critical thought on genre have been ably chronicled by a variety of critics. The most thorough compilations appear in Chamard's Histoire under the discussions of the various individual poets, in Laumonier's Ronsard poëte lyrique (Paris: Didier, 1923), and in Patterson, II, 579-610.

of almost all of them expresses allegiance to poetry's melodic component. Jean Antoinne de Baïf produced the most schematic and impractical approaches for fusing music and poetry, and Ronsard presented the most idealistic defense of the notion and the most prolific practice, while du Bellay and Pontus de Tyard embodied the spirit of the idea into their verse and critical opinions without making the union a primary goal of their efforts.[39]

Tired of the visual effects of the grand rhetoriquers Ronsard and his fellows felt that great poetry must be musical, must be heard rather than merely read with the eye. Their belief hearkened back in part to their notion that poetry was a divine gift which embodied the Platonic harmonies of the universe. If poetry was to fulfill its divinely appointed role, it must couch itself in the same harmonious components as the music of the spheres. For them, song was more than a metaphor for poetry; it was an expression of a fundamental quality that all verse must have. Further, their philosophy dictated that poetry lifted man's capacities, enabling him to apprehend the true beauties of the cosmos. In order to provide the aesthetic thrill for the soul, it must engage the senses. Music, then, was indispensable in conveying what Clements terms the "psychagogic" experience of the poet's rapture to his audience.[40] It is the harmonious sound, as du Bellay insists in the Deffence,

---

[39]Patterson, II, 531.

[40]Clements, Critical Theory, p. 149.

which will capture the soul and sense of the poet's audience. For du Bellay, the euphony is a final test of excellent craftsmanship: "Regarde principalement qu'en ton vers ny ait rien dur, hyulque, ou redundant. Que les periodes soient bien joinctz, numereux, bien remplissans l'oreille."[41] Ronsard argues that "oreille . . . est certain juge de la structure des vers, comme l'oeil del la peincture des tableaux"[42] and reminds his would-be poets to regulate their verse "au patron de ton oreille, gardant tousjours le plus que to pourras une bonne cadence."[43] Elements which offend the ear, a delicate arbiter of fitness and propriety, must be eliminated.

In addition, much of the Pléiade's concern with the musical aspects of poetry reflected the general debate over versification in French. While some writers both within and without the Pléiade advocated the application of classical prosody (vers mesurés) and others argued over the appropriate employment of rhyme, the critical consensus of the Pléiade coalesced on two points. First, poetry should reflect the natural accents and spoken nuances of the language. Whatever patterns of rhyme, rhythm, or stanzaic form were imposed on the poet's conceptions, they should be dextrously and flexibly employed to enhance the oral qualities of the line. Du Bellay argues in the Deffence that

---

[41]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 78.

[42]Ronsard, XIV, 29.

[43]Ronsard, XIV, 27.

> la rythme de notre poëte serva voluntaire, non forcée: receüe, not apellée propre, non aliene: naturelle, non adoptive: bref, elle sera telle, que le vers tumbant en icelle ne contentera moins l'oreille, qu'une bien armonieuse musique tumbante en un bon & parfait accord.[44]

In addition, in this area, Ronsard made great progress in the artistic interplay of caesura, rhyme, and enjambment. Satterthwaite argues that Ronsard's poetic triumph here, if no where else, reigns supreme.[45]

Second, if one does not choose to suit the poetry to actual music (as Ronsard, Baïf, and others did), one should assiduously arrange the sounds so that the words themselves take on their own musical quality. While du Bellay and others less militant about the fusion of poetry and musical accompaniment were content to counsel moderation in rhyme and sweetness to the ear, Ronsard sets forth specific practical guides for the implementation of musical qualities: which words to choose, certain sounds to rely on for special effects, when to use hiatus. Change in poetic taste and more developed judgment may have rendered such specific criteria passé, but Ronsard's emphasis on the lyrical resonances inherent in language itself can never be overlooked. His insistence that verbal patterns be as sensually pleasing as those of musical tones created new sensitivities in the ears of fellow poets and provided the impetus for further development of French as a medium for poetry.

---

[44]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 145-46.

[45]A. W. Satterthwaite, Spenser, Ronsard, and Du Bellay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 64.

Ronsard asserts in the Abbregé:

> Tout ainsi que les vers Latins ont leur piedz, comme tu sçais, nous avons en nostre Poësie Françoise, de laquelle je veux traicter icy, une certaine mesure de syllabes, selon le dessein des carmes que nous entreprenons composer, qui ne se peut outrepasser sans offencer la loy de nostre vers.[46]

The Pléiade's metrical exercises not only enlarged the aural composition of French poetry, but their work with figure, metaphor, and allegory enhanced the imagistic texture of poetry as well. Although Clements stipulates in his study that the Pléiade did not add to the catalogue of poetic images and symbols,[47] their attitude toward the presence of imagery in poetry was unique and helped to revitalize the flagging verse of France. Francis Yates observes in her study of the French academies that all of the continental humanists shared "a universal delight in cryptic statement" that stemmed from the Ficinian Platonism which held that some experience is so exalted that it is unspeakable except in "veiled form."[48] The writers adhered to the general neoplatonic notion that the poet's heightened capacities and link with the divine also embued him with an intuitive wisdom which transcended ordinary existence. Such wisdom was incarnate in "visionary symbols" that could best be expressed in "cryptic images" that some neoplatonists called

---

[46]Ronsard, XIV, 8.

[47]Clements, Critical Theory, p. 267.

[48]Yates, p. 36.

"heiroglyphs."[49] This belief is in part the basis of Ronsard's expansion of Horace's often quoted dictum of "odi profanum vulgus":

> . . .ne se fault soucier, comme je l'ay dit tant de fois, de l'opinion que pourroit avoir le peuple de tes ecris, tenant pour reigle toute asseurée, qu'il vault mieux servir à la verité qu'à l'opinion du peuple qui ne veut sçavoir sinon ce qu'il voit devant ses yeaux, & croyant à credit, pense que noz devanciers estoyent plus saiges que nous, & qu'il les fault totalement suivir, sans rien inventer de nouveau. . . .[50]

Even such a detached theorist as Pontus de Tyard reminds poets that "l'intention du bon poëte n'est de non estre entendu, ny aussi de se baisser et accomoder à la vilté du vulgaire."[51] Du Bellay, too, asks poets to look beyond the satisfaction of mob and commonplace to the jury of the cultivated elite:

> Seulement veux-je admonester celuy qui aspire à une gloyre non vulgaire, s'eloigner de ces ineptes admirateurs, fuyr ce peuple ignorant, peuple ennemy de tout rare et antique sçavoir, se contenter de peu de lecteurs, à l'exemple de celuy qui pour tous auditeurs ne demandoit que Platon, et d'Horace, qui veult ses oeuvres estre leuz de trois ou quatre seulement entre les quelz est Auguste.[52]

While the Pléiade's poetic practice was not often so esoteric as their criticism might suggest, these writers were fully conscious of their divine imperative to convey beauty to a lazy humanity which adored banal clarity and decried innovation as incomprehensible.

---

[49]Berger, "Imagination," p. 40.

[50]Ronsard, XIV, 35.

[51]Pontus de Tyard, p. 67.

[52]Du Bellay, p. 181.

Hence, the poet's message, conveyed in such condensed symbols, was revealed to a limited circle of poet-interpreters. If common men could not penetrate the image to the hidden knowledge, then so be it. The poet could not compromise. Thus, the images present in poetry were both signifiers of the poet's link with his divine source and inviolable components of the poetic mystery which could not be reduced to mindless clarity without desecrating the sacramental role of the poetic art.

Beyond this oracular view of the importance of the image was the conviction that poetry possessed a potency in fusing the "word" with the "thing." Because poets were constantly meditating on the supernatural realities inherent in the physical world, they saw their images, conceits, symbols as a resolution to the antinomies between the two realms. Comito in his study suggests that these poets saw in their works the creation of a "new paradise of wholeness."[53] As poets, they claimed freedom from Nature's order in their pursuit of the Idea and a simultaneous allegiance to the sensual immediacy of things; their images were the tangible embodiments of the reconciliation they sought between these opposites.

Yates underscores the important role that Dorat played in this emphasis on image. She notes that Ronsard, du Bellay, and their companions learned from their master at Coqueret "to hide the truth of things in poetry" they were taught that the fables of poetry were

---

[53]Terry Comito, "The Lady in the Landscape and the Poetics of Elizabethan Pastoral," University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1972), 203.

to be interpreted as veiled statements of the truth.[54] Further, Berger asserts that Ronsard and his circle recognized the primacy of poetry, in part, because they saw in it the "union of all disciplines in an inspired image."[55] Capitalizing on the emerging Renaissance awareness that the mind could both "unfold" and "enfold" meaning, the superior poets of the Pléiade elevated the importance of images because what they stood for was inseparable from their concrete form. Stone demonstrates that the Pléiade believed in poetry as a revelation of divine mysteries to a virtuous and dedicated man who in turn transmits these mysteries to other men. Such a transmittal required "exceptional effort and great work" in order to execute its duty to "communicate knowledge in a veiled and hidden form."[56] Hence, the reliance on images, conceits, and symbols parleyed obscurity into clarity for those souls whose efforts in gaining virtue and knowledge initiated them into their secrets.

In the Solitaire Premier, Pontus de Tyard records a vigorous defense of the necessity of such complexity in imagery and poetic texture:

> Je leur repondray . . . que l'intention du bon Poète n'est de non estre entendu, my aussi de se baisser et accomoder a la vilté du vulgaire (du quel ils sont le chef) pour n'attendre autre jugement de ses oeuvres que celuy, qui naistroit

---

[54] Yates, p. 15.

[55] Berger, "Imagination," p. 37.

[56] Stone, p. 109.

> d'une tant lourde cognoissance. Aussi n'est-ce en si sterile terroir qu'il desire semer la semence qui luy rapporte loüange. Bien desireroit-il qui ces chassieux (mais aveugles) eussent la veüe bonne, et peussent cognoistre que ce qu'il cerchent sous nom de facilité n'est rien moins que facilité: mait doit avoir nom d'ignorance painte aux rudes lineamens de leurs grossieres inventions.[57]

This is not to say that the Pléiade advocated obscurantism--quite the contrary. They deliberately fought conscious abstruseness in poetry fostered by the rhétoriquers and the difficulté vaincue.[58] Even Ronsard, sometimes difficulty erudite, stresses the need in poetry for clarity and elevation:

> La plus grande partie de ceux qui escrivent de nostre temps, se trainent enervez à fleur de terre, comme foibles chenilles, que n'ont encore la force de grimper aux festes des arbres, lesquelles se contentent seulement de paistre la basse humeur de la terre, sans affecter, la nourriture des hautes cimes, auxquelles elles ne peuvent attaindre à cause de leur imbecilité.[59]

If he recognizes the difficulty in a dense imagistic texture, he is nonetheless committed to its potency:

> Tu n'oubliras les comparaisons, les descriptions des lieux, fleuves, forests, montaignes, de la nuict, du lever du Soleil, du Midy, des Vents, de la Mer, des Dieux & Déesses, avecques leurs propres metiers, habits, chars, & chevaux: te fragonnant en cecy à l'imitation d'homere, que tu observeras comme un divin exemple, sur lequel tu tireras au vif les plus parfaictz lineamens de son tableau.[60]

---

[57]Pontus de Tyard, p. 67.

[58]Clements, Critical Theory, p. 88.

[59]Ronsard, XVI, 337.

[60]Ronsard, XIV, 15.

Clearly, the members of the Pléiade held in tension their devotion to clarity of poetic communication and their espousal of the poetic mystical obscurity. Clements' study summarizes their difficult position that was in continuous adjustment throughout their careers and its differences from the attitudes of their contemporaries:

> First (of their precepts) was their endorsement of oracular obscurantism . . . . Second, they were greatly concerned with the ethical intention of the poet to be communicative and honest with his reader. Third, the doctus poeta convictions of the Pléiade and their disregard for the unschooled reader caused them to admire complexity and learned paraphrase.[61]

Thus, their poetry took form around the use of image and symbol; the texture was dense but brilliant. One look at its crowded tapestry might gain only a kaleidoscopic impression of figure, line, color, meaning, but a thousand looks could not exhaust its treasure and would repay the student with still yet undiscovered facets of detail, depth, texture. Such a tapestry provided beauty on all levels, from superficial studies of surface components to penetrating appreciation of the symbolic substrata.

Coupled with their fascination with the inspired image was the Pléiade's militant emphasis on the importance of word choice. In the Abbregé, Ronsard writes:

> Elocution n'est autre chose qu'une propriété
> et splendeur de paroles bien choisies et ornées
> de graves & courtes sentences, qui font reluyre
> les vers comme les pierres precieuses bien

---

[61]Clements, Critical Theory, p. 118.

> enchassées les doigts de quelque grand Seigneur.
> Tu te doibs travailler d'éstre copieux en vocables.
> & trier les plus nobles & signifians pour servir
> de nerfs & de force à tes carmes, qui reluyront
> d'autant plus que les mots seront significatifs,
> propres & choisis.[62]

From their earliest sallies in du Bellay's Deffence down to the last written opinion of the group at the century's end, the writers were concerned with the exercise, elevation, and invigoration of the medium available to poets, language, in particular the French language. Clearly influenced by the Italian movement that sought to enshrine its own language as a viable medium for artistic expression, du Bellay and his fellows were even more vehement in their insistence that good poets must compose in their own language. Although du Bellay's Deffence is the earliest statement on the matter, it is yet the most comprehensive articulation of their reasons for adopting the vernacular. It is both a defense against the pedants' arguments which considered any modern language inferior to the classics, and a specific program for enriching the language and, hence, the literature. Du Bellay refutes outright the notion that some languages have greater worth as tools than others. In pointing out that all languages come from the same source for the same purpose ("c'est pour signifier entre nous les conceptions & intelligences de l'espirit"),[63] du Bellay moves immediately to the crux of his argument--language

---

[62] Ronsard, XIV, 15.

[63] Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 12.

must be useful to men and men have made the difference in the evolution of various languages: "Il est vray que par succession de tens les unes, pour avoir eté plus curieusement reiglées, sont devenues plus riches que les autres: mais cela ne se doit attribuer à la felicité desdites Langues ains au seul artifice & industrie des hommes."[64]

Du Bellay argues that if French becomes as exercised in art and sciences as Greek and Latin, then it will be as fruitful and beautiful a tool as they are. Du Bellay's program of enrichment began with imitation of the classical writers: translating their figures, metaphors, images, symbols, and wordplay into French and borrowing where necessary paraphrased excerpts of the original material to enhance the copy. Not content with achieving excellence through copying the superiorities of others, du Bellay advocates a rigorous program of re-vitalizing the slumbering giant of the French language: ". . .je veux bien avertir celuy qui entreprendra un grand oeuvre, qu'il ne craigne point d'inventer, adopter & composer, à l'imitation des Grecz quelques motz Françoys, comme Ciceron se vante d'avoir fait en sa Langue."[65] He advocates coining new words: ". . .les choses n'ayent premierement eté: puis apres, les motz avoir eté inventez pour les signifier: & par consequent aux nouvelles choses estre necessaire imposer nouveaux motz,

---

[64]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 13.

[65]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 137.

principalement ès Ars, dont l'usaige n'est point encores commun & vulgaire . . . ."[66] Further, he argues that poets in building a fit language for literature must be free to use unaccustomed words for unaccustomed things, and they must use words purely French to give their poetry its own life. For this purpose, he specifically advises that the poet should sift through the ancient French poets and old romances for terms that have been completely lost through negligence or which have lost some of their original resonance. Such usage, he assures his audience, will impart "grande majesté" to the poetry, for he is fully confident that in remaking his own language, the poet can in some way remake his world. Turquet in the introduction to his translation of the Deffence observes that "du Bellay endows words, and French words, with the divine power of creating the universe."[67]

Ronsard concurs with du Bellay in the conviction that the poet's employment of his mother tongue is both the only way to compose great poetry and the only way to nourish a great language. Like du Bellay he urges his friends to create new words in their writing; he exclains in the Abbregé that the "plus nous aurons de mots en nostre langue, plus elle sera parfaite."[68] He also counsels

---

[66]Du Bellay, Deffence, p. 138.

[67]Gladys M. Turquet, trans., The Defense and Illustration of the French Language (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1939), p. 4.

[68]Ronsard, XIV, 31-32.

poets to revive archaisms from old French literature and to engraft dialectical French terms into artistic parlance:

> Tu savras dextrement choisir & approprier les mots plus significatifs des dialectes de nostre France, quand mesmement tu n'en auras point de si bons ny de si propres en ta nation, & ne se fault soucier si les vocables sont . . . d'autre païs, pourveu qu'ilz soyent bons & que proprement ilz signifient ce que tu veux dire. . . .[69]

He also counselled that words from the trades be brought into the pale of artistic usage:

> Tu pratiqueras bien souvent les artisans de tous mestiers comme de Marine, Vennerie, Fauconnerie, ceux qui doivent la perfection de leurs ouvrages aux fourneaux, Orfevres, Fondeurs. Mareschaux, Minerailliers et de là tireras maintes belles & vives comparaisons, avecque les noms propres des mestiers, pour enrichir ton oeuvre & le rendre plus aggreable & parfaict: car tout ainsi qu'on ne peult dire un corps humain beau, plaisant & accomply, s'il n'est composé de sang, venes, arteres, tendens, & surtout d'une plaisante couleur: Ainsi la Poesie ne peut estre plaisante ny parfaicte sans belles inventions, description, comparaisons, qui sont les ners & la vie du livre, qui veult forcer les siecles pour demourer de toute memoire victorieux & maistre du temps."[70]

Further, Ronsard believed that provignement (or derivation) and composition (fusion of two words into a compound) would enrich the poet's supply of materials:

> De tous vocables, quelz qu'ilz soyent, en usage ou hors d'usage, s'il reste encores quelque partie d'eux, soit en nom, verbe, adverbe ou participe, tu le pourras par bonne & certaine analogie faire

---

[69]Ronsard, XIV, 10-11.

[70]Ronsard, XIV, 10.

> croistre & multiplier . . . . Puisque le nom de verve nous reste, tu pourras faire sur le nom le verbe verver, & l'adverbe vervement; sur le nom d'essoine, essoiner, essoinement & mille autre telz . . . et sur les vocables receus en usage, comme pays, eau, feu, tu feras païser, eaüer, foüer. . .et mille autres tels vocables, qui ne voyent encores la lumiere faute d'un hardy & bien heureuz entrepreneur.[71]

Finally, Ronsard reminds the poet to eschew the sterile language of the court and the gentile:

> . . .pour ce que France n'obeist qu'à un seul Roy, nous sommes contraints si nous voulons parvenir à quelque honneur de parler son langage courtizan autrement nostre labeur, tant docte qu'il soit,. . .seroit estimé peu de chose, ou (peult-estre) totalement mesprisé. Et pour-ce que les biens & faveurs viennent de tel endroit, il faut bien souvent ployer sous le jugement d'une damoyselle ou du'un jeune courtizan, encores qu'ils se connoissent d'autant moins en la bonne et vraye Poësie qu'ils font exercice des armes & autres plus honorables mestiers.[72]

Collectively, the Pléiade's exploratory and experimental attitudes towards the possibilities of the vernacular pressed the French language beyond its heretofore self-confined limits into a range of variety and possibility that could foster great literature. Coupled with their emphasis on the imagistic texture of poetry and the lyrical quality which must be inherent in it, their allegiance to a living, potent language was a catalyzing force both in the ripening of the language itself and in its fruitful production of superior literature.

---

[71]Ronsard, XIV, 33-34.

[72]Ronsard, XIV, 12.

Spenser's Craft: Imitation and Invention

These specific ideas from the Pléiade's program of imitation and invention seem to be clearly reflected in Spenser's minor poetry. Like other literary men, Spenser shared his age's interest in the notions of imitation and invention. Although, unlike the Pléiade, he left no critical expositions, his poetical works certainly reflect a practice of the principles of imitation and invention which bears remarkable similarity to the theory and practice of his predecessors in the Pléiade. Like du Bellay, Ronsard and the others who studied at Coqueret, Spenser not only received but seemed genuinely to have appreciated and absorbed the typical humanist education that he received at Mulcaster's school. Lodge's testimony in Wit's Misery (1596) that Spenser was the best read in the ancient poets and moralists seems to evidence the poet's knowledge of the classics directly and indirectly.[73] As the work of the Variorum editors and of scholars such as B. E. C. Davis has demonstrated, Spenser clearly knew, in addition, medieval authors and contemporaries from French and Italian.[74] His acquaintance seems to have been both broad and deep.

---

[73]Cited in B. E. C. Davis, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (1933; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 59.

[74]Edwin Greenlaw, et al., eds. The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1943), IX, 13-17; Davis, pp. 59-60.

Like the second wave of continental humanists, Spenser seems to have learned early from Mulcaster that, whatever "gift" he might be endowed with, only study and labor could bring his work to perfection. Like the men of the Pléiade, Spenser seems to have regarded his learning as a means of enhancing his natural poetic powers; what he studied became "grist" for the mill of his imagination, for he was dedicated to linking labor with native ability in order to achieve great poetic expression. Davis lucidly sets forth the common commitment to artistic excellence which was shared by Spenser and the circle of du Bellay and Ronsard:

> For the outward formality of Spenser's first work reflects a new self-consciousness, the humanist's exultation in his art which had already inspired Petrarch and the Pléiade and which now for the first time found full expression in English poetry. Decorum requires the perfect adjustment of form and matter in imitation of the ideal. So the poet, true to his calling as seer and inspired leader of men, will turn with disdain from the barbarous dissonance of those who would defame his sacred art and will spare no pains in the process of scaling Parnassus.[75]

That Spenser practiced all levels of imitation mentioned by du Bellay is clear from even a cursory glance at the early materials of his career. Spenserian scholarship attests to his prolific borrowings and assimilations from other writers, both ancient and contemporary. It is not the purpose of this study to recapitulate those findings. Unquestionably, Spenser's earliest works ("Visions of Bellay," "Visions of Petrarch," and "Ruines of Rome") are

---

[75]Davis, p. 63.

examples of his practice of the techniques of translative imitation du Bellay espouses when he discusses the work of "traducteurs" and "translateurs." By the 1580's, Spenser's mock epic, "Virgils Gnat," translating Virgil's Culex, shows him experimenting with the more sophisticated paraphrastic level of imitation. And even as early as his "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," Spenser has begun to practice with the more advanced "imitateur" technique, though the school boy poems usually only try to translate the letter and spirit of the models into the best poetic English possible.

Although these poems are the clearest examples of such exercises, the technique appears throughout the range of his work from these juvenile pieces to the Fowre Hymnes, and is ample proof that he attempted to do what du Bellay and Ronsard counsel--to retain where possible or where necessary the "small elements" of the original in order to perfect whatever poetic skill he was working on at the time. Hence, "Virgils Gnat" copies the matter and experiments with the form, working with rhyme and line length and adding more lines to the original; in "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" Spenser works with a borrowed genre and subject and manipulates content and figure to his own purposes. Spenserian scholarship is replete with notes that particular pithy turns of phrase, potent tropes, evocative images seem to originate in the work of some ancient or contemporary model.

Further, Spenser's amazing gift for assimilation and interpolation also reflects the poet's employment of the imitative

techniques of du Bellay's "paraphrastes" and "imitateurs." His works are finely interwoven with allusions to works of other writers and to individual facets of those works that have become redressed in his own fashion and harnessed to his particular poetic interests to empower his artistic vehicles. One such example from Renwick's citation to the "Ruines of Rome" will serve to exemplify how these imitative techniques work in Spenser's poetry. Renwick's note to lines 344 through 355, which deal with the power of poetry to confer immortality, begins with a list of the chief classical sources which acquainted Spenser with the "eternizing" theme of these lines. The note then includes quotations from Ronsard's Odes and du Bellay's Deffence as contemporary locations of similar material which Spenser knew and could have read shortly before composition. Renwick finishes the note with the following statement: "The Renaissance latinists nearly destroyed the virtue of the notion [of imitation] by vain repetition; but a good poet can refresh a hackneyed idea, especially when it is true."[76] Davis observes that Spenser's deftness with these techniques marks him as a master of imitation, a Renaissance literary hallmark. His imitative practice became a benchmark of his literary skill because it was coupled with his consistent selection of these borrowings decorously suited to his individual poetic purposes. Further, in embodying du Bellay's and Ronsard's assertion that imitation does not preclude the use of native tradition, Spenser

---

[76]W. L. Renwick, ed., Complaints by Edmund Spenser (London: Scholartis Press, 1928), pp. 196-197.

was able to revive and strengthen in English poetry what Chaucer had begun: the fusion of popular, native, colloquial strains with the classical tradition.[77]

Even more important than Spenser's accord with the Pléiade's general humanist notion of the imitation of other authors was his accord with their sentiments on the poet's duty to imitate in his art the concords of Nature. Like Pontus de Tyard, Spenser was fascinated by the ultimate principles of Beauty and Good that ran through all things, and his vision peers beyond the imperfections of the present realm to the eternal perfections of the next. Consequently, much of his poetry is at once distinctly contemporary and allusively imaginative.

Nowhere is this principle more evident than in "The Visions of Bellay," "The Visions of Petrarch," "The Ruines of Rome," and "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" his four juvenile efforts at translations and imitation. The subjects of these poems are the ruins of a great city, the evanescence of temporal things, the frailty of worldly power, but they are titled "Visions" signifying both the author's apprehension of the state of the physical world and his glimpse, beyond the present foreground of destruction and demise, of a principle more unchanging and immutable. It is true that for the substance of these pieces Spenser is indebted to the original authors, du Bellay and Petrarch, but their dual perspective seems to have

---

[77]Davis, p. 62.

awakened the fledgling pact to a revelation of the conjunction of the real and the visionary that he pursues with greater evocation throughout his career. He might write in "Teares of the Muses" of the disarray that the literary world had degenerated into, but his eye is on the possibilities that exist behind the present. His "Prosopopoia" may satirize the follies of court life, the corruptions of the church and state, but it does so because Spenser at once reflects the contours of his surroundings while fixing a steady eye on what these things might be. "The Ruines of Time" certainly demonstrates the vulnerability of all things to the insatiable ravages of time, but in picturing them for his audience, Spenser is constantly juxtaposing them against the touchstones that are lasting: truth, beauty, goodness.

Davis observes that Spenser's task as New Poet was to transform the commonplace into an object of enduring Beauty, "seeing them through a vista of intellectual concept." His representation of the vraisemblance of Nature is not just to see "men as they are but to see them as they ought or ought not to be. Whether the theme be love or warfare, eulogy or elegy, it presupposes the absolute type, the perfect lover, warrior, courtier, as measure to the scale of values."[78] It is such a sense of art's imitation of Nature that allows Spenser to construct Elizabeth's court in the animal realm of "Prosopopoia"; to evoke the failures of the church in the

---

[78]Davis, pp. 59, 65.

whimsical figures of the Shepheardes Calendar's "Julye" eclogue; to sing of the beautiful, fallen butterfly in "Muiopotmos" and in the same breath subtly warn his sovereign of the spidery clutches inherent in the French alliance. It is Spenser's unswerving adherence to this representation that elevates his vision, and while he may be "sage and serious," he certainly avoids the bitter melancholy which overtakes du Bellay or the capricious indulgence in the momentary which flavors much of Ronsard's work. The canon of his poetry demonstrates a growing sense of the ideals of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, a sense which transcends surface realities and culminates in the artistic constructs of his greatest works, "Epithalamion," The Fowre Hymnes, and the Faerie Queene. As Kathleen Williams has noted:

> Thus, Spenser's imitation of Nature is of a very inclusive and, in one sense of the word, a very realistic kind. Indeed, one is constantly surprised and impressed by the literalness with which Renaissance poets seem to have understood their task of creation, and by the confidence with which they approached it.[79]

Like the Pléiade, Spenser, shared a sense that imitation alone was not sufficient to produce great art. His bent for experimentation and his unceasing ardor in testing the outward bounds of his ability to conceive, frame, and express were the twin engines which powered his inventive efforts. Davis makes explicit the importance that the relationship between imitation and invention bore for writers

---

[78]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass: A Reading of the "Faerie Queene" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. xv.

such as Spenser and the members of the Pléiade in creating poetry which would be acknowledged as lasting monuments of artistic achievement, transcendent above the current criticisms against poetry, fiction, and the vernacular:

> The ancient definition of poetry as a mode of imitation has proved sufficiently elastic and equivocal to meet the demands of widely divergent schools of criticism; and the cult of ideal form throughout the Renaissance era encouraged the artist, in imitating nature, to attempt to refine upon her. "Art to nature strived to joyne," "nature had for wantonesse ensude Art," "art, striving to compayre with nature," "Art at nature did repyne," --such phrases all bear the same implication. The faculty ennabling the artist thus to imitate, even to improve upon his model is "invention," which bears something of the same relation to "fury" as "fancy" to "imagination."[80]

With the Pléiade, Spenser enjoyed a literary self-delight, an almost gratuitous interest in poetic activity which exulted in the play of the imagination and in the exploration of his chosen medium. He shared with them the conviction that fine artistic execution was a symbol of their high calling to teach the art of right living. Among Spenser and the poets of his stature there was a consensus, as Helgerson puts it, that the "the Poet makes his time as well as mirrors it."[81]

Versification

Spenser's importance as a "maker" is nowhere more apparent than in his interest in enhancing the lyrical potential of English

---

[80]Davis, p. 131.

[81]Richard Helgerson, "The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career," PMLA, 93 (1978), 899.

verse. Although often noted, dissected, and analyzed Spenser's contribution to the musical potential of English poetry cannot be taken seriously enough, and his experimentation in his minor works was the proving ground for the verbal skills which make his great pieces such a delight. As the only example of critical prose extant from Spenser's hand, the Harvey correspondence is significant in its commentary on the problem of verbal music. Enmeshed in the common literary debate over whether English, or French, or Italian verse should be measured quantitatively like the classics, Spenser confronts directly the poet's difficulty with accent:

> whyche sometime gapeth, and as it were, yawneth il favouredly, comming shorte of that it should, and sometime exceeding the measure of the Number . . . But it is to be wonne with Custome, and rough words must be subdued with Use. For, why a Gods name, may not we, as else the Greekes, have the kingdome of oure owne Language, and measure oure Accents by the sounds, reserving that Quantitie to the Verse? (p. 610)

Just as the men of the Pléiade realized that only a reliance on the natural accents and rhythms of the language could produce musical poetry, so too does Spenser increasingly turn to the native lyrical qualities of English for the enhancement of pleasing aural effects in his verse. As many critics have shown, part of Spenser's artistic maturity was his developing ability to suit his verse to rhythms of speech. There is considerable advancement in metrical virtuosity in moving from such feeble lines as "The chapters Alablaster, the fryses cristall" (p. 523, iv, 1. 3) in "Visions of Bellay" or "In olde honour of the people gowned long" (p. 514,

xxxii, l. 14) in "The Ruines of Rome" to the Chaucerian fluidity of "February" or the smoothly flowing lay of "Aprill" in The Shepheardes Calendar. While Davis labels Spenser's early poetic efforts as "conscientious" and "labored" in their efforts at metrical precision, he astutely remarks that these fumbling attempts to wed the native tradition to tonal and rhythmic subtlety is the foundation for the later greatness of his verse.[82]

Further, like the members of the Pléiade, Spenser admired multiplicity and variety, and so his minor pieces reflect a variety of metrical cadence and tone as he experiments with all ranges of rhyme and rhythm. From the faltering sonnet translations of his early "Vision" poems to the couplets of "Prosopopoia," to the ottava rima of "Virgils Gnat," England's New Poet flexes the muscle of his artistic skill, learning to suit the liquid alliteration of vowels to the force of assonance and to control pace and fluidity with the use of hiatus. Renwick observes rightly that the triumph of The Shepheardes Calendar is not in matter and incident but in lyrical quality, for it is the first harbinger of Spenser's coming greatness in poetic melody.[83] The poet who could articulate the restrained grief of the elegy for Dido in "November" has certainly discovered a freedom in his metier that presages the balance of freedom and control characteristic of his most accomplished verse:

---

[82]Davis, pp. 193-95

[83]W. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1925), p. 97.

O trustless state of earthly things, and slipper hope
O mortal men, that swincke and sweate for nought
And shooting wide, doe misse the marked scope:
Now haue I learned (a lesson derely bought)
That nys on earth assurance to be sought:
  For what might be in earthlie mould,
  That did her buried body hould,
    O heauie herse,
Yet saw I on the beare when it was brought
    O carefull verse.
(p. 462, ll. 152-62)

In the thirteen different prosodic schemes employed in the Calendar, Spenser begins to exhibit mastery in playing measured rhythms against the symphonic counterpoint of the accents of speech and in directing flow of assonance and alliteration against the check of ceasura and end-stops. Passages (such as these from "Julye" and "October") clearly demonstrate Spenser's ability to use the ceasura and end-stop to enhance the lines' tone and impact:

Three things to beare, bene very burdenous,
But the fourth to forbeare, is outragious.
Wemen that of louies longing once lust,
Hardly forbearen, but haue it they must:
So when choler is inflamed with rage,
Wanting reuenge, is hard to asswage:
And who can counsell a thristie soule,
With patience to forbeare the offred bowle?
(p. 437, ll. 132-39)

O pierlesse Poesye, where is then thy place?
If nor in Princes pallace thou doe sitt:
(And yet is Princes pallace the most fitt)
Ne brest of baser birth doth thee embrace.
Then make thee winges of thine aspyring wit,
And, whence thou cast, flye back to heauen apace.
(p. 457, ll. 79-84)

Renwick makes clear the affinities between Spenser's verse technique and those of the Pléiade:

> The poets of the Pléiade set an example in variation of metre itself, and the imitation of their lyric measures would not only force the lesson of variety, but would teach the young poet how one line is related to those before and after it, freeing him from the tyranny of the line and teaching him to construct a group of lines together.[84]

Davis also gives testimony to the importance of Spenser's musical approach in producing the mellifluent texture of his verse: "The timbre of his instrument [Spenser's poetic technique] allows the utmost flexibility in verbal music which is duly operated through the disposing of various rhythms, with fine adjustment of vowels and consonants, upon a constant norm."[85]

Even Berger's examination of the mode and diction of The Shepheardes Calendar underscores the importance of Spenser's prosodic experiments there for his later fluency in verbal music. He argues that the "meta-recreational" mode of shepherds singing in an idyllic world provides Spenser the artist with the ideal means of probing the contours and textures of his own art:

> Colin Clout is Spenser's image of the fledgling imagination in its purest form, disporting itself in the Muses' garden of conventions and reluctant to pass through the gate into the world. Spenser himself, now evaluating the achievement of his predecessors from the other side of the wall has discarded Colin's idyllism but not his delight in artifice.[86]

---

[84] Renwick, Spenser, p. 105.

[85] Davis, p. 184.

[86] Harry L. Berger, "Mode and Diction in the Shepheardes Calendar," Modern Philology, 67 (1969), 147.

Further, both Alpers and Rosenmeyer agree the Calendar's eclogues are less concerned with the creation of autonomous worlds than they are with their master's "evaluating styles of speech and song."[87]

Imagery

While Spenser's interest in the euphonious cadence of verse is certainly a distinction shared by his French counterparts, he also reflects in his poetry a similar fascination with the importance of image and figure in the verse. Like Ronsard and du Bellay, Spenser's use of image went beyond conventional rhetorical imperatives. He too saw in the poetic image the fusion of the realm of perceptions with the symbolic vision. Davis observes that Spenser's "poetic consciousness" instinctively "transform[ed] all perception to symbolic representation."[88] Consequently, image and figure are always employed in order to illustrate some larger poetic objective; particulars, for Spenser, are fashioned in concord with the symbolic purpose of the whole. His poetry often takes on a sense of "general properties and large appearances," for the image is for Spenser a means of uniting the vagaries and vicissitudes of temporal existence with the ultimate and unchanging realities beyond them. Only great art and the most skilled of artisans can achieve such a coalescence. Further, such an attitude tends to merge image into metaphor and

---

[87]Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of the Pastoral," College English, 34 (1972), 357.

[88]Davis, p. 167.

metaphor elides smoothly and almost imperceptibly with allegory. The result is a poetic texture that dazzles on the surface and that continues to yield facets of meaning regardless of the level to which it is probed.

Clearly, Spenser's translation pieces embody the images of the originals and so help little in demonstrating his development of the Pléiade's attitude toward imagery. But his next composition, The Shepheardes Calendar, evinces this technique in play. The shepherd swains and their ladies move through a pastoral landscape that reverberates with multiple tones of meaning and implication. In choosing a convention like pastoral, which was associated with the use of allegory for contemporaneous comment, Spenser deliberately chose to exercise such imagistic technique. The landscape and seasons are described only as they relate to the particular notion that Spenser is attempting to symbolize. Hence, in "Januarye," winter's "wastful spight" has produced "barrein ground" and the flocks are "feeble in the fold," for the eclogue sets forth not just the wretchedness of a shepherd's situation in winter, but the miseries of both unrequited love and the torments of an artist who has forsaken his art. Diametrically opposed to this pageant is the "August" singing match which serves to illustrate Spenser's prowess in a pastoral convention. Here we are told "the sunnebeame so sore doth us beate," that the sheep are grazing peacefully, and the shepherds lazily while away the time in singing. The tenor of the images has changed to match the lighter-hearted purpose that Spenser has in

mind, but they are no more or less realistic in stroke and definition.

Perhaps Spenser's most effective use of such techniques in the Calendar comes in the blazon of "Aprill" and the elegy of "November." Here, Spenser, through the great singer, Colin, constructs the figures of Eliza and Dido with multiple levels of significance. "Aprill"'s Eliza is a matchless shepherd damsel whose beauty commands reverence of all creatures of the cosmos; she also incorporates Spenser's image of his patron, Queen Elizabeth, and she is the symbolic embodiment of the power of song in the universe. The details we are given concerning her are symbolic and not individual; she is clad in "ermines white" and a "cremsin coronet," has an "angelik face" and cheeks which "the Redde rose medled with the White yfere." Thus, the reader is conscious of Eliza not so much as a "living woman" but as a force of beauty, order, and authority.

Similarly, "November"'s Dido, although movingly mourned, becomes more the source of unspeakable grief as the lost object of beauty than a much-mourned "real" woman. Colin says that Dido had been without peer for "beauties prayse and Pleasaunce," that she "well . . . couth the shepherds entertayne, with cakes and cracknells and such country chere" (p. 461, ll. 94-96). In addition to her beauty, Dido was gracious and hospitable, for Colin remembers, "Ne would she scorne, the simple shepheards swaine, for she would cal hem often heme/and guie hem curds and clouted Creame" (p. 461, ll. 97-99). But beyond her beauty and gracious demeanor, we know

nothing of this paragon, for Spenser intends her ambiguous virtues both to call forth the universal Ideal of Beauty that must be mourned and to leave open the possibility of interpreting Dido as his own sovereign.[89] Like Eliza, the details of presentation preclude individual acquaintance with the lovely lady; she is but a symbolic image so finely conceived that we, like poor Thenot, are moved to "doolful pleasaunce" at the chronicling of her loss.

This imagistic technique shows up even more strongly in the last of Spenser's minor pieces, "Muiopotmos" and "The Ruines of Time." In "Muiopotmos," Spenser's emphasis on the beauty of created things stands like a gilded framework upon which the whole of the poem depends. And while the images are static, they nonetheless hold in relentless synthesis his larger purpose of demonstrating the beauties of artistic creation and his careful depiction of ephemeral Clarion and his fragile world. Every aspect of this brilliant picture addresses this larger purpose; from the catalogue of Clarion's armor, to the flowers in the garden, to the details of the goddesses' tapestries, and the foreboding details of Aragnoll's web, each feature reminds us of the delight in creating the beautiful and of the transcience that such earthly beauty possesses. The butterfly created in Pallas' tapestry is set forth in marvellous detail that at once evokes reality and at the same time gilds it:

> Emongst those leaues she made a Butterflie,
> With excellent deuice and wondrous slight,
> Fluttering among the Oliues so wantonly,

---

[89]Paul McLane, Spenser's "Shepheardes Calendar" (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), pp. 47-60.

> That seem'd to liue, so like it was in sight
> The velvet nap which on his wings doth lie,
> The silken downe with which his back is dight,
> His broad outstretched hornes, his hayrie thies,
> His glorious colours, and his glistering eies.
> (p. 519, ll. 329-36)

Perhaps nothing captures the essence of Spenser's attitude toward image so well. He, like Pallas, desires to create an image with so "excellent deuise and wondrous slight" that it "seemes to liue, so like it was in sight." For him, depiction of the real is but a ladder to the ultimate realm of the Ideal.

Even in such an elegiac piece as "The Ruines of Time," Spenser relies on the use of symbolic image. He speaks of the ruins of Verlame, but their details connote universal decay: "All those (O pitie) now are turned to dust, /And ouergrowen with black oblivions rust" (p. 472, ll. 97-98). Verlame mourns the lack of remembrance of her city, but the reader is impressed by the futility of any earthly renown:

> . . .but to lament
> My long decay, which no els doth move,
> And mourns my fallwith dolefull dreriment.
> Yet it is comfort in great languishment,
> To be bemoaned with compassion kinde,
> And mitigates the anguish of the minde.
> But me no man bewaileth, but in game,
> Ne sheddeth teares from lamentable eie:
> Ne any liues that mentioneth my name
> To be remembered of posteritie.
> (p. 473, ll. 156-65)

Spenser laments the fall of Leicester and Sidney, but the grief evokes the passions of the patriotic and the nationalistic and not the tender pangs of friend or lover; for these worthies too are

images that symbolize the virtues of England's national state and artistic attainments. Like all men in sixteenth-century England, the importance of their fame lies chiefly, not in their individual stature, but in what their fame and praise might teach to those who see it.

Hence, these final early pieces demonstrate quite clearly Spenser's echo of the same imagistic qualities that the Pléiade's critical theories emphasized. And while Spenser's art undoubtedly took the technique to a symbolic extreme not often practiced by other writers, the Pléiade and Spenser pay serious reverence to the necessity of image in the pursuit of an artist's greatest inventions.

Language

Although the musical quality of verse and the symbolic role or imagery are important to both Spenser and the Pléiade, perhaps the most important characteristic that Spenser's work shares with the Pléiade is his allegiance to the vernacular as a fit medium for literature. Interest in vernacular art had begun in Italy, spread to France, and from there had moved to England. As an issue of debate, it was a familiar topic to all men of letters, so it is not surprising that Spenser joined in the fray, nor is his interest necessarily indicative of any opinion shared solely with Ronsard, du Bellay and their circle. As Renwick has pointed out, even if Spenser was not aware of the source of these linguistic arguments,

he certainly would have been aware of their substance from his study under Mulcaster.

Mulcaster's Elementarie (compiled in 1582 after years of teaching) bears all the earmarks of someone familiar with du Bellay's arguments in the Deffence:

> No one tung is more fine then other naturallie, but by industrie of the speaker, which . . . endevoreth himself to garnish it with eloquence, and to enrich it with learning . . . . And therfor the learned tungs so termed of their store, maie thank for their own people, both for their fining at home, and their favor abrode. Whereupon it falleth out, that as we ar profited by the mean of these tungs, so we are to honor them even for profit sake, and yet not so but that we maie cherish our own, both in such cases, as the use thereof is best: and in such places, as it maie be bettered, tho with imparing of them. For did not those tungs use even the same means to braue themselves ear theie proved so beawtifull? Did the people strain curtesie to pen their naturall, even these same arguments which theie had from the foren? If theie had don so, we had never had their works, whereat we wonder so.[90]

This is the same question that Spenser poses to Harvey in their correspondence when he wonders "why a Goddes name may not we, as else the Greekes, have the kingdome of our own language" (p. 611).

Like the Pléiade's, Spenser's efforts at building a strong native literature were directed, not at suiting classical prosody and genre to native matter, or at latinizing the artistic language, but toward revitalizing and standardizing elements of the language

---

[90]Richard Mulcaster, The First Part of the Elementarie (1582), ed., E. T. Campagnac (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 253.

that were particularly English. Consequently, Spenser's poetry has become uniquely recognizable for the same reliance on archaism, provincialisms, and neologism which characterized the linguistic theories of the Pléiade. If Ronsard and his friends looked toward the dialects of Provencal, Walloon, and Picard to enliven the standard converse of court and city, Spenser looked to the variants in East Midland and northern Lancaster. The French ignored their immediate poetic predecessors and borrowed the diction of the late medieval troubadours and poets such as Jean de Meung (Roman de la Rose) or Chretien de Troyes (Arthurian romances); so too did Spenser overlook his closest poetic forebears and turn instead to Chaucer for a storehouse of earthy, pungent language. Renwick notes that "the French poets did not teach Spenser to love Chaucer, but they taught him to be bold in regarding him as the 'well of English undefiled' and in drawing upon his store of language."[91]

Hence, E. K.'s epistle to the Shepheardes Calendar deliberately links the "New Poete" to the linquistic tradition of Chaucer, whom he calls the "Loadestarre of our Language" (p. 416). While the rusticity became less an overt framework and more a blended element of his style in his mature works, the Chaucerian marks of unusual, "undefiled" English became a distinctive component of his verbal style throughout his career. Spenser was constantly on the alert for unusual terms in earlier poetic language, especially in

---

[91]Renwick, Spenser, p. 84.

the language of Chaucer. Even the earliest of his original pieces, "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," shows the beginning of Spenser's tendencies in diction in using archaic words--for example, "cleepe" (p. 521, l. 58) or "brust" (burst) to rhyme with "trust" (p. 521, l. 101)--and in the incorporation of foreign elements such as "surquedie" (p. 521, l. 105), "battelaint" (p. 521, l. 101), and "gorgeouslie" (p. 521, l. 100). But these instances are only glimmers in the overall texture of the poem, giving little hint to the range of experimentation in The Shepheardes Calendar.

In no other of Spenser's poems is his dedication to the embellishment of the English language as clearly displayed. E. K. opens the piece with a defense of the author's techniques in language, and no matter whether one concedes E. K. to be but another mask worn by the author himself in the poem's construction, one must nevertheless acknowledge that E. K.'s remarks certainly reflect the author's intentions and emphases. Of Spenser's diction, he hotly asserts:

> For in my opinion it is one of special prayse, of many whych are dew to this Poete, that he hath laboured to restore, as to theyr rightfull heritage such good and naturall English words, as haue been long time out of use and almost clene disinherited. Which is the onely cause, that our Mother tonge, which truely of it self is both ful enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time been counted most bare and barrein of both (p. 417).

As many scholars have pointed out, rusticity may be the keynote of the eclogues and archaism their tonal chord, but the music of the Shepheardes Calendar is rife with chromatic variants ranging from

classicisms, to trade terms, to chivalric designations. These anomalies might seem ill-favored in the mouths of real shepherds, but from Spenser's symbolic characters in pastoral allegory, these variants help to tie the superficial images and figures to the symbolic import carried beneath the surface.

The eclogues are laced with Chaucerian archaisms like "eft-sones," "ne," "als," "whilom," "uncouth," "wight," "eke," and "sithens" which help to provide the eclogues with their romantic setting out of time and place. The Calendar also borrows heavily from archaisms which appear in both Chaucer and Mallory through terms such as "warray," "enchreason," "belgardes," "beauperes," and "paravaunt."[92] Further, Draper's study of terms glossed by E. K. concludes that Spenser drew his obsolete terms almost entirely from Middle English dialects or from contemporary dialectical forms which had a Middle English origin.[93]

Aside from the use of archaism, the language of the Shepheardes Calendar is also notable for its employment of another linguistic technique supported by Ronsard, provincial dialects, and trade terms. McElderry's quantitative study reported by the Variorum indicates that the Calendar itself employs almost 115 dialect terms, 44 of which lack illustration in the OED between 1500 and 1650, suggesting a conscious effort on Spenser's part to practice the same techniques

---

[92] Variorum, VII, 619.

[93] Variorum, VII, 620.

as du Bellay and Ronsard--to strive for rare and unusual terms in the language itself.[94] His technique is clearly present in the "Julye" eclogue, which portrays two shepherds as opposing kinds of spiritual "pastors." The language here is deliberately rustic and weighed with words from provincial dialects. Thomalin, in speaking out against ambitious and uncaring pastors, remonstrates with Morrel in speech that is laden with such rustic and dialect evidence: "Syker thou speakes lyke a lewde lorrell,/of heauen to demen so:/ How be I am but rude and borrell,/yet nearer wayes I knowe" (p. 445, ll. 93-96).

Finally, the Shepheardes Calendar also shows Spenser's experimentation with the lexical variation and innovation of new words that the Pléiade's theories encouraged. McElderry notes about 115 instances of borrowings and innovations in the Shepheardes Calendar out of a total of about 600 in all of Spenser's work. He adds in addition to this about 200 instances of variation in usage--changing a word from substantive to verb as in his use of the verb "to cherry" and the adjective "daint."[95]

Spenser's next piece was similar to the Shepheardes Calendar in that its matter required rustic, plain speech and style. De Selincourt's observation of the similarities in diction of "Prosopopoia" and Chaucer is quoted in the Variorum: "In the

---

[94] Variorum, VII, 628.

[95] Variorum, VII, 628.

Shepheardes Calendar he had aimed at the formation of an ideal poetic diction on the model of Chaucer; now he takes the same model upon simpler lines, his object being to write in the familiar style without the richness of allusion, so predominant in his work as a whole, and with only the faintest tough of archaism."[96] And as such his "Prosopopoia" is filled with old fashioned terms: "algates," "eath," "sheene," "swincke," "wood" (mad). Further, as Rubel remarks, Spenser begins in "Prosopopoia" to use old words in a new sense, as "ashape" (p. 496, l. 72). The poem also incorporates neologisms such as "amenaunce" (p. 502, l. 781) and "aguise" (p. 501, l. 656).[97] Spenser's efforts here mark a maturity of the techniques he experimented with so radically in the Shepheardes Calendar.

Spenser's language experiments have often in the perspective of the ensuing 400 years been judged artificially extreme and needlessly obscurantist; even Davis's rather seasoned catalogue of the linguistic qualities of his poetry asserts that Spenser's practice "can be justified solely as an extreme poetic license, an instrument of fantasy fashioned for a unique purpose."[98] It is Spenser's purpose, however, which more than compensates for the density and difficulty which his diction often presents. Like all pioneers, his efforts encompassed overreaching explorations of the potentials and possibilities of the unknown, and because of his temerity,

---

[96] Variorum, VII, 562.

[97] Variorum, VII, 595.

[98] Davis, p. 133.

later poets have received his legacy of a language that was a more flexible, more colorful, more sensitive instrument in the hands of true artists. For Spenser and the Pléiade, the poet's language embodied both a means for the artist to perform patriotic and nationalistic service and an arena in which to exercise his powers of invention and so to fulfill his divinely-endowed role. Davis concludes that for Spenser:

> . . . language is both restrictive and refractory, imposing absolute laws upon the free play of invention. It is a hard taskmaster, and every poet must find himself chafing at times against his tyranny of an instrument not of his own making and therefore not entirely under his control. . . . Spenser was not exceeding the priviledges of his profession . . . in divising a language so purely decorative and so little bound by traditional usage or the exigencies of grammar. . . . The sole criterion or authority governing the selection is tone and effect.[99]

The minor poems written in the eighties, however, mark a change in Spenser's techniques. After "Prosopopoia," archaism is not the primary means of Spenser's linguistic embellishment. McElderry notes that of the 300 archaisms catalogued only 32 appear after the Calendar while of the 600 instances of innovation, fully half appear in poems written after 1579.[100] In the later poems, Spenser relies instead on innovation and variation for the increased flexibility of his language, reflecting the Pléiade's insistence that these techniques could sustain a tongue's vitality.

---

[99] Davis, pp. 134-35.

[100] Variorum, VII, 628.

The implication seems clear that variation and innovation, and not deliberate use of archaic terms, became the distinctive features of Spenser's verse. Rubel notes that the diction of "Teares of the Muses" differs in kind with that of both the Shepheardes Calendar and "Prosopopoia," consisting primarily of compounding terms and use of French "-ance" nouns to give this lament for the arts a decorously appropriate elevation. The same commentator also notes that "Virgils Gnat" consists of "conspicuous compounds" such as "milk dropping," "down rolling," "halfe horsy" and unusual words such as "blent," "greekish," and "impeach"; the artful "Muiopotmos" is a veritable paradigm of the poet at play, revealing an increase of these compounding and innovative techniques.[101]

What does seem distinctive about Spenser's interest in the vernacular and also reflective of the stance of the Pléiade is his commitment to the poet's responsibility in the invigoration of his native tongue. Like du Bellay, Spenser's poetry illumines a conscious poetic exercise of the limits and parameters of vernacular English. While Helgerson is correct when he says that Spenser's creation of himself as poet would have been impossible without a legion of vernacular writers upon whom to model himself,[102] Spenser's execution of that commitment seems most nearly like the posture delineated in the critical writings of Ronsard and du Bellay.

---

[101] Variorum, VII, 542, 549, 610.

[102] Helgerson, "Career," p. 895.

Throughout the minor poetry, then, Spenser, showed a continuous development of linguistic techniques which mirror concerns similar to those of Ronsard, du Bellay, and their fellows. As an artist conscious of both his divine gift and his obligation to exercise his inventive powers in service of that gift, Spenser was a proponent of the embellishment of the English language and of the creation of great art in that tongue. His use of archaism, dialect, and neologism went beyond a playful desire to experiment; for him such exploration of diction was essential to his attainment as a true artist and as dedicated citizen. Renwick's study provides a most helpful summary of the similarities between Spenser and the Pléiade as poetic "wordsmiths" extraordinaire:

> Language, then, was in the eyes of the Pléiade a living thing, capable of development, and requiring cultivation. . . . The progress of living speech was not to be restricted by the practice of past ages, nor was it fortuitous: it was a positive operation, a positive duty. Language did not occur, it had to be made, and its making was in the hands of the poet. . . . In neither case was the new poetic diction the result of accident; there was thought behind each, and more than a single thought. The main contention of the Pléiade, the most important intrinsically and in its results was their assertion of the freedom of the poet as artist, and it is obvious from all his work that Spenser claimed this freedom and recognized the duty it involved. . . . Spenser worked on precisely the same lines as were laid down by du Bellay and Ronsard: the ancient native literature to be studied with a linguistic purpose; dialects and particularly such as retained some archaic character, to be brought into the main stream of literary speech; technical terms to be put to poetical use; new forms to be created from existing roots; and loosely, words to be borrowed from ancient and modern foreign languages: the language to be plastic and not rigid, and the poet to be the final judge of fitness.[103]

---

[103] W. L. Renwick, "The Critical Origins of Spenser's Diction," Modern Language Review, 17 (1922), 15-16.

Clearly, Spenser's practice of the demands of imitation and invention manifests his kinship with the aesthetic constitution of the Pléiade. As followers of the priestly conception of the poet-artist and the consequent duty of the poet-priest to render his art as a sacrament of his religion, Spenser, like du Bellay, Ronsard and Pontus de Tyard, immersed himself in perfecting his natural abilities. What he might learn from the art of other poets and from the artistry of Nature itself, he did through the implementation of all levels of imitation. What might not be gained through accretion from other sources, he forged upon the anvil of his own imaginative invention and made it uniquely his own through the mellifluence of his verbal music, the mystical potency of his images, and the vitality of his poetic language.

CHAPTER IV

"BEAUTY'S BURNING LAMP": COLIN CLOUTS COME HOME AGAINE AND THE MATURITY OF SPENSER'S AESTHETIC

The Maturing of Spenser's Aesthetic

The body of Spenser's minor poems written before 1590 reflects a philosophical asesthetic shared with the Pléiade in France. Like these writers, Spenser displays in his minor poetry his faith in the divinely endowed nature of the poet, his confidence that the poet possessed heightened sensibilities which linked him to wisdom beyond the reach of ordinary men, and his vision that the power of song could re-make the world if its potency were properly unleashed. His belief in the necessity of the poet to the stable order of things also mandated a conscientious and unceasing devotion to honing his poetic skills. Further the philosophy predisposed him to construct poetry based upon natural, unstrained verbal music, mystical and fantastic imagery, and earthy, vernacular diction.

Tracing Spenser's view of the primacy of the poet and his commitment to refining his skills in these minor pieces makes clear the similarity of his aesthetic to that of the Pléiade. Part of Spenser's literary development is reflected in his gradual shaping of that philosophy to suit his vision of what poetry could and ought to be. From his early juvenile pieces, which present not only source materials that embody the aesthetic but also the crafts-manship associated with the philosophy, Spenser moved on to explore

the power and necessity of the poet, his song, and his skill in a variety of poetic settings. The fusion of Spenser's individual vision and the asesthetic which he shared with the Pléiade comes to its clearest realization in Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, the last of his minor work. Colin Clouts represents the coalescence of Spenser's developing poetic vision and his philosophy that poetry is a supernaturally imparted gift that compells its recipients to strive for the most potent possible articulation of their wisdom. Here Spenser begins to demonstrate exactly how that power is to be used. For the first time he harnesses fully the impetus provided by his aesthetic convictions with the vitality of matured craftsmanship. In short, in Colin Clouts Come Home Againe we see Spenser's most vivid reflection of the aesthetic tenets of the Pléiade.

Like the Pléiade, Spenser had, from the earliest poems, been troubled by the appropriate relationship between his ideal, created world and the often perplexing vicissitudes of the real world. In part, Spenser's minor pieces reflect his continual effort to find a balance between the ideal and the real. Critics note that Ronsard found this balance in his mature love lyrics and the hymns to the seasons; similarly, du Bellay found this maturity in the poems composed after his return from Rome. His early pieces show the artist's quest to define himself, to identify the components of his art, and to determine the purposes to which the poet and his practice might best be put.

In the juvenile vision poems, Spenser clearly relied on the vatic aspects of his gift to construct poetry which links the phantasmagoria of the world of art to the everyday realm of sixteenth-century politics, letters, and society. The result is a poetry which uses the superior knowledge and insights of the poet to teach, to inspire, but rarely to delight. We may acknowledge intellectually our kinship with the complaints offered by the various speakers of these poems, but we are little moved by the sterile artistic techniques out of which Spenser creates them. His art here is disjunctive, for it removes the created world of art to the realm of the fantastic and cryptic that speaks to the factual world only in mysteries and symbols. Like the medieval poems they resemble, Spenser's "Vision" poems seek to address the needs and desires of those who inhabit the "real" world solely through obscure symbols in a transcendent ideal.

Spenser's practice in this regard is a typical medieval disjunction between life and art. One must withdraw from life to art and must at the end of the fictional experience return to life, having profited from what has been learned in the world of art.[1] This is what the persona of Spenser's "Vision" poems does in each case: he is caught away by the "divine fury," supplied with some sort of extraordinary insight, and then returned to his ordinary

---

[1]Harry Berger, Jr., "The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World," Centennial Review, 9 (1965), 36-78.

existence. Clearly, such separation is in direct opposition to an aesthetic like that of the Pléiade. While they espoused a belief that the vatic essence of poetry necessarily involved some obscurity, they nonetheless believed that the Orphic power of song was given to the poet to provide men with wisdom and insight beyond the reach of their ordinary capacities. Such a "furious" art could provide both pleasure from and knowledge about life not otherwise possible. If the reader of the "Vision" poems, then, fails to be as enlightened as the persona, it is because Spenser's vision has not yet captured the coalescence between the realms of life and art.

Aware of the problem and of the tensions, Spenser's next choice of métier was logical, particularly since the poetic tradition held that fledgling poets must try their wings on the pastoral. In 1579, the Shepheardes Calendar signals Spenser's first extended use of the pastoral, a genre which in Colin Clouts, was to provide a means of resolving the aesthetic conflict of the actual versus the ideal, art versus life. While Spenser's efforts at discovering the poet's role in the conflict in The Shepheardes Calendar are laudable, they are neither satisfactory nor final. Clearly the pastoral mode provided three distinct advantages in presenting how the poet should execute the role that the aesthetic of Spenser and the Pléiade demanded for him.

First, the pastoral genre by its nature and tradition provided Spenser with the means of demonstrating his philosophical conviction that the poet's art had real potency in providing men with a

transcendent way to deal with the vagaries of life. In short, the pastoral helped Spenser to justify poetry as a serious and necessary component in society. For the man who had consciously adopted poetry as a serious vocation, justified in its own right, and who had adopted a systematic aesthetic which asserted the poet as a necessary member of the social matrix, Spenser was faced with the problem of showing that poetry possessed an efficacy in dealing with the actual problems of humanity. Hence, for Spenser, the pastoral seemed the ideal scene in which to place his poet-priests. Shepherds are real creatures the literary tradition saw as leading existences suitable for contemplation, imagination, and song, but who undeniably had real, responsible activities. By its very nature, the pastoral existence seemed to embody the fusion of fantasy and reality, art and life, thought and action, that Spenser's aesthetic demanded.

Second, in appropriating the pastoral for the Shepheardes Calendar, Spenser began to confront the accusion that art was an unsatisfactory alternative to the real world. The tendency to view the pastoral as an escape gained only through the imagination had existed since its classical origins; this view of the pastoral was reinforced by the medieval perspective that saw the ideal and the real as opposiing facets that existed concurrently but not conjunctively in art. Indeed, as Henninger has noted, the pastoral scene has been seen primarily as some half-remembered place of archaic terms, pictured as an "idealized child-scape" whose sole purpose is

to create "an ideal existence in contradiction to the real world."[2] The classical pastoral, according to Alpers, poses life in nature as an "ethical alternative" to life in society. Such fragmentation was troublesome to the olistic perspectives of many Renaissance thinkers, so the pastoral in the Renaissance takes on the Christian perspective that man's life has an inherent relation to nature. Spenser, in particular, with his kinship to the Pléiade's theory that the compelling force behind poetry is the divine urge to lift man above his rightful capacity and state, feels the need to discover the union between man and nature, life and art. Thus, the Shepheardes Calendar attempts to come to terms with reality by celebrating the reflections of human life in the passing seasons.[3]

Finally, Spenser's adoption of the pastoral in the Shepheardes Calendar stems from his attempt to grasp subject matter that will suit itself both to his imitation and to his invention. Classically, the pastoral mode had been viewed a dichotomous approach to life. It was seen, according to Heninger, as "art's compensation for what culture lacks . . . justapos[ing] the ideal with the actual."[4] At the same time, the pastoral subject matter was, as Kermode observes,

---

[2]S. K. Henninger, Jr., "The Rennaisance Perversion of the Pastoral," Journal of the History of Ideas, 22 (1961), 255-56.

[3]Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of the Pastoral," College English, 34 (1972), 364.

[4]Henninger, p. 256.

the "antithesis of art, the wild or savage as opposed to the cultivated, the material upon which art works."[5] Hence, the pastoral became an irresistible exercise for an artist who sought to practice his inventive powers by linking the ideal beauties of his creations to the rough contours of actuality. Spenser, along with the other poets who were awakening to the serious viability of poetry as an art, began to reshape the pastoral as a means of placing the actual within the ideal.[6]

In the Arcadian landscapes of Colin's homeland, the poet might present perfection actualized and attainable--if only hurriedly glimpsed in the artist's moment of ecstasy, and thus Spenser begins to discover the application of his idea that only the poet's imagination can apprehend the ideal realities of existence. Berger asserts that Spenser's naive pastoral of the Shepheardes Calendar begins to realize that the "real (whatever it is) is genuinely and continually altered, enriched, reconstructed by acts of interpretation."[7] Here, then, on the roughest and most unadorned drama of human society, one could practice his most skillful and ingenious imitation and invention. In order to repeat, deftly and accurately, the buccolic delineations and speech, every turn and nuance of his imitation must be correct, and in order to take the Arcadian

---

[5]Frank Kermode, English Pastoral Poetry: From the Beginning to Marvell (London: G. G. Harrap & Co., 1952), p. 12.

[6]Henninger, p. 256.

[7]Berger, "Renaissance Imagination," p. 77.

simplicities and create with them something beyond themselves, every title of his imagery, diction, and rhythm must be exquisitely selected.

The Shepheardes Calendar, however, is but the beginning of Spenser's exploration, and so his efforts in these eclogues are both praiseworthy for their pioneering and tentative in their conclusions. We celebrate the technical successes of his invention which produces the playful caprice of August's singing match, the weary oppression of January's physical and emotional landscape, and the ecstatic glimpses throughout of Eliza, Dido, and the shepherd girls. But, like Colin, we struggle with the tensions between private desires and public responsibilities, between the practical and the moral implications of a poetic vocation, and between the conflict of the self-indulgent play of the pastoral existence and the call to action and intercourse with the social hierarchy. Colin, as Isabel MacCaffrey has so ably pointed out, has failed because he has limited himself to life within nature without realizing his own nature.[8] And so we are disappointed but not surprised when Spenser has Colin hang his pipes upon the tree in the close to the "December" eclogue. The problems are disabling, and he turns to other avenues in an effort to circumvent the difficulties.

Spenser's poetry of the 1580's, then, marks in part his further, often less successful, attempt to find solutions to his

---

[8]Isabel MacCaffrey, "Allegory and Pastoral in The Shepheardes Calendar," English Literary History, 36 (1969), 88-109.

aesthetic problem of suiting art to life in modes other than the pastoral while at the same time expanding the potentials of his craftsmanship. The minor poems of the 1580's fall into two groups: (1) mythological treatments and (2) simple animal fables. In the first group the "Teares of the Muses" is a mythological polemic against the sixteenth-century state of English letters, while the "Ruines of Time" presents through the mythical Verlame the problems of achieving fame, favor, and preferment in Elizabeth's court. The group of animal fables, "Prosopopoia," "Virgils Gnat," and "Muiopotmos," continues Spenser's absorption with seeing human problems from an "other-than-human" perspective. "Prosopopoia," through the degenerate fox and ape, examines the shortcomings of court, church, and art; "Virgils Gnat" explores, tongue-in-cheek, the futility of striving for lasting honor, and "Muiopotmos" presents the tragic end of beauty.

These poems lack the innocence and the delights present in the eclogues of The Shepheardes Calendar. The poet-figures of the 1580's poems do still possess, in small ways, the Orphean spark of divine imagination, but these figures move in realms of such undivided disorder that their presence seems to strike only a flicker of light in a vacuum of darkness.

The sick poet-narrator of "Prosopopoia" calls on the voice of Mother Hubberd to use poetry to allay the surrounding decay, and she in turn tells of the Fox and Ape who are eventually restored to their proper place in society by the poet-figure, Mercury. While

Mercury's re-alignment certainly indicates Spenser's confidence in the power of art to evoke order in this realm, it says nothing at all about poetry's power to affect the sickness and decay in the frame of poet-narrator. Similarly, "The Teares of the Muses" and "The Ruines of Time" both imply Spenser's affirmation of what poetry's power could be if it were properly unleashed, but except for the narrator's obedient encomiums to the fallen Leicester and Sidney at the close of the "Ruines" there is not much expression of whether the poet's voice will be used as it should. In all of these poems there still exists a void between the poet's place in a contemplative ideal and his role in the social fabric.

In "Muiopotmos," however, Spenser seems to have lucked upon part of the problem's solution. Here, poetry's divine source and power are embodied in the exquisite beauty of Clarion. In describing this concentrated symbol of art and its transcendence, Spenser lavishes the subject with more luxurious detail than almost any other in his poetry outside of the surreal gardens in The Faerie Queene. But as exquisite as is the ascendancy of Clarion's beauty, it nonetheless is summarily destroyed by the hideous Aragnoll. Explicators of the poem's allegory have been befuddled by the untimely demise to which Clarion comes. Almost everyone has agreed that Clarion must symbolize the power of art. Could Spenser, they wonder, be implying that art is useless vanity and that Clarion dies because of hapless pride? Or has Clarion committed some other more subtle sin (like Adam's and Eve's transgression in

the Garden), about which Spenser is trying to teach us a lesson? Or perhaps Clarion's fate is Spenser's bitter comment on the fate awaiting those artists, however, perfect their talents, who fail to find the protection of preferment and favor from the Aragnolls of fate and forgetfulness?

It seems more likely, considering Spenser's development to this point, that Clarion's significance is more aesthetic and less moral. Spenser is aware of the Pléiade's insistence that great art is continuously striven for, that art, like the Nature in Ronsard's Hymn to the Seasons, is forever reproducing herself in increasing variety. Her work is not finished; she does not rest in stagnation, but she is constantly at work, producing again and again the same beauties and delights that she first did thousands of cycles ago. Clarion's destruction, then, is the rightful fate of a fragile butterfly. His beauty will be missed, but he is not the only or the last repository of beauty, and we are assured that in both life and art there will be other Clarions, other heralds of aesthetic order and pleasure.

"Muiopotmos" is an exception to most of the poems of this period. Besides it, the poetry of the 1580's is pervaded by a dark and pessimistic tone. The solutions presented are only temporary or partial mitigations of long-standing complexities. Even the delight and innocence of such a harmlessly beautiful creature as Clarion seems reduced to insignificance by the motiveless and malign catastrophe that befalls him. Whatever wisdom, insight, or sympathy

the poet's art has provided him in these poems seems lost and inconsequent in the face of the terrible truths that he seems intent on uncovering. The Shepheardes Calendar may have tipped the balance too far in the favor of cloistered delight, and so Colin could not find solutions to the complexities with which he was confronted in his haven of isolation. But these pieces overcompensate with their emphasis on moral didacticism and their total immersion in problems and disorders, cutting off the reader's emotions and sympathies and keeping him from gaining the profit they seek to provide.

In the late 1580's Spenser had not discovered the mode which would enable him to realize in his poetry the aesthetic he shared with the Pléiade and thus to carry out his mission as poet-priest. Further, these poems, in their concentration on "real" world problems through total allegoric or metaphoric frames, show how far Spenser still is from grasping the tenuous balance that must exist between the ideal and actual. These poems delineate actual problems of Spenser's milieu, but their framework is so allegorically "other world" that he still fails to achieve the fusion of profit and pleasure that would satisfy both the priestly vocation of the poet and the aesthetic exercise that his artistic philosophy demanded.

From whatever motivations, Spenser does seem to have discovered by the late 1580's that the key to his problem lay with the pastoral mode. For by 1589 he was at work on the last of his minor pieces, Colin Clouts Come Home Againe. Despite the conclusions of

Hamilton and Durr, Spenser does not at this point separate himself from Colin Clout to become England's heroic poet. Rather, having explored the public, didactic responsibility of his art through the poetry of the 1580's, Spenser has come to see that his role of Orphic priest, as described in the theories of Ronsard, du Bellay, and Pontus de Tyard,[9] can best be fulfilled through figures such as Colin Clout, who weds the luxury of his art with the practical demands of living.[10] Colin is the shepherd of rough, unadorned actuality who grapples with complex problems of real humanity but who endures them in part because of the power of his song. Whatever disillusionment Spenser has with the active world of reality, he realizes that the solution does not lie in a private retreat to the isolation of contemplation, art, or pastoral innocence. Rather, his art must be a fusion of both, the singer who languishes on the pastoral landscape grappling selfishly with personal problems of love and fame must instead take the song which flourishes in Arcadia to the active world of men, politics, church and state. And without running away from the problems of the active world by disguising it in utter fantasy of animals and myths, the true poet, as the Pléiade's theories suggest, must transform the world through the power of his song. And discovering this, Spenser finds the balance that makes the Faerie Queene, the Epithalamion and the Amoretti

---

[9] See above, Chapter II, pp. 8-17.

[10] Helgerson, p. 899.

poems of such delight and wonder, for he is able to fully unleash both the potency of divine vision and the mastery of practical skill in his effort to link this divine imperative with his audience's needs, desires, and concerns. This is the fusion that he finally discovers in Colin Clouts, a fusion which orchestrates the symphonic interplay between his natural technique and the aesthetic philosophy that he shares with the Pléiade.

The Figure of the Poet in Colin Clouts

Even the most cursory reading of Colin Clouts will reveal that that Spenser's concept of the poet-priest has ripened and matured to reflect the link between divine endowments and this public responsibility to act as intermediary between the actual world and the unattainable realm of the ideal. His poetic figure here possesses a roundness of vision absent in the priest-singers of his early work. At the close of the Shepheardes Calendar, Colin, tormented by his unrequited love for Rosalind and his failure to find peace in the pastoral retreat, despairingly hangs up his pipes. Despite the constant testimony of the other shepherd singers that Colin's voice is matchless and his song the potent product of divine fury, we are constantly aware that Colin consistently fails to use his power as they are meant to be used. His songs must often be reported by others, for he is not present in the social group to sing them himself; he spends some time teaching the woods to sing, and some time exercising his song like Orpheus of old; he finally in "October"

and "December" fails to exercise his powers on at least two occasions that call for his help. Cullen notes that Spenser's poet-persona of the Calendar "perverts the public responsibility as teacher into teaching nature to be an extension of himself."[11]

In contrast, the Colin of Colin Clouts will not be overcome by the interplay of defeat and triumph in the human order of things. As the vessel of vatic understanding and vision, his art must embody the cyclical configuration of life so that ordinary men can receive a glimpse of the same vision. This understanding is precisely what is lacking from the Colin of the Shepheardes Calendar and from the poet-personas of the 1580's poetry. In Colin Clouts, then, Colin displays the characteristics of Spenser's early poet-priests coupled with the vision that these immature priest-singers lacked. Colin has been abroad in the active world of men and affairs, and he has also been executing his responsibilities as shepherd, for the poem's opening clearly implies that Colin has for some time been holding "court" daily with the shepherds.[12] This is obviously not the Colin who sang in lonely despair in the Calendar, who avoided life outside of the pastoral haven, and who, inside the pastoral

---

[11]Patrick Cullen, Spenser, Marvell and the Renaissance Pastoral (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 88-89.

[12]Edmund Spenser, Poetical Works, ed. J. C. Smith and E. D. Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1912), p. 536, ll. 4-6. All further citations from Spenser will be documented parenthetically with page and line numbers from this text.

society, often shunned his place among his fellows. Echoing Ronsard's assertions in the "Preface" to the Franciade and Pontus de Tyard's observations in the Solitaire Premier, this Colin has allowed his poetic gift to elevate his vision of life and by giving expression to his gift he extends that possibility of elevation and endurance to his fellow men.

This Colin also still possesses the supernatural mastery of song. We are told that, as always, his hearers stand as if dumb-struck by the power of his art: "The shepheard swaines that did about him play;/Who all the while with greedie listfull eares,/Did stand astonisht at his curious skill,/Like hartlesse deare, dismayed with thunders sound" (p. 536, ll. 6-9). Later, as Colin prepares to unfold his tales of travel to his listeners, we are told that even the possible hostilities of the environment are held at bay by the force of his voice: "With that they all gan throng about him neare,/With hungrie eares to heare his harmonie:/The whiles their flocks deuoyd of dangers feare,/Did round about them fed at libertie" (p. 536, ll. 52-56). Further, Hobbinoll reminds us early in the poem of the disasters that occurred while they were without Colin's song:

> Colin my liefe, my life, how greate losse
> Had all the shepheards nation by thy lacke? . . .
> Whilest thou wast hence, all dead in dole did:
> The woods were heard to waile full many a sythe
> And all their birds with silence to complaine:
> The fields with faded flowers did seem to mourne,
> And all their flocks from feeding to refraine:
> The running waters wept for they returne,
> And all their fish with langour did lament:

> But now both woods and fields, and floods revive,
> Sith thou art come, their cause of merriment,
> That us late dead, has made againe alive.
> (p. 536, ll. 16-17, 22-31)

Thus, Colin Clouts also subtly reemphasizes Spenser's version of the Pléiade's view of the poet as a special figure or member of the priestly elite, who descends directly from the great Orpheus.[13] The poem begins by distinguishing Colin, like Orpheus, as a singer superior to the other shepherd swains, and Hobbinoll's recital of the list of natural maladies that have occurred in the absence of Colin's song echoes the Orphean myths of the shaman who charms the woods and its inhabitants. Like the song of Orpheus, this Colin's song causes the Shepherd of the Ocean to follow the entrancing trail of his melody and holds all hearers, both in the pastoral setting and at Court, transfixed, bereft of the capability for action while they are under his spell. Just as the ancient singer's music had charmed the minions of the underworld and soothed the wild animals, Colin's powers have both charmed the disdainful courtiers and kept wolves from attacking the flocks while he sings. The subtle undertones of the Orphean myth throughout the poem vividly reinforce Colin as a poet of stature superior to his fellows, and the allusion perpetuates within the reader's mind the idea which Spenser shared with Ronsard and his fellows that true poets were an elite race who counted their lineage directly from the line of original

---

[13] See above, Chapter II, pp. 60-65.

demigod poets. Spenser affirms the supernatural origins of the true poet's gifts. Not only does the narrator describe Colin's talents as a "curious skill" (p. 536, l. 5), but Colin himself reports that when he first beheld Cynthia his being was filled with "furious insolence" that "lifts [him] above the measure of [his] might" and makes him feel as "one ycrept in spright" (p. 542, ll. 620-23). Finally, after Colin's exposition on the power of love to rule the lives of mortal men, Cuddy observes that "it seems that some celestial rage/ . . . is breathed into thy brest,/That poureth forth these oracles of sage,/Of that high powre, wherewith thou art possest" (p. 544, ll. 823-26).

More important, however, is that this Colin's song has been taken beyond the restrictions of the simple, pastoral setting and is exercised over more than just the woods, fields, and floods, an expansion of powers of which the Pléiade poets would have heartily approved. The urbane Shepheard of the Ocean is lured to Colin's company by the charm of his art (p. 537, ll. 60-63), and Colin finds favor both with the matchless Cynthia because of the sweetness of his song (p. 540, ll. 361-67) and with the members of her court (p. 541, ll. 484-85). Colin has finally discovered that the mystical imperative of his art possesses its efficacy in the face of man and society as well as in Nature. Only in giving voice to the artistic fury within him can he rightfully fulfill his position as poetic intermediary, and his mediation takes on its greatest importance only when he accepts his place as a man of art and song within the

arenas of court life, politics, and heroic activity.

Having reiterated his faith in the divine source and mystical power of the poet, Spenser goes further to re-affirm the Pléiade's concept that the poet's insights and wisdom come also from a supernaturally heightened capacity for understanding and imagination.[14] Having heard of Colin's passage over the fearful unknown sea and subsequent arrival in a land far surpassing anything he might have imagined in his pastoral isolation, Cuddy questions whether there really is another realm outside of the shepherds'. Colin unequivocally reminds him that Cuddy's pedestrian mind and experience do not make him capable of apprehending the reality of Cynthia's lovely realm on his own: "Ah Cuddy (then quoth Colin) thous a fon,/That has not seene least part of nature's worke:/Much more there is unkind, then thou doest kon,/And much more that does from men's knowledge lurke" (p. 539, ll. 292-95). Only a superior faculty like Colin's could receive such supernatural beauty and order and then transmit an understanding of those qualities to lesser men. Even Melissa later notes that all true lovers are "greatly bound" to Colin for his sensitive portrayal of their plight, for he only has seen what others have not and "full deeply hast designed/Of love and beautie, and with wondrous skill,/ Hast Cupid safe deposited in his kynd" (p. 545, ll. 896-98).

---

[14] See above, Chapter II, pp. 38-43.

This tie between the supernatural unction of the poet and the subsequent elevation of his capacity to imagine, understand, and articulate is made irrefutably apparent in the interchange between Colin and Cuddy concerning love. Having acknowledged the divine source of Colin's vision, Cuddy goes on to tell how Colin's song has altered his own understanding:

> But, never wist I till this present day
> Albe of love I alwayes humbly deemed,
> That he was such an one, as thou doest say,
> And so religiously to be esteemed,
> Well may it seeme by this thy deep insight,
> That of that God the Priest thou shouldest bee:
> So were thou wo'st the mysterie of his might,
> As if his godhead thou didst present see.
> (p. 544, ll. 827-34)

Colin agrees that such mysteries as love do "pass . . . reason's reach" and need a "priest to express . . . [its] power divine" (p. 544, ll. 837-38), thus acknowledging his importance in the social fabric. Clearly, then, Spenser remains committed in Colin Clouts to the Pléiade's philosophy of the priestly role of the poet and to the heightened capacity of his imaginative art, but his aesthetic faith has been strengthened as a foundation element for his poetry because it has been tenaciously linked to the poet's responsibility to execute that artistic power in an intermediary position between nature and society, art and life, the ideal and the actual, contemplation and action.

The poem's very structure suggests how this fusion of vision and aesthetic produces a pastoral that is at once intrinsically fantastic and at the same time inherently practical. As Sam Meyer's

study has shown, the poem consists of several schematic units that are melded into a single unit by the pastoral frame. Meyer's enumeration of five sections, in addition to being awkward and artificial, obscures the unity of the poem by presenting it as a series of fragments which Spsnser has somehow linked together through the pastoral story. He observes that Colin Clouts may be seen as a series of separate vignettes on: (1) the pastoral ideal; (2) the courtly idea; (3) the perversion of the courtly idea; (4) neo-platonic ideal of love, and (5) an economium to Rosalind.[15] While Meyer's study is one of the few booklength treatments of Colin Clouts, it contains some weaknesses of perspective which have prompted at least one other Spenser critic to call it "not well-digested."[16] Primarily, what Meyer's treatment lacks is an adequate explanation of the poem's structure that goes beyond seeing the poem as: (1) the curious but flawed re-working of the pastoral formula that Spenser is about to abandon for the heroics of The Faerie Queene; (2) the needed repository for disparate poetic fragments that he desired to publish, or (3) a drawing-board for his as yet immature ideas on the hierarchies of Love and Beauty.[17] It is just such an explanation

---

[15]Sam Meyer, An Interpretation of Edmund Spenser's "Colin Clout" (Notre, Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 174.

[16]John Mulryan, "Recent Trends in Spenser Studies: 1967-1971, A Review Article," Cithara, 11 (1971), 93.

[17]Meyer, pp. 176-78.

that is supplied when the poem is read in light of Spenser's and the Pléiade's aesthetics of the necessity and potency of poet-priest.

The poem opens in typical pastoral fashion. Colin, surrounded by his shepherd companions, has been singing and playing to the delight of his audience. The scene is reminiscent of the earlier Shepheardes Calendar and seems to indicate that Spenser's characters have taken up exactly where the Shepheardes Calendar left off. Yet this Arcadian scene is soon shown to differ materially from the nostalgic otherworld of the Calendar. Colin has been to the world outside since he hung up his pipes in the "December" eclogue, and his shepherds are avidly interested in what goes on outside their sylvan pale. Thus, this pastoral is not a simplistic eclogue where the singer yields himself to the sentimental nostalgia of Nature's blandishment. As Comito points out in the Calendar, the poet is constantly surrendering his own spontaneity to the influence of place, season, or circumstances.[18] Such is not the case in Colin Clouts. Here, Colin remains in charge throughout the poem. We hear or see little of the pastoral setting itself, for the poet has ceased to practice his powers on the woods, streams, and animals which surround him. In the Calendar eclogues, the reader is constantly bombarded with the pathetic fallacy of the material landscape and Colin reacting to one another. Colin Clouts lacks that

---

[18]Terry Comito, "The Lady in a Landscape and the Poetics of Elizabethan Pastoral," University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1972), 200-18.

sentimental emphasis, for the poet-priest has come into his own and exercises his powers as a means of controlling his life--he is no longer a reactor but an actor. In fact, the one explicit mention of the natural surroundings responding to Colin's powers, the sheep grazing peacefully without fear of attack (p. 537, ll. 52-56), has obviously been arranged by the poet so that his audience can concentrate upon his study without the distraction of watching their flocks. Comito's observation that in Colin Clouts "it is the poet's mixed vision which transforms the landscape: endows it with life, discovers in the barren soil a voice to reject or lament with man"[19] underscores the role of the Pléiade philosophy in the poem. Here, in the mature Colin, is the vatic poet whose powers of song enable him to master surroundings and circumstances and thus to become a figure of necessity in the social order.

In addition to his control through song, Colin's memory, his imaginative mental power, like the heightened capacity described in the Pléiade aesthetic, directs the poem. Every aspect of the poem is structured by Colin's memory; the unseen narrator provides the movement from place to place, vision to vision. In the Shepheardes Calendar, Colin, although constantly troubled by lack of love and fame, never allows his imaginative capacities to help him cope with these complexities. He clearly has faculties capable of such transcendance. His elegy for Dido certainly mitigates the

---

[19] Comito, p. 207.

fears of his audience in their confrontation with death, and the reports of the other shepherds of such moving pieces as his celebration of beauty in "Aprill's" "Laye of the Faire Eliza" and his engaging love complaint in "August" demonstrates an elevation of wisdom and sensitivity sufficient to outface any temporary difficulty that one might encounter. But the Colin of the Calendar is always in despair; his powers never elevate him, and he has, in fact, ceased to attempt to exercise them against the difficulties with which he is faced.

In Colin Clouts, however, Colin has recognized the rightful use of his capabilities, and like St. Paul he has learned, through the efficacy of his imaginative art, that in whatsoever state he finds himself, he will therewith be content. The pastoral of Colin Clouts, then, avoids the charge of Henninger against the Shepheardes Calendar that like the usual Renaissance pastoral it denies "reality by simplifying confusion and complexity to an irreducible orderliness."[20] For while Colin Clouts might, as Empson notes, attempt to place the complex within the simple, "it nonetheless grapples with the complex."[21] Colin's memory is the transforming agent. Having recounted the splendors of Cynthia and of her island kingdom across the sea, Colin is asked by Thestylis why he had ever returned to such a humble, country environment:

---

[20]Henninger, p. 254.

[21]William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1950), p. 20.

> Why didst thou ever leave that happier place,
> In which such wealth might unto thee accrue?
> And back returnedst to this barrein soyle,
> Where cold and care and penury do dwell:
> Here to keep sheepe, with hunger and with toyle,
> Most wretched he, that is and cannot tell.
> (p. 543, 11. 652-59)

The question cuts to the core of the typical pastoral dilemma, for until this point, Colin has reported to his hearers only the unparalleled beauty of Cynthia and her kingdom. Rightly enough, Thestylis wonders why one privileged to visit such a utopia would voluntarily return to a place that, albeit simple, innocent, and naturally beautiful, is nonetheless marred by want, work, and worry. Ironically, Spenser has reversed at this moment the usual pastoral dichotomy, for here the primitive world of the shepherds is the all-too-imperfect world of actuality rather than the ethereal realm of the idyllic that it is traditionally conceived to be.

Colin's response reflects the Pléiade's notion that the poet possesses special wisdom and a superior vision, and also demonstrates the maturity that Spenser's aesthetic has achieved since he last left Colin wailing in "December's" "barrein fields." First, Colin acknowledges that there was much beauty to be found in Cynthia's court, but he goes on to point out with those splendors were many wretched courtiers and practices. In the Shepheardes Calendar, Colin is either bemoaning his unhappy state or singing the beauties of some one-time remembered moment; there is never a link between the two. When he is in misery over Rosalind, his past insights into the love and beauty present in the universe

do not help him, for he has let his personal desires separate him from his artistic link to wisdom, insight, and understanding, and hus, he cannot fully perform his public responsibilities as vatic artist. But in Colin Clouts, Colin sees all: the "cold and care and penury" (p. 543, l. 657) of the shepherds' lot and the "quiet homes" that are symbols of a stable and protected existence unavailable to those who live at court; the "happie peace and plenteous store" (p. 539, l. 310) of Cynthia's realm conjoined with a place where "single Truth and simple honestie/Do wanter up and downe despys'd of all" (p. 543, ll. 727-28).

The shepherd audience possesses the limited vision of ordinary men, and they respond on the basis of what they see. Colin, however, as oracular poet-priest of the Pléiade aesthetic possesses a superior vision. He can tell his listeners, who have never seen a land outside their own, of a place of breath-taking beauty ruled by a magnificent queen. When they are so enraptured by this vision of land, ruler, and court as to begrudge their own rude place, Colin's same visionary memory can provide them with the realistic shortcomings of the seeming visionary ideal, gently structuring their perceptions so that they not only tolerate but accept as right their roles as shepherd swains and country lasses. That Colin has learned this lesson and its importance to the role of the poet is made apparent in his response to Thestylis:

> Therefore, I, silly man, whose former dayes
> Ad in rude fields bene altogether spent,
> Durst not adventure such unknown wayes,
> Not trust the guile of fortune's blandishment,

> But rather chose back to my sheepe to turne,
> Whose utmost hardnesse I before had toyle,
> Then having learned repentence late, to mourne
> Emongst those wretches which I there descrybe.
> (p. 543, ll. 668-74)

Unlike the immature Colin of the Calendar, this poet has learned that harshness exists everywhere--there is no use to mourn his fate, either in pastoral retreat or in courtly subterfuge. Further, as he goes on to say, his experience at court has shown him what he must do, what he has been given this gift for:

> Cause have I more (quoth he) of cancred will
> To quite them ill, that me deemed so well:
> But say regard of private good or ill,
> Moves me of each, so as I found, to tell,
> And eke to warne young shepherds wandering out,
> Which through report of that lives sainted blisse,
> Abandon quiet home, to seeke for it,
> And leave their lambs to losse, misled amisse.
> (p. 543, ll. 680-87)

Clearly, Colin Clouts is Spenser's matured pastoral. Having come to terms with a ripened aesthetic that, like the theories of Ronsard, du Bellay and their fellows, saw the poet and his miraculous gift not as embellishments to the human condition, but as vital components necessary to man's enlightenment and endurance, Spenser fashions a pastoral which captures the reader in its soothing delight while at the same time unflinchingly reminding him that nurtured within the palaces of plenty and bowers of beauty are the wolves of greed, envy, spite, and misfortune. Spenser discovers the solution to the aesthetic puzzle of fusing the ideal with the actual, interfacing life and art, for indeed there can be no such separation. The two exist in invariable conjunction, with the poet providing

the essential bridge between them. At the same time, Spenser overcomes the dilemma of whether poetry could or should provide both profit and pleasure by having his audience within and without the poem's frame discover that these two are inseparably wed. This is the roundness of vision which elevates Colin Clouts above either simple, jaded escapist literature or tired, moralistic allegory and which saves the poem from being a series of unrelated fragments. What Meyer sees as mere fragments really coalesce, under the shaping eye of the poet, to produce the mosaic of life which the poem captures so succinctly. We may conclude with Dodge that:

> Colin Clouts owes little to the Calendar; for its art is essentially more direct. In the earlier poem whatever facts of personal experience and opinion are to be discerned we see dimly and ambiguously through a kind of luminous fog: love story and satire are altogether baffling. In the latter, the story is almost as clear as a chronicle, the satire almost as direct and vivid as that of MHT ["Prosopopoia"]. Its pastoralism, indeed, is more a point of view than a set disguise, or, at least, the mask is worn lightly and removed at will. From the allegorical to the literal the style winds to and fro flexibly, according as the poet's memories take form. It is free, not run in moulds. Beside it the beauties of the Calendar seem almost academic.[22]

Further, as Alpers reminds us, the aesthetic vision which Spenser's poet achieves in Colin Clouts is essentially the same as that delineated by Shakespeare, Yeats and others and is exactly what all great artists (true poets as Spenser's, Ronsard's, and du Bellay's aesthetic would have termed them) search for: "The true pastoralists

---

[22]Edmund Spenser, The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, eds. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), VII, 447-48.

. . . are those who come to terms with reality, and in so doing so discount their bonds, their allegiances, and their true selves."[23]

The eye of the poet can, by virtue of its divine source, apprehend the whole; it has a link to the full "picture" that is inaccessible to others. This is clearly the spirit of the Pléiade doctrine of the poet's supernatural capacities, and Spenser obviously shares the same view throughout his work. Like the Pléiade poets, Spenser also knew that the poet who could so clearly envision the height of beauty, perfection, and order in the universe could not help seeing the depths of ugliness, disarray, and disorder which are also present. The impermanence of the uplifting artistic vision and the discrepancy between it and the actual work could lead to the visionary despair of the juvenile pieces, the reclusive myopia of the Calendar, or the embittered satire of the poetry of the 1580's. But ultimately Spenser's faith that such an overpowering gift as that of the poetic art must work some good leads him to realize that if the poet's apprehensions of perfection and beauty were but glimpses, momentary grasps, of the ideal which must be reached for again and again, they were nonetheless necessary images of order and beauty. There may be images of perfection such as Cynthia or Rosalind, but only the mind and the voice of the poet can transmit the essence and the importance of these figures to everyday mortals. Colin has seen such perfection in the face of the

---

[23]Alpers, p. 353.

incomparable Cynthia, and so he can endure the imperfections that exist around him. But he understands that for others to attain to the same insight, he must find the words within him to re-create in his art the ordered beauty which he has seen:

> Thus (answered he) but her great excellence,
> Lifts me above the measure of my insight:
> That being filled with furious insolence,
> I free my selfe like one yrapt in spright.
> For when I think of her, as it ought
> Then want I words to speake it fitly forth:
> And when I speak of her what I have thought,
> I cannot thinke according to her worth.
> Yet will I think of her, yet will I speake,
> So long as life my limbs doth hold together,
> And when as death these vitale bonds shall breake,
> Her name recorded I will leve for ever.
> (p. 542, ll. 620-31)

Unspoken, these images were mere ephemeral figments, but captured in the song of the poet, they became part of man's reality forever. Just as du Bellay urges in the Deffense, and Ronsard asserts in the Abbregé, the true poet, as a natural outgrowth of his acceptance of his responsibility as a vatic artist, must search for articulation worthy of his poetic gift.[24] And as with other aspects of this aesthetic, Spenser's poetic technique in Colin Clouts shows a maturity which places this poem closer to the level of Spenser's masterpieces than to the craftsmanship evident in much of his other minor poetry.

---

[24] See Chapter III, pp. 4-5.

Thus, the philosophical understanding of the poet as a priest is tied inextricably in Spenser, as in the Pléiade, to his conviction that the poet is also an artist whose skills must be continuously drawn out and exercised. It is neither coincidental conviction nor frivolous faith that saw the aesthetic dogma of the Renaissance's greatest poets resting on twin pillars. In actuality, the rather mystical belief that the song of the poet was sent from the divine upon a few chosen men was also responsible for the notion that the technical artistry needed to articulate that song must be dutifully and responsibly explored and developed through the poet's imitation and invention.

Imitation and Invention in Colin Clouts

As in almost all areas, Colin Clouts shows Spenser's maturity in his practice of skillful imitation. Throughout his career Spenser continues to practice all the levels of imitation categorized by du Bellay ("translateur," "traducteur," "paraphrastes," and "imitatior").[25] Colin Clouts is no exception. He follows in the pastoral mode the foodsteps of Virgil, Theocritus, and Mantuan, poets whom he had also imitated in the Calendar. But this poem is the curiously eclectic blend of literary tradition and personal idiosyncracy that is a hallmark of Spenserian technique. For the poem is a fragile fusion of moments of Theocritan innocence and play with

---

[25] See above Chapter III, pp. 5-11A.

the more somber and moralistic Virgilian episodes, all intermixed with Spenser's own flavor of pastoral as a delicate creation of art. His use of pastoral, here, is more subtle, for despite the Theocritan innocence of Cuddy or the allegorical renderings of Elizabeth's court in shepherd guise, the poem nonetheless conveys a realistic sense of discourse in a rustic setting. The premise that a shepherd has visited the wide world outside the secluded pale and is telling of the people, places, and attitudes that he found there compels our suspension of disbelief, and so we accept as appropriate the shift of mood, discourse, and style which the poem encompasses. We have lost the sense that many elements of the poem are but contemporaneous reworkings of pastoral conventions. Although the poem certainly contains those recasts, we are less conscious of the imitative technique at work. In realizing that the poet's art must fuse the actual and the ideal, Spenser began also to realize how the imitative exercises urged by the Pléiade could further that purpose. Hence, his recounting the ocean voyage to Cynthia's court is clearly modelled after similar voyages in Ovid and Virgil.[26] Further, as Greenlaw points out, the passage bears strong resonances to the voyage of the Argonauts heralded by Orpheus.[27] Obviously, Spenser has captured the delicate balance of the "imitateur" which du Bellay

---

[26]Meyer, pp. 90-91.

[27]Variorum, VII, 460.

praises in the Deffence, for he intends his readers to associate the voyage both with the general mythological strain and with the particular figure of Orpheus celebrating the exploratory voyages of the Argonauts, but he is also vividly concerned with telling about his encounter with Raleigh and their subsequent journey to England. It is true that Spenser employs this technique in all of his work, but here, as Meyer's detailed analysis shows, the fusion of personal facts, fictional embellishments, and traditional strains of imagery is smoother than it is in any of his work save The Faerie Queene or the Epithalamion.[28]

The same imitative technique is carried even further in the celebrated song of the two rivers' love. Spenser creates the story of Bregog and Mulla along traditional mythological lines in order to execute his thematic development of the importance of Love. In this episode he displays both his ability to imitate the forms of his literary predecessors and his capacity to imitate the order and beauty of the natural world around him:

> Old father Mole (Mole hight that mountain gray
> That walls the Northside of Armulla dale)
> He had a daughter fresh and flower of May,
> Which gave that name unto that pleasant vale,
> Mulla the daughter of old Mole, so light
> The Nimph which of the water course has charge,
> That springing out of Mole, doth run downe right
> To Butterwart, where spreading forth at large
> It giveth name unto that ancient Cittie. . . .
> Full faine she lov'd and was belov'd full faine,
> Of her own brother river, Bregog hight,

---

[28]Meyer, pp. 90-91.

> So hight because of this deceitfull traine,
> Which with Mulla wrought to win delight.
> (p. 537, 11. 104-12, 116-19)

In setting up the typical folk myth of the run-away couple and the vengeful father, Spenser recreates a forceful description of the Irish countryside that surrounded his home.[29] Thus, this passage reflects Spenser's practice of both kinds of imitation that du Bellay and Ronsard advocated and demonstrates his assimilation of the aesthetic theory to the immediate purposes of his "living" art.

Versification

In addition to exhibiting examples of Spenser's imitative powers in suiting his voice to the calling of his vocation, Colin Clouts demonstrates the consequent maturity of the inventive powers which the Pléiade also encouraged poets to exercise. Because this undergirding aesthetic which Spenser shared with the Pléiade saw poetry as such an admixture, valued both as a vatic, inspirational power and simply as art, Spenser's poetry shows great emphasis on the perfection of verbal music, imagery, and diction. Naturally, Colin Clouts shows greater mastery of these techniques than Spenser's earliest pieces. More important, Colin Clouts shows how Spenser has come to use these elements to execute the poetic purpose of bridging the abyss between the actual and the ideal.

Clearly, Spenser's experimentation with the verse of the 1570's and 1580's shows a poet who, in exploring various forms,

---

[29] Variorum, VII, 454-7.

rhythms, and rhymes, was also searching out an appropriate and versatile accompaniment for the song that he was singing. His previous successes had been sporadic, ranging from the pedestrian couplet confines of the earliest pieces to the liquid movement of such Calendar pieces as "Aprill" or "October." Like Ronsard and du Bellay, he had borrowed and experimented with verse forms from continental writers and had dabbled in measured verse, but so far his experimentation had not found a form that freed him consistently from restraint. Davis noted that "the discipline of a traditional pattern such as the sonnet is too rigid for the wayward temper of his Muse, and when thus enfettered he becomes still and artificial. In verse, as in speech, he needed an instrument of his own making."[30] Clearly, the Spenserian stanza of the Faerie Queene was the most effective solution to this problem, but the free-flowing stanzaic form of Colin Clouts shows mastery equal to that found in the verse forms of his finest poetry.

The Pléiade aesthetic demanded that poetry first of all be musical, but it is also called for poetry to be natural and to so capture the sounds and rhythms of speech that they produce their own musical effect.[31] Ronsard and du Bellay adhered to this practice because they felt that the song produced by such effects was likely to (1) communicate the poet's vision more clearly, and (2) force the

---

[30]B. E. C. Davis, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (1933; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 201.

[31]See above, Chapter III, pp. 16-19.

poet to develop the capacities and parameters of living language and not to create in a sterile, learned, and literary parlance removed from life. Further, Spenser seems also to have concurred with the Pléiade in their concern with varying accent and pause to enhance the musical rhythms of poetic song. These principles are clearly and effectively at work in Colin Clouts.

Since the pastoral convention of the conference of shepherds demands a format of discourse and narrative, the poem must evolve from a series of speeches. Such was the format of the Calendar eclogues in which Spenser endeavored to experiment with various rhyme schemes within the shepherds' speeches.

In Colin Clouts Spenser works with "continuous quatrains" which are sometimes interlinked and other times free-standing. The quatrains are not, however, the primary building blocks of the poem; rather Colin Clouts, like The Faerie Queene, is constructed upon strophic units based upon Colin's speeches themselves, units which are often "interlaced with rhetorical punctuations by the other interlocutors."[32] Such a format carries the sense byond the metrical unit, not just by giving the poem a conversational effect, but by executing exactly Ronsard's aesthetic tenet that the verse form of poetry should enhance the poet's articulation of his vision. Colin's paean to the gentle maid is but one example of this technique at work within the poem:

---

[32]Meyer, p. 53.

Ah far be it (quoth Colin Clout) fro me,
That I of gentle Mayds should ill deserve:
For that my selfe I do professe to be
Vasall to one, whom all my days I serve;
The beame of beautie sparked from above,
The floure of vertue and pure chastitie
The blossome of sweet ioy and perfect love,
The pearle of penelesse grace and modestie:
To her my thoughts I daily dedicate,
To her my thoughts I nightly martyrize:
To her my love I slowly do prostrate.
To her my life I wholly sacrifice:
My thought, my heart, my love, my life is shee,
And I hers ever onely, every one:
One ever I all vowed hers to bee,
One ever I, and others never none.
(p. 541, ll. 464-79)

Davis remarks:

> The continuous quatrains of Colin Clouts are designed to convey the effect of easy conversation. To Spenser, as to his contemporaries, the heroic couplet, which Chaucer had perfected as an instrument adapted to all forms of narrative poety, is "merely riding rhyme," a crude measure befitting "base style" and "mean matter." . . . But in the pure sanguine of his natural element Spenser builds lofty rhyme, embellishing and dignifying his theme by means of the well-wrought stanza, the normal unit of his verse structure. He composes by staff, as may be gathered from Colin Clouts, where from time to time the continuous quatrains assume a strophic character. . . . He cannot adequately be represented by the citation of single lines or couplets, his purple patches usually extending to a complete stanza.[33]

Having found the freedom of the stanzaic structure, Spenser goes on to compose with greater freedom and flexibility within the strophic units themselves. Although the rhythm is primarily structured around the decasyllabic quatrains, Meyer observes that "some of the lines are perfect iambic pentameter."[34] In fact, Spenser

---

[33] Davis, p. 201.

[34] Meyer, p. 58.

has so perfected his play with both the caesura and the stop that the circumscribed metrical form flows naturally into the cadences of musical speech. It seems true from the analysis of Meyer that while Colin Clouts does not embody the variety of end-stopping and enjambment enjoyed in The Faerie Queene, his placement of the caesura exhibits skillful variation equal to that found in the very best of his work. Even such a short passage as Colin's closing praise to Rosalind shows Ronsard's "principle of purposeful variety" in his execution of metrical technique:

> Such grace shall be some guerdon for the griefes
> And long affection which I have endureth:
> Such grace sometimes shall give me some reliefe,
> And ease of paine which cannot be received.
> And ye my fellow shepheards which do see
> And leave the languours of my too long dying,
> Unto the world for ever witnesse bee,
> That hers I die, nought to the world denying,
> That simple trophie of her great conquest.
> (p. 545, 11. 943-51)

These techniques coupled with his fluent manipulation of intralineal accents and the flow of assonance, alliteration, and feminine rhyme give the verse of Colin Clouts a natural, musical quality embracing the poet-priest's message in irresistible and mesmerizing song. Davis cogently observes:

> The divers motives of Colin Clouts Come Home Againe compose a suite of verbal music--Hobbinoll's monosyllables divide the lilt of introduction from Colin's song, with its play upon proper names. The Intermezzo of the voyage is marked by trochaic rhythm, with a torrential rush of strong vowels and surging polysyllables. The lavish use of glides and liquids throughout

> the paeon to the court [pp. 539-40, ll. 337-455] adds speech and fluency, which gradually diminish as the singer approaches his solemn peroration.[35]

Language

The freedom which Spenser's language experiments give to his poetic diction is another aspect of his invention which shows maturity in Colin Clouts. The language throughout the poem continues to include the combination of archaism, neologism, and innovation that was advocated by the Pléiade[36] and that makes possible wide varieties of tone and style in the early poems. Meyer's analysis reminds us that even in the Varorium there exists no direct, detailed study of the diction of Colin Clouts, the subject always being subsumed under general discussions of Spenser's practices.[37] Meyer, however, does provide an overview of critical comment available on Colin Clouts' diction, and attempts to draw some conclusions about its importance to an overall understanding of the poem.

Although Meyer does not attempt to identify the philosophical basis which links Spenser's prosodic techniques to his larger aesthetic, he nonetheless accurately points out the importance of studying the heretofore overlooked details of the diction of Colin Clouts:

---

[35] Davis, p. 187.

[36] See above, Chapter III, pp. 24-28.

[37] Davis, p. 34.

> The specialized diction in Colin Clouts has been given detailed attention [in his study] because it represents collectively a significant part of the poem's total vocabulary and because its close study opens an avenue to an understanding of the poem. Examination of this diction, moreover, reveals the degree to which Spenser, a disciplined literary craftsman, drew upon for the purposes of this poem a great variety of legitimate resources, native and foreign, in order to have available a vocabulary of adequate richness, breadth, and flexibility.[38]

Clearly, throughout his early poetry Spenser's diction parallels the dictums set forth by du Bellay and Ronsard that good poets, in order to use their heightened capacities properly, must work towards invigorating the communicative capacities of their native tongues. Spenser's early work, particularly in the Calendar, shows his desire to re-vitalize the language of English poetry with words drawn from archaisms and dialect. This practice has been quantitatively studied by McElderry, who concludes that Spenser's fondness for archaisms, though clearly characteristic of the Calendar, has been exaggerated by critics in their references to his non-pastoral poems and to his mature work.[39]

Colin Clouts, as a mature piece, does contain some archaisms and a sparing use of dialect terms. McElderry dismisses their

---

[38]Meyer, p. 46.

[39]Bruce R. McElderry, Jr., "Archaism and Innovation in Spenser's Poetic Diction," PMLA, 47 (1932), 144.

presence as typical Elizabethan practice, and Meyer argues that they are present only for their rustic connotation and not for lexical variety: "There exists in Colin Clouts a sufficient number of words and usages that might have been non-current to the readers of the day to justify the assertion that Spenser intended the poem to have a slightly archaic quality. The archaisms were included, not to enrich vocabulary, but to enhance the pastoral motif by reason of their connotative value."[40] No doubt the archaisms, which heavily weight the introductory section that provides the pastoral frame, are present for their feeling of rustic simplicity, but for a person bent on the unusual course of being a professional poet, who had come to see the perfection of the poet's voice as absolutely vital to acquiring the highest hopes of mankind, such an explanation does not go far enough. It ignores the compulsion that Spenser felt to make from the English vernacular an instrument fit to frame the vision articulated by the sublime voice of the poet. Hence, he relies on antique "y"-prefix verbs--"ybore" (p. 544, l. 839), "ycleepe" (p. 53, l. 65), "ywrokes" (p. 545, l. 921)--and other Chaucerian verbs such as "hight" (p. 536, l. 15; p. 537, l. 65, 81 etc.) and "ken" in its variant forms (p. 537, l. 74; p. 539, l. 272) to keep alive alternatives to the familiar terms which have lost their surprise and their vigor through repetition. Thus, Meyer concludes about Spenser's use of archaisms in Colin Clouts that it is

---

[40]Meyer, p. 37.

"so infrequent as to be no more than a coloration, and they are of such nature that they would not have interfered with the fluency and intelligibility of reading."[41]

It does appear that dialect has all but disappeared in this poem. McElderry and Meyer both report but one instance, that of "atweene" (p. 537, l. 81).[42] Similarly, Colin Clouts lacks any neologisms, new words which Spenser coined and which are not recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary, prior to his use of them. Clearly, Spenser's practice in regard to these three techniques is a shift from his lexical practice in earlier pieces such as the Calendar or "Prosopopoia." On the surface such an absence might seem to indicate that the brash "New Poet" of the Calendar has played out his youthful bent for avant-garde poetry and has acquiesced to the tested and tried status quo. More likely Spenser has come to realize that the grossly archaic or dialectal forms which add character may also confuse the message, and that too much enhancement of language may clutter the fabric with which the artist works.

And so in keeping both with his aesthetic and philosophic convictions, Spenser relies primarily in Colin Clouts upon a vast array of lexical innovation, the last of the linguistic techniques which Ronsard espouses. McElderry classifies (and Meyer concurs)

---

[41] Meyer, p. 42.

[42] Meyer, p. 41.

these innovations into borrowing (appropriating foreign terms to English usages), variations (changes in grammatical or lexical usage), and adoptions (Spenser's use of terms recently surfacing in the language). Since both the Pléiade and Spenser believed that a vernacular can undergo only limited expansion through the appropriation of foreign words, Spenser's reliance on borrowed words is moderate in Colin Clouts. Meyer lists "aemuling[ed] (p. 537, 11. 72, 73), "paravant" (p. 545, 1. 941) and "singulfs" (p. 538, 1. 168) as falling into this category. He also notes that while Spenser conveys meaning through context in these instances, these terms are not vivid enough to capture the reader's curiosity in themselves and they failed to become a part of standard English parlance.[43]

It is in Spenser's use of variant forms that his peculiar inventive prowess comes most strikingly into play. Not only does he craft at will new word forms to suit the metrical and syntactical needs of the moment, but he also freely expands the meaning of given forms to encompass new situations and applications. The examples of this practice are numerous, but a few will suffice to illustrate the effects on Colin Clouts of Ronsard's notion of linguistic expansion. In the poem's opening narrative frame (p. 536, 1. 7), Spenser adds the suffix "-full" to the verb "list" to construct the adjective "listfull," describing the "eares" of Colin's avid audience. Later in reporting his voyage across the sea, Colin tells

---

[43]Meyer, p. 42.

that all he took with him was his "oaten" pipe (Spenser was the first to use "oaten" as an adjective), "small needments else need shepheard to prepare" (p. 538, l. 915). By adding "-ment" to "need," Spenser thus constructs another noun for "something that is required" in order to complete the rhetorical trope playing "needments" against "need." He uses the same technique of adding suffixes to known words in "rewardfull" (p. 538, l. 187) and "blandishment" (p. 543, l. 671). The practice was advocated and employed by the Pléiade in France; its high regard stemmed from their belief that it showed the self-reliance, inner strength, and immortality of the vernacular itself because such variants proved that the language could always renew itself from its existing components.

Similar changes are at work when Spenser constructs the verb "indignifie" from the verb "dignify" (p. 542, l. 538), the act of endowing dignity on someone or something; the addition satisfies both the metrical requirements of the line and the aesthetic satisfaction of manipulating medium to purpose and need. Hence, he constructs the adjective "fleecie" from the shepherd noun "fleece" and applies it to cattle (p. 542, l. 606), and he takes the adjective "gallant" and fashions the noun "gallantry" (p. 543, l. 729) in order to describe the ostentatious shows exhibited by members of Elizabeth's court.[44] The variations are subtle and well suited to context so that they not only convey with immediacy the author's

---

[44]Meyer, pp. 42-43.

intent, but at least some of Spenser's variations did exactly what he and the Pléiade hoped: they modified the language and became absorbed into common parlance. While many of his terms were not accepted into everyday usage, the technique was certainly not lost on later English poets who attempted to model their craftsmanship after his. Renwick observes correctly that Spenser "taught future English poets to write."[45]

In addition to these variations in grammatical form, Spenser also continued in Colin Clouts to follow the Pléiade tenet of providing broader meanings for existing words either through compounding or through new syntactical placement. He uses "charming" (p. 536, l. 5) for the first time in the sense of playing a pipe; "neighbor" (p. 537, l. 127) becomes an adjective for "nearness"; "read" (p. 540, l. 336) is used as a synonym for "see"; "insolence" (p. 542, l. 622) is broadened to include "exultation," and "trophe" (p. 545, l. 951) is first used as a "memorial." Coupled with these are his unprecendented usages, according to Padelford and McDowell,[46] of compounds "self-regarde" (p. 543, l. 682), "well turned" (p. 540, l. 418), "fellow shepheards" (p. 545, l. 947) and "high aspiring" (p. 543, l. 695). One cannot help being impressed by Spenser's innovative use of the vernacular and by his diligence in carrying

---

[45] W. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1925), p. 116.

[46] Frederick M. Padelford and William Maxwell, "The Compound Words in Spenser's Poetry," JEGP, 25 (1926), 506.

out the aesthetic principles which he had been refining throughout his career.

A perusal of Spenser's word choice in Colin Clouts makes it evident that Spenser had by this time mastered his language as a tool with which to build his artful song. Like his French counterparts' emphasis on imaginative derivations from other Romance languages and from their own dialects, on creations of new forms by combining substantives with common suffixes, and on extensions of meaning through new syntactical placement, Spenser's diction in Colin Clouts relies on the subtly new, but not confusingly strange, to vivify his language and enhance the freedom of his verse. He comes to the poem fully convinced of the Pléiade doctrine that the true poet must fulfill his duty to his gift by "making illustrious" his own tongue, and so he brings his inventive powers into play not just to "set the tone, but to enrich the language, to provide a word that will fill a felt need, whether that need be material accomodations, rhetorical force, semantic precision."[47] Davis sums up the importance of Spenser's craftsmanship with words in the following statement:

> The language of Spenser is the supreme achievement of Elizabethan poetic invention. Swayed by no law save that of decorum, it supplies a perfect instrument for his theme, a make-believe vernacular for a make-believe world. . . . The peculiar effectiveness of this newly invented instrument lies in its range and flexibility. . . . Only in the "very grave and profitable" sententiousness of Complaints and of

---

[47] Meyer, 44.

> certain episodes in other pieces where Spenser has attempted to express abstract thought without the aid of concrete allegory, does his grand style degenerate into bombast. Once he can find a pretext for description, words follow as naturally as the leaves from the tree and as varied in shape and colour. The nine hundred odd verses of Colin Clouts Come Home Againe combine all the different modes . . . burlesque, colloquialisms, easy urbanity, fine rhapsody, country address . . . he may be said to have achieved his object, restoring "such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use and almost cleanly disinherited"; for his influence upon English poetic diction, upon vocabulary and usage that form the poet's peculiar monopoly has proved greater than that of any single author, with the possible exception of Shakespeare and Milton.[48]

Imagery

Finally, Colin Clouts Come Home Againe represents a triumph of imagery that evolves from Spenser's perception of the image-bearing word as the incarnate fusion of the ideal and the real. The poet's lyrical verse might make his art pleasing and irresistible; his words might give it power, but the image was the vision made flesh. Like the Pléiade, Spenser had throughout his career explored the multi-dimensional aspect of the images of poetry;[49] from his earliest work, he had tended to use the images in his poems primarily in terms of their symbolic associations or significances. Thus, the literal aspects of his images are but gateways to the vision beyond--the vision that only the true Orphic poet could properly apprehend--which is of ultimate importance in the poet's song. Hence, the true

---

[48] Davis, pp. 153-55.

[49] See above, Chapter III, pp. 19-23.

poet as Pontus de Tyard expresses it in the Solitaire constantly scanned the temporal context for links to the ideal beyond; and as Spenser had grown into the realization that poetic art was the only link between the two realms, his quest to find the most appropriate fusion between the transience of the actual and the permanence of the ideal became more pressing. Comito notes that by the time of Spenser's mature work his subject is always his quest to suit his "place" to his "vision."[50] We see in the images delineated in Colin Clouts the amalgamation of literal place and figure with literary convention and context and with larger allegorical scheme.

As is usual in Spenser's work, the literal level of the imagery is only sparsely set forth. Actuality is suggested by broad strokes and not by minute detail. We are presented with shepherds in conference, piping and whiling away their time. The flocks graze in peace. Such is the setting of the pastoral framework. Later in Colin's comparison of his homeland with the fabulous realm of Cynthia, we learn that the rural life is troubled by sickness, famine, war, crime and wild animals (p. 539, ll. 312-21). Similarly, we are told that the sea voyage is stormy, but that Cynthia's island kingdom is bountiful: "For that same land much larger is than this,/And other men and beasts and birds doth feed:/There, fruitful corne, faire trees, fresh herbage is/And all things else that living creatures need" (p. 539, ll. 296-99). Of the inhabitants

---

[50]Comito, p. 204.

of Cynthia's realm, we learn at some length that there are at Cynthia's court shepherd lasses and swaines of worthy character and abilities and that there are also foul courtiers who debase the code of courtesy and allegiance (p. 540, ll. 376-455; p. 541, ll. 485-583). Colin also presents us with two figures of perfection, Cynthia herself (p. 540, ll. 332-51; p. 542, ll. 632-47) and his own beloved, Rosalind (p. 549, ll. 927-51).

As in his earlier work, we are quickly made aware that these places and figures are provided by the poet not simply for their own importance but, as Spenser's concordance with the Pléiade aesthetic demands, for their larger allegorical implications within the conventions of the literary tradition with which he is working. Hence, the basic images of the shepherds and their rural environment serve once again as cues to alert readers that here is a vehicle which will "unfold greater matter of argument covertly." The warning of the Calendar's "Epistle" notwithstanding, the use of the pastoral scenes and figures also sets forth inextricably the same link that the Pléiade envisioned between the world of imagination and memory and that of tangible actuality. Thus, the reader expects from familiarity with the pastoral convention only the details which will link the shepherds to their allegorical counterparts, and so we are not distressed by the lack of concrete detail.

Spenser has clearly seen his purpose to be larger than simply addressing individual and specific situations through the delineations of his pastoral characters. Had this been his central purpose,

he could rightly be counted a failure. The historical allegory is often inconclusive in its correspondences and at times impenetrably obscure. To assume that such a calculating artist and deliberate craftsman as Spenser would deliberately allow himself to be cast into this position certainly underestimates the abilities of a poet of such skilled ability and with such a zealous commitment to his vocation. Rather, in assessing Spenser's imagistic and allegoric technique against his general aesthetic conviction, it becomes clear that such obscurity is deliberate and accurately reflects his adherence to an aesthetic similar to that of Ronsard and du Bellay. His strokes of detail give the illusion of specificity, but his descriptions are open-ended so that while the reader might tentatively assign the literal meaning to a particular person or event, such interpretation is rarely sure. The poem remains plastic, always open to new allegorical alignments, and so the poem never becomes a static artifact but the living bridge between the actual and the idea. We may surmise that the "new shepherd late up sprong" (p. 540, l. 416) is Shakespeare or Daniel, but the image has been so fused with the metaphorical that our analysis is never completely finished. Michael Murrin recognizes this same technique in The Faerie Queene:

> The purpose is to create profound moral truth beneath the veil of allegory; the poem and the poet himself are analogies to the cosmos, and in creating the poem, the poet is creating a new world. Thus, his allegory is bringing reality, and the poet himself becomes a god . . . seeing history from a point

> of view outside time and passing moral judgements on certain individuals.[51]

Mulryan in his analysis of the place of Colin Clouts within the Spenser canon concurs with Murrin's interpretation of Spenser's imaginistic technique and notes that it embodies the most successful application of that technique outside of Spenser's masterpieces.[52]

This imagistic technique is also the basis for the rather peculiar structure of Colin Clouts Come Home Againe. A careful examination of Spenser's technique in manipulating the images of the poem's episodes shows how closely the structure of Colin Clouts is allied with the Pléiade's theories on the composition and use of imagery.[53] Set within the narrative, pastoral frame are Colin's five reports: (1) the myth of Mulla/Bregog; (2) the journey to Cynthia's Court; (3) the contrast between Cynthia's ideal and corrupt courtiers; (4) the Cupid/Venus creation myth, and (5) the Rosalind paean. Davis and others have excoriated the poem as a "catch-all" of unpublished fragments or a mysterious conjunction of loosely related anecdotes about love and allegiance.[54] Meyer in his exhaustive study of the poem seems the episodes as Spenser's repetitious means of developing the philosophy of love and beauty which later found full fruition

---

[51]Michael Murrin, The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the Renaissance (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 1.

[52]Mulryan, p. 97.

[53]See above, Chapter III, pp. 21-23.

[54]Davis, p. 180.

in The Foure Hymns.[55] But in light of the increasing critical awareness concerning the deliberateness of Spenser's allegorical technique and of the similarity of his aesthetic to that of the Pléiade, it seems clear that the order and selection of these episodes are linked to some larger aesthetic purpose.

Spenser felt the need to be as clear in his message as a priest would be in trying to communicate a heavenly vision to his hearers, but he also shared the compunction of Ronsard and du Bellay that the message should be couched in the oracular robes of metaphor, allegory and fable, "to hide the truth of things in fable."[56] Thus, Spenser's Colin Clouts encompasses a variety of episodes which communicate several allegorical themes at once. The opening Mulla/Bregg fable satisfies pastoral demands for the inclusion of the love story and evidences the author's inventive powers because he constructs his own folk myth to be the vehicle. It may be a vital reference to any of a number of love affairs among Spenser's contemporaries, including a warning to the Queen of the ramification of a marriage to any suitor without the approval of her subjects. It certainly introduces the subject of love and its primacy as an orderer of the affairs of men.

The next episode is rather more specific than the first. We meet the Shepheard of the Ocean, who seems universally identified

---

[55] Meyer, p. 178.

[56] Jones, p. 29.

with Raleigh, and we voyage with Colin to the island kingdom of the resplendent Cynthia. Here the concrete details are more certain, and Spenser certainly wants us to recognize the magnificent Queen as his own sovereign. Not only are his hopes for favor and preferment encapsulated in his praise of the lovely monarch, but once again Spenser is clearly defining a source of order in human concerns. This time it is Cynthia, not love, who acts as a source of order and who possesses "peerless skill in making well" (p. 538, l. 188). Like "Aprill's" Eliza, Cynthia's beauty and magnificence bring grace, bounty, and order to her surroundings (p. 538, l. 187). But although Spenser patently intends for these images to be tied to specific actualities, he nonetheless has allied these actualities with highly mythological fantasies. Clearly, the oracle has not yet articulated an encompassing vision of the poet's truth.

Having portrayed both Cynthia and the lads and lasses who serve her best, Colin is reminded by Thestylis' question that there must be more to this land or he (Colin) would have remained there. In reply Colin reports a nebulous list of errors and ills that exist at Court in the persons of Cynthia's corrupt courtiers:

> . . . and he doth soonest rise
> That best can handle his deceiful wit,
> In subtil shifts, and fines devise,
> Either by laundring his well deemed name,
> By creeping close into his secrecie;
> To which him needs a guilefull hollow hart,
> Masked with faire dissembling curtesie,
> A filed toung furnisht with tearmes of art,
> No art of schools, but Courtiers schoolery.
> (p. 543, ll. 692-702)

Here, the specific details are so obscurely presented that they suggest no specific allegorical ties, but rather suggest a general picture of the distortions and disorders that were certainly present in the court of Spenser's real sovereign. Spenser takes a step away from the specifics that he reached in the Cynthia section back towards more obscurity and greater latitude in absolute interpretation. While the possibility of censure for such unfavorable criticism no doubt prompted this judicious course, the move is also part of his allegorical scheme.

Next, Colin tells another myth, the story of Venus and Cupid and the hierarchy of love. The images are strictly fabulous, and there are no links to specific actualities. Rather, Spenser expounds instead a general mythical treatment of the power of love to order and cause germination. Without much doubt Spenser seems to be exercising the neoplatonic theories that gain full expression in The Faerie Queene, Epithalamion, the Foure Hymnes. But here the general idea that love is the highest ideal to which man can attain becomes the means of the absolute fusion between the ideal and the actual. Colin asserts that

> . . . beautie is the bayt which will delight
> Doth man allure, for to enlarge his Kynd,
> Beutie the burning lamp of heavens lights
> Darting her beames into each feeble myth:
> Against whose power, nor God, nor man can find,
> Defence. . . .
>
> (p. 545, 11. 871-76).

Love is the force which orders all creation, but the apprehension of beauty enables men to strive for that ultimate ideal. Further, only

the poet, as the priest of Beauty, can properly communicate the vision so that man can be elevated above himself. Only Colin the poet can properly see the glories of the sea, Cynthia, her realm, and the Irish landscape, and fashion them all into icons of beauty which capture men's imaginations and so lift them beyond the actual dangers of real shepherding, or the discomforts of actual life in secluded Ireland, or the degrading intrigues of Elizabeth's real court. Only Colin, the poet-priest, can fashion an image fusing the actual and the ideal which will provide such an opportunity.

This step back into further obscurity, away from clear, specific, literal assignment, is deliberate and is made evident by the last episode. Colin returns here to the subject of his beloved Rosalind who, as the other shepherds observe, will now be sorry for not returning the love of one who understands the matter so well. There are no details here about Rosalind; the attempt at even the concreteness in Cynthia's image is absent here. Rosalind is the perfected ideal available to the imaginations of men, and Colin rebukes his unenlightened audience for making "so bold a doome with words unmeet,/of things celestiall which ye never saw" (p. 545, ll. 928-30). She is of "divine regard and heavenly Law,/Excelling all that ever ye did see" (p. 545, ll. 933-34), and is the cause of Colin's highest flight of artistic vision. Once embittered by his failure to attain her, he now accepts her as the always-sought-for but never-completely-obtained object of his quest. Rosalind may certainly have been a real woman, but like Dante's Beatrice and

Petrarch's Laura, she was also most certainly a symbol--both to Colin and to Spenser--of the value of beauty. He is content to be the trophy of the conquest of such great beauty. She has raised him, and his subsequent articulation of that beauty will always elevate others. And so Colin, like Dante, accepts his place as priest and poet, as observer and articulator, of the divine vision. His mature understanding of Rosalind as an unreachable symbol who, through the power of the poet's art, has profound consequences on the qualities of order and beauty within man's life brings stability to his own existence. He has accepted the "poet's search" for "he is committed to the attempt to find in things of the created world, without any sacrifice of their destiny and immediacy signs of a reality that transcends them. . . ."[57]

Thus, Spenser achieves through the images of Colin Clouts an inseparable coalescence of the actual and ideal which is the goal of both his and the Pléiade's aesthetic. The intermingling is complex. At moments it reveals vividly simple resolutions to the apparent tangle of simultaneous metaphorical and allegorical operations, and in those instances, Spenser seems dazzlingly clear. But in an instant the cloud reemerge and the veil is drawn again, placing the interpretation in obscurity. Renwick notes that

> . . . in all these passages literary and personal motives and interests are inextricably bound up together; and we must accept them together and try to appreciate both at

---

[57]Comito, p. 201.

> the same time, or we shall miss something he meant us to see and enjoy. . . . Spenser made his art express the interests and feelings of his life, and exercised his art upon the universe that he knew, keeping the two activities balanced.[58]

This is precisely the view of image which the Pléiade advocated as the only means possible of turning into tangibles the esoteric fury which was visited upon the worthy poet.

Conclusion

Spenser brings to culmination in Colin Clouts Come Home Againe the balanced coalition between the philosophy of his aesthetic and the techniques of craftsmanship which he has been developing throughout his minor poetry. In this poem as in the earlier minor poems Spenser's ideas about the nature and importance of the poet and the importance of imitation and invention to a true poet's technique bear striking similarity to the aesthetic concerns of the Pléiade. Like their critical theories, Spenser's minor poetry presents the figure of the poet as a man whose special gift of songs comes to him through the divine fury of the Muses. Because, for the Pléiade and for Spenser, the origins of the song are supernatural, poetry provides man with a supernatural vision that he could not otherwise attain. Further, throughout the minor poems, Spenser reflects the Pléiade's faith that the song's supernatural origins also gave it extraordinary power to evoke change and produce order. Thus,

---

[58] Renwick, p. 125.

Spenser's poet-figure, like that of the Pléiade, is a person of supreme importance to the social order; without him and his voice humanity would lack one of its essential components.

Spenser achieves the poetic vision of his mature pieces when, like the Pléiade, he uses the vatic nature of the poet conjoined with his most refined imitative and inventive skills to bridge the gap between life and art for his audience. His poetry reflects the Pléiade's injunction that such a specially blessed person as the poet could not use his gift as an excuse for indolence or complacency. The members of the Pléiade constantly urge true poets to refine their gifts of song through imitation, both of other poets and of nature itself. Further these poets are to enhance their song by exercising their inventive powers in the musical quality of their verse, in the oracular nature of their imagery, and in the vernacular choices of their diction. Spenser's minor poems clearly share the same concerns of craftsmanship. In learning to suit the components of his poetic technique to his philosophy of the vatic poet, Spenser eventually solves the puzzle of the poet's vision. Like the Pléiade, Spenser shows in his finest minor poems that only the static beauty of poetic art can momentarily reproduce the permanent beauties of the ideal.

The imaginative view of the world which Spenser shared with the writers of the Pléiade gives his poetry its aesthetic power, for while the vision of the Pléiade and of Spenser acknowledges the permanence of the ideal that the poet glimpses, this vision realizes

that these glimpses of beauty are impermanent and must be captured in the poet's art again and again. Halio explains the allegiance of Spenser and the Pléiade to the primacy of the poet-imagination thus:

> though less concerned with creating entirely new mental experiences, or of fashioning a light that was never seen on sea or land, they were concerned with the uses of the imagination dealing with the realities that did exist. For them, it was enough that the imagination served a dual function in apprehending the nature of reality in question, and in devising an appropriate means of responding to it.[59]

In using an aesthetic similar to the Pléiade's, Spenser comes to understand the exercise of his imaginative powers as his fulfillment of his priestly role of poet-interpretor and so to fashion for himself a permanent place in the pantheon of English poets. Like his counterparts in the French Pléiade, his commitment to the sacred vocation of the poet made possible a serious and professional view of poetry, as a valid vocation in its own right, and a veneration for the art and its practitioners that would nourish England's future literary and intellectual growth.

This is not to say that the aesthetic philosophies of Spenser and the Pléiade were identical. There is little reflection in Spenser's work of the Pléiade's specific ideas concerning poetic genre: for example, the ode and "scientific" poetry which were of general interest to the group. The Pléiade also set forth

---

[59] Jay L. Halio, "The Metaphor of Conception and Elizabethan Theories of the Imagination," Neophilologus, 50 (1966), 457.

particularized rules for rhyme and metrical use that for obvious reasons do not appear in Spenser's poetry. Finally, the Pléiade aesthetic dealt at length with dramatic poetry, developing notions of tragedy and comedy: these ideas seem entirely absent in Spenser's aesthetic.[60] Further, Spenser's aesthetic is not simply a reflection of the theories of one set of writers; rather it shares the artistic tendencies of many. Clearly, the most notable of these poets, in terms of the ideas discussed in this study, is Chaucer. While the Pléiade theories helped Spenser to focus consciously on techniques for the use of the vernacular and poetic imagery, the poetry of Chaucer provided for Spenser an example of these techniques carried out through Chaucer's natural genius. Renwick observes quite rightly that without Chaucer's example of the theories' execution in his native English, Spenser might not have envisioned the poetic success which implementation of the Pléiade theories could bring. Chaucer was his model, but the Pléiade helped teach him the significance of Chaucer's techniques for his own work.

In playing out his philosophical convictions about the seriousness of the poet's art, Spenser was assiduously endeavoring to improve the craftsmanship which produced the poet's art; and thus, verbal melody, vernacular diction, and poetic imagery were also

---

[60] W. F. Patterson, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory: 1328-1630 (1935; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), II, 930-49.

given renewed vigor for later poets. In short, an understanding of Spenser's poetic career from the viewpoint of the principles he shared with the aesthetic of the French Pléiade shows clearly a continuity of development in thought and technique that is an essential part of Spenser's poetic art.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alpers, Paul. "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of the Pastoral." College English, 34 (1972), 352-71.

Anderson, Judith H. "'Not worth a boterflye': 'Muipotmos' and 'The Nun's Priest Tale.'" Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1 (1971), 89-106.

Atchity, Kenneth. "Spenser's 'Mother Hubberd's Tale': Three Themes of Order." Philological Quarterly, 52 (1973), 161-172.

Baldwin, Charles S. Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice: Classicims in the Rhetoric and Poetic of Italy, France, and England, 1400-1600. Ed. by Donald Lemen Clark. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939.

Beach, D. H. "The Poetry of Idea: Sir Phillip Sidney and the Theory of Allegory." Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 13 (1971), 365-89.

Bean, John C. "Cosmic Order in the Faerie Queene." Studies in English Literature, 17 (1977), 67-79.

Bercovich, Sacvan. "Empedocles in the English Renaissance." Studies in Philology, 65 (1968), 67-80.

Berger, Harry, Jr. "Spenser's Gardens of Adonis: Force and Form in the Renaissance Imagination." University of Toronto Quarterly, 30 (1961), 128-49.

_____. "The Spenserian Dynamics." Studies in English Literature, 8 (1968), 1-18.

_____. "The Prospect of Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry." Studies in English Literature, 1 (1961), 93-120.

_____. "Mode and Diction in The Shepheardes Calendar." Modern Philology, 67 (1969), 140-49.

_____. The Renaissance Imagination: Second World and Green World." Centennial Review, 9 (1965), 36-78.

Brown, James N., and Humphry Tonkin. "Form and Spenser's Venus." PMLA, 90 (1975), 123-24.

_____. "Spenser's Poetic Strategy." PMLA, 90 (1975), 293-94.

Brown, James N. "Stasis and Art in The Shepheardes Calendar." Massachusetts Studies in English, 3 (1971), 7-16.

_____. "'Hence with the Nightingale Will I Take Part': A Virgilian Orphic Allusion in Spenser's 'August'." Thoth, 13 (1972-3), 13-18.

Bryan, Robert A. "Poets, Poetry, and Mercury in Spenser's 'Prosopopoia': Mother Hubberd's Tale.'" Costerus, 5 (1972), 27-33.

Bullock, W. L. "The Precept of Plagiarism in Cinquecento." Modern Philology, 25 (1928), 293-312.

Burchmore, David W. "The Image of the Centre in Colin Clouts Come Home Againe." Review of English Studies, 28 (1977), 393-406.

Cain, Thomas H. "Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus." University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1971), 24-47.

_____. "The Strategy of Praise in Spenser's 'Aprill.'" Studies in English, 8 (1968), 45-58.

Cassirer, Ernst. The Platonic Renaissance in England. Trans. James P. Pettegrove. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1953.

Castor, Grahame. Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Thought and Terminology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.

Cave, Terrence, ed. Ronsard the Poet. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd. 1973.

Chamard, Henri. Histoire de la Pléiade. 4 Vols. 1939; rpt. Paris: Didier, 1961.

Chamard, Henri. Joachim du Bellay. 1900; rpt. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969.

Chamberlain, Frederick. Elizabeth and Leycester. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939.

Champion, Pierre. Ronsard et Son Temps. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925.

Cheney, David. Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in "The Faerie Queene." New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Clements, Robert J. Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade. Harvard in Romance Languages, No. 18. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942.

_____. "Iconography on the Nature and Inspiration of Poetry in Renaissance Emblem Literature." PMLA, 70 (1955), 781-804.

_____. "Poetry and Philosophy in the Renaissance." Comparative Literature Studies, 8 (1971), 1-20.

Comito, Terry. "The Lady in a Landscape and the Poetics of Elizabethan Pastoral." University of Toronto Quarterly, 41 (1972), 200-18.

Cullen, Patrick. "Imitation and Metamorphosis: The Golden Age Eclogue in Spenser, Marvell and Milton." PMLA, 84 (1969), 1559-70.

_____. Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970.

Davis, B. E. C. Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study. 1933; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1962.

DeNeef, A. Leigh. "'The Ruines of Time': Spenser's Apology for Poetry." Studies in Philology, 76 (1979), 262-71.

DeNeef, A. Leigh. Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor. Duke: Duke University Press, 1982.

Du Bellay, Joachim. La Deffence et Illustration de La Langue Françoyse. ed. Henri Chamard. Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1948.

_____. Oeuvres Poétiques. 6 Vols. ed. Henri Chamard. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1923.

Dunidas, Judith. "'Muiopotmos': A World of Art." Yearbook of English Studies, 5 (1975), 30-38.

Durling, Robert M. The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Elliot, G. R. Humanism and Imagination. Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1938.

Ellrodt, Robert. Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser. Geneva: Droz, 1960.

Empson, William. Some Versions of Pastoral. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1950.

Fletcher, Angus. The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Frye, Northrop. "Yeats and the Language of Symbolism." University of Toronto Quarterly, 17 (1947), 1-17.

Gang, Theodor M. "Nature and Grace in The Faerie Queene: The Problem Reviewed." English Literary History, 26 (1959), 1-22.

Gransden. K. W. "The Pastoral Alternative." Arethusa, 3 (Spring 1970), 103-21; (Fall 1970), 177-96.

Greenlaw, Edwin, et al. The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition. Vol. VII: The Minor Poems. Spec. eds. Charles G. Osgood and Henry C. Lotspeich. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943.

Hamilton, A. C. "The Argument of Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar." English Literary History, 23 (1956), 171-82.

Halio, Jay L. "The Metaphor of Conception and Elizabethan Theories of the Imagination." Neophilologus, 50 (1966), 454-61.

Hall, Vernon. Renaissance Literary Criticism: A Study of Its Social Content. New York: Columbia University Press, 1946.

Hardin, Richard F. "The Resolved Debate of Spenser's 'October.'" Modern Philology, 73 (1976), 257-63.

Harrison, T. P., Jr. "Spenser, Ronsard and Bion." Modern Language Notes, 49 (1934), 139-45.

_____. "Spenser and the Earlier Pastoral Elegy." University of Texas Studies in English, 13 (1933), 36-53.

Helgerson, Richard. "The Elizabethan Laureate: Self-Presentation and the Literary System." ELH, 46 (1979), 193-220.

_____. "The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career." PMLA, 93 (1978), 893-911.

Henninger, S. K., Jr. "Metaphor as Cosmic Correspondence." In Renaissance Studies, Summer 1967. Ed. John M. Headley. Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1968, pp. 3-22.

Henninger, S. K., Jr. "The Renaissance Perversion of the Pastoral." Journal of the History of Ideas, 22 (1961), 254-61.

Hill, R. F. "Colin Clout's Courtesy." Modern Languages Review, 57 (1962, 492-503.

Hoffman, Nancy Jo. Spenser's Pastorals: "The Shepheardes Calendar" and "Colin Clouts." Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Hutton, James. "Spenser's 'Adamantine Chains': A Cosmological Metaphor." In The Classical Tradition: Literary and Historical Studies in Honor of Harry Caplan. Ed. Luitpold Wallack. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966, pp. 572-94.

Javitch, David. "Poetry and Court Conduct: Puttenham's 'Arte of English Poesie' in Light of Castiglione's Corteigiano." Modern Language Notes, 87 (1972), 865-82.

Jayne, Sears. "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance." Comparative Literature, 4 (1952), 214-38.

Jeandet, J. P.-Abel. Pontus de Tyard. Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1860.

Jones, H. S. V. A Spenser Handbook. New York: F. S. Crofts, 1937.

Jones, K. R. W. Pierre de Ronsard. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970.

Kennedy, Judith M. "The Final Emblem of The Shepheardes Calendar." Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual, 1 (197), 95-106.

Kristeller, P. O. The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino. New York: Columbia University Press, 1943.

Laguardia, Eric. Nature Redeemed: The Imitation of Order in Three Renaissance Poems. The Hague: Mouton, 1966.

Langdon, Ida. Spenser's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: An Essay with a Collection of Illustrative Passages from His Works. 1911; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965.

Lapp, John C., ed. The Universe of Pontus de Tyard: A Critical Edition of "L'Univers." Cornell Romance Studies, No. 3. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950.

Laumonier, Paul. Ronsard poëte lyrique. Paris: Didier, 1923.

Levin, Harry. The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1969.

Mallette, Richard. "Poet and Hero in Book VI of the Faerie Queene." Modern Language Review, 72 (1977), 257-67.

_____. "Spenser's Portrait of the Artist in The Shepheardes Calendar and Colin Clouts Come Home Againe." Studies In English Literature, 19 (1979), 19-41.

Meyer, Sam. An Interpretation of Edmund Spenser's "Colin Clout." Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1969.

Milne, Fred L. "The Doctrine of Act and Potency: A Metaphysical Ground for Interpretation of Spenser's Garden of Adonis Passages." Studies in Philology, 70 (1973), 279-87.

Montrose, Louis A. "'The perfect paterne of a Poet': The Poetics of Courtship in The Shepheardes Calendar." Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 21 (1979), 34-67.

Moore, John W., Jr. "Colin Breaks His Pipe: A Reading of the 'January' Eclogue." English Literary Review, 5 (1975), 3-24.

Mulcaster, Richard. The First Part of the Elementarie (1582). Ed. E. T. Campagnac. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.

Mulcaster, Richard. The Positions (1582). Ed. R. H. Quick. London: Longmans, 1888.

Mulryan, John. "Recent Trends in Spenser Studies: 1967-1971, A Review Article." Cithara, 11 (1971), 90-102.

Murrison, Alexander F. The Odes of Pindar Rendered in English Verse. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933.

McAlindon, T. "The Idea of Byzantium in William Morris and W. B. Yeats." Modern Philology, 64 (1967), 307-19.

_____. "Yeats in the English Renaissance." PMLA, 82 (1967), 157-69.

MacCaffrey, Isabel. "Allegory and Pastoral in The Shepheards Calendar." English Literary History, 36 (1969), 88-109. rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser. Ed. A. C. Hamilton. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972, 549-568.

_____. Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

McElderry, Bruce R., Jr. "Archaism and Innovation in Spenser's Poetic Diction." PMLA, 47 (1932), 144-70.

McFarlane, I. D. Renaissance France: 1470-1589. Vol. II of A Literary History of France. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1974.

MacLean, Hugh. "'Restlesse anguish and unquiet paine': Spenser and the Complaint, 1579-1590." In The Practical Vision: Essays in English Literature in Honor of Flora Roy. Eds. Jane Campbell and James Doyle. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977, pp. 29-47.

McLane, Paul. Spenser's "Shepheardes Calendar." Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1961.

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

Parkes, H. B. "Nature's Diverse Laws: The Double Vision of the Elizabethans." Sewanee Review, 58 (1950), 402-18.

Patterson, Warner Forrest. Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory: A Critical History of the Chief Arts of Poetry in France (1328-1603). 3 Vols. 1935; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966.

Poggioli, Renato. "The Oaten Flute." Harvard Library Bulletin, 11 (1957), 147-84.

Quainton, Malcolm. Ronsard's Ordered Chaos: Visions of Flux and Stability in the Poetry of Pierre de Ronsard. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1980.

Quitslund, Jon A. "Spenser's Image of Sapience." Studies in the Renaissance, 16 (1969), 181-213.

Renwick, W. L., ed. Complaints by Edmund Spenser. London: Scholartis Press, 1928.

_____. Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry. London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1925.

_____. "The Critical Origins of Spenser's Diction." Modern Language Review, 17 (1922), 1-16.

Richardson, David A., ed. Spenser: Classical, Medieval, Renaissance and Modern. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland State University Press, 1977.

Ronsard, Pierre de. "A Brief on the Art of French Poetry." Trans. James Harry Smith. In The Great Critics: An Anthology of Literary Criticism. Eds. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks. Rev. and enlarged. New York: W. W. Norton, 1939.

Ronsard, Pierre de. Oeuvres Complètes. 18 Vols. Ed. Paul Laumonier. Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1931-1959.

Rossky, William. "Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic." Studies in Renaissance, 5 (1958), 49-73.

Sainsbury, George. A History of Criticism and Literary Tastes in Europe From the Earliest Texts to the Present Day. 3 Vols. 1902-1904; rpt. London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1949.

Satterthwaite, Alfred W. Spenser, Ronsard, and Du Bellay: A Renaissance Comparison. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Sebillet, Thomas. Art poetique françoys: Edition critique, avec une Introduction et des notes. Ed. Felix Gaiffe. Paris: Societe des Textes Francais Modernes, 1910.

Shore, David R. "Spenser's Colin Clouts Come Home Againe: The Problem of Poetry." English Studies in Canada, 8, No. 3 (1982), 262-81.

Silver, Isidore. The Intellectual Evolution of Ronsard. St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1969.

_____. Ronsard and the Hellenic Renaissance in France. St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1961.

Spenser, Edmund. Poetical Works. Eds. J. C. Smith and E. De Selincourt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912.

Stone, Donald. Ronsard's Sonnet Cycles. Yale Romantic Studies, No. 14. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Turquet, Gladys M., trans. The Deffense and Illustration of the French Language. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1939.

Tyard, Pontus de. Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes. Ed. John C. Lapp. Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1966.

Tyard, Pontus de. Solitaire Premier. Ed. Silvso de Barridon. Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1950.

Upham, Alfred Horatio. The French Influence in English Literature from the Accession of Elizabeth to the Restoration. New York: Octagon Books, 1965.

Warden, John. ed. Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

Weber, Henri. La Création Poétique au XVIe Siècle en France de Maurice Sève à d'Aubigné. 2 Vols. Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1955.

Weisinger, Herbert. "Yet Another Theory of the Renaissance." Bucknell Review, 12 (1964), 1-16.

Wilkens, A. S. ed. The Epistles of Horace. London: Macmillan and Co., 1885.

Williams, Kathleen. "Vision and Rhetoric: The Poet's Voice in The Faerie Queene." ELH, 36 (1969), 131-44.

_____. Spenser's World of Glass: A Reading of the "Faerie Queene." Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

Wilson, D. B. Ronsard, Poet of Nature. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1961.

Wine, M. L. "Spenser's 'Sweete Themmes': Of Time and the River." Studies in English Literature, 2 (1962), 111-7.

Woodhouse, A. S. P. The Poet and His Faith: Religion and Poetry in England from Spenser to Eliot and Auden. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Yates, Francis. The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century. London: University of London Press, 1947.

VITA

Robin Renée Killman was born in Columbia, South Carolina, on September 15, 1957. She attended elementary schools in that city and was graduated from Lower Richland High School in June 1975. The following September she entered Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee, and in August 1979 she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, graduating Magna Cum Laude. In September of 1979 she accepted a teaching assistantship at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and began study toward a Master's degree. This degree was awarded in March 1981.

She remained in graduate school at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy in English. This degree was awarded in December 1985.

The author is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, Alpha Chi, and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. Ms. Killman is employed by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville English Department.