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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Teresa Gail Yow entitled "Images of Inactivity in The Faerie Queene." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

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IMAGES OF INACTIVITY IN

THE FAERIE QUEENE

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Teresa Gail Yow

December 1980

3016901

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DEDICATION

To my mother, who could not stay with us.

Nancy Smith Yow
1930-1979

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Bain T. Stewart for the patience and wisdom with which he has guided me during my entire graduate career and especially for the direction he has given me during the writing of this dissertation. I would also like to thank Drs. Thomas Wheeler, Allen Carroll, and Paul Barrette for their many helpful suggestions and comments regarding this work.

Special gratitude goes to Jeanne Dixon, Darcus Johnson, and especially Karen Dobbs for their patient and expert typing and retyping of this manuscript. To my supervisors, Christina Sekula and Craig Whitmire, I offer my appreciation for their understanding and support. I am particularly grateful to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, operated by Union Carbide Corporation, U.S. Department of Energy, under contract W-7405-eng-26, for providing the manpower and the reproduction facilities for the preparation of this work.

I thank my dear friends Charles Crume, Kevin DeCantillon, and Ray Moseley for believing in me and encouraging me.

My beloved father, William James Yow, my dear sister and best friend, Sharon Yow Brooks, and my kind brother-in-law, James Brooks, have given me love and support that have sustained me for many years. To them I am especially grateful.

And finally, I give thanks and praise to Him who makes all things possible.

ABSTRACT

Certainly at the heart of the devotion any reader has for The Faerie Queene is an appreciation for Edmund Spenser's mastery of the adventure story and for his portrayal of action and characters in action. Throughout the poem we encounter knights engaged in combat against the multiple manifestations of evil in the universe, their heroic endeavors constituting the poem's basic narrative action. Portraying these knights, Spenser emphasizes the necessity of action on the part of the knight who must persist in his quest as long as evil exists. For the knights continually confronted with the need for action in the never-ending battle against evil, the greatest temptation is, of course, the desire to rest, to be free of the physically and emotionally draining demands of the quest. However, as long as there is the possibility that evil lurks in the next forest, the knight must not falter, not, at least, while he has the physical stamina to continue; any escape into passivity courts disaster. Confronted with rival claims upon their souls, these knights must choose between the call of duty and the desire for rest and withdrawal from worldly cares. For the most part Gloriana's knights do not falter; they fulfill their chivalric obligations, constantly acting and reacting at every turn. But what of the knight who falters, turns aside from his quest, and fails to act? In a work filled with examples of the active battle of good against evil, the knight who fails to act seems a strangely inactive figure who contrasts noticeably with the moving, active figures of Spenser's Faery Land.

Although the appearance of one motionless figure would not be momentous, when this figure appears repeatedly, the alert reader cannot fail to notice. Indeed, the alert reader of The Faerie Queene will notice that one of Spenser's most characteristic techniques is the repetition of similar episodes or images that develops into a recognizable pattern of imagery. The use of these patterns is one way in which Spenser reveals to his readers the moral of his poem. Therefore, the message of The Faerie Queene emerges not only through characters whose actions direct us to the moral of the poem, but also through images that serve as "moral signposts," part of the poem's "system of warning devices" that colors and refines our understanding of Spenser's moral vision. Certainly one image pattern that constitutes part of the poem's system of warning devices is that of the inactive figure.

Chapter II of this study is a general discussion of inactivity and the quest and of Spenser's method of employing image patterns and a system of warning devices to shape the moral message of his poem and an examination of the knight and his quest against evil as the cornerstone of Spenser's moral universe. This chapter covers the quests of Britomart, Cymochles, and the Red Crosse Knight and constitutes an examination of the quest as a moral struggle against evil.

Chapters III and IV take a more particular approach to inactivity and the quest. Devoted to the quests of Guyon and the Red Crosse Knight, these chapters constitute an examination of the quest as a spiritual struggle against sin and of inactivity as a symbol of surrender to sin.

Chapter V focuses on inactivity and the quest as they relate to Spenser's darkening moral vision, occasioned by the poet's growing realization of the disparity between his dream of an Edenic moral universe and the reality of a fallen world. This darkening vision gave birth to the disillusionment of Books V and VI of The Faerie Queene, reflected in the failures of Artegall and the withdrawal of Calidore.

Finally, Chapter VI concerns the Mutability Cantos and Spenser's vision of the divine plan of God that maintains a moral universe and of the end of time, when God, having defeated sin, will create a new world where man, his earthly battles over, will be admitted to the peace and rest of eternity.

Such an examination of Spenser's images of inactivity and his system of warning devices will lead us to a clearer understanding of the poet's purpose in creating The Faerie Queene. Certainly we will discover that images of inactivity in the work reveal to us as clearly as do the triumphs of Gloriana's knights Spenser's vision of the moral universe that is The Faerie Queene.

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CHAPTER I

SIGNS AND SYSTEMS

To say that The Faerie Queene is a poem of action is to state what every admirer of Edmund Spenser's great work has known ever since he beheld, through enchanted eyes, the Red Crosse Knight "pricking on the plaine." From the moment of Red Crosse's first appearance on the plains of Faery Land to the orderly procession of Mutability's subjects in the heavens above, The Faerie Queene offers us a world of action, of charging knights, fire-breathing dragons, and fleeing maidens. Beyond every bend in the roads that traverse Gloriana's land, villains plot foul enterprises while knights seek new ways to counter their foes. Certainly at the heart of the devotion any reader has for The Faerie Queene is an appreciation for Spenser's mastery of the adventure story and for his portrayal of action and characters in action. An inquiry into the poet's skillful handling of action might lead us to conclude with Janet Spens that Edmund Spenser was, quite simply, attracted to things in motion, to moving water, flickering shadows, and, most of all, the human figure in action.[1] Agreeing that the poet emphasizes characters in action and objects in motion, Rosemary Freeman states that Spenser had, as witnessed by the poem, a keen "consciousness of mobility."[2]

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[1]Janet Spens, Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation (London: Edward Arnold and Company, 1934), p. 42.

[2]Rosemary Freeman, The Faerie Queene: A Companion for Readers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 57.

Because he was interested in objects and figures in motion, the poet was quite naturally attracted to the romance form, a literary genre in which action and adventure are key elements, and to the knightly quest, that convention of the romance which emphasizes adventure and action. As Spenser explains to Raleigh in the prefatory letter to the first three books of The Faerie Queene, published in 1590,

> I devise that the Faery Queene kept her annuall feaste xii. dayes, uppon which xii. severall dayes, the occasions of the xii. severall adventures hapned, which being undertaken by xii. severall knights, are in these xii. books severally handled and discoursed.[3]

Hence, the structural core of The Faerie Queene consists in the quests assigned by Gloriana to the knights of her court. Throughout The Faerie Queene we encounter knights engaged in combat against the multiple manifestations of evil in the universe, their heroic endeavors constituting the basic narrative action of the poem. Portraying these knights Spenser places a high value on heroic energy and emphasizes the necessity of action on the part of the knight who must persist in his quest as long as evil exists. The ever-questing knight is, then, the principal figure of The Faerie Queene, a figure Spenser repeatedly and skillfully portrays in action.

For these knights continually confronted with the need for action in the never-ending battle against evil, the greatest temptation is, of course, the desire to rest, to be free of the physically and emotionally

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[3]Edmund Spenser, "A Letter of the Authors," in The Faerie Queene in The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser, ed. R. E. Neil Dodge (1908; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), p. 137. All references to The Faerie Queene are to this edition and will appear parenthetically by book, canto, stanza, and line number.

draining demands of the quest. After each battle the knight, his foe defeated, discovers that a new adversary is stalking the countryside. And so the quest continues. As long as there is the possibility that evil lurks in the next forest, the knight must not falter, not, at least, while he has the physical stamina to continue; any escape into passivity courts disaster. Yet the temptation to escape persists. C. S. Lewis asserts,

> In other poets temptation usually summons the will to Titanic action, to the inordinate resolutions of a Tamburlaine, a Faustus, a Macbeth, or a Satan. In Spenser it more often whispers "Lie down. Relax. Let go."[4]

Throughout The Faerie Queene, Richard Pindell notes, the knights of Gloriana are besieged by conflicting demands--the need to persevere and the urge to rest. Confronted with rival claims upon their souls, these knights must choose between "the voice of conscience and the songs of the sirens."[5] For the most part Gloriana's ambassadors of good throughout Faery Land do not falter; although tired and bruised they fulfill their chivalric obligations, constantly acting and reacting at every turn. But what of the knight who heeds "the songs of the sirens"? Fatigued, perhaps confused, he hesitates and lowers his sword. Although the quest, "the voice of conscience," beckons him, he does not respond; perhaps he doffs his armor, disencumbering himself while he rests beside a spring of cool water. Although helpless innocents wait and foul

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[4]C. S. Lewis, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 162.

[5]Richard Pindell, "The Mutable Image: Man-in-Creation," in Eterne in Mutabilitie: The Unity of The Faerie Queene, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1972), p. 172.

villains plot, the knight, pledged to the heroic struggle against evil, turns aside from his mission, perhaps for only a moment, and fails to act. In a work consisting overwhelmingly of examples of the active battle of the representatives of good against the forces of evil, the knight who fails to act, who does not fight, is the exception, so much so that a reader, accustomed to, indeed prepared for, never-ending combat, cannot fail to take note. Resting when he should be actively engaging in his quest, faltering when he should be riding forth, this knight seems a strangely still figure. Discovered in a moment of inactivity, this knight appears arrested, thus contrasting noticeably with the moving, active figures of Spenser's Faery Land.

Of course, the appearance of only one motionless figure in the poem would not be momentous. When this figure appears repeatedly, however, the alert reader cannot fail to notice. A. Bartlett Giamatti asserts that as one reads The Faerie Queene, he begins to discern "patterns" taking shape, patterns that result from the repetition of similar episodes or images.[6] Rosemond Tuve refers to this technique of repeating images as Spenser's "web structure," a series of events or images, pieces that, seen all together, form a pattern which creates a picture with a meaning not actually stated.[7] This complex interweaving of seemingly unrelated parts that Tuve recognizes as Spenser's usual

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[6]A. Bartlett Giamatti, Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 32.

[7]Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Mediaeval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 364-366.

structure[8] is called by Kathleen Williams the poet's "expanding nets of images."[9] Other scholars, including R. L. Renwick[10] and Giamatti,[11] have noted the cumulative effect of Spenser's images. Giamatti, in particular, asserts that the parallels, correspondences, and patterns in the poem create hard centers of meaning and concern; they convey, he states, "accumulating significance."[12] Noting the "uncanny cumulative power" of The Faerie Queene, Lyle Glazier remarks that "the net effect of the imagery is of a carefully wrought, centripetal design." The "slow, serpentine convolutions of imagery," he asserts, help lead the reader into the poem's "orderly, shaped universe, created out of imagery which achieves the pattern of a vast interlocking design." Concluding, Glazier insists, "To find the richest beauties of Spenser one must begin at the beginning and be prepared to wait until the imagery has accumulated sufficiently to make its direction clear."[13]

One image which is invested with this "accumulating significance" is, of course, that of the inactive, or arrested, figure. For example, in Book I, canto vii, the Red Crosse Knight is discovered relaxing beside a cool fountain, his armor beside him on the grass (I.vii.2).

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[8]Tuve, p. 369.

[9]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. xvii.

[10]R. L. Renwick, Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry (1925; rpt. London: Edward Arnold and Company, 1933), p. 159.

[11]Giamatti, p. 70.

[12]Giamatti, pp. 73-74.

[13]Lyle Glazier, "The Nature of Spenser's Imagery," Modern Language Quarterly, 16, No. 4 (1955), 309-310.

Then suddenly, Duessa, having followed her new-found love, appears and, finding Red Crosse lounging, his defenses down, quickly and easily seduces him. Moments later the defenseless knight, his armor off and his weapons cast out of reach, is defeated by the giant Orgoglio. Thus, in this episode the Red Crosse Knight, heretofore undefeated, is overcome twice. This double defeat is, we note, preceded by an image of inactivity, that is, the knight's lengthy idleness by the fountain. Later, the image of the inactive knight reappears as we discover Cymochles, "Having his warlike weapons cast behynd" (II.v.28.7), idling in the Bower of Bliss, watching tempting maidens cavorting nearby. Certainly the attentive reader must see the parallels between two knights lounging idly, their weapons and armor abandoned, at least momentarily, while they find pleasure in the company of seductive women. Thus, the net of images produces its pattern and its effect. As the image of the inactive figure is repeated elsewhere in the poem, the reader begins to attach significance to each new appearance of the image, allowing his understanding of the poem's meaning to be shaped by Spenser's "web structure."

How, specifically, does Spenser employ the image of the inactive figure to shape the meaning of his poem? Because this image is repeated to the point of becoming an image pattern in the poem, we may assume that Spenser intended for images of inactivity to contribute to the moral of The Faerie Queene. Although Spenser employs many methods to reveal to us the meaning of his poem, one primary technique is to lead us to the moral message of The Faerie Queene through the poem's imagery. John Bender notes that one of the greatest accomplishments of recent

Spenserian scholarship has been to illustrate that the poet's images are not merely decorative, that they are integral to the poem's allegorical meaning.[14] Concerning this significance of the poem's images, Renwick reminds us that for Spenser, as for Sidney, the poet was not justified by artistic success only; his images, or "speaking pictures," were invented and set forth to instruct the reader.[15] The meaning of The Faerie Queene, therefore, emerges not only through characters whose actions direct us to the moral of the poem, but also through images that serve to color and refine our understanding of Spenser's moral vision. Indeed, as Tuve asserts, Spenser's understanding of the didactic theory of poetry caused him to create images that function as "active agents" through which the poet works to convey meaning.[16]

Thus, we can easily see how an image, consciously repeated until a pattern with "accumulating significance" develops, can contribute considerably to the moral teaching of The Faerie Queene. Because Spenser conveys to us the moral of The Faerie Queene chiefly through characters and images, we can see, as Glazier points out, that the characters of the poem are in themselves "images of moral values." He concludes, then, that the chief function of Spenser's imagery "is not to exist as a beautiful picture gallery but to delineate actors or action in the

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[14]John Bender, Spenser and Literary Pictorialism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 20.

[15]Renwick, p. 140.

[16]Rosemond Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 398.

spiritual allegory, which is the true subject of the poem."[17] If, then, the "actors" in this spiritual allegory illustrate the moral of Spenser's poem, we must assume that those who fail to act also contribute to Spenser's meaning. Hence, the arrested figure and the images of inactivity that Spenser constructs around this figure constitute a significant thread woven into the moral fabric of The Faerie Queene.

Helping us to recognize the elements of moral significance in his poem, Spenser has, Maurice Evans notes, carefully erected "moral signposts"[18] that constantly direct and redirect our reading. Forming a "system of warning devices," the poet's moral signposts alert us, slow us down in our reading, and demand that we examine the matter at hand before proceeding. When Spenser wants us to recognize some moral principle, perhaps one not overtly stated, he alerts us by means of this system of warning devices. Clearly, one element in this system of warning devices is the previously noted cumulative effect of images. Thus, the pattern of images of inactivity also constitutes part of the poem's system of warning devices. For example, when the Red Crosse Knight first appears to us as a static figure, idling beside a cool fountain, his armor cast aside and his vigilance forgotten (I.vii.2-8), Spenser begins to construct his system of warning devices around the image of this arrested figure. As the knight, his senses dulled and his defenses down, is overcome first by Duessa and then by Orgoglio, the poet's message becomes unmistakable; failure to act invites disaster.

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[17]Glazier, pp. 302-303.

[18]Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 74.

The moral signpost appears. Later, when Artegall lowers his sword and fails to slay the tyrannical Amazon Radigund (V.v.13-14), his inactivity invites comparison with that of the Red Crosse Knight. When Radigund enslaves Artegall following his passive surrender to her beauty (V.v.18), the message is immediately clear: like the Red Crosse Knight, Artegall has courted disaster through inaction. Without overtly condemning these characters, Spenser implants in his reader's mind a clear moral message, and we recognize the poet's indictment against inaction. When the arrested figure appears again, we are expected to be vigilant, to associate, and to learn. Giamatti notes, "In [the poem's] vast world of déjà vu, of repetitive phenomena, of recommencements, only wariness and cumulative experiences will guide us to the single and abiding visionary core"[19] of the moral universe of The Faerie Queene. Hence, as we read, we make associations, allowing our understanding of the poem to be molded by the poet's unmistakable message.

Thus, we can clearly see that images of inactivity contribute substantially to the system of warning devices that directs our reading and our understanding of the moral allegory of The Faerie Queene. In a work as massive as Spenser's, this image of stasis necessarily appears in varied forms, each of which constitutes an element in the system of warning devices. Several major variations within the basic pattern of inactivity may be designated. Motion may be completely arrested, perhaps only momentarily, as a character hesitates before acting or fails to act altogether. Repeated, frantic activity is another variation

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[19]Giamatti, p. 75.

because this type of activity is static in its futility. Then, because activity that is circumscribed is limited activity, it constitutes a third variation. That is, a character whose freedom to move is limited, perhaps because he is imprisoned or bound in some other way, is rendered, to a great degree, inactive. Thus, the inactive character may appear in varying postures. We can also note variations in Spenser's treatment of images of inactivity in the poem. First, the poet is, of course, concerned with inactivity and its relationship to the knightly quest, with the fact that a knight's failure to act decisively endangers his quest and the moral universe he defends. This concern is the subject matter of Chapter II, a general discussion of inactivity and the quest designed to serve as an introduction to Spenser's method of employing image patterns and a system of warning devices to shape the moral message of his poem and to establish the knight and his quest as the cornerstone of Spenser's moral universe. Because this chapter is intended to serve as a general introduction, we will examine there the quests of three knights whose careers appear to provide the best examples of Spenser's general treatment of inactivity and the quest. These knights are Britomart, Cymochles, and the Red Crosse Knight. Then in Chapters III and IV we will, building on the foundation laid in Chapter II, take a more particular approach to inactivity and the quest. In these chapters, devoted to a discussion of the quests of Guyon and the Red Crosse Knight, we will examine Spenser's concept of the quest as the Christian's earthly battle against sin. That is, we will move from a general discussion of the quest as a moral struggle against evil to an examination of the quest as a spiritual struggle against sin. Hence, in these two

chapters we will examine the quests of Guyon and Red Crosse, whose careers are more spiritual in nature than those of the other knights of the poem. Chapters III and IV, then, will deal with inactivity and sin. In Chapter V, covering the quests of Artegall and Calidore, we will focus on inactivity and the quest as they relate to Spenser's darkening moral vision, occasioned by the poet's growing realization of the disparity between his dream of an Edenic moral universe and the reality of a fallen world. This darkening vision gave birth to the disillusionment of Books V and VI, reflected in the failures of Artegall and the withdrawal of Calidore, the subject matter of Chapter V. Finally, we will examine, in Chapter VI, the Mutability Cantos, in which Spenser shares with his readers two visions: the first, his vision of the divine plan of God that maintains a moral universe despite the chaotic and destructive work of sin; the second, his vision of the time when God, having defeated sin, will create a new world where man, his earthly battles over, will be admitted to the peace and rest of eternity.

As we examine images of inactivity as a net of imagery that functions as a significant element in Spenser's system of warning devices, investigating inactivity and the quest, inactivity and sin, inactivity and the darkening vision, and inactivity and the final visions, always seeking for the unspoken moral, we will see how such imagery contributes to our understanding of Spenser's purpose in creating The Faerie Queene. Certainly we will discover that images of inactivity in the work reveal to us as clearly as do the triumphs of Gloriana's knights Spenser's vision of the moral universe that is The Faerie Queene.

CHAPTER II

INACTIVITY AND THE QUEST

Our study of images of inactivity begins as we consider the figure at the heart of the poet's conception of Faery Land, the questing knight of the Faerie Queene. On the allegorical level the world of Spenser's poem is a microcosm of the real world where man struggles to achieve and maintain virtue and moral integrity against the forces of chaos and evil that constantly attempt to undermine his moral well-being. Thus, in creating Faery Land Spenser presents the world of his poem as a battle-field, a vast arena where the eternal struggle between good and evil is staged, where the champions of good and the proponents of evil wage constant warfare for control of man's world and his moral destiny. As Spenser's allegory of this warfare unfolds, his vision of a moral universe begins to reveal itself, a universe shaped by the outcome of every confrontation between good and evil and preserved by the victories won by the guardians of virtue whose strength, determination, and integrity constitute the last stronghold of this moral universe. On the fictional level the principal players in the drama of this eternal warfare are, of course, the questing knights of the Faerie Queene. As champions of the realm determined to defend the innocent and the virtuous and to battle unceasingly against all perpetrators of evil who threaten the peace and order of their land, these knights of Gloriana constitute their queen's only defense against her enemies, their victories ensuring the continued well-being of her land and people. More important, just as they constitute, on the narrative level, her only hope, these knights, as

representatives of good in Spenser's allegorical warfare, symbolize hope for the moral universe the poet envisions in The Faerie Queene.

Given the importance of the fictional and allegorical roles of these knights, we can readily understand the profound significance Spenser attached to the quests assigned to her knights by the Faerie Queene. As Humphrey Tonkin observes, the quest "is the main ordering principle in Spenser's poem. As such, it is a metaphor for the ordering principle of virtue. . . . Where the quest is threatened, the principle of virtue is threatened."[1] Obstacles in the way of a completed quest may be villains who oppose the knight, that is, external manifestations of evil in the form of, for example, injustice or deceit. Just as often, however, barriers to the achieved quest lie within the knight himself, the product of an inherent character fault or the result of a fleeting moment of weakness. He may, for instance, grow weary or lose sight of the importance of his mission. If he falters, the quest may be delayed, or perhaps completely abandoned, by this knight who fails to persevere. Therefore, in the light of Spenser's allegory the delayed or thwarted quest symbolizes a defeat for the forces of good whose assigned mission is to defend and preserve virtue in the moral universe. The quest, achieved or thwarted, becomes, then, a key to our understanding of Spenser's moral allegory. Clearly, if we are to understand the poet's moral message, we must examine the knight and his quest.

Such an investigation takes us quickly to the heart of the action of The Faerie Queene and to the center of the system of warning devices

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[1]Humphrey Tonkin, Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 292.

that informs the moral allegory of the poem. As each knight struggles to complete his quest, his battles, victories, and defeats bring us into a world where achieving success calls for constant perseverance, where staying alive depends on never-failing vigilance and physical strength, where thwarting the enemy depends on a readiness and willingness to meet every challenge with quick-thinking action. Thus, the knight who lowers his physical or mental defenses, who fails to respond to every situation in a positive and active way, endangers his quest and all that it represents. In this moment of physical or mental inactivity, he ceases to be an actively questing knight. As Spenser portrays this inactive knight, he delivers a clear moral message that the quest, man's moral destiny, and the fate of the moral universe are imperiled by the knight who falters in his active struggle for victory. Thus, the image of the inactive knight is an element in the system of warning devices Spenser employs to guide his readers to an understanding of the moral message of The Faerie Queene.

In this chapter we will examine images of inactivity and the quest in an attempt to illustrate Spenser's method of employing image patterns as an element in his system of warning devices and to establish the knight and his quest as the foundation upon which the poet constructs the moral message of The Faerie Queene. This chapter is, thus, a general introduction to these ideas. In particular, we will explore the idea that the successful completion of the quest and, therefore, the preservation of virtue in the world depend upon the knight's ability to remain true to his course and resist the temptation to delay or to be distracted from his assigned task. The successful completion of the

quest depends, then, upon the knight's strong sense of purpose and his unfaltering allegiance to and belief in the cause he has undertaken. For our examination of these ideas we will discuss the careers of Britomart, Cymochles, and the Red Crosse Knight. There are, of course, other examples of knights whose careers are threatened by lapses into inactivity. Indeed, each of the titular heroes of the six books of The Faerie Queene and many of the less important knights who appear in the poem are guilty of moments of inactivity. We will examine these three knights because, first, they are significant characters and, second, their careers lend themselves very well to a discussion designed to establish a general pattern employed throughout the poem. Furthermore, we will discuss these knights out of sequence; that is, in discussing Britomart, then Cymochles, and then Red Crosse, we will be covering primarily Books III and V, then Book II, and finally Book I. This arrangement is calculated. Because one of the central ideas of this chapter is the knight's sense of purpose and allegiance to his quest, we will examine Britomart first because she displays, for the most part, a very strong sense of purpose and dedication to her cause. She represents, then, one extreme. In our discussion of Cymochles we will move to the other extreme, for he is a knight with no cause and, thus, no allegiance or sense of purpose. We will examine the Red Crosse Knight last because he represents a mean between these two extremes. That is, he has a quest, but he wavers in his allegiance to this cause and is, thus, easily deflected from his true course. With our discussion of these three knights, we begin our study of images of inactivity in The Faerie Queene.

For the knights who engage in the eternal warfare between good and evil, this battle being waged on the plains of Faery Land, every new day brings adventure, danger, and always the possibility of crippling injury or even death. With such certain peril besetting the way, the knight, if he is to persevere and complete his quest, must be able to disregard his own safety; he must, of course, have courage. Personal bravery alone, however, is not always sufficient to keep a man true to his task. To persevere in the face of danger, fatigue, and setbacks, a man must have an unshakeable belief in what he is doing, a belief in the justness and worth of his cause, a belief that strengthens him and keeps him true to his course. In particular, this belief in the worth of his task creates in the knight a strong sense of purpose. It is this sense of purpose that, for the most part, sustains the knights of The Faerie Queene and beckons them forward on their quests when the temptation to delay or forsake the quest is strongest. As the story of the knights and their quests unfolds, it is possible to conclude that the knight who keeps intact his belief and sense of purpose moves ahead steadily, resisting the temptation to deviate from his true course or to relax physically or mentally when vigilance is of the utmost importance. Likewise, the knight with no clear sense of purpose, no belief in what he is fighting for, no real mission, can be easily dissuaded from action and persuaded to abandon, if only momentarily, the task at hand.

Of all the knights presented in The Faerie Queene, the one most readily associated with a strong sense of purpose and belief in a mission is Britomart, the lady knight who, although assigned no official quest by Gloriana, nevertheless discovers that she has one and fulfills

its purpose admirably. The tremendous influence on an individual that a strong sense of purpose and a belief in one's cause can have may be seen in the transformation Britomart undergoes before beginning her quest. When we first meet the young Britomart, she has just fallen in love with the man whose image she has seen in an enchanted mirror, and, inexperienced and ignorant of the special destiny prepared for her by "Eternall Providence" (III.iii.24.4), she surrenders to the passion of love and wastes away into "a pyned ghost" (III.ii.52.5). Merlin, however, soon informs Britomart of her special mission and teaches her, as Kathleen Williams observes, that "love is not a thing to be passively suffered, but an opportunity for responsible action and personal growth."[2] From the magician Britomart discovers that God has chosen her for a divinely sanctioned mission to find and marry Artegall, the man in the mirror, and with him found a line of descendants who will one day lead England to a period of great glory and peace (III.iii.23.1-9). This knowledge gives Britomart a sure sense of purpose that transforms her from a naive, heartsick girl into a responsible, mature woman who accepts her role in life, quickly submits herself to the ways of "Eternall Providence," and sets forward on the course plotted for her by "the streight course of hevenly destiny" (III.iii.24.3). To this course which becomes her quest, Britomart, for the most part, remains true, riding through Faery Land in quest of Artegall "without repose or rest, / Searching all lands and each remotest part" (III.iv.6.6-7). Describing Britomart's determined efforts to remain true to her course, Williams notes that the

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[2]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 93.

knight has a mind firmly fixed on her objective and realizes that to turn aside is to be quickly lost:[3] "Constancy and a determined and steady progress are characteristic of her."[4] Sustained by a sure sense of her own direction, Britomart refuses to be deflected from her true course even by Florimell's obvious need for deliverance from the lustful forester (III.i.17). Because she realizes that Florimell, for the moment at least, is not included in her proper sphere of endeavor, Britomart allows her companions, Arthur and Guyon, to attempt the maiden's rescue, and, with her "constant mind" (III.i.19.1) fixed upon her objective, the lady knight goes forward

> As lay her journey, through that perlous pace,
> With stedfast corage and stout hardiment.
> (III.i.19.7-8)

Thus, for the most part Britomart's sure sense of purpose and belief in the man and the mission chosen for her by God strengthen the lady knight and guide her steadily toward her goal.

In the course of her later adventures, however, Britomart loses faith in Artegall and with it her belief in her mission and her sense of purpose. This great loss is the result of Britomart's hearing from Talus the news that her lover has been imprisoned by the beautiful Amazon Radigund (V.vi.11-12). Remembering the spirited and purposeful woman warrior of Books III and IV, we should rightly expect Britomart to undertake the task of delivering Artegall with the determination and zeal usually characteristic of her. However, the news has wrought a

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[3]Williams, p. 86.

[4]Williams, p. 91.

change in Britomart. Instead of arming herself and resuming her quest, which now certainly includes delivering from bondage the man she is destined to marry, Britomart, convinced that Artegall is guilty of "breach of faith to her, which he had firmely plight" (V.vi.12.9), surrenders herself to a fit of the sulks. While Talus waits for an answer, some determined action on the part of the heretofore purposeful warrior woman, Britomart, caught in the throes of jealousy, fitfully and aimlessly casts about her lodgings: "A while she walkt, and chauft; a while she threw / Her selfe uppon her bed, and did lament" (V.vi.13.6-7). Convinced of Artegall's unfaithfulness with Radigund, Britomart, according to Maurice Evans, responds to the news of her lover's supposed delinquency with the all-too-human reaction of anger and jealousy, which "saps her faith in her divine mission to marry him and distracts her from the pursuit of her quest."[5] With her faith in her lover and her mission gone, the lady knight loses the sense of purpose that has, up to this point, kept her steadily on her true course. Hence, she is transformed again into the "wayward childe" (V.vi.14.1) of Book III. She is now a frenzied female who has lost faith in the man she loves and the search for him that is her quest.

Of course, this transformation has a disturbing effect on her quest. As we have seen, Britomart's loss of a sense of purpose transforms her from the determined questing knight of Books III and IV into the brat of Book V who "kicks, and squals, and shriekes for fell despight" (V.vi.14.5). While Artegall languishes in prison and the

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[5]Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 205.

future of England that she is to create with him hangs delicately in the balance, Britomart takes to her bed. Instead of taking active measures to free Artegall and discover the truth about his apparent infidelity, Britomart, now uncertain that she has a real purpose, delays her movement forward, in essence abandoning the task that is hers to perform. On her bed, surrendered to ineffectual pouting that can in no way resolve the problem she faces, Britomart becomes, in effect, a figure of the inactive knight. Certainly the passivity of Britomart is censurable. Because she holds England's future in her hands, Britomart is obviously wrong to allow her own personal weaknesses to thwart her quest. And just as the welfare of England is dependent upon the successful completion of Britomart's quest, so the welfare of Faery Land and the moral universe of which it is a replica rests in the hands of Britomart and other knights like her who must deal with their own personal weaknesses and flaws in order to overcome all obstacles that block the way of the successful completion of their quests. As a means of alerting us to the possible dangerous results of the lady knight's behavior, Spenser, in casting Britomart as an inactive knight, allows this image of inactivity to deliver the moral message of this episode. Through this image, a part of the poem's system of warning devices, the poet clearly signals that unless Britomart can put aside her own jealousy and fear and recapture the belief in her mission that has led her this far, the quest, England's future, and the fate of the moral universe are in great jeopardy.

Although Britomart soon regains her composure enough to arm herself and follow Talus westward toward Artegall, it is soon quite clear that

the woman who accompanies the iron man is not the same Britomart who earlier pursued her quest relentlessly. Lost in anguished jealousy she soon slackens her pace to a near crawl (V.vi.18-19). With the faith that once pushed her forward gone, Britomart dawdles "as she thus melancholicke did ride" (V.vi.19.1). Her eroded faith becomes even more obvious when, after meeting the disguised villain Dolon along the way (V.vi.19.3-4), she agrees to spend the night at his lodgings (V.vi.22.1-2), "knowing full well," as T. K. Dunseath observes, "that any delay on her part will prolong Artegall's miseries."[6] Furthermore, it should be noted that the location of Dolon's lodgings also bodes ill for Artegall and the quest, for Dolon dwells a "little wide by west" (V.vi.22.4), that is, out of Britomart's way, for Artegall is imprisoned due westward (V.vi.7.4-5). Thus, not only has Britomart slackened her pace and delayed her journey, but she has now allowed herself to be sidetracked, further evidence, indicates Dunseath, that the lady warrior has lost faith in Artegall and their heavenly destinies.[7] The cumulative effect of these images of Britomart evolves into the picture of a knight who, without real purpose or direction, falters in the active pursuit of her quest. No longer riding forward boldly "without repose or rest" (III.iv.6.6), Britomart becomes again the inactive knight whose delay and slackened pace signal failure and danger to the reader of The Faerie Queene.

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[6]T. K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 168.

[7]Dunseath, p. 170.

As we have seen, Britomart does at times experience an uncertain sense of purpose that delays her quest briefly. For the most part, however, Britomart's adventures are characterized by steady progress toward and relentless pursuit of her quest. Other knights in The Faerie Queene are not so sure of their purpose, their lack of direction preventing them from making any progress at all. Cymochles is such a knight. We must first make it clear that Cymochles is not a knight who serves Gloriana. He is, nevertheless, a knight, one of some renown, we might add, and as such he should have some sense of purpose, an allegiance to some sovereign or goal. Hence, he is a proper subject for our investigation of the idea that lack of purpose and allegiance creates in a knight the inability to remain true to any course and the propensity to be easily distracted and waylaid. Apparently Cymochles was not always so purposeless. When we are first introduced to Cymochles seeking lascivious pleasures in Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, we are told that he was once a redoubtable knight, "Famous throughout the world for warlike prayse, / And glorious spoiles, purchast in perilous fight" (II.v.26.2-3). Although these words create a very favorable first impression of Cymochles, it is not long before we realize that he is not the formidable knight he once was. Seeking Cymochles to bring him to the aid of his besieged brother, Atin finds the knight lying beside a purling stream "in ladies lap entombed" (II.v.36.3), having succumbed to the lulling sounds of a trickling stream, "Whiles creeping slomber made him to forget / His former payne, and wypt away his toilsom sweat" (II.v.30.8-9). Clearly, here is a man with no thought beyond the delights of the moment. If he had any mission or obligations before

arriving in the bower, he has lost all memory of them now. Certainly Cymochles announces his lack of purpose by the very fact that he is doing nothing except sleeping (II.v.30.1-9), leering, when awake, "like an adder lurking in the weedes" (II.v.34.1) at the naked damsels who cavort enticingly near him, and pouring out "his ydle mynd / In daintie delices and lavish joyes" (II.v.28.5-6). Obviously, these are not the actions of a knight with duties to perform and obligations to fulfill. Indeed, Cymochles is not involved in any real activity at all; he is the aimless, passive, and inactive knight.

However, Cymochles announces his purposelessness most clearly by the fact that he has "his warlike weapons cast behynd" (II.v.28.7). The word "cast" is significant here, for Cymochles has not merely unarmed himself for a moment's pleasure; he has discarded his weapons as if they were no longer of any use. Also, sleep has "made him to forget / His former payne." With his weapons plainly abandoned and his memory of the pains and toil of knight errantry forgotten, Cymochles is a man with nothing to do and nowhere to go. In discussing the importance of armor in the life of a knight, Dunseath notes that the significance of a knight's armor arises from the fact that by it he advertises his worth and purpose.[8] In addition, Angus Fletcher observes that "heroes wear their emblematic armor . . . to notify mankind of their heroic purpose" and that "their failure to be always armed . . . will mark a loss of faith in the chivalric ideal."[9] Certainly Cymochles lacks the sense of

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[8]Dunseath, p. 55.

[9]Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 192.

purpose and faith necessary to transform him into an actively questing knight. Although he is soon spurred into action by Atin and quickly arms himself to rescue his brother (II.v.37-38), before he gets very far he meets Phaedria, who, according to B. Nellist, is the "representative of all purposeless and wasteful laxity." As the handmaiden of the "vyle Acrasia" (II.v.27.2), Phaedria seeks to deflect men from their heroic purpose by persuading them to surrender their wills,[10] with the result that after meeting her they wander aimlessly, as do her own Wandering Islands. Pauline Parker, in describing Phaedria, observes that she is "ready to distract and dissipate wherever she should be admitted"[11] and that she spends her time "debasing and corrupting those who have not better business."[12] Thus, when Cymochles meets the charming but insidious Phaedria, he is quickly persuaded to listen to her philosophy that all work is "fruitlesse toile" (II.vi.17.9). And soon

> By this she had him lulled fast a sleepe,
> That of no worldly thing he care did take;
> Then she with liquors strong his eies did steepe,
> That nothing should him hastily awake.
> (II.vi.18.1-4)

Forgotten is his brother, forgotten his vow "to beene avengd that day" (II.v.38.5) on him "that did Pyrochles deare dismay" (II.v.38.7). From this meeting with Phaedria we can draw one further conclusion about this knight and his proclivity for idleness: Cymochles cannot remain true to

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[10]B. Nellist, "The Allegory of Guyon's Voyage: An Interpretation," in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972), p. 246.

[11]Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 148.

[12]Parker, p. 128.

one course; he cannot fulfill any obligations because, as his name implies, his nature is to waver and fluctuate, to swing quickly from one interest to another without ever fully committing himself to any task, without ever really accomplishing anything. Consequently, even if he had a quest, he would not pursue it long.

In presenting this episode Spenser delivers a clear moral indictment against the ineffectual Cymochles. Through repeated images of inactivity the poet signals that the knight who refuses to commit himself to a goal, who refuses to fulfill the obligations placed upon him by his chivalric profession, and who wastes himself in self-serving laxity is to be condemned. If Cymochles can be said to have a mission, it is only to satisfy his own selfish needs; if he can be said to have a sovereign, it is Acrasia, the wicked enchantress who takes advantage of his self-serving nature to dissuade him from any worthwhile activity, or, worse yet, the archvillain Archimago, who is able to play upon Cymochles' weaknesses and faults and finally enlist him in the cause of evil against the virtuous knights Guyon and Arthur (II.viii.10-45). Cymochles is, therefore, one of Spenser's most important examples of the knight who is to be indicted for his failure to live up to the ideals of the chivalric code, ideals that include committing oneself fully without respite to the cause of good and to the preservation of virtue in a moral universe. This condemnation Spenser delivers, in part, through his use of images of inactivity.

We have now examined Britomart, a knight who has a sure sense of her mission and her purpose and, for the most part, remains steadfast in her allegiance to her quest. We have also examined Cymochles, a knight

who has no quest and no direction and is, for all practical purposes, unworthy of the name "knight." Now we turn our attention to a knight who has been assigned a specific quest by Gloriana but is plagued by a wavering allegiance to his mission and a tendency to be easily led astray from his true course. This is the Red Crosse Knight. When we first see Red Crosse "pricking on the plaine" (I.i.1.1), followed closely by Una and her dwarf, he appears to be making steady progress toward Una's land and her family, the picture of the three companions traveling in single file conveying the impression of travelers closely knit in their determination to pursue their mission without delays or detours. Further, as we read how Red Crosse carefully reins in his horse that "did chide his foming bitt, / As much disdayning to the curbe to yield" (I.i.1.6-7), we sense even more surely the knight's determination to remain on course and to make certain that nothing deflects him from a straight path toward his goal. This impression, however, does not last long, for in the course of his adventures Red Crosse quickly becomes very much like his own horse, which pulls at the reins, attempting to set off across the plains in a direction contrary to the path he should be following. For instance, when a storm arises the knight and Una wisely seek shelter in a forest. Once inside the grove, however, they grow enchanted with the natural splendor of their surroundings and passively allow themselves to be "with pleasure forward led" (I.i.8.1) until they are deep within the wood, far from their point of entry. Once there, they apparently forget the storm and the journey that lies before them:

Led with delight, they thus beguile the way,
Untill the blustring storme is overblowne;
When, weening to returne whence they did stray,
They cannot finde that path, which first was showne,
But wander too and fro in waies unknowne,
Furthest from end then, when they neerest weene,
That makes them doubt, their wits be not their owne:
So many pathes, so many turnings seene,
That which of them to take, in diverse doubt they been.
(I.i.10.1-9)

Thus, having given themselves momentarily to the pleasures of the grove, Red Crosse and Una now find themselves lost in a "labyrinth" (I.i.11.4) of twisting paths. Unable to recover their sense of direction, they wander about, traveling in circles that in no wise lead them closer to their journey's end. Significantly, when one wanders in a circle, one makes no progress of any kind, such circular motion essentially constituting no motion at all. The Red Crosse Knight, then, finds himself early trapped in a kind of inactivity. Although at this point Red Crosse is resolved "forward still to fare" (I.i.11.1), his persistence in seeking the correct path indicating that he yet possesses the determination and sense of purpose necessary to drive him steadily toward his goal, the point is that the knight has already lost his way; his wandering in the wood thus presents a symbolic foreboding of the difficulties that will soon beset his quest. The fact that this wandering inactivity bodes ill for Red Crosse's quest becomes clearer when we see him "wrapt in Errours endlesse traine" (I.i.18.9). Parker makes the point that if the traveling companions had not entered the Wandering Wood and stayed longer than necessary, they would not have found Error.[13] They do find her, however, and soon the monster's hold upon the knight renders him

[13]Parker, p. 78.

completely immobile: "hand or foot to stirr he strove in vaine" (I.i.18.8). This picture creates, in effect, the image of a knight, bound in the beast's viselike grip, unable to move and, thus, inactive. Lost, impeded in his progress, and now reduced to literal inactivity by Error's determined grip, the Red Crosse Knight has taken the first step—through Error, in error—toward a long career of unwise choices that will eventually lead him to bondage in the prison of Orgoglio.

Throughout his narrative of Red Crosse's adventures, Spenser continues to emphasize the knight's propensity to lose his way and be sidetracked in his quest. Now, wearied by his encounter with Error Red Crosse meets Archimago, the powerful enemy of all knights who labor on behalf of good; his chief joy is to deflect knights from their virtuous endeavors:

> For all he did was to deceive good knights,
> And draw them from pursuit of praise and fame,
> To slug in slouth and sensuall delights,
> And end their daies with irrenowmed shame.
> (II.i.23.1-4)

Soon this "conning architect of cancred guyle" (II.i.1.1) convinces Red Crosse to rest for the night in his lodgings. Of course, this sleep is a state of literal inactivity. More important, however, Red Crosse's sleep is what Mark Rose refers to as a "heedless, somnolent condition,"[14] a state that clearly signals relaxed vigilance. Thus, "drownd in deadly sleepe" (I.i.36.6), having lowered his physical and mental defenses, the knight is easy prey for the fiendish magician, who sends a dream to convince Red Crosse of Una's unworthiness as an object of his love and

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[14]Mark Rose, Spenser's Art: A Companion to Book One of The Faerie Queene (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 21.

devotion, making him "Much griev'd to thinke that gentle dame so light, / For whose defence he was to shed his blood" (I.i.55.2-3). Convinced of her unworthiness the knight abandons Una and, of course, the quest she has led him on this far. Although the Red Crosse Knight appears at this point to be taking some positive action to free himself from an unfaithful woman who could present an obstacle to his quest, we know that the knight has been deceived by Archimago and that Una is true. We also see more clearly than Red Crosse that Una is the knight's quest. Therefore, what appears to be positive action and a step toward resuming his quest is actually a mindless step in the wrong direction. As James Nohrnberg observes, "Although his flight may seem to get his quest started, it really reverses its proper direction, and signals a desertion of his true calling."[15] Rushing away at random, trying to forget what he wrongfully believes to be Una's unfaithfulness, Red Crosse abandons his quest along with Una; it will be a long time before he is able to resume his proper course and complete the quest assigned to him.

From this point on, the Red Crosse Knight wanders aimlessly; having lost his belief in Una and the quest, the knight, like Britomart, has lost his sense of purpose too and, thus, has nowhere to go. In need of someone or something to believe in, Red Crosse soon casts his lot with the beautiful and fragile Fidessa, actually the foul witch Duessa in disguise, and finds himself sitting in the cool shade of a glen with his new companion. Again engaged in literal inactivity "there as they sit" (I.ii.30.2), Red Crosse, his first purpose completely forgotten and his

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[15]James Nohrnberg, The Analogy of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 133.

desire or need to move forward stilled, wastes his time weaving a garland for Duessa/Fidessa (I.ii.30.6-9). Describing this episode, C. G. Osgood observes, "Forgotten are his troubles, forgotten is Una, forgotten his career, forgotten all but the delicious moment."[16] Furthermore, we may note that the knight has shifted allegiances very quickly, and this change can only be harmful. Instead of traveling with Una on a straight course toward the completion of his quest, Red Crosse now sits absently weaving a garland for his new mistress. And because she is a cohort of Archimago, enemy to all faithful knights, Duessa will use all her wiles to keep the Red Crosse Knight from resuming his quest or engaging in any activity designed to aid the cause of virtue. Indeed, in the short while since their meeting, Duessa has already convinced Red Crosse that his most significant act should be resting with her from the heat of the day, escaping the toils and troubles of the world, where his mission on behalf of virtue and good still waits, uncompleted. And because Red Crosse is not the first man Duessa has deceived and waylaid, it is not surprising that the knight, in this very place where she has reduced him to ignoring the call of the world while he weaves a garland, should meet Fradubio, the man Duessa earlier reduced to complete immobility by changing him into a tree. Of this moment in Red Crosse's adventures, Mark Rose writes,

> At least for the moment he is abandoning his "traveil." . . . Having withdrawn from heroic activity, from the forward motion of a quest that has become confused and problematic since he has lost faith in Una, it is appropriate that he

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[16]C. G. Osgood, quoted in Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, and Frederick Morgan Padelford, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), 443.

encounters, as a kind of warning, an image of complete immobility-Fradubio, a man transformed into a tree.[17]

Red Crosse, however, fails to see the parallels between the examples of two men impotent and inactive under the spell of a seemingly beautiful woman. But the parallels and images are too striking for the reader to fail to notice that Spenser has again employed his system of warning devices to deliver a clear moral indictment.

In each stage of his adventures the Red Crosse Knight drifts further from his quest. With nothing to believe in or battle for, the knight passively allows Duessa to lead him where she will until he finds himself inside the House of Pride, residence of the proud sovereign Lucifera. Here, Elizabeth Watson remarks, Red Crosse is further impeded from his proper duties on behalf of his quest.[18] Moreover, having literally abandoned his quest earlier in leaving Una behind, the knight now symbolically signals his rejection of the quest assigned to him. Flattered by the attention paid to him by Lucifera and her court and exhilarated by his recent victory over the Saracen Sansjoy, Red Crosse

> goeth to that soveraine queene,
> And falling her before on lowly knee,
> To her makes present of his service seene.
> (I.v.16.1-3)

On bended knee the knight symbolically shifts his allegiance to Lucifera, as Leicester Bradner observes, "forgetting in his worship of

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[17]Rose, pp. 34-35.

[18]Elizabeth Watson, Spenser (London: Evans Brothers, Ltd., 1967), p. 97.

her seeming majesty that he had once pledged allegiance to Gloriana."[19] Agreeing on this point, Rose notes that "Redcross has become a full-fledged member of Lucifera's court, her servant rather than Gloriana's."[20] Because we have seen Red Crosse abandon his quest in favor of a life without toil or obligations and the faithful Una in favor of the lascivious Duessa, it is not surprising when we see the knight reject Gloriana, his true sovereign and the author of his quest, in favor of the worldly and vainglorious Lucifera. Indeed, shifting allegiances seems to be something Red Crosse does quite well. However, throughout The Faerie Queene, Spenser makes it obvious that a truly worthy knight accepts his calling and completely commits himself to it, persisting with unswerving devotion in his service to his sovereign and his duties in connection with his quest. In describing this single-minded dedication to a cause, Nohrnberg writes,

> All the heroes are heroic insofar as they are faithful to their "troth" or calling, all must exhibit steadfastness, loyalty, courage, and perseverance. The underlying prerequisite is most nearly constancy, literally "standing with."[21]

This constancy Northrop Frye calls "fidelity: that unswerving loyalty to an ideal which is virtue, to a single lady which is love, and to the demands of one's calling which is courage."[22] Red Crosse's infidelity

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[19]Leicester Bradner, Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 111.

[20]Rose, p. 68.

[21]Nohrnberg, p. 72.

[22]Northrop Frye, "The Structure of Imagery in The Faerie Queene," in Essential Articles, p. 160.

and disloyalty Spenser signals in one of the poem's most disturbing images of inactivity: the Red Crosse Knight kneeling before the proud Lucifera. This inactivity becomes more pronounced and more significant when we see the knight, moments later, "layd in sumptuous bed" (I.v.17.1) recovering from his battle wounds. But instead of enjoying his recent victory in combat, Red Crosse is engulfed by "griefe and agony" (I.v.17.8). Having denounced all that is important to him—the quest, Una, and Gloriana—the knight is right to grieve.

With all former allegiance clearly a thing of the past, Red Crosse has nothing to drive him onward. When he finally leaves the House of Pride, he does so not from any sense of duty, but from fear resulting from his knowledge of the prisoners who lie enchained in Lucifera's dungeon. After leaving the House of Pride and the horror within it, the knight, because he is tired after his recent battle and ride but, more important, because he really has nowhere to go, dismounts in a pleasant grove where

> he wearie sate
> To rest him selfe, foreby a fountaine syde,
> Disarmed all of yron-coted plate,
> And by his side his steed the grassy forage ate.
> (I.vii.2.6-9)

Rose concludes, "In escaping from the House of Pride he has gone as far as he can; now he is motionless, his heroic quest evidently ended."[23] Of this moment Osgood writes, "after his quiet escape what? Nothing. He has no aim . . . he is without a purpose, without vision or

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[23]Rose, p. 87.

inspiration."[24] And so, like the nymph of this fountain who fell out of favor with Diana because she "Satt downe to rest in middest of the race" (I.vii.5.4), Red Crosse, having long ago fallen out of the race that began on the day Una rode into the hall of the Faerie Queene, also sits down to rest. More important, like Cymochles, the Red Crosse Knight has discarded his armor, the symbol of his chivalric purpose and honor. Indeed, as Susanne Murphy remarks, one of the greatest failures of Red Crosse's career occurs when he willingly surrenders his identity as a man of warfare.[25] This episode represents a lower stage in Red Crosse's descent from a questing knight to a purposeless man aimlessly wandering the roads of Faery Land, a descent Spenser signals by successive images of the knight's increasing inactivity, culminating in the moment when Red Crosse, "lying downe upon the sandie graile" (I.vii.6.2), drinks of the fountain's enchanted waters: "Eftsoones his manly forces gan to fayle, / And mightie strong was turnd to feeble frayle" (I.vii.6.4-5). Of course, with his strength sapped by the enervating waters, his armor cast aside, and his attention riveted on his loose companion, Duessa, who has joined him and is now with him "Pourd out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd" (I.vii.7.2), Red Crosse has no chance to gather his strength, his armor, or his vigilance when sudden danger intrudes on the scene in the form of Orgoglio. Although the knight reaches for his "unready weapons" (I.vii.7.9), he is so unprepared that "ere he could

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[24]Osgood, Variorum, I (1932), 444.

[25]Susanne Murphy, "Love and War in Spenser's The Faerie Queene," in Eterne in Mutabilitie: The Unity of The Faerie Queene, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1972), p. 132.

his armour on him dight, / Or gett his shield" (I.vii.8.1-2), he is attacked by the giant, who has no trouble defeating his victim, the knight

> Disarmd, disgraste, and inwardly dismayde,
> And eke so faint in every joynt and vayne,
> Through that fraile fountain, which him feeble made,
> That scarsely could he weeld his bootlesse single blade.
> (I.vii.11.6-9)

As a matter of fact, Red Crosse never delivers a single blow against his adversary. So unprepared and feeble is he that he is actually overcome by the wind created by one of the giant's powerful blows, which "did him overthrow, / And all his sences stoond, that still he lay full low" (I.vii.12.8-9).

Thus, the scene that began with an inactive Red Crosse resting "in middest of the race" now reveals him on the ground still and nearly lifeless. Yet this episode does not end until we have seen the knight in still more dreadful circumstances, imprisoned deep within Orgoglio's dungeon. Literally bound and imprisoned behind a locked iron door, Red Crosse is, of course, reduced to a state of inactivity. This inactivity becomes more pronounced when the knight, finally delivered from his lengthy imprisonment, is so emaciated that his "feeble thighes" are "unhable to uphold / His pined corse" (I.viii.40.7-8):

> His rawbone armes, whose mighty brawned bowrs
> Were wont to rive steele plates, and helmets hew,
> Were clene consum'd, and all his vitall powres
> Decayd, and al his flesh shronk up like withered flowres.
> (I.viii.41.6-9)

Whereas once he willfully forswore his quest, disregarding the future of the virtuous Una and her family, Red Crosse, now delivered by Prince Arthur, reunited with his faithful Una, and set free to resume his

quest, finds he has no strength to move forward. Thus, the episode ends. Beginning in willful inactivity and a willful renouncing of Una and the quest, this episode finally reveals a man filled with remorse and shame at having abandoned those who need his help. However, now that Red Crosse is ready to resume his mission of defending virtue, he finds himself physically unable to travel, in need of rest to recover his strength (I.ix.2.2-3). And so, for the present the quest must remain unaccomplished and Una's family must remain enthralled by the dragon who will ravage their land until he is finally destroyed by the Red Crosse Knight.

As we have seen, the knight who fails to act promptly and heroically endangers his quest and the moral order for which it stands. Through images of inactivity Spenser paints a picture of this knight who pauses, perhaps for only a moment, in the pursuit of his quest. And through these images Spenser delivers a clear moral message: the knight who relaxes by a fountain, who removes his armor, who detours from his true course, runs the risk of losing his battle for moral victory and of endangering the moral universe of which he is the chief defender and remaining hope. As images of the inactive knight reappear throughout The Faerie Queene, a system of warning devices designed for the instruction of the alert reader takes shape. Thus, the image of the inactive knight helps to direct us on our journey through Faery Land. This Faery Land is a world of heroic human endeavor and achievement, of blood shed for the sake of virtue, of battles fought on behalf of honor and moral integrity. For the knights of Gloriana who fight these battles, the foe may be a wicked magician, a misshapen monster, or a disguised witch

whose task is to deceive, seduce, or destroy those who have committed their lives to the preservation of virtue in the world. Just as often, however, the enemy lies within. Moral lassitude, physical weariness, lack of purpose and commitment, and loss of direction and belief are all foes to be fought and overcome if the knight is to continue and if his quest is to terminate successfully. For the knight who succumbs to the enemy within, the journey that is the quest will become fraught with obstacles that distract him from his proper duties, delay his progress, and darken his chances for victory in the moral warfare being waged in the world around him and in the world of his own mind and spirit.

CHAPTER III

INACTIVITY AND SIN: THE QUEST OF GUYON

The Faerie Queene was born of Edmund Spenser's understanding of the eternal struggle between good and evil for control of man and his universe. In creating the characters who serve as representatives of good and evil in this warfare, the poet called upon his socio-cultural, historical, literary, and religious heritage. For instance, as we have seen, in casting the questing knight as the principal representative of good, Spenser called upon both the romance genre of literature and his country's traditions of chivalry and Arthurian legend. Because Spenser was a Christian poet, however, it is quite natural that he also would have seen in the figure of the questing knight a parallel to the triumphant Warrior-Christ of Revelation. Describing his vision of the end times, John the Revelator writes, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."[1] Just as Christ will, in the final days, appear as an armed warrior to battle the adversaries of God, so the Christian warrior on earth, represented by the questing knight of The Faerie Queene, must put on "the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11) and wage war "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual

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[1]Holy Bible, King James Version (New York: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1970), Revelation 19:11. All scriptural references are to this translation and will hereafter appear parenthetically.

wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). The adversaries of the knight, the evil ones against whom he struggles, are then the followers of Satan and the enemies of God. Of course, this evil may take many forms; as Angus Fletcher notes, the knight is engaged in endless warfare against "the forces of night, darkness, winter, deceit, cruelty, lust."[2] Whatever the manifestation, however, the source of all evil for Spenser is the same: evil, darkness, and death came into the world as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve. Indeed, as Maurice Evans observes, "The Faerie Queene takes its whole being from Spenser's profound sense of the Fall," with the prime object of the poem being to educate and train the hero and, through him, the reader "to recognise all the infinitely subtle ramifications of Original Sin and to circumvent or to survive their challenge."[3] Spenser's Faery Land is then a microcosm of the fallen world, and the story of The Faerie Queene is the story of the Christian warrior, that is, the knight, working through the Fall to defeat evil and sin in the name of Christ.

Although the mission of the knight as a Christian warrior is to battle against the manifestations of evil and sin in the world, the knight must first wage war against the enemy within, to attempt to defeat sin and achieve virtue in his own life. This struggle becomes the knight's quest. Indeed, the chivalric quest, with all its knightly

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[2]Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 192.

[3]Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 27.

trappings, is "an extended metaphor of man's struggle for virtue"[4] in the fallen world: "The hero is born into this fallen state which presents by its very nature a perpetual choice between good and evil, and the 'Quest' in The Faerie Queene is the allegory of this challenge."[5] If, then, the quest is a symbol for the pilgrimage of the soul away from sin, how does this spiritual struggle fit into Spenser's system of warning devices and especially into his pattern of images of inactivity? Throughout the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, the Christian is exhorted to labor diligently against sin, "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58), to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1), and to fight "the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). As one can easily see from these few passages, the task of the Christian is seen in terms of labor, of work, of action. Quite naturally, the symbol of the quest fits well with this concept of the Christian as a laborer of God, for as Elizabeth Watson notes, the quest is that "constant militant endeavour that Spenser sees as the very action of the life of the Church and the individual Christian life."[6] For the knight who remains true to his quest, who labors unceasingly and who acts quickly, the battle against sin can be won. But what of the knight who fails to act, who lowers his sword or engages in idleness? For this knight who falters in the active struggle of the quest, who cannot say with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have

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[4]Evans, p. 60.

[5]Evans, p. 27.

[6]Elizabeth Watson, Spenser (London: Evans Brothers, Ltd., 1967), p. 39.

finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7), there is an analogous faltering in the battle against sin. As T. K. Dunseath observes,

> abandoning the way is a common metaphor for falling into sin. When Job wishes to affirm his faith, he uses the language of man the wayfarer: "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined."[7]

Thus, the knight who abandons the active struggle of the quest can be said to have fallen into sin. Of course, the daily struggle of the Christian against sin is fraught with many difficulties:

> The Christian struggle towards heroism is not an easy progress, and the characters of The Faerie Queene, though capable of redemption, are never without sin: the subtle and mutable elements of which they are made and among which they live confuse and trip them up continually.[8]

As a Christian Spenser was certainly aware of the pitfalls awaiting the Christian. In order to alert the reader of The Faerie Queene to these dangers, Spenser employs his system of warning devices. And because Spenser understood that the Christian must labor unceasingly if Satan and sin are to be prevented from securing a foothold, the poet very early relates sin to inactivity. If we examine Spenser's images of inactivity, we will see that the poet often uses character inactivity to signal a surrender to sin and that he uses continued inactivity, or stasis, to symbolize bondage to sin or the eternal thralldom of the soul which has surrendered itself to sin.

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[7]T. K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 148.

[8]Evans, p. 29.

A panoramic view of The Faerie Queene reveals some interesting details about Spenser's concept of the nature of sin and evil and about the correlation he saw between sin and inactivity. Concerning evil and sin in The Faerie Queene, C. S. Lewis writes,

> In other poets temptation usually summons the will to Titanic action, to the inordinate resolutions of a Tamburlaine, a Faustus, a Macbeth, or a Satan. In Spenser it more often whispers "Lie down. Relax. Let go."[9]

In another study Lewis notes that in Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, Macbeth, and Paradise Lost, evil appears as "energy-lawless and rebellious energy, no doubt, but nevertheless energy, abounding and upsurging." However, in The Faerie Queene evil does not usually appear as energy.[10] In discussing images of evil in the poem, Lewis develops five different categories of evil; three of these are images of disease and defect (Maleger, for example), images of the disgusting (for instance, Duessa and Error), and images of "the Waste House" (the House of Busyrane or the Castle of Orgoglio).[11] Significantly, the last two of Lewis's five categories specifically concern inactivity. The first of these categories includes characters such as the paynim knights who at first appear to have energy, Pyrochles, for instance. According to Lewis this apparent energy is soon revealed to be not energy but "frenetic anguish,"[12] one which in its frenzy is totally ineffectual. The

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[9]C. S. Lewis, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 162.

[10]C. S. Lewis, Spenser's Images of Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 66.

[11]Lewis, Images, pp. 67-73.

[12]Lewis, Images, pp. 67-68.

second of these categories includes those images "in which evil takes the form of a temptation to relax, or to fall asleep, or to die."[13] Representatives of this kind of evil include Phaedria, Mammon, and Despair. In general, Lewis observes, evil and good in The Faerie Queene are

> diametrically opposed in respect of inactivity. Normally, it is the image of good that is active. True, evil will sometimes be engaged in hard labour, as Mammon's smiths are. . . . More usually, however, evil is shown as the suspension of all activity. One thinks of the Bower where no one makes love; or the endless empty silences of Orgoglio's castle and the House of Busyrane; or the dusty cobwebbed unused caves of Mammon; or the immobility of Despayre in his dark cave musing.[14]

Continuing, Lewis notes that in direct contrast to the inactivity of evil

> is the energy of the image of good. Sometimes, good is painful and penitential, as at the House of Coelia. But far more often it is a matter of knightly quests, of dances, revels, and love-making, of "skipping like wanton kids," of romping. Consequently, whereas evil places tend to be empty or thinly populated, good places are full of figures in joyous motion.[15]

In conclusion Lewis writes,

> Evil imprisons, good sets free. Evil is tired, good is full of vigour. The one says, Let go, lie down, sleep, die; the other, All aboard! kill the dragon, marry the girl, blow the pipes and beat the drum, let the dance begin.[16]

To sum up, we may say that Spenser saw the Christian as a laborer for God, a warrior engaged in a daily, active struggle against sin.

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[13]Lewis, Images, p. 70.

[14]Lewis, Images, p. 94.

[15]Lewis, Images, p. 94.

[16]Lewis, Images, p. 95.

This Christian soldier Spenser envisioned as the actively questing knight of the Faerie Queene. Furthermore, because he saw the life of a Christian in terms of an active battle to overcome sin, Spenser most often presents good and virtue in terms of action whereas he portrays evil and sin through images of inactivity. In his most overt and simplistic presentation of sin in The Faerie Queene, the pictorial procession of the Seven Deadly Sins in Book I, canto iv, Spenser clearly establishes his understanding of the relationship between sin and inactivity. First, it is significant that Spenser presents each of the counselors of Lucifera, that is, each of the Deadly Sins, as a diseased and deformed creature. For instance, Avarice has a disease that incapacitates him:

> eke in foote and hand
> A grievous gout tormented him full sore,
> That well he could not touch, nor goe, nor stand.
> (I.iv.29.6-8)

And "loathsome Gluttony" is, of course, a drunkard, a creature so surfeited with the drink in his "bouzing can" that "on his seat / His dronken corse he scarse upholden can" (I.iv.22.7-8). Of the drunken counselor Gluttony Spenser writes:

> Unfit he was for any worldly thing,
> And eke unhable once to stirre or go;
> Not meet to be of counsell to a king,
> Whose mind in meat and drinke was drowned so,
> That from his frend he seeldome knew his fo:
> Full of diseases was his carcas blew,
> And a dry dropsie through his flesh did flow,
> Which by misdiet daily greater grew.
> (I.iv.23.1-8)

And, quite naturally, Lechery is syphilitic:

lewdnes fild him with reprochfull pain
Of that foule evill, which all men reprove,
That rotts the marrow, and consumes the braine.
(I.iv.26.6-8)

Thus, each of the counselors, or Sins, is afflicted with a debilitating ailment, one that renders him ineffectual, helpless, and virtually inactive. Furthermore, the relative immobility of each of the counselors is compounded by the fact that each rides by the side of a diseased crony, so that "each couple is a jangling, discordant, incongruous team":

> This impression is further emphasized by the absurd gaits of the beasts: the ass, constantly miring in his sluggish tracks, and the hog trotting by his side; the goat jerking and jumping about, and the camel undulating along beside him with his easy, awkward stride.[17]

With the counselors so afflicted as to be nearly unable to sit upright on their mounts and the beasts themselves pulling against each other and moving at different paces, the procession of Lucifera and her counselors presents for the reader a clear picture of the debilitating and destructive effects of sin: like a disease sin infects the moral and spiritual centers of an individual's life, incapacitating him and making him unfit "for any worldly thing," certainly unable to labor diligently for any virtuous cause; and sin creates chaos and discord like that afflicting Lucifera's procession, so that a life of sin becomes a confused and chaotic journey. For a Christian the journey of life is the pilgrimage of the soul toward Christ, who, as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), gives meaning, direction, and purpose to the life of

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[17]Editor, Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, and Frederick Morgan Padelford, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), 217.

a believer. Without Christ, the sinless "light of the world" (John 8:12), the journey of the soul consists in a series of groping steps in the dark, "for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35). Like Lucifera and her counselors, who are on what Rosemary Freeman calls a "clumsy, pointless expedition"[18] across the grounds of the House of Pride and back again, the individual who surrenders himself to a life of sin soon finds himself on a pilgrimage to nowhere, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Yet even for the Christian, the believer who has chosen to follow Christ and to do battle against sin in his own life, the way is still difficult and the presence of sin is still very real, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Hence, we find the necessity of laboring constantly, of remaining vigilant, and of persevering in the active struggle against sin. Thus, concerning his return and the day of judgment, Christ admonished his followers repeatedly,

> 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:
> 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.
> 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.
>
> (Mark 13:35-37)

Just such a warning Spenser sounds in employing images of inactivity to signal a falling into sin.

Because Spenser so clearly saw the relationship between inactivity and sin, it is not surprising to discover that the poet chose as the

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[18]Rosemary Freeman, The Faerie Queene: A Companion for Readers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 95.

counselor who leads Lucifera's procession "sluggish Idlenesse, the nourse of sin" (I.iv.18.6), who rides upon "a slouthfull asse" (I.iv.18.7) and is "Arayd in habit blacke, and amis thin, / Like to an holy monck, the service to begin" (I.iv.18.8-9). Of this chief counselor who leads Lucifera's "laesy teme" (I.iv.36.3) Spenser writes:

> And in his hand his portesse still he bare,
> That much was worne, but therein little redd;
> For of devotion he had little care,
> Still drownd in sleepe, and most of his daies dedd:
> Scarse could he once uphold his heavie hedd,
> To looken whether it were night or day:
> May seeme the wayne was very evill ledd,
> When such an one had guiding of the way,
> That knew not whether right he went, or else astray.
> (I.iv.19.1-9)

> From worldly cares himselfe he did esloyne,
> And greatly shunned manly exercise;
> From everie worke he chalenged essoyne,
> For contemplation sake: yet otherwise
> His life he led in lawlesse riotise;
> By which he grew to grievous malady;
> For in his lustlesse limbs, through evill guise,
> A shaking fever raignd continually.
> Such one was Idlenesse, first of this company.
> (I.iv.20.1-9)

This description presents some of the characteristics of the Deadly Sin of idleness, or sloth, as well as making clear Spenser's understanding of the relationship between inactivity and sin. In connection with Spenser's pictorial representation of sloth, let us consider Siegfried Wenzel's study, The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature. According to Wenzel, sloth, which became one of the Deadly Sins in the twelfth century, was first associated with monks, who, sequestered in their lonely cells, often suffered from intense boredom,

which in turn caused listlessness, psychic exhaustion, and apathy.[19] Through the centuries sloth came to have two different but related meanings. Pigritia, meaning simple laziness or indolence, a characteristic quite naturally associated with the bored and restless monks, was a term describing sloth used by writers through the eleventh century.[20] This form of sloth is primarily a physical phenomenon associated with a neglect of one's profession and a failure in the performance of worldly duties and activities.[21] In the twelfth century, however, the conception of sloth as physical laziness gave way to a much more spiritualized view of the sin.[22] Called by the more specialized term acedia, sloth came to mean, particularly to the theologians of the twelfth century and the centuries following, spiritual idleness or negligence in performing one's duties to God.[23] Indeed, the exalted position of sloth as a Deadly Sin indicates that to early theologians the vice meant more than laziness. In its most insidious form sloth means a spiritual listlessness born of apathy and aversion to God and the things that are directly related to Him.[24] Carried to extremes, acedia can develop into spiritual loathing and then into spiritual

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[19]Siegfried Wenzel, The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature (1960; rpt. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), pp. 5-8.

[20]Wenzel, p. 30.

[21]Wenzel, p. 91.

[22]Wenzel, p. 30.

[23]Wenzel, p. 58.

[24]Wenzel, p. 49.

inactivity, stagnation, and decay. This spiritual dryness necessarily results in a turning away from God, what is sometimes referred to as the "dark night of the soul." Oppressive grief, a deadness of the soul, and abject despair follow. Of this terminal stage of sloth William May writes, "In his extremity a man experiences not simply the absence of God but a terrifying dryness and darkness which, it seems to him, not even the presence of God could assuage; his desire for God goes dead."[25] Thus, the result of this sin is complete atrophy of the soul that can only end in death.

Certainly all of these ideas were part of Spenser's conception of Idleness in his description of the procession of the Seven Deadly Sins. That Spenser's Idleness is guilty of pigritia is obvious from the fact that he shuns "manly exercise," avoids "everie worke," and is "drownd in sleepe," nearly unable to "uphold his heavie hedd." In addition, we know that this "monk" is guilty of acedia; that is, he neglects his spiritual duties, because his breviary lies "still" in his lap, this portesse "That much was worne, but therein little redd; / For of devotion he had little care." And although the counselor has not yet experienced the oppressive despair that comes from spiritual loathing, Spenser suggests that this spiritual atrophy will soon threaten Idleness when he mentions the counselor's "lustlesse" limbs, indicating not purity, but lack of feeling or life, and when he tells us that Idleness spends "most of his daies dedd," suggesting that apathy or aversion to life which

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[25]William F. May, A Catalogue of Sins: A Contemporary Examination of Christian Conscience (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), p. 196.

leads, quite naturally, to death. We should also note that Spenser calls this counselor Idleness "the nourse of sin." By this phrase Spenser means, as an old adage states, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." Moreover, the individual who engages in idleness is inactive not only physically but also spiritually. With his spiritual defenses down, his vigilance relaxed, and his active struggle against sin forsaken, the slothful man opens the door to many other temptations and sins. As Wenzel notes, sloth is rightly called "the most dangerous as well as the most oppressive of all temptations."[26] Thus, Spenser calls idleness "the nourse of sin" because succumbing to this one sin can lead from the seemingly venial sin of laziness to such sins as gluttony and lechery, embraced to relieve the boredom of idleness and the apathy of spiritual listlessness, to the greatest sin of all, turning away from God and seeking release in death.

Quite clearly, Spenser associated sin with idleness in its many forms. Therefore, when Spenser presents a character who is idle, that is, inactive, we must certainly pause in our reading to examine the image of inactivity the poet is presenting. Is the idle man unarmed and relaxed beneath the shade tree a knight who has forsaken his quest, a Christian warrior, representative of the Church Militant, who has abandoned the active struggle against sin? Can we not say that the inactivity of this character perhaps signals a surrender to sin? The answer to these questions lies in further study of Spenser's images of inactivity and his system of warning devices. Here we will examine the

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[26]Wenzel, p. 5.

quests of two knights, Guyon and the Red Crosse Knight. We will study the quests of these knights of Books I and II of The Faerie Queene because these two books are more clearly spiritual and are thus more concerned with man's spiritual life and with sin than the other books of the poem. As Spenser moved into later books, his focus shifted to more secular concerns, man's relationship to society in Book IV, for instance. Although there are examples of inactivity and sin after the first two books of The Faerie Queene, they are fewer and less significant than those in the first two books and are thus less deserving of in-depth scrutiny. In addition, in the following examination of images of inactivity and sin, which covers Chapters III and IV of this study, we will explore the quest of Guyon first because his is the more secular of the first two quests. Thus, the study of this quest seems a fitting transition from an examination of the secular idea of the quest in Chapter II to a study of the highly spiritual quest of the Red Crosse Knight, contained in Chapter IV. Furthermore, we will devote two complete chapters of this study to an examination of inactivity and sin because the examples are numerous and all are quite significant. Also, in the context of the thesis of this study, images of inactivity and sin seem to be the crux of Spenser's system of warning devices, thus warranting careful and lengthy examination. Finally, in these next two chapters, we will examine occasional inactivity as a symbol of surrender to sin and continued inactivity, or stasis, as a symbol of bondage to sin or the eternal thralldom of the soul which has surrendered itself to sin.

As much as that of any knight, the quest of Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, is closely connected with the presence of sin in the world. Early in his adventures Guyon receives into his care the infant Ruddymane, the bloody-handed child orphaned by the violent deaths of his passion-ruled parents, Mordant and Amavia. Mordant, the passionate knight seduced away from his family and knightly duties by the sexual allurements of the wicked enchantress Acrasia in her Bower of Bliss, is a type of Adam, who, in submitting to the charms of Eve in the Garden of Eden, ate of the forbidden fruit and left for all of mankind the legacy of Original Sin. His hands indelibly stained by the blood from his dying mother's wound, Ruddymane represents all of mankind, which from its infancy has been stained by Original Sin. In vowing to avenge the deaths of Mordant and Amavia, Guyon takes as his quest the battle against sin, the undoing of the effects of the First Fall. Throughout his travels Guyon labors against many manifestations of the sin which came into the world as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, battling, as Watson notes, against temptations that attack the passions (anger and lust), the ambitions (greed and pride of place), and the soul (self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, and sloth).[27]

Many of these temptations Guyon struggles with when he encounters Mammon, god of wealth, whom the knight meets as he wanders through the desert searching for adventure. This miser who dwells deep within the earth with his hoarded treasure takes his being and his name from that

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[27]Watson, p. 103.

love of wealth and material goods which Christ warned his followers against when he enjoined,

> 19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
> 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
> 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
> . . . . . .
> 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
> (Matthew 6:19-21,24)

As Pauline Parker observes, the word "mammon" here stands not only for literal money but for the putting of worldly values first: "Mammon in the gospel is not only money but the alternative to God, the other claimant to an exclusive service."[28] That Mammon considers himself an alternative to God and service to him a substitute for service to God can be concluded from two facts. First, as he introduces himself to Guyon, Mammon boasts, "God of the world and worldlings I me call, / Great Mammon, greatest god below the skye" (II.vii.8.1-2). Second, and most important, in his overtures to Guyon, Mammon offers the knight untold wealth, kingdoms, and honors if he will abandon his quest and pay allegiance to his godhead:

> Wherefore, if me thou deigne to serve and sew,
> At thy commaund, lo! all these mountaines bee;
> Or if to thy great mind, or greedy vew,
> All these may not suffise, there shall to thee
> Ten times so much be nombred francke and free.
> (II.vii.9.1-5)

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[28]Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 128-129.

In exchange for this wealth, Guyon will, of course, have to forsake his quest, his service to God in the form of his battles against sin. That Guyon recognizes the dangers to his quest inherent in Mammon's offers is obvious when the knight, in answer to Mammon's temptations to worldly goods, replies:

> Me ill besits, that in derdoing armes
> And honours suit my vowed daies do spend,
> Unto thy bounteous baytes and pleasing charmes,
> With which weake men thou witchest, to attend:
> Regard of worldly mucke doth fowly blend
> And low abase the high heroicke spright.
> (II.vii.10.1-6)

Thus, Guyon rejects Mammon's offers in the name of knighthood, remaining true to his first allegiance, the quest and his vow to avenge the deaths of Mordant and Amavia by destroying Acrasia and the power she wields in seducing men like Mordant to surrender to the sins of the flesh.

However, although Guyon has no desire for worldly goods and realizes the misery that arises from love of wealth (II.vii.12.1-9), he follows Mammon, perhaps out of idle curiosity, perhaps to try his virtue, deep into the underworld, indeed, to the very "gate of hell" (II.vii.24.6). Here Mammon attempts to lure Guyon away from his quest and into his own services by showing him the untold treasures of his cave. Realizing that the knight is not really tempted by the sight of countless heaps of gold, the god of wealth hopes to trick Guyon into breaking "the fatall Stygian lawes" (II.vii.27.9), which decree that anyone who touches or eats anything in the underworld or who sleeps there must remain in the underworld forever (II.vii.27.1-5). And so, on his third day in Mammon's cave, Guyon is brought, "weake and wan, / For want of food and sleepe" (II.vii.65.2-3), to the Garden of Proserpina:

> The Gardin of Proserpina this hight;
> And in the midst thereof a silver seat,
> With a thick arber goodly overdight,
> In which she often usd from open heat
> Her selfe to shroud, and pleasures to entreat.
> Next thereunto did grow a goodly tree,
> With braunches broad dispredd and body great,
> Clothed with leaves, that none the wood mote see,
> And loaden all with fruit as thick as it might bee.
> (II.vii.53.1-9)

Here Mammon launches his final attack against Guyon, saying:

> Why takest not of that same fruite of gold,
> Ne sittest downe on that same silver stoole,
> To rest thy weary person in the shadow coole?
> (II.vii.63.7-9)

Although he is undoubtedly hungry after three days underground, Guyon is still clear headed enough to realize that he cannot eat fruit made of gold; thus, he refuses to touch or eat the "golden apples glistring bright" (II.vii.54.1), thereby withstanding the double assault of the offer of gold and food. But what of the temptation to rest? That Guyon is tired after three days of following Mammon through his dark domain is clear; the knight's fatigue, however, begins long before this adventure. Early in his travels, we remember, Guyon is forced to travel on foot, carrying the full weight of his armor and Mordant's, after his horse is stolen by Braggadochio (II.ii.11-12). Hence, Guyon's weariness becomes a major issue in Book II, the repeated allurements to rest forming an important factor in his struggles against temptation. In the Garden of Proserpina the knight encounters the first of these temptations to rest.

When we examine in closer detail the silver seat upon which Guyon is tempted to sit, we will see more clearly the great importance attached to this first temptation to rest. First, as James Nohrnberg observes,

the silver stool is connected with Theseus' seat in Hades,[29] where he sits forever bound, "condemned to endlesse slouth by law" (I.v.35.8), as Spenser tells us in his description of hell in Book I. If Guyon, because of his fatigue, surrenders to his desire for rest and sits upon the seat in the middle of Proserpina's garden, he will be guilty of sloth, and like Theseus he will be bound forever in the underworld as punishment for his sin. As John Upton remarks, if Guyon takes the seat, he will show himself "a lazy knight, and deserving the punishment of Theseus for sitting on this slothful seat."[30] More important, "the stool, with its invitation to sloth, may include mental sloth-forgetfulness or inattention or unretentiveness."[31] This mental sloth includes, of course, a relaxation of vigilance, the failure to "Take ye heed, watch and pray" (Mark 13:33). According to Parker's understanding of this temptation to sit and relax on the silver seat, "Sleep might seem innocent enough; but to sleep in someone's house is an act of trust and friendship which would be treachery here; moreover, the sentinel on duty must not sleep."[32] This mental sloth, however, also implies a forgetfulness of one's duties and obligations, "an abdication or a numbing of the memory":[33] "Whatever else it implies, the seat offered to Guyon might well entail this hazard of fixity, 'getting stuck,' as

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[29]James Nohrnberg, The Analogy of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 342.

[30]John Upton, Variorum, II (1933), 269.

[31]Nohrnberg, p. 343.

[32]Parker, p. 132.

[33]Nohrnberg, p. 343.

elsewhere in the quicksand of Unthriftyhead."[34] Of course, if Guyon were to rest on the silver seat, in this "chair of forgetfulness," he would lose all memory of his duty and the battle against sin which is his quest. Guyon, however, is wary (II.vii.64) and, refusing to rest in the seat, is allowed to return to the world and to his quest. Thus, the knight escapes this great temptation to sin, a temptation Spenser alerts us to in part through the images of inactivity associated with Proserpina's silver seat.

Although Guyon resists the temptations of Mammon and escapes the underworld with his life, he does so only after he has seen the fate of those who have succumbed to temptation and to sin. Indeed, it is very clear that the Garden of Proserpina is situated in the center of hell, the eternal abode of people who chose a life of sin. All of the descriptive details of this hell, the "direfull, deadly black" fruit (II.vii. 51.8), the spreading branches of the "trees of bitter gall" (II.vii. 52.2), and the "blacke flood" of the river Cocytus (II.vii.56.7), which "direfull deadly stancke" (II.vii.57.3), conjure up, notes Janet Spens, "the atmosphere of the valley of the shadow of spiritual death."[35] In this place of eternal darkness and suffering, we see "many damned wightes" (II.vii.57.2) who "do endlesse wayle and weepe" (II.vii.56.9). Of the many who suffer for their sins in this place, two are singled out for our observation and edification. As we observe these two, Tantalus

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[34]Nohrnberg, p. 342.

[35]Janet Spens, Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation (London: Edward Arnold and Company, 1934), p. 125.

and Pilate, we also note that Spenser once again employs images of inactivity to warn against the wages of sin.

First we see Tantalus, who, through pride and ambition, defied the gods of Olympus. For Tantalus, whose sin was, as Kathleen Williams notes, greed and aspiring ambition, punishment is vain labor among the fruits and waters of hell:[36]

> Deepe was he drenched to the upmost chin,
> Yet gaped still, as coveting to drinke
> Of the cold liquour which he waded in,
> And stretching forth his hand, did often thinke
> To reach the fruit which grew upon the brincke:
> But both the fruit from hand, and flood from mouth,
> Did fly abacke, and made him vainely swincke:
> The whiles he sterv'd with hunger and with drouth,
> He daily dyde, yet never throughly dyen couth.
> (II.vii.58.1-9)

This punishment of the eternal frustration of reaching for something only to have it retreat again and again was, according to Paul Alpers, a commonplace Renaissance representation of the spiritual state of a miser.[37] In depicting this torment of repeated and vain attempts to get what can never be had, Spenser associates inactivity and sin in a rather unique way. Here inactivity is not the failure to move or act that we have seen before. Rather, here inactivity may be defined as vain, repeated labor, static in its futility. Tantalus tries to seize the fruit, the object of his insatiable desire; he fails, only to begin again the same frustrated process, his empty movements constituting an eternity of stasis. Explaining Tantalus' plight, Patrick Cullen notes

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[36]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 60.

[37]Paul J. Alpers, The Poetry of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 246.

that this figure represents the sons of Eve, who, like their mother, sin by coveting what is not theirs:

> We are born heirs to our parents' insatiable desires; and unrestored, we perpetually re-enact . . . the desperate attempt to satisfy the insatiable. Desiring too much, nothing sates; and we are cursed by our own desires.[38]

Thus, because of his sin of greed and covetousness, Tantalus is doomed to an eternity of frustration, "the torment of the damned whose desires have no rest."[39] This fate Spenser depicts in part through images of inactivity.

The second character singled out in the hell at the center of Proserpina's garden is Pilate, a man whose sin also doomed him to an eternity of frustration and futile activity. Looking into the waters of Cocytus, Guyon sees Pilate,

> Another wretch, whose carcas deepe was drent
> Within the river, which the same did hyde:
> But both his handes, most filthy feculent,
> Above the water were on high extent,
> And faynd to wash themselves incessantly;
> Yet nothing cleaner were for such intent,
> But rather fowler seemed to the eye;
> So lost his labour vaine and ydle industry.
> (II.vii.61.2-9)

In this hellish condition Pilate pays eternally for the sin he committed upon earth when he

> by unrighteous
> And wicked doome, to Jewes despiteous
> Delivered up the Lord of Life to dye,
> And did acquite a murdrer felonous.
> (II.vii.62.4-7)

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[38]Patrick Cullen, Infernal Triad: The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 80.

[39]Cullen, p. 81.

Recalling the events of Jesus' trial recounted in the Scriptures, we remember that Pilate made several rather weak attempts to secure his prisoner's release, even going so far as to inquire of Jesus his true identity: "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Without waiting for Jesus' reply, however, the judge returned to the waiting crowd:

> 24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.
>
> (Matthew 27:24)

With these words, which reveal Pilate's awareness of Christ's innocence, the unjust judge delivered Jesus up to death. Hence, he doomed himself to an eternity of forever attempting in vain to wash away his spiritual stains, just as he attempted, while on earth, to wash himself clean of guilt for his part in the condemnation and death of Christ. In his description of Pilate's eternal punishment, Spenser again associates sin and inactivity. As William Nelson observes, Pilate will forever attempt to wash the hands that "by doing nothing" delivered Christ to the crucifixion.[40] And because his sin was one of "doing nothing" instead of taking positive and forceful steps to secure Christ's release, Pilate must forever endure the punishment of vainly attempting to cleanse his hands, stained with the blood of Jesus, his "labour vaine and ydle industry" constituting an eternity of empty activity, static in its futility. Although Guyon escapes this hell of inactivity in Proserpina's garden, he surely leaves with a more certain understanding of the nature of sin and of the wages of sin, an understanding Spenser offers to his

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[40]William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 183.

readers in part through his system of warning devices and images of inactivity.

The poet's interest in the relationship between inactivity and sin continues, however, and leads us directly to one of the most controversial episodes of The Faerie Queene, that of Guyon's faint. Because many scholars have devoted untold pages to accounting for the knight's swoon, which occurs immediately after he leaves Mammon's cave (II.vii. 66.5-9), we cannot hope to resolve the difficulties surrounding the episode in a study as limited in scope as this. We can, however, understand the sequence better if we view it in the light of images of inactivity and Spenser's system of warning devices. The crux of this episode which has solicited so much commentary concerns whether or not Guyon sins, or "falls," at any time during his encounter with Mammon. For some readers the answer is that Guyon does not sin, that his faint may be attributed literally to lack of food and sleep, or that the faint is merely an allegorical expression of the limitations of human strength and the inevitable result of the trial the knight has just endured.[41] Although clearly there is a literal explanation for Guyon's faint—no reader can deny the fact that the knight has endured three days underground without food, sleep, or fresh air—nearly all readers seek further in the episode for a reading that more satisfactorily explains the faint which nearly costs Guyon his life. Looking for such an interpretation, some scholars find in Guyon a degree of guilt in connection

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[41]Leicester Bradner, Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 129; Alpers, p. 274; and Graham Hough, A Preface to The Faerie Queene (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Ltd., 1962), p. 157.

with the Mammon episode. Citing the opening scenes of this episode, where Guyon is seen wandering in the wilderness as he "evermore himselfe with comfort feedes / Of his owne vertues and praise-worthie deedes" (II.vii.2.4-5), they accuse the knight of feelings of self-sufficiency and of a certain pride in his own strength and virtue; that is, they find Guyon guilty of the specific sin of pride.[42] However, whether we believe that Guyon is guilty of a specific sin or not is ultimately of little consequence. The important fact here is that Guyon is a man, the child of Adam and Eve, and like all humanity, he is guilty of sin in general, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This inherent sin Spenser signals in part through an image of inactivity. A closer look at the passage in question will clarify this point.

Coming up out of the noisome atmosphere of Mammon's underground den, Guyon takes a breath of "vitall ayre into his brest" (II.vii.66.6), and immediately "The life did flit away out of her nest, / And all his sences were with deadly fit opprest" (II.vii.66.8-9). As he lies helpless on the ground, Guyon is attended by a guardian angel, "a faire young man, / Of wondrous beauty" (II.viii.5.1-2) who sits protectively at the head of the fallen knight. At this point Spenser speaks directly to us:

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[42]Harry Berger, Jr., The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's Faerie Queene (1957; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 28; Maurice Evans, "The Fall of Guyon," in Spenser: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Harry Berger, Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 88-96; and Parker, p. 134.

> And is there care in heaven? And is there love
> In heavenly spirits to these creatures bace,
> That may compassion of their evilles move?
> There is: else much more wretched were the cace
> Of men then beasts. Buth O th' exceeding grace
> Of Highest God, that loves his creatures so,
> And all his workes with mercy doth embrace,
> That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
> To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe!
> (II.viii.1.1-9)

> How oft do they their silver bowers leave
> To come to succour us, that succour want!
> How oft do they with golden pineons cleave
> The flitting skyes, like flying pursuivant,
> Against fowle feendes to ayd us militant!
> They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
> And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
> And all for love, and nothing for reward:
> O why should hevenly God to men have such regard?
> (II.viii.2.1-9)

In this passage Spenser reveals his understanding of several crucial points in the Christian belief. First, in the eyes of God all men, no matter how virtuous by worldly standards, are sinners; as Spenser declares, men are "bace" and "wicked." Thus, Guyon need not be guilty of a specific sin in the Mammon episode for Spenser to label him "bace." This episode demonstrates "Guyon's penchant to sin, the corrupt affections he and all men have inherited through the Fall."[43] We may say then that "Guyon's faint clearly symbolizes the Fall of Adam."[44] Second, human strength and virtue are insufficient for salvation and victory over sin. Having done all, man still finds that he is too inherently weak and "bace" to deserve salvation. This adventure, then,

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[43]Cullen, p. 73.

[44]Evans, "The Fall of Guyon," p. 92.

is an allegory "not of heroism but of human weakness."[45] This weakness Spenser signals through an image of inactivity. That is, Guyon's physical condition reflects a spiritual condition. Thus, whether Guyon is guilty of a specific sin or sin in general, that is, inherent sin, he is still a "wicked man" in need of God's grace and mercy, here represented by the fair-faced guardian angel. Finally, it is significant that Spenser describes in active, militant terms the help God sends his children. As we have seen, man's quest as a Christian is to engage in an active struggle against sin; such a struggle Guyon's quest has been up to this point. However, man, because of his inherent weakness and sinfulness, is unable to win this battle against sin on his own; man cannot save himself. Therefore, strong though he may be, Guyon, like all men, needs God's grace, the gift of salvation. Therefore, when Guyon's strength fails and the end of his quest against sin appears certain, God sends an agent to take over Guyon's active struggle. While the knight lies unconscious and still on the ground, his protector, positioned at his head, is ready, as are all of God's agents,

> to ayd us militant!
> They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
> And their bright squadrons round about us plant.
> (II.viii.2.5-7)

Thus, Spenser underscores the active labor needed to overcome sin, and in doing so, he emphasizes the stillness of Guyon in this, one of the most pronounced images of inactivity in The Faerie Queene.

Although Guyon's encounter with Mammon and its eventual debilitating results endanger his quest, the knight's meeting with another

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[45]Evans, "The Fall of Guyon," p. 92.

inhabitant of Faery Land strikes even closer to the heart of his quest. On one leg of his journey the knight meets Phaedria, handmaiden of Acrasia, the evil temptress whose overthrow is the goal of Guyon's quest. As we have seen earlier in our discussion of the derelict knight Cymochles, Phaedria serves her mistress by waylaying knights and subverting their quests, persuading them, through her "no toil" philosophy, to

> Withdraw from thought of warlike enterprize,
> And drowne in dissolute delights apart,
> Where noise of armes, or vew of martiall guize,
> Might not revive desire of knightly exercize.
> (II.vi.25.6-9)

Because Phaedria's principal function is to divert men from their proper duties, she is a fitting symbol of the sin of sloth, especially in its milder form of pigritia, or laziness. Indeed, her home is on the "Idle Lake" (II.vi.10.2), a name which clearly announces that in Phaedria's domain there is no work at all. On her island retreat all is framed "to allure fraile mind to carelesse ease" (II.vi.13.6). Phaedria herself does not work; because of the construction of the little boat by which she traverses the Idle Lake, she can travel freely by doing little more than moving her finger:

> Eftsoones her shallow ship away did slide,
> More swift than swallow sheres the liquid skye,
> Withouten oare or pilot it to guide,
> Or winged canvas with the wind to fly:
> Onely she turnd a pin, and by and by
> It cut away upon the yielding wave;
> Ne cared she her course for to apply:
> For it was taught the way which she would have,
> And both from rocks and flats it selfe could wisely save.
> (II.vi.5.1-9)

Not only does Phaedria not work, spending her days in ease, but she tempts others to join her in her careless indolence. Thus, as Graham

Hough notes, she is the temptation to idleness and time-wasting.[46] One man who is tempted to partake of the ease Phaedria offers is, as we have seen, Cymochles, whom Phaedria convinces to forsake his armor and all his worldly duties. Once on Phaedria's island, Cymochles becomes slothful and effeminate, as do all her guests:

> Thus when shee had his eyes and sences fed
> With false delights, and fild with pleasures vayn,
> Into a shady dale she soft him led,
> And laid him downe upon a grassy playn;
> And her sweete selfe without dread or disdayn
> She sett beside, laying his head disarmd
> In her loose lap, it softly to sustayn,
> Where soone he slumbred, fearing not be harmd.
> (II.vi.14.1-8)

Listening to Phaedria's sweet lullaby, Cymochles soon surrenders himself to total inactivity, and, by doing so, he also surrenders completely to the sin of sloth.

Phaedria's lullaby forms the focal point of this episode of The Faerie Queene, which Spenser creates almost entirely from images of inactivity that mount in such a way that the temptation to idleness is seen as a "spreading stagnation."[47] Her lyric is, of course, a parody of the Sermon on the Mount, a perversion of the words Christ used to urge his disciples to depend upon God to supply all their needs (Matthew 6:25-32). However, whereas Christ's words, as Richard Pindell observes, were designed to bring man to a courageous and active dependence upon God, the words of Phaedria's diabolical parody are intended to tempt man

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[46]Hough, p. 161.

[47]Nohrnberg, p. 301.

to retreat into idleness and ease.[48] Thus, through her perversion of the Gospel, the handmaiden of Acrasia lures men from their way in the world and from the duties they have there. Whereas Christ never asked men to forsake their work or their missions, Phaedria urges:

> Why then doest thou, O man, that of them all
> Art lord, and eke of Nature soveraine,
> Wilfully make thy selfe a wretched thrall,
> And waste thy joyous howres in needelesse paine,
> Seeking for daunger and adventures vaine?
> What bootes it al to have, and nothing use?
> Who shall him rew, that swimming in the maine
> Will die for thrist, and water doth refuse?
> Refuse such fruitlesse toile, and present pleasures chuse.
> (II.vi.17.1-9)

Through her seductive words, Phaedria urges Cymochles, indeed all men, to forsake everything, all care and work, their worldly duties, their quests. Evans reminds us that work and sweat are the penalty of sin[49] (Genesis 3:17-19). Because of his sin Adam was forced to labor and sweat; gone forever was the pleasant ease of his sinless life in the Garden of Eden. Because of his transgression, Adam was separated from God. This sinfulness and alienation from God Adam left as a legacy to all mankind. And although only God can forgive sin, thus effecting the reconciliation between God and man, man can demonstrate his desire for reconciliation by laboring for, and thus toward, God. That is, although man's works will not earn him forgiveness or salvation, although these are not "a source of redemption,"[50] man can and must take an active role

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[48]Richard Pindell, "The Mutable Image: Man-in-Creation," in Eterne in Mutabilitie: The Unity of The Faerie Queene, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1972), p. 172.

[49]Evans, Anatomy, p. 31.

[50]Evans, Anatomy, p. 31.

in seeking reconciliation with God. His willingness to labor and sweat is indicative of his active desire for a reunion with God. This labor, then, the result of sin and the Fall, develops into man's quest for God. To forsake work and the quest is to forsake one's search for reconciliation with God, to surrender oneself to separation from God and to a life of sin that completely alienates one from God. As Pindell notes, Phaedria's is one of those importunate voices that would lure man away from the ideal quest that moves him beyond himself to God.[51] In luring men from work and their quests, Phaedria tempts them to surrender to sin. And surrender Cymochles does. Abandoning himself to the particular sin of sloth, Cymochles also surrenders to the life of sin in general that results when one forsakes the quest for God and the active struggle against sin made necessary by the Fall. Fast asleep in Phaedria's lap (II.vi.18.1-4), Cymochles experiences the sleep of sin.

Although Cymochles quickly succumbs to Phaedria's temptation, Guyon is not so easily deterred from his mission. He is courteous to her, but "Her dalliaunce he despisd, and follies did forsake" (II.vi.21.9). His politeness evaporates, however, when he discovers that she and her boat, instead of leading him closer to his quest's end, Acrasia's bower, have taken him off course. Seeing her island retreat,

> He wist him selfe amisse, and angry said:
> "Ah! dame, perdy ye have not doen me right,
> Thus to mislead mee, whiles I you obaid:
> Me litle needed from my right way to have straid."
> (II.vi.22.6-9)

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[51]Pindell, p. 172.

Although Guyon recognizes that Phaedria is tempting him into "dalliance which is wrong chiefly because it distracts him from the stern activity of his quest,"[52] he nevertheless follows her onto her island, and for his indiscretion, he, like Cymochles, is affected by the narcotic, lulling quality of her words. Coming to blows with Cymochles, whom he finds on the island, Guyon soon hears Phaedria's "no toil" philosophy on war and arms (II.vi.32-35), and "at her speach their rages gan relent, / And calme the sea of their tempestuous spight" (II.vi.36.3-4). Thus, in his own way Guyon succumbs to the pleasing words of Acrasia's handmaiden; just as Cymochles' body and will were numbed into a surrender to inactivity earlier, so now Guyon's will is numbed and the battle that is the quest is suspended momentarily as the knight stands motionless before Phaedria.

Quickly remembering his quest, however, Guyon leaves the island of this charming female surely planted in his way to deflect him from his steady progress toward the end of his quest, Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. Yet Acrasia is not done with attempting to thwart Guyon's progress toward her haven. On the last stage of his journey toward the Bower of Bliss, Guyon travels by sea, encountering on his voyage the many temptations Acrasia conjures up to stop the knight in his progress toward her domain and the completion of his quest, which is the destruction of the Bower of Bliss. Not surprisingly, as Spenser continues to accumulate images of inactivity as we move closer to Acrasia's bower, the retreat of all those who have completely forsaken the world and its

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[52]Watson, p. 88.

attendant labors and cares, the temptations to sloth and inactivity increase, resulting in that "spreading stagnation" of idleness noted earlier. For example, passing the carcasses of men on the "Rock of vile Reproch" (II.xii.8.1), Guyon is warned by his guide, the Palmer, of the dangers of a life of idleness:

> Behold th' ensamples in our sightes
> Of lustfull luxurie and thriftlesse wast:
> What now is left of miserable wightes,
> Which spent their looser daies in leud delightes.
> (II.xii.9.2-5)

Spenser's message is clear: a life spent surrendered to the sins of idleness and "wanton joyes and lustes intemperate" (II.xii.7.7) is a life destined to end in "shame and sad reproch" (II.xii.9.6). Skirting clear of this peril, Guyon himself is tempted to spend his days in idleness, first by Phaedria, whom he meets again (II.xii.15-17), then by the beautiful Sirens, who sing as the knight's boat passes nearby:

> O thou fayre sonne of gentle Faery,
> That art in mightie armes most magnifyde
> Above all knights that ever batteill tryde,
> O turne thy rudder hetherward a while:
> Here may thy storme-bett vessell safely ryde;
> This is the port of rest from troublous toyle,
> The worldes sweet in from paine and wearisome turmoyle.
> (II.xii.32.3-9)

Offering ease and a peaceful retreat from the troubles of the world, the Sirens are "a variant of sloth."[53] This promise of a cessation of the toils of life is an especially insidious temptation for a knight like Guyon who has labored diligently without rest: "The Sirens' song is a most poignant expression of Guyon's longing for rest, coupled with the

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[53]B. Nellist, "The Allegory of Guyon's Voyage: An Interpretation," in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972), p. 249.

momentary feeling that he deserves it for heroic labours already accomplished."[54] Guyon's labors, however, are not over, as we know, for his quest is not finished; indeed, now as he approaches the Bower of Bliss, it has really just begun. As Lilian Winstanley observes, the Sirens "probably stand for that mood of weariness which comes over so many men and destroys them on the very threshold of noble achievement."[55] Although such weariness may at times overtake all men, with baleful consequences, for Guyon, the Christian knight whose quest against sin and its effects began long ago when he pledged to avenge the deaths of Mordant and Amavia, such weariness signals the possible abandonment of this quest before the battle has really begun. Parker observes,

> the sirens' temptation is one that all flesh is heir to, especially the flesh of those who seek to advance in virtue and the spiritual life, the temptation that now it is enough, one may repose, enough has been gained.[56]

For Guyon repose with the Sirens would mean forsaking the quest and the battle against sin, a danger Spenser warns against in the images of inactivity in the song of the Sirens and other temptations Guyon encounters on his sea voyage to the Bower of Bliss.

Having escaped all of the dangers attendant upon his sea voyage, Guyon reaches his destination, the Bower of Bliss, there to meet Acrasia, his chief antagonist and the object of his quest. In her seeming paradise the enchantress has created a retreat from the world where she seduces men to forget who and what they are as they succumb to the

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[54]Evans, Anatomy, p. 140.

[55]Lilian Winstanley, Variorum, II (1933), 367.

[56]Parker, p. 149.

temptation to abandon themselves to the sensual pleasures of the bower. In order to make as clear as possible the seductive appeal of this retreat, Spenser has created in this canto what many readers believe to be the most beautiful and the most descriptive lines of The Faerie Queene. However, lest we, the readers, also succumb to the delights of Acrasia's retreat and fail to recognize the moral of this episode, the poet has employed, perhaps more forcefully than anywhere else in The Faerie Queene, his system of warning devices to alert us to hidden peril. In the Bower of Bliss this peril consists in repeated allurements to surrender to sensual pleasures, that is, the sins of the flesh, in particular the sins of sloth and lust. As elsewhere in his poem, Spenser warns us in part of the presence of evil and sin through images of inactivity.

From the abundant images of inactivity in this canto, it is quite apparent that Acrasia offers to all who enter her gates a life of sloth and ease. In general, Spenser warns that one of the bower's hidden perils is that it diverts man from his worldly duties, the charm of indolence blinding him to all but sweet rest. Hence, in this retreat the pleasures of sensual ease reduce men quite literally to states of inactivity. After he enters the gate of the bower, Guyon soon discovers that all of the inhabitants of the garden are indulging in some type of leisure. Resting near the porch is False-Genius, guardian of the gate. Significantly, the porter is sitting, attired in a loose garment that

> to the ground did fall,
> And flew about his heeles in wanton wize,
> Not fitt for speedy pace or manly exercize.
> (II.xii.46.7-9)

Thus, we may assume that even if the porter is performing his usual duties, his work is designed to allow frequent rest, his clothing suggesting that he is more apt to be inactive than engaged in movement. Excess, too, is resting (II.xii.55.7), her leisure again indicating that the garden is dedicated to sloth. Indeed, as Williams observes, throughout canto xii Spenser stresses restful dreaminess,[57] producing a tableau of relaxed ease where all are pictured as sitting or reclining. Even Acrasia, mistress of the bower, apparently performs her duties while lying on a bed of roses (II.xii.77.1). In her bower Acrasia has created, Evans notes, a garden of eternal sloth where even the grapes bend over enticingly to offer themselves to passersby, thus eliminating the simple task of reaching upward.[58] Significantly, all aspects of nature join in the inactivity of the bower. Even the climate remains eternally unchanged, arrested in a "stedfast state" (II.xii.51.2). Because nature's activity is arrested, there is no growth or decay in the garden and hence no reason for man to labor, to sow or to harvest. Thus, in general Spenser warns that the love of sloth which abounds in this bower Acrasia has created results in man's forsaking all work, even the simplest of activities.

However, Spenser's indictment against the Bower of Bliss involves more than the fact that Acrasia tempts men to succumb to the sin of sloth. As we have seen earlier, Spenser saw the necessity of labor as a consequence of the Fall, that is, the sin of Adam and Eve. In

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[57]Williams, p. 73.

[58]Evans, Anatomy, p. 146.

addition, as explained before, the poet understood that, just as sin originally alienated man from God, so labor, in the form of a never-ceasing battle against sin, becomes an element of man's finding his way back to God. Let us note, however, that Acrasia's bower seems to be a paradise, a type of the Garden of Eden before the Fall. In creating a world of her own, a pleasure grove that turns its back on the real world outside, Acrasia has, in effect, denied the Creation and Fall of Genesis. And with these she has denied the God of Creation, setting herself up as God and Creator, offering to all a world where there is no labor because there was no Fall, a world that attempts to deny the distinction between sin and virtue, a world where anything, any activity or inactivity, is justifiable in the name of pleasure.

In denying the existence of the Fall, sin, and virtue, Acrasia becomes a formidable enemy of all knights because she denies, of course, the necessity of the quest, that is, the battle against sin. Quite naturally, the enchantress, like her handmaiden Phaedria, seeks to waylay knights and to seduce them into forgetting their quests and all virtuous action. Verdant, Acrasia's sleeping lover, is one of the many knights whom the enchantress has convinced to renounce the quest for virtue:

> His warlike armes, the ydle instruments
> Of sleeping praise, were hong upon a tree,
> And his brave shield, full of old moniments,
> Was fowly ra'st, that none the signes might see;
> Ne for them, ne for honour, cared hee,
> Ne ought that did to his advauncement tend,
> But in lewd loves, and wastfull luxuree,
> His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spend:
> O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend!
> (II.xii.80.1-9)

Not only do his "warlike armes" hang "ydle" in a tree, but the knight, lying asleep in Acrasia's lap, has surrendered himself completely to the inactivity that reigns in the bower. In contrast to this description of the sleeping, unarmed knight, we have these words from the Apostle Paul:

> 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
> 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
> 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.
> 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.
>
> (1 Thessalonians 5:5-8)

As we read Paul's words and compare them with Spenser's description of the fallen knight, we can more clearly see the nature of Verdant's sin. As a knight Verdant is to battle incessantly against sin, this battle becoming a way of life. He has, however, renounced this way of life, surrendering to sin instead of waging war against it. Thus, we may conclude that Verdant's "voluptuous inactivity is a more profound sin than any fleshly orgy. Leisure is necessary for refreshment in this world, but no man has a <u>right</u> to it, least of all as a way of life."[59] A knight especially has no right to idleness as a way of life because as a consequence of the Fall and sin, he has a work to do, as do all "children of the day," that is, Christian warriors against sin and darkness. In embracing sloth and ease in Acrasia's world, Verdant has abandoned this work, the quest, becoming one of the children of the night and of sin.

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[59]Watson, p. 108.

However, the offer of a life of ease and idleness is not Acrasia's most powerful weapon. She is a beautiful woman

> arayd, or rather disarayd,
> All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
> That hid no whit her alablaster skin.
> (II.xii.77.3-5)

Baring her "snowy brest" (II.xii.78.1) to every eye, Acrasia lures men away from the world and their duties with her overt offer of sexual pleasure. Then, having won a man away from the world, she attempts to keep him "so enthralled that he forever forgets all virtuous action."[60] In Christian interpretation she is a type of Eve, a temptress who urges man to follow "the promptings of Satan to give in to the blind urgings of the flesh."[61] She is then woman, who, through her sexual power, becomes a symbol of corrupting sensuality and sin. Acrasia offers

> that kind of sexual passion which seizes upon a man's whole life and destroys it. She represents the temptation to allow bodily pleasure to become an end in itself, to become in fact the chief end of life.[62]

Human sexuality used in such a way becomes sterile lust.

For Spenser human love and sexuality are gifts from a loving God that have marriage as a beginning and fruition as a natural end. Thus, the sexuality associated with true love is fertile and life-giving. On the other hand, the human sensuality found in the Bower of Bliss, Evans notes, has been blinded to the primary end of sex and love, that is,

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[60]A. C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 122.

[61]Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, eds., Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, the Mutability Cantos, and Selections from the Minor Poetry (New York: Odyssey Press, Inc., 1965), p. 5.

[62]Bradner, p. 133.

procreation.[63] Hence, for Spenser the bower becomes the seat of sterile human lust, a sterility the poet symbolizes with various states of inactivity. As we encounter Cymochles in the bower in Book II, canto v, for example, we find him lounging, surrounded by

> a flock of damzelles fresh and gay,
> That rownd about him dissolute did play
> Their wanton follies and light meriment.
> (II.v.32.4-6)

However, while these maidens attempt to lure Cymochles into amorous activities, the languid knight only watches:

> He, like an adder lurking in the weedes,
> His wandring thought in deepe desire does steepe,
> And his frayle eye with spoyle of beauty feedes.
> (II.v.34.1-3)

Cymochles, whom we have every reason to believe is quite virile, has, under Acrasia's spell, lost sight of the proper function of his own sexuality and has become a voyeur. Indeed, Cymochles is in a state of "suspended lust."[64] We must make clear here, however, that even if Cymochles were to engage in sexual intercourse, he would still not be engaged in any virtuous activity; fornication is a transgression. The point is merely that Spenser is employing instances of "suspended lust," that is, images of inactivity, to represent allegorically the sterile lust to which the inhabitants of the bower have given their lives.

The supreme example of the inactivity Spenser associates with the sin of lust is, of course, Verdant. Although the sweat on Acrasia's breasts indicates that she and Verdant have just completed their "late

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[63]Evans, Anatomy, p. 146.

[64]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 332.

sweet toyle" (II.xii.78.3), when we see the knight, we note only that he is at this point asleep, rendered impotent by his recent sexual activity with Acrasia. He is suffering from "paralysis of appetite."[65] Indeed, Acrasia and her partner are actually involved in no activity of any kind;[66] while Verdant sleeps, his body wasted and spent in the possession of demonic love,[67] the enchantress merely hangs over him longingly, herself reduced to a state of inactivity by the temporary impotence of her lover (II.xii.73.1-9). Consequently, according to Hough, Acrasia becomes a symbol of the sterile and life-destroying sensuality of the bower.[68] Ironically, by engaging her partner in sexual activity, Acrasia has defeated herself; having led Verdant into a world of sloth and lust, she becomes a victim of his subsequent impotence and inactivity. As Williams observes, Verdant, the passive partner reduced to a state of impotent inactivity, and Acrasia, the dominant, yet for the moment totally helpless and unfulfilled, partner, are caught by Spenser in a moment of suspended animation.[69] The poet's message is unmistakable. The effect of lust, indeed, of any sin, is to paralyze and destroy: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Romans 8:13). Spenser, aware of "the lethargy, the dissolution, or disintegrating

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[65]Lewis, Allegory, p. 339.

[66]Lewis, Allegory, p. 332.

[67]Isabel MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 248.

[68]Hough, p. 164.

[69]Williams, p. 76.

life-in-death of sensuality,"[70] once more employs images of inactivity to warn of the wages of sin.

As we can see, Acrasia's world is dedicated to the passions of the flesh, its inhabitants surrendering themselves most noticeably to the sins of sloth and lust. This surrender to sin exacts a price, however. As Paul explains in his epistle to the Romans, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). That is, a life devoted to sin becomes a life of bondage to sin, of spiritual decay, and of eternal separation from the God of righteousness. Thus, the strongest indictment against the Bower of Bliss is that it illustrates quite clearly that surrender to sin results in the eternal bondage of the soul. To symbolize this bondage, Spenser uses images of cages and nets, both literal and figurative, which hold man trapped and motionless. In Book II, canto v, the poet introduces the men whom Acrasia has lured into the bower and then transformed into shapes that reflect the bestiality and degradation of the human soul which has succumbed to animal passions, noting that the enchantress, like Circe,

> Does charme her lovers, and the feeble sprightes
> Can call out of the bodies of fraile wightes;
> Whom then she does trasforme to monstrous hewes,
> And horribly misshapes with ugly sightes,
> Captiv'd eternally in yron mewes,
> And darksom dens, where Titan his face never shewes.
> (II.v.27.4-9)

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[70]Edward Dowden, Variorum, II (1933), 348.

Here Spenser envisions these former men in double bondage: imprisoned behind iron bars, they are physically enslaved, the cages, which allow little room for movement, reducing them to a state of inactivity; their souls, likewise, are held captive by their own brutishness, as symbolized by their beastlike forms and "monstrous hewes." Consequently, they are physically and spiritually static, incapable of physical movement or spiritual growth or life. For Spenser, the literal inactivity resulting from physical captivity is a proper symbol for spiritual stasis or death.

Spenser's interest in depicting the bondage of the soul that has delivered itself up to sin becomes more obvious throughout canto xii as various types of "cages" reappear. For instance, the wall "enclosed rownd about" (II.xii.43.1) the bower not only serves to keep out wild beasts but is also designed the "entred guestes to keep within" (II.xii. 43.2). Hence, like the "yron mewes" imprisoning Acrasia's animals, the bower wall becomes a kind of cage fashioned to limit the movement to and fro of the garden's inhabitants. Because their movements are circumscribed by the bower's wall, we may say that Acrasia's guests are rendered relatively inactive, their partial stasis symbolizing the bondage of the soul that has succumbed to sins and passions such as those found in the garden. Within the symbolic cage of the garden wall appear other types of cages, especially nets, which Spenser depicts both figuratively and literally. Once inside the wall Guyon encounters another gate,

> being goodly dight
> With bowes and braunches, which did broad dilate
> Their clasping armes, in wanton wreathings intricate.
> (II.xii.53.7-9)

Here Spenser depicts the vegetable life in the garden as a large snare that attempts to enclose man in "wreathings intricate," making him virtually motionless. Significantly, when one is held fast by "clasping armes" or "embracing" vines (II.xii.54.2), one does not actually move. Indeed, Nelson opines, everything in the garden entices, embraces, and reaches out to trap man; these interwoven enticements are a web into which man is led by his natural inclination to satisfy his passions.[71] These webs are, of course, suggestive of man's subsequent spiritual slavery. Ultimately, figurative nets or webs become associated with Acrasia herself. Reclining on her bed of roses, the enchantress is arrayed in a transparent garment of "silke and silver thin" (II.xii. 77.4) of which Spenser writes:

> More subtile web Arachne cannot spin,
> Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
> Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee.
> (II.xii.77.7-9)

Besides informing us that the loose weave of her garment resembles the fineness of a spider's web, Spenser warns that Acrasia's beauty is a net that traps men and eternally enslaves their souls. Furthermore, C. W. Lemmi notes, the spider's web is a common symbol of the snares that beset weak mortals.[72] Caught in the gossamer web of the enchantress' charms, motionless and trapped like insects, Acrasia's victims indeed become slaves to their passions. Again Spenser figuratively suggests physical inactivity as a symbol for the bondage of the soul.

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[71]Nelson, p. 187.

[72]C. W. Lemmi, Variorum, II (1933), 393.

Later the web or net by which man is trapped in a motionless state becomes literal as Guyon captures Acrasia and Verdant in a "subtile net" (II.xii.81.4), binding them in "captive bandes" (II.xii.82.5). This net becomes the means by which Guyon subdues the false Acrasia. Ironically, the many webs she has woven to trap weak mortals are replaced by a net in which she herself is bound. Like her victims, Acrasia becomes a slave:

> The faire enchauntresse, so unwares opprest,
> Tryde all her arts and all her sleights, thence out to wrest.
> (II.xii.81.8-9)

> And eke her lover strove: but all in vaine;
> For that same net so cunningly was wound,
> That neither guile nor force might it distraine.
> (II.xii.82.1-3)

Her frantic activity is futile. Unable to escape, Acrasia is, for all intents and purposes, motionless and helpless. Thus, the conqueror of men becomes herself a victim, her physical captivity and virtual immobility becoming tangible expressions of her own spiritual bondage. Captured within a net very like those of her own fashioning, Acrasia becomes a static figure suspended in a moment, a warning of the spiritual stasis or death associated with the Bower of Bliss.

However, Spenser's ultimate warning of the spiritual death that surrender to sin entails is Gryll, the man transformed into a hog through his servitude to Acrasia and sin. Changed back into human form after the destruction of the Bower of Bliss, Gryll berates his savior, having sunk so low into the sensual prison of the life offered to him by Acrasia that he prefers to remain a beast. Although they have returned Gryll to human form, Guyon and the Palmer cannot change Gryll's "hoggish minde" (II.xii.87.8). Having "so soone forgot the excellence / Of his

creation" (II.xii.87.2-3), Gryll will remain forever bound in the prison of his mind and soul, forever condemned to the spiritual stasis of sin.

Thus, we can see how images of inactivity within the Bower of Bliss episode contribute to Spenser's system of warning of the perils of surrendering to sin and base passions. Although the garden appears at first glance to be the scene of great frolicking and frantic activity, a place where wanton nymphs gambol and knights enjoy physical delights, in reality Acrasia's abode is a type of hell, a near motionless world where men surrender their bodies to sloth and lust and their souls to endless bondage to partake of a moment of pleasure. The moment, however, is brief. After man forgets his quest for virtue, gives himself over to sloth and lust, and loses his soul to bondage to sin, the moment is over and the eternity of perpetual stasis and separation from God begins.

In concluding this first of two chapters on inactivity and sin and the quest of the knight as the labor of the Christian warrior in service to God against sin, we recall to mind the words of Paul to the Ephesians: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1). Exhorting the Christians at Ephesus to remain constant in their labor for God, Paul echoes the thoughts the poet Spenser surely must have had when he chose to allegorize the battle of man against sin in terms of an active quest for virtue. Recognizing that "No wretchednesse is like to sinfull vellenage" (II.xi.1.9), Spenser cautions against the results of surrender to sin through images of inactivity and his system of warning devices.

CHAPTER IV

INACTIVITY AND SIN: THE QUEST OF THE RED CROSSE KNIGHT

Recalling the groundwork for our study of inactivity and sin laid in the first part of Chapter III, we move now to an examination of the quest of the knight who, more than any other figure in Spenser's poem, is a type of the Christian warrior on earth, representative of the Church Militant. Indeed, James Nohrnberg points out, the prototype for the Red Crosse Knight, titular hero of Book I of The Faerie Queene, is the chivalric Christ on horseback in Revelation.[1] Furthermore, the quest of this knight closely follows the symbolism of the quest of Christ.[2] The purpose of the quest of Christ was, of course, to undo the effects of the First Fall, to effect a reconciliation between God and His creation, and to make possible the salvation of man. By submitting Himself completely to the will of His Father and seeking to defeat sin in the name of God, Christ established a pattern of spiritual devotion and warfare, a quest, to be followed by all Christians. The story of the Red Crosse Knight is, then, the story of the Christian life in general, the story of the growth of faith and the struggles attendant upon this growth. Thus, the narrative of Book I concerns "the religious

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[1]James Nohrnberg, The Analogy of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 189.

[2]Northrop Frye, "The Structure of Imagery in The Faerie Queene," in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972), p. 161.

life, ranging from rapture to despair."[3] As Kathleen Williams notes, in Book I the meaning of Christian warfare and devotion is unobtrusively shaped through the story of "knights and ladies gentle deeds" (I.1.5).[4] In recounting the "deeds" of Red Crosse, Spenser presents for the edification of his readers the quest for virtue and faith, man's quest for God.

Such a quest necessarily demands complete submission to the will of God, and this total submission in turn necessitates an active turning away from sin. Therefore, before the Red Crosse Knight can emulate Christ and defeat sin, that is, the final dragon, in the name of God, he must struggle to defeat sin in his own life. This battle, which Red Crosse takes up the day he champions Una's cause in the halls of Gloriana, becomes his quest. When he assumes his knightly vocation, he accepts, as must all Christians, "the call to devote oneself wholly to one heaven-chosen task."[5] Upon accepting this call Red Crosse begins a struggle against sin in his own life that will lead him into the very pit of hell. In order to win the battle the knight must labor without ceasing, ever keeping his eyes on Christ if he is not to falter and submit to the temptations that assail him throughout his quest. He must learn, as Williams remarks, that "this is a God-centred world, and a knight must keep his attention steadily away from self and upon the

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[3]H. S. V. Jones, A Spenser Handbook (1930; rpt. New York: F. S. Crofts and Company, 1937), p. 174.

[4]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 4.

[5]Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 78.

quest he has been entrusted with, if he is not to go astray."[6] To relax one's attention, to turn away from God to self, to flag in one's active Christian labor, is to invite defeat and endanger the quest:

> So for the first thing, the knight [must] have power to concentrate the whole content of life and the whole significance of reality into one single wish. If a man lacks this concentration, this intensity, if his soul from the beginning is dispersed in the multifarious, he never comes to the point of making the movement.[7]

These last words return us to our discussion in Chapter III of sin as it relates to inactivity and the quest. Spenser's story of the quest of the Red Crosse Knight is related to us, in part, through images of inactivity; through these images and the poet's system of warning devices, we are frequently cautioned that the way from sin to God is difficult, fraught with many spiritual dangers capable of impeding progress or even entrapping the soul. Thus, as we journey with the knight as he struggles against sin and grows in faith through prison to penance and beyond, we witness the bondage and liberation of a human soul.

Inexperienced in the faith represented by the bloody cross on his shield, the Red Crosse Knight is unprepared for the first challenge of his quest. As we have seen in Chapter II in our initial discussion of Red Crosse's quest, the knight and Una, having relaxed their vigilance and allowed themselves to be led by their senses into the Wandering Wood, soon find themselves face to face with the monster Error (I.i.7-14). Confronted by this creature Red Crosse displays the first

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[6]Williams, p. 4.

[7]Nohrnberg, p. 135.

signs of a weakness that will hinder him throughout his journey: excessive confidence in himself and pride in his own abilities. This fault precipitates the knight's first "error." Driven by confidence in his own might and a desire to prove himself, Red Crosse ignores Una's warning, attacks the monster, and immediately finds himself caught tight in the viselike coils of her tail:

> her huge traine
> All suddenly about his body wound,
> That hand or foot to stirr he strove in vaine:
> God helpe the man so wrapt in Errours endlesse traine.
> (I.i.18.6-9)

Immobile in her grasp Red Crosse feels the effects of this first error, or sin. The knight has misplaced his faith; instead of faith in God, he has faith in himself, that is, pride: "He has a kind of faith, but it is in his own 'force,' the strength and light of his own virtue, and this must bar the way to the faith to be attained before he can achieve his quest."[8] Like the disciple Peter, who, when attempting to walk on the waves, depended on his own abilities to cross the water only to find himself sinking rapidly (Matthew 14:28-31), Red Crosse, relying on his own power, forgets his dependence upon God and finds himself rapidly losing his battle with Error. This monster is often said to symbolize false theological doctrine.[9] If one of the things she represents is the sin of pride, faith in self rather than faith in God, then she does indeed symbolize a grave misunderstanding of one of the chief tenets of Christianity: faith in God saves; faith in self, that is, in one's own

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[8]Williams, p. 7.

[9]John Erskine Hankins, Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of The Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 120.

works, does not. It is this misunderstanding, this pride in self, that leads Red Crosse to Error's den and binds him, trapped and motionless, in her determined grip. Thus begins the long and tortuous career of the Red Crosse Knight, a career continually marked by misplaced faith and mistaken loyalties. Although the knight soon frees himself from the monster's grasp and finally slays her, error, in the form of this misplaced faith, will continue to mar his quest.

The next adventure on this difficult quest clearly reveals that the Red Crosse Knight has not escaped error in the form of misplaced faith or the inactivity Spenser uses to signal the disastrous effects this error will have on the knight's quest. Meeting Archimago, the powerful enemy of virtue, a type of Satan, soon after his victory over Error, Red Crosse unwisely trusts the old man, agreeing to spend the night in his lodgings. Perhaps because of excessive confidence following his recent victory, the knight relaxes his vigilance and is soon "drownd in deadly sleepe" (I.i.36.6) while in the deep of night Archimago begins the machinations that are to alter profoundly the course of Red Crosse's quest:

> Archimago's power is at its greatest at night, when even the Christian armour cannot help minds "drownd in deadly sleepe." . . . The "sleepy mind" is evil's ally, and the efforts of Archimago . . . are, throughout, to blind the eye of reason, to induce Red Crosse to relax his constant guard against the deceit through which evil works, in fact to disarm him.[10]

This is not to say, of course, that physical fatigue or the need for sleep is evil. Nor are we saying that the Red Crosse Knight sins because he sleeps. The point is merely that Spenser employs sleep in

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[10]Williams, p. 8.

this episode as a symbol of Red Crosse's as yet undeveloped and thus weak spiritual alertness. It is this weakness in the knight's spiritual armor that leads him to unquestioning trust in Archimago. It also leads him to succumb to "deadly sleepe." Again, Spenser's criticism is not aimed at mere physical sleep; the term "deadly sleepe" applies quite clearly to that which assails "sleepy minds" (I.i.36.9). That is, the sleep the Red Cross Knight gives himself to is the sleep of the spiritually unwary. Spenser's point is, then, that the knight, in lowering his spiritual defenses, makes himself an easy mark for the evil that constantly lurks, waiting for an opportunity to prey upon the spiritually "sleepy" or inactive. Thus, relaxed into a state of spiritual inactivity, his soul's defenses down, the knight is easy prey for the evil magician, who sends a false dream to convince Red Crosse of Una's unworthiness as an object of his love and devotion. And because he is spiritually unalert, the knight once again misplaces his faith; believing in his senses, that is, himself, more than he believes in Una, Red Crosse abandons his lady (I.ii.6.8-9)–the truth and the light that have led him thus far–and, of course, his quest as a warrior of God. Indeed, Williams notes, this same self-sufficiency "which begins Red Crosse's failure as knight and lover is also the self-sufficiency which begins his failure as a Christian."[11] On his own for the first time, with only faith in himself remaining, the Red Crosse Knight thus enters a period of confusion and doubt that will lead him steadily down to the darkness of Orgoglio's dungeon, for, as Parker notes, "only in [Una's] company

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[11]Williams, p. 4.

can Holiness make any progress, or even stay as he was."[12] Also realizing the importance of Una to the knight's faith and to his quest, Nohrnberg asserts, "Without Una, Redcrosse's dedication can be neither wholly one, nor wholly true."[13] His cause lost, his faith in Una betrayed, and his faith in God yet meager, the Red Crosse Knight begins this new phase of his quest, the erratic search for someone or something to believe in.

This search, which begins as the knight shifts his loyalties to the false Duessa, disguised as the fragile beauty Fidessa (I.ii.26-27), quickly plunges Red Crosse into another episode of inactivity. After traveling together for some time in the noonday sun, the two find a cool, shaded place where they dismount to "rest their weary limbs a tide" (I.ii.29.9). So eager is Red Crosse to revive his waning faith that he begins to weave a garland for his new mistress "there as they sit" (I.ii.30.2). The knight, however, has once again misplaced his faith, for his new companion is an ally of Archimago and, thus, an agent of sin. Her debilitating effect upon him is obvious: she has apparently succeeded in erasing from his memory Una, his quest, and his purpose and has contented him with indolent ease and idle talk beneath a tree situated on what Spenser calls "unlucky ground" (I.ii.28.9). Although seeking refuge from the noonday heat beneath a shady tree is an action innocent enough in itself, Spenser's point in describing Red Crosse sitting on this "unlucky ground" is that in comparison to what he should

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[12]Parker, p. 73.

[13]Nohrnberg, p. 281.

be doing, that is, actively pursuing his quest, the knight's inactivity beneath the tree is culpable behavior. Indeed, under the influence of Duessa, Red Crosse, sitting in the cool shade when he should be pursuing his quest, commits a second sin, surrendering himself to sloth, or pigritia, the sin of inactivity. Indeed, the knight has actually begun the journey into a life fraught with sin, as his later career demonstrates, for having abandoned Una and the quest, Red Crosse has also abandoned the active struggle against sin. As Duessa's demoralizing influence on him increases, so do his transgressions and his moments of surrender to inactivity.

The extent of the paralyzing effect Duessa has on Red Crosse's will and faith becomes even clearer when the knight, meeting Fradubio, the man transformed into a tree, finds himself this time incapable of any action in response to the bewitched man's plight. Standing beneath a shade tree the Red Crosse Knight plucks a bough with which to fashion the garland for Duessa, only to see drops of blood falling from the broken limb and to hear a pitiful moaning in human tones from the tree itself (I.ii.30-31). At this point the knight is so unsure of what he believes, not knowing where to place his faith, that he no longer trusts even his own senses or their ability to steer him to correct decisions and actions. Thus, "doubting much his sence" (I.ii.32.4), he simply stands, benumbed, before the speaking tree: "Astond he stood, and up his heare did hove, / And with that suddein horror could no member move" (I.ii.31.8-9). Separated by the evil influence of Archimago from the truth and reason Una once lent to his quest and already affected by the false and sinful nature of Duessa, Red Crosse has lost the capacity to

act so needful for the furtherance of his quest. As John Upton remarks, once "the common enemy of mankind" separates holiness from truth,

> falshood attaches herself to holiness; and no adventure succeeds. Our christian [sic] knight stands amazed at the plucking of a bough, and seeing it stream with blood; he stands amazed, and performs nothing, for holiness unassisted with truth and reason is soon lost in amazement and silly wonderment.[14]

This inability to act warns us of the debilitating effect of sin, here in the form of Duessa the false, in the life and quest of a Christian.

Not only does sin often make one incapable of physical action, but it can also prevent one from taking moral action because it can cloud the mind with doubt, making the truth of one's sinful circumstances difficult to discern or acknowledge. Standing before the Red Crosse Knight is Fradubio, once a man, like the knight, plagued by sin and doubt, now a man transformed into a tree as a consequence of that sin and doubt. Once the faithful lover of the beautiful Fraelissa, Fradubio became physically attracted to the fair-seeming Duessa, who, as Fradubio recounts, "Did yield her comely person, to be at my call" (I.ii.36.9). So taken by her physical beauty was he that he failed to see that she was a witch, a "false sorceresse, / That many errant knights hath broght to wretchednesse" (I.ii.34.8-9). Torn between his love for Fraelissa and his lust for Duessa, Fradubio, unable to make a decision, lost Fraelissa to the witch's spell and then became the paramour of the enchantress. Later, when the witch's true nature was revealed to him, Fradubio, still irresolute and now too fearful to leave the enchantress,

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[14]John Upton, quoted in Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, and Frederick Morgan Padelford, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), 263.

became the second victim of her evil spells. Now he stands beside Fraelissa, both of them transformed into trees.

Spenser's description of Fradubio's circumstances contains some pertinent information about sin and its effects on man's life. When man has before him the good and the evil, he often longs for the good but desires the evil equally. As good and evil battle for his allegiance, man stands irresolute between them, unable to commit himself to either the good he knows to be true or the evil he desires to embrace. Doubtful and indecisive, he is fully unable to make a stand for either. Because the battle against sin must be an active, daily struggle, the man, incapable of undertaking the struggle, gives the victory by default to evil, thus exemplifying the truth of the words of Jesus, "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke 11:23).

Thus, Fradubio's inability to act on behalf of good illustrates the paralyzing effect of sin in man's life. Battling for his soul, sin enlists as its ally doubt that is strong enough to deter the undertaking of moral action, creating spiritual paralysis. As Frederick Padelford notes, "The doubting soul is vacillating in thought and action . . . and is therefore rendered mute and impotent."[15] Having allowed himself to embrace the evil he desired, Fradubio found himself filled with "unresolved doubt and frail resolution, which stand rooted to the spot because they can never decide which way to go."[16] Thus, because he once

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[15]Frederick Morgan Padelford, Variorum, I (1932), 435.

[16]Hankins, p. 123.

"stood suspended in doubt,"[17] Fradubio, transformed into a tree, must now remain physically immobile, his stasis a fitting symbol of his spiritual paralysis. Yet spiritual paralysis, nurtured as an ally by sin, soon becomes spiritual decay, which leads eventually to spiritual death. Fradubio's transformation into a tree symbolizes this spiritual death. According to William Nelson, the human tree is a common figure for "man captive to sin and therefore spiritually dead."[18] Indeed, as Maurice Evans observes, "The Faerie Queene is full of allusions to characters turned into trees, all of them carrying the stigma of some form of sinfulness."[19] Because he lost faith in the good and embraced evil with its attendants, doubt and irresolution, Fradubio now stands "enclosd in wooden wals full faste" (I.ii.42.8), prisoner of sin, "the active evil to which the uncommitted state of doubt makes him vulnerable."[20]

From this spiritual bondage Fradubio and Fraelissa cannot be released by any mortal man, not even the redoubtable knight before them. Prisoners of sin and death, they must await deliverance at the hands of the only being who ever conquered both sin and death, the living Christ. Having once abandoned faith in the good, Fradubio has now discovered

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[17]Mark Rose, Spenser's Art: A Companion to Book One of The Faerie Queene (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 36.

[18]William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 162.

[19]Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 55.

[20]Martha Craig, "The Secret Wit of Spenser's Language," in Essential Articles, p. 321.

that only faith in the true good can release him, a faith that will lead him to "be bathed in a living well" (I.ii.43.4). Thus, Nelson observes, "the release of this wretched pair from their imprisonment, like the release of mankind from its bondage to sin and death, must wait upon that miraculous bath which is, in one sense at least, baptism in Christ."[21] Only baptism in the living waters will cleanse away sin and free the soul: "doubt and resolution will be purged also, and the whole mind of man directed to more positive action."[22] Cleansed and ready to resume a life of spiritual growth, Fradubio will be free from his prison walls.

But what of the knight who himself stands immobile before the man/tree, hearing but not hearing his woeful tale? Himself a victim of Duessa's wiles, another doubter who has lost faith in the good-Una and the quest-the Red Crosse Knight stands before this vision of truth, unable to see. Rose observes,

> Fradubio's name, Brother Doubt, points both to his crucial error, lack of faith, and to his relationship with Redcross. But Redcross, having withdrawn from the light, never perceives that this bizarre creature is his alter ego, the image of what he himself is in danger of becoming.[23]

Thus, the episode is a measure of the success of Archimago, agent of sin, in separating the Red Crosse Knight from truth in that he does not

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[21]Nelson, p. 162.

[22]Hankins, p. 123.

[23]Rose, p. 35.

recognize a summary of his own situation.[24] Refusing to see himself in Fradubio, the knight turns from the truth and

> When all this speech the living tree had spent,
> The bleeding bough did thrust into the ground,
> That from the blood he might be innocent,
> And with fresh clay did close the wooden wound.
> (I.ii.44.5-8)

And departing with Duessa, the spiritually blind and paralyzed knight moves on in his adventures, leaving only to continue his descent into the spiritual hell that awaits him.

That the knight has truly begun this blind descent becomes all too clear as we observe how passively he allows himself to be led by Duessa to the worldly House of Pride. That he has sunk to a level of spiritual emptiness low enough to allow him to be a part of the world of the House of Pride is obvious from his actions, and inaction, there. Most assuredly, at this point in his career the Red Crosse Knight belongs in this world governed by the vainglorious Lucifera. The knight is, as we have seen, a man driven to a great extent by confidence in his own abilities. Because of this pride he depends upon himself and not God in his battle with Error and is nearly defeated. Also, because of pride he deserts the faithful Una, believing her to be untrue and thus unworthy of his attentions. The prideful knight is therefore a fit inhabitant of Lucifera's domain, a kingdom of vainglorious and pompous people: "Lucifera is the guiding spirit for a joyless court of backbiters who spend their time competing in physical vanities, arranging their hair

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[24]Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, eds., Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, the Mutability Cantos, and Selections from the Minor Poetry (New York: Odyssey Press, Inc., 1965), p. 21.

and clothes, sneering at each other's pride."[25] These are people who worship self, just as the Red Crosse Knight has done. To worship self and those worldly goods that puff up self is, of course, to deny the worship of the true and only God. Such is the sin of pride, the sin of Lucifer, who sought to worship self, to make self God.

The Red Crosse Knight is, as we have seen, a man who has a rather high, a potentially dangerous, regard for self; however, in the course of his recent adventures, his ego has suffered considerably. Not only has he been forced to acknowledge what he believes to be the infidelity of Una, but he has also recently abandoned his quest and with it the profession that defines his self-image and his place in the world. Attempting to recapture his concept of self, he casts his lot with Duessa and takes to himself the quest of defending what he falsely believes to be her innocence and honor. In this desperate attempt to rebuild his self-image, he refuses to see that Fradubio is a mirror image of the half-man that he himself is becoming. Thus, desperately blind to his present situation, he joins the world of Lucifera's minions at the House of Pride, hoping to find there the attention and praise he needs to rebuild his deteriorating self-confidence. However, in this place where all "devise / Themselves to setten forth" (I.iv.14.5-6), the Red Crosse Knight is virtually ignored, and his pride, of course, suffers. Watching as Lucifera and the members of her court flaunt themselves,

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[25]Rose, p. 54.

the stout Faery mongst the middest crowd
Thought all their glorie vaine in knightly vew,
And that great princesse too exceeding prowd,
That to strange knight no better countenance allowd.
(I.iv.15.6-9)

Piqued by their failure to give him what he considers to be his due regard, the Red Crosse Knight self-righteously condemns the vanity of this court. And so, standing back in disdain, he observes the antics of pride while he himself suffers neglect with an intensity that only the proud can feel. Thus abandoned to the sin of pride, the most fatal of sins because it displaces God for self, the knight stands on the edge of a spiritual abyss. He has forsaken the search for virtue that was his quest and, by implication, the God who is the author of that quest, and he has, in committing the sin of pride, violated the first of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Having violated this commandment, the knight has prepared the way for other transgressions, for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Thus, the Red Crosse Knight has approached the abyss of sin. In representing this spiritual state, Spenser now makes the knight a spectator of the procession of the Seven Deadly Sins.

In Chapter III of this study we observed that in his description of this procession Spenser captures the essence of the debilitating effects of sin and depicts, in part through images of inactivity, the spiritual paralysis that results from sin. Watching the pointless expedition of the counselors, however, the Red Crosse Knight fails to relate their spiritual stasis to his own. Although the counselors are making a feeble attempt at progress, they are actually going nowhere. The effect

is one of stasis—an ineffectual procession is observed by a knight who stands stationary, oblivious of his own spiritual stasis mirrored in the scene before him: "Sin is in bouncing, bumping motion but the knight, significantly, is going nowhere; his spiritual progress has stopped."[26] In particular, Red Crosse fails to see the parallels between himself and the first counselor, Idleness. First, according to Rose, "Idleness, so 'drownd in sleepe' that he 'knew not whether right he went, or else astray,' mirrors Redcross' obliviousness."[27] This character also reflects the knight's lack of direction or purpose now that he has abandoned his quest; just as the counselor neglects his portesse little redd" (I.iv.19.2), symbol of his profession, thus leaving himself with nothing to do, Red Crosse neglects the duties associated with his profession, thereby leaving himself with no task to push him onward. Finally, the Red Crosse Knight does not realize that, like the counselor, he will soon sink in his career to a state of complete inactivity by a fountain that will mark a further stage in his descent into the pit of hell. Thus, as Isabel MacCaffrey observes, the counselor Idleness "is the prophetic mirror of the knight as he will shortly afterward appear to us."[28]

Although the Red Crosse Knight does not consciously recognize the dreadful implications of the procession before him, he is nevertheless infected by the joylessness of Lucifera's court. At this point Red

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[26]Rose, p. 57.

[27]Rose, p. 58.

[28]Isabel MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 89.

Crosse's joylessness is not associated with an image of inactivity; however, the effect his stay at the House of Pride has is important because it causes to grow in the knight the sadness that will eventually lead him to succumb to that inactivity by a fountain that precedes his descent into hell. Because the knight's absence of joy is, then, a prelude to his fall, it deserves our attention. This absence of joy combines with a certain predisposition Red Crosse has for melancholy, a trait revealed to us at our first glimpse of this knight who "of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad" (I.i.2.8). Thus it is that in the House of Pride the Red Crosse Knight meets in combat the physical embodiment of his own joylessness, the pagan knight Sansjoy. This confrontation is, of course, precipitated by more than Red Crosse's predisposition toward melancholy. As we have said, many of the knight's misadventures stem from his struggle with self, a struggle that intensifies the moment he deserts Una and the quest, thus relinquishing an essential ingredient of his self-identity. Of course, as the knight's identity crisis worsens, his melancholy grows. Having abandoned all that is important to him, he partakes of the meaningless pride and vanity of Lucifera's court. These circumstances, according to Kellogg and Steele, lead Red Crosse to question the meaning of his own life.[29] The answer brings him face to face with Sansjoy, the fitting symbol of the knight's "growing despair of his righteous identity."[30]

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[29]Kellogg and Steele, p. 27.

[30]Patrick Cullen, Infernal Triad: The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 43.

However, what Parker terms Red Crosse's "self-regarding melancholy"[31] would not exist were it not for his dangerous dependence upon and confidence in self; indeed, this pride in self is the principal source of his trouble. This dependence upon self creates sorrow in the Red Crosse Knight because, having abandoned his faith in God and having depended upon his own abilities, he has thus far encountered only difficulty and confusion. Therefore, as the knight perhaps senses, he has only himself to blame for his failures. As Williams notes, the man who relies upon himself will fear punishment when he fails, as he must; the Red Crosse Knight then is moving toward the sorrow and fear of the Old Testament law of guilt and vengeance and away from the true faith of salvation in Christ.[32] Although the knight still bears the shield of faith emblazoned with a bloody cross, the "deare remembrance of his dying Lord" (I.i.2.2), he has never embraced the promise of salvation embodied in this cross. He is, in essence, a man who still relies for salvation upon works instead of faith. Reading Paul's epistle to the Romans, we can better understand the sorrow the Red Crosse Knight feels, for there we learn that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight" (Romans 3:20). The sorrow born of the recognition of this pronouncement is, of course, compounded by the fact noted earlier that the Red Crosse Knight must fail because his "deeds" reflect the weak and sinful nature of all men. Thus, the knight's "imperfect faith in God, and his prideful faith in the limited

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[31]Parker, p. 84.

[32]Williams, p. 16.

resources of the fallen self, render him ultimately helpless and therefore joyless or 'sad.'"[33] In Sansjoy the Red Crosse Knight encounters this profound sadness of those who depend upon self and not upon the mercy and grace of God.[34] Because this sorrow will not depart from the knight until he has placed his faith in God alone and learned to live by the hope of salvation that only a true dependence upon God can foster, he is unable to kill Sansjoy, who is borne away under cloud's cover by Duessa (I.v.14.1-9). Thus, Red Cross's sorrow continues to live; it is this sorrow that will eventually lead him to embrace the inactivity that precedes his fall.

That the knight does not yet fully realize that his pride in self is the source of his difficulties and sorrow is evident from the next image of inactivity in the poem. Immediately following the battle, the knight allows himself to bask in the accolades heaped on him by the members of Lucifera's court (I.v.15.6-9). Momentarily buoyed by praise of his prowess in battle, Red Crosse finally joins the ranks of the House of Pride:

> Wherewith he goeth to that soveraine queene,
> And falling her before on lowly knee,
> To her makes present of his service seene:
> Which she accepts, with thankes and goodly gree,
> Greatly advauncing his gay chevalree.
> (I.v.16.1-5)

This moment when the knight drops to his knees, motionless as he bows before Lucifera, has already been discussed in Chapter II as an image of inactivity that signals the shifting of Red Crosse's knightly allegiance.

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[33]Cullen, p. 23.

[34]Williams, p. 16.

In the context of the relationship between inactivity and sin, however, this passage demands further analysis. Remembering that each of the knights of the Faerie Queene symbolizes the Christian warrior on earth, a type of the chivalric Christ of Revelation, we can see that the temptation to which the Red Crosse Knight now succumbs involves much more than a shifting of knightly allegiance from Gloriana to Lucifera. Essentially, at this moment in his life the Red Crosse Knight faces a difficult test of his potential likeness to Christ. This test the knight fails. In this episode Red Crosse faces a temptation paralleling one of the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. When tempted by Satan to "fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9), Christ responded, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). The Red Crosse Knight, however, "makes present of his service" to Lucifera, the temptress who by her name and actions reveals herself as a type of Satan. Kneeling before Lucifera the Red Crosse Knight worships a new god, eternal enemy of the one true God. The image of inactivity that depicts this transgression clearly signals the knight's spiritual peril and the inescapable fact that Red Crosse, long poised on the brink of his own spiritual abyss, has now begun the final descent.

That the Red Crosse Knight has truly begun the final stage of his journey into hell Spenser makes clear in the remaining scenes of canto v of Book I, scenes in which images of inactivity accumulate quickly, evolving into a terrifying representation of spiritual paralysis and death. As Spenser begins in these scenes a catalogue of those whose sins have already condemned them to eternal spiritual bondage, he

carefully establishes the Red Crosse Knight's kinship with these enslaved souls. Having been prematurely proclaimed the victor over Sansjoy, the knight is escorted back to Lucifera's palace while "all the people followe with great glee, / Shouting, and clapping all their hands on hight" (I.v.16.7-8). Amid all of this gaiety

> Home is he brought, and layd in sumptuous bed:
> Where many skilfull leaches him abide,
> To salve his hurts, that yet still freshly bled.
> In wine and oyle they wash his woundes wide,
> And softly can embalme on everie side.
> And all the while, most heavenly melody
> About the bed sweet musicke did divide,
> Him to beguile of griefe and agony.
> (I.v.17.1-8)

Literally, the wounds that force Red Crosse to take to his bed are physical ones, "woundes wide" still bleeding. We must remember, however, that these wounds were inflicted by Sansjoy, the physical embodiment of the Red Crosse Knight's own spiritual malady, who himself lies at this moment in "slombring swownd, nigh voyd of vitall spright" (I.v.19.5). Then symbolically these bleeding wounds are wounds of the soul, that is, physical signs of the knight's spiritual pain. Thus, although he is surrounded by the physical comforts of royal splendor and is attended by excellent physicians who minister to his body, the prostrate, disconsolate knight succumbs to his spiritual pain, his soul crying in "griefe and agony."

The Red Crosse Knight, however, is not alone in his spiritual suffering, signaled by an image of inactivity. Leaving this image Spenser turns to the previously mentioned description of those who share Red Crosse's spiritual agony, a description of the hell of eternal inactivity reserved for the damned. Describing Duessa's descent into

the underworld to seek aid for the wounded Sansjoy, Spenser presents for us this vision of hell, where the souls of the damned endure spiritual agony for all eternity. As she travels through the underworld, Duessa passes by the river Acheron, where "many soules sit wailing woefully" (I.v.33.2). Moving past these she sees other creatures eternally tormented in this "house of endlesse paine" (I.v.33.7): Ixion forever bound to a turning wheel (I.v.35.1), "thristy Tantalus hong by the chin" (I.v.35.5), Typhoeus "stretched on a gin" (I.v.35.7), "Theseus condemned to endlesse slouth by law" (I.v.35.9). Significantly, all of these creatures are literally bound, condemned to an eternity of stasis for transgressions against the gods committed during their lifetimes. Foremost among these offenders is Aesculapius, imprisoned in a dark cave "in chaines remedilesse" (I.v.36.8) for defying Jove by raising Hippolytus from the dead. Even those souls who are allowed to move are forever condemned to labor in vain: there is Sisyphus, who "an huge round stone did reele / Against an hill, ne might from labour lin" (I.v.35.3-4); and there are the fifty sisters, who "water in leke vessels draw" (I.v.35.9). Because the stone Sisyphus rolls up the hill always falls back upon him just as he reaches the top of the incline, his labor is futile-and endless. And because their pails leak, the sisters strive endlessly to gather a sufficient quantity of water. Thus, their motions are empty, static in their futility. As we examine this concept of hell as eternal stasis, recalling a similar vision of hell in Book II, we find the network of imagery equating inactivity and sin again powerfully reinforced.

Although the hell of Book I is classical rather than Christian in concept, Spenser shifts quickly to a perspective that will allow him to speak again his message of Christian truth, again pronounced, in part, through images of inactivity. Returning us to the upper regions and the House of Pride, Spenser now directs our attention to an earthly hell, the dungeon beneath Lucifera's palace. While the Red Crosse Knight recovers from his wounds, his servant, Una's dwarf, discovers

> Where, in a dungeon deepe, huge nombers lay
> Of caytive wretched thralls, that wayled night and day.
> (I.v.45.8-9)

The dwarf soon learns

> The hidden cause of their captivitie;
> How mortgaging their lives to Covetise,
> Through wastfull pride and wanton riotise,
> They were by law of that proud tyrannesse,
> Provokt with Wrath, and Envyes false surmise,
> Condemned to that dongeon mercilesse,
> Where they should live in wo, and dye in wretchednesse.
> (I.v.46.3-9)

Spenser's message is unmistakable: the wages of sin is eternal bondage and damnation. Among the prisoners is

> that great proud king of Babylon,
> That would compell all nations to adore,
> And him as onely God to call upon.
> (I.v.47.1-3)

With him are

> King Croesus, that enhaunst
> His hart too high through his great richesse store;
> And proud Antiochus, the which advaunst
> His cursed hand gainst God, and on his altares daunst.
> (I.v.47.6-9)

Having given their lives to transgressions against God in exchange for earthly gain, these men now discover the great price of bondage to sin, a lesson Jesus taught when He explained, "For what is a man profited, if

he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). The lesson, however, comes too late for these slaves to sin, some of whom

> Fell from high princes courtes, or ladies bowres,
> Where they in ydle pomp, or wanton play,
> Consumed had their goods, and thriftlesse howres.
> (I.v.51.6-8)

Now all "these together in one heape were throwne, / Like carkases of beastes in butchers stall" (I.v.49.1-2). Describing this earthly hell where all are pictured as lying in heaps like rubbish, Spenser again employs images of inactivity, signaling that all the damned who in "dongeon lay" (I.v.51.5) have paid the ultimate price for their sins.

Although the Red Crosse Knight, alerted to this danger by the dwarf, immediately affects his escape from the House of Pride, his flight from the hidden dangers of Lucifera's domain ironically leads him to new peril, signaled by one of the most significant images of inactivity in The Faerie Queene, that of the knight's lengthy idleness by a woodland stream. Thus, although this action appears to be a movement from the shadow of certain peril into the light of new hope, the knight has actually but taken a step further into the overwhelming darkness ahead. We have only to examine the nature of the knight's escape to see the truth of this statement. First, as Leicester Bradner points out, Red Crosse's flight from the House of Pride is "not the result of a true understanding of the danger of pride as the sin which opens the way to all other sins but only of unreasoning fright."[35] Thus, because the

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[35]Leicester Bradner, Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 112.

knight does not yet understand the nature of his sin or its peril, he is in danger of repeating his transgression and bringing down upon himself its dreadful consequences. Furthermore, although Red Crosse has left behind the "sad House of Pryde" (I.v.53.9), he has not escaped the grief long growing in his heart, a sorrow nurtured by his adventures at Lucifera's palace. The knight, still unable to see the real reason for this sadness yet feeling its pain, blames his grief on the fact "that his too hastie speed / The fayre Duess' had forst him leave behind" (I.vi.2.1-2) and still more on the fact "that Una, his deare dreed, / Her truth had staynd with treason so unkind" (I.vi.2.3-4). However, the origin of the knight's sorrow is, as we have seen, much more complex. Already burdened by a growing sense of guilt for his failures and an increasing lack of faith in divine mercy and the possibility of salvation, Red Crosse, on leaving the House of Pride, carries with him two new sources of sorrow. First, the knight flees the palace in sheer fright. We return to Bradner's comment on this fear: "The very fact that a formerly brave and hitherto victorious knight falls a prey to sudden terror shows how far his character has been undermined."[36] Although Red Crosse may not be able to admit to this fear in his conscious mind, surely his already battered ego does not accept this further defeat without some anguish. The knight has run away from his enemy under cover of night; for this he grieves. Second, Red Crosse's sadness is compounded by the fact that, as Rose notes, he "has had a close brush with spiritual death in the House of Pride, and even now his

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[36]Bradner, p. 112.

condition is 'sad.'"[37] That is, sin and death, like a disease, have poisoned Red Crosse's entire system; hence, even though he has hastily left behind the overt dangers of the House of Pride, he carries within him, growing like a secret tumor, this sadness that poisons his heart and soul.

And so, still struggling with sin that, because he does not yet fathom its fatal consequence, is free to course through his system, saddening him to the depths of his soul, the Red Crosse Knight, having finally reached a spiritual impasse, stops before a stream by the side of the road and surrenders to the inactivity Spenser captures in one of his most powerful images of inactivity. Unable to move further on his spiritual dead-end road, he dismounts and sits upon the grass. Perhaps in an attempt to rid himself of the heavy burden of the spiritual lethargy and the sense of futility brought on by sin and failure to progress on his now empty quest, the knight removes his armor, placing it on the grass beside him (I.vii.2.6-9). Here in the pleasant shade he attempts to unburden himself of guilt and failure by escaping into the world of sensual pleasures (I.vii.3.1-5). This episode describing the Red Crosse Knight by the fountain, a very crucial one in the light of the knight's entire career, has been the subject of much critical commentary. Because this is one of the most complex scenes in The Faerie Queene and because it contains one of the most pronounced images of inactivity in the poem, this episode deserves in-depth analysis. First, we must try to understand exactly what the Red Crosse Knight has

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[37]Rose, p. 81.

done, and, having ascertained this, we must then examine the consequences of his actions.

First, in examining what the knight has done, we find that he has, quite simply, stopped, abandoned all activity. In particular, he has finally, perhaps without even realizing it, abandoned all pretense of having a quest. Overtly signaling this fact, Red Crosse relieves himself of his armor, the gear that announces his profession to the world. MacCaffrey notes that the time has finally come when Red Crosse "abandons his integrity as a knight, the identity he assumed when he put on the armor of God."[38] He has, Williams observes, performed of his own volition the action toward which all of his enemies have been working:[39] he has disarmed himself and renounced what he is. Sitting on the grass, his armor discarded beside him, Red Crosse becomes an idle man who was once an actively questing knight.

Furthermore, in renouncing his armor, the Red Crosse Knight has, in this moment of inactivity, renounced his allegiance to God, for his gear of battle is that "whole armor of God" described by Paul in Ephesians (Ephesians 6:13-17). Thus, Red Crosse has denied his role as a warrior of God, and in doing so he renounces, MacCaffrey explains, "a particular relationship of submissiveness to God and acceptance of a model of virtuous life laid down by [Christ]."[40] Not only has Red Crosse renounced his quest and the author of this quest, but he has also

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[38]MacCaffrey, p. 161.

[39]Williams, p. 18.

[40]MacCaffrey, p. 161.

thrown aside the hope of salvation prefigured in the bloody cross on his abandoned shield. He has, then, forsaken all that can aid him in winning the battle he began long ago, a battle now seemingly forgotten in this moment of idle retreat.

Next, because he has retreated from the heat of the battle and embraced inactivity, the Red Crosse Knight can also be accused of having given up "in middest of the race" (I.vii.5.4). While the battle against the enemies of God continues in the world, Red Crosse relaxes in a pleasant corner apart from this world, far away from the clashing of arms. Like the nymph who presides over the fountain nearby (I.vii.v.1-9), the knight has stopped running before the race has been won. To this situation we may apply the words of Paul: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Corinthians 9:24). In this race of life some run haltingly and some, like Red Crosse and the nymph, quit before they reach the finish line. However, only those who "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14) shall achieve victory. This victory the Red Crosse Knight has lost sight of. Because he has lost interest in the race, or the battle he once waged, the knight, with no purpose to pull him once again to his feet and no course to pursue once standing, lapses into complete idleness. This absence of the pressure to act is certainly one of the pleasures of the grove to which Red Crosse has retreated. Hidden from the world and the war that continues there, the knight enjoys the delights of his little paradise, Eden recreated for a fleeting moment.

However, because the battle has not been won, because Red Crosse has merely attempted to erase it from his mind, his paradise is a false one:

> A paradise prematurely regained is no paradise but a Garden of Proserpina. The Red Cross Knight is not yet ready for paradise; this is why Spenser insists that he is only "in middest of the race." . . . Only in the fullness of time will man's nature be redeemed so that he can revel in the harmless pleasures of the natural world.[41]

With the din of battle beyond his range of hearing, or caring, the Red Crosse Knight forgets his duty, the struggle against the enemies of God he undertook so long ago, and the labor necessary to attain victory. In the comfort of forgetfulness, he secures a momentary peace: "we see him, lulled by a false philosophy and with no objective in life, his irksome armor laid aside, surrender to complacency and soft living his noble spirit, built for high emprise."[42]

The Red Crosse Knight has, however, done more than retreat in idleness from reality into a false paradise of his own making. In divorcing himself from the real world and the battle against evil, the knight has entered another realm, the world of those who, having given up the fight, stand defenseless against the enemy. As Red Crosse rests beside the fountain, his enemy, sin, begins its most terrible onslaught, and the defenseless knight succumbs. And what is the nature of the Red Crosse Knight's sin? First, in forsaking all physical labor in his pleasant paradise, the knight has committed the sin of sloth, that is, pigritia, or simple indolence. Indeed, the fountain whose waters the knight relaxes beside is presided over by a lazy nymph who, while

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[41]MacCaffrey, p. 164.

[42]Padelford, Variorum, I (1932), 438.

hunting with Diana, grew tired and hot and "Satt downe to rest in middest of the race" (I.vii.v.4). As punishment for her transgression against the goddess, the nymph was transformed into a fountain whose "waters wexed dull and slow, / And all that drunke thereof did faint and feeble grow" (I.vii.5.8-9). Thus, the fountain is, as Padelford observes, symbolic of sloth.[43] Just as the nymph, in abandoning the chase, succumbed to sloth, those who stop beside her waters to rest "in middest of the race" become partners in her crime. Furthermore, because the water is enchanted, all who drink of it are reduced to great weariness, and the torpor of their slothfulness grows upon them. Their sin then, like a disease, continues to grow. Thus, the Red Crosse Knight,

> lying downe upon the sandie graile,
> Dronke of the streame, as cleare as christall glas:
> Eftsoones his manly forces gan to fayle,
> And mightie strong was turnd to feeble frayle:
> His chaunged powres at first them selves not felt,
> Till crudled cold his corage gan assayle,
> And chearefull blood in fayntnes chill did melt,
> Which, like a fever fit, through all his body swelt.
> (I.vii.6.2-9)

Having drunk of the enchanted waters, the knight becomes completely spiritless and listless; the sloth to which he has surrendered has totally incapacitated him.

Not only has the knight surrendered in this moment of inactivity to physical sloth, but he has also succumbed to mental sloth. Laying aside his armor and reclining fully by the fountain, Red Crosse has completely lowered his mental and spiritual defenses. Discussing this episode, Watson remarks, "The Redcrosse Knight unarms himself; he leaves

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[43]Padelford, Variorum, I (1932), 437.

off Christian virtue and vigilance."[44] And Hankins observes, "The fountain seems to signify the relaxing of vigilance and cessation of effort which causes one to slacken in the warfare of the soul."[45] Noting the knight's "drowsiness and feebleness of watch," John Ruskin recalls the disciple Peter,[46] sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane, to whom the Lord, rebuking his drowsy follower, said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:40-41). Immediately after this, the crowd seized Jesus and Peter did indeed fall to temptation, denying his master three times. Just so, his vigilance relaxed, the Red Crosse Knight, lying listless and defenseless by the fountain, will be an easy prey for his enemy.

Besides being guilty of the sin of pigritia, that is, physical and mental indolence, the Red Crosse Knight has also surrendered to a more severe form of sloth, acedia, the despair that eventually results from spiritual listlessness and a turning away from God. Recalling our discussion of acedia in Chapter III, we remember that spiritual apathy turns into spiritual inactivity, stagnation, and decay. Oppressive grief, a deadness of the soul, and abject despair follow. For some time now, Red Crosse has been experiencing spiritual listlessness, and grief over his sins and failures has long been his companion. Although at this point, as he idles by the fountain, the knight has not completely

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[44]Elizabeth Watson, Spenser (London: Evans Brothers, Ltd., 1967), p. 98.

[45]Hankins, pp. 81-82.

[46]John Ruskin, Variorum, I (1932), 423.

surrendered to despair–he will meet his own despair face to face further on in his career–he has sunk to an abject melancholy, allowing the seeds of despair to take root in the now fertile soil of his grief-stricken soul. Leaving the House of Pride, we recall, Red Crosse takes with him a sense of shame and guilt over his fear and failures; the sadness born of this guilt and shame follows him until, too heavily burdened by his sorrow to continue, he stops to rest by the fountain. Williams, in discussing the knight's melancholy, notes that he is saddened by failure and frightened by danger so narrowly avoided at the House of Pride;[47] thus, he tries to retreat from the world of his shame and failure, to seek escape in forgetfulness. Of the knight's grief, Evans writes,

> Disheartened by the misery he can never overcome, wearied by the perpetual moral dilemma, he sits down by the fountain of sloth and, taking off his Christian armour, seeks to lose himself in sensual pleasures.[48]

And so Red Crosse commits the sin of acedia, his inactivity by the fountain announcing quite clearly his surrender to this sin.

Yet strangely enough, for all his grief over past failures, the Red Crosse Knight still carries within him a vestige of pride, a sin also signaled in this significant image of inactivity. Indeed, were it not for his inflated view of his own importance and worth, the knight would not be so dismal about his failures. Noting this aspect of Red Crosse's personality, Parker explains the knight's sadness: "It is intense melancholy, discouragement, depression caused by finding out that one is

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[47]Williams, p. 18.

[48]Evans, p. 99.

not so good as one hoped one was; a depression deriving from the root of pride."[49] This pride is fostered by a zealous overconfidence that has plagued the knight since his battle with the dragon Error. Indeed, it is this pride that has blinded him to many truths about his failures in the world: blinded him to the truth about Una, Fradubio, Lucifera, and Sansjoy; his relationship to each of these people; and his failures and shortcomings in each of these relationships. And now, sitting beside the fountain, having recently escaped the horrors of the House of Pride, the Red Crosse Knight is once more, because of his pride, blind to the truth. Although his escape from Lucifera's was motivated by fear and was not the result of a virtuous stand against the sin of pride, Red Crosse, now free from danger and lulled into momentary forgetfulness, perhaps remembers only that he fled from a wicked place and is safe at last. Thus, the knight, Parker observes, begins to feel a certain self-complacency: "Something has been achieved, one deserves, one even needs, a little relaxation."[50] Indeed, many critics see in the idle, unarmed knight lounging beside the fountain an overconfident man congratulating himself for past victories.[51] So proud of himself is he, so assured of his physical and moral impregnability, that he carelessly doffs his armor and relaxes. At this moment when he is oblivious of all moral dangers, when he thinks he is secure from all temptation and his

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[49]Parker, p. 86.

[50]Parker, p. 85.

[51]For example, Bradner, p. 112; Cullen, pp. 51-52; Vern Torczon, "Spenser's Orgoglio and Despaire," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 3 (1961), 126-127; and Nohrnberg, p. 263.

virtue is safe in his own self-sufficiency, the prideful knight discards the armor of God as useless baggage. In doing so he repeats the great sin of presumption to which he has succumbed many times before. Relying on self instead of God, the knight commits the sin of pride.

The consequences of the Red Crosse Knight's sins arrive with devastating swiftness. Significantly, the effects of sin are again described in terms of images of inactivity. Upon this scene of total physical and moral stasis comes Duessa, who, having realized that her prey has escaped from the House of Pride, hastily pursues him to this spot. Now, sensing the helplessness of the unarmed knight "lying downe upon the sandie graile," the enchantress, ally of evil and agent of sin, takes advantage of the situation and moves to complete her seduction of the Red Crosse Knight. Because his physical strength has deteriorated as a result of the enchanted waters he has just drunk and because his moral strength amounts to no more than a fading memory of his former unblemished character, the knight is unable to withstand her attack. And so Red Crosse abandons himself to sexual passion with Duessa, described in an image of activity that reveals the knight "Pourd out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd, / Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame" (I.vii.7.2-3). Thus, the knight moves one step closer to his spiritual hell. Indeed, in surrendering to the sins of sloth and pride beside the fountain, Red Crosse has cleared the way for the onslaught of sins to which he has heretofore been immune. We have seen that as he relaxes by the stream, seeking to relieve his anguish in a moment of escape, the knight first succumbs to sloth, the sin of indolence. Then, having once surrendered to this sin of the flesh, he drinks of the water, an act

that, according to A. C. Hamilton, symbolizes his "yielding to the senses."[52] Kellogg and Steele go so far as to call this an act of gluttony.[53] Indeed, this entire episode in which Red Crosse reclines by the fountain, frees his body of its irksome armor, drinks leisurely from the fountain, and "feedes upon the cooling shade, and bayes / His sweatie forehead in the breathing wynd" (I.vii.3.1-2) represents a growing surrender to the pleasures of the flesh. This indulgence of the senses brings about in the knight what Nohrnberg calls "a collapse into frailty" that manifests itself as "an effeminate slackness, or sensuality."[54] As we have noted, it is at this moment of Red Crosse's lapse into sensuality that Duessa appears. Noting how naturally resistance to temptation, on both a physical and spiritual level, diminishes once man has exposed himself to sin, John O'Conner points out that Red Crosse does nothing to counter what Duessa is leading him into.[55] Indeed, because of the allurements of sin, the knight "has ceased to practice the Christian virtues and thus is without the moral vigor to defend himself."[56] Also, because he has cast his armor, and his knightly honor, aside, Red Crosse no longer even feigns knightly action. Instead, he loosens all restraints, as a knight and a Christian, and surrenders to

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[52]A. C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 75.

[53]Kellogg and Steele, p. 30.

[54]Nohrnberg, p. 263.

[55]John E. O'Conner, "Prince Arthur: The Cohesive, Tempering Grace," in Eterne in Mutabilitie: The Unity of The Faerie Queene, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1972), p. 145.

[56]Bradner, p. 112.

the sin of lust. This act of lust with Duessa symbolizes, note Kellogg and Steele, the state of total depravity to which the knight has been reduced.[57] This depravity Spenser signals, in part, through this image of inactivity that finds Red Crosse lying in the arms of Duessa.

The images of inactivity that accumulate quickly after Red Crosse's surrender to Duessa reveal, however, that the knight is to sink still lower before the spiritual nightmare that began long ago in Archimago's cottage ends. While most nightmares end with the morning light, this nightmare, born of the blackness of hell, will end only with the knight's spiritual death. Because, as Evans observes, sex, of all passions, most easily leads to the "spiritual death of sin,"[58] the Red Crosse Knight, lying passion spent on the ground in Duessa's arms, must now face spiritual death, the arrival of which is announced by the thundering footsteps of the giant Orgoglio. According to H. S. V. Jones, Orgoglio and Lucifera are "different forms of that mistaken, introverted faith which we call pride."[59] Whereas Lucifera represents the vain pride of the world, Orgoglio symbolizes pride of the flesh.[60] Lying in Duessa's embrace, luxuriating in the stimulation to his senses that the pleasures of the grove provide, the Red Crosse Knight has indeed been worshipping his own flesh. Forgotten are God, duty, and the virtuous life in this moment when the knight revels in the carnality of his flesh

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[57]Kellogg and Steele, p. 13.

[58]Evans, p. 30.

[59]Jones, p. 156.

[60]Kellogg and Steele, p. 30.

like an animal. Indeed, Kellogg and Steele assert that at this stage in his career Red Crosse has fallen to the level of an animal in his revolt against God and reason.[61] As we have seen, he has waged this rebellion because of self-satisfaction in his past achievements and his pride in what he believes to be his self-sufficiency and invulnerability. Ironically, relying on himself the knight has sunk to the level of an animal, pitifully blinded by his grandiose self-conception to the fact that he has become something less than human. At the shrine erected to himself, then, the knight, man deifying the animal in him as God, meets Orgoglio, the monstrous externalization of what he has become. In Orgoglio, Hamilton says, Red Crosse meets "his fallen self."[62] The confrontation presents, according to Roger Sale, a "spectacle of human degradation."[63]

Because, in his present weakened condition, the knight has no chance against Orgoglio's attack, the "battle" that follows contains pronounced images of inactivity. Timing his entrance exactly the giant arrives just as postcoital depletion, joined with the enervation resulting from the draught of enchanted water and the overall lapse into sensual slackness, has reduced the knight to a state of utter helplessness. Not surprisingly, the attack comes, J. E. Whitney observes, at the precise moment when Red Crosse is finally completely inactive.[64]

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[61]Kellogg and Steele, p. 30.

[62]Hamilton, p. 61.

[63]Roger Sale, Reading Spenser: An Introduction to The Faerie Queene (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 45.

[64]J. E. Whitney, Variorum, I (1932), 428.

His body too weak and too long inactive to respond, his mind still adrift in a sea of slothful and erotic pleasures, the knight has neither physical nor moral forces to call to his aid. And his spiritual ally, his faith in God, has long since been discarded with the armor that now lies just out of his reach. He has, according to Hamilton, "forgone all grace, both human and divine."[65] Thus, the knight is finally on his own: "his selfhood finds itself alone with the monstrous consequences of empty pride, which he has no hope of withstanding."[66] And so, taken completely unawares, Red Crosse staggers helplessly to his feet and reaches for his "unready weapons" (I.vii.7.9):

> But ere he could his armour on him dight,
> Or gett his shield, his monstrous enimy
> With sturdie steps came stalking in his sight.
> (I.vii.8.1-3)

Unable to reach his "shield of faith," which alone can save him from "all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16), the knight goes into battle against Orgoglio clutching only his "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Without faith, however, the Word is empty. Perhaps the knight senses the uselessness of his sole weapon, for seeing Orgoglio advance toward him, Red Crosse,

> haplesse, and eke hopelesse, all in vaine
> Did to him pace, sad battaile to darrayne,
> Disarmd, disgraste, and inwardly dismayde,
> And eke so faint in every joynt and vayne,
> Through that fraile fountain, which him feeble made,
> That scarsely could be weeld his bootlesse single blade.
> (I.vii.11.4-9)

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[65]Hamilton, p. 75.

[66]Williams, p. 20.

Although the knight is understandably physically weak, perhaps his state of mind has more to do with his defeat than his physical impotence. Red Crosse, who has spent his entire career congratulating himself, albeit prematurely, on his knightly accomplishments, now clearly sees himself disgraced and powerless to escape further shame. This shame, combined with his previous sorrow, creates in Red Crosse a dull, dispirited grief. Having acknowledged shameful defeat in his own mind, the Red Crosse Knight can barely lift his sword in battle. Indeed, there is no battle at all. In this moment when the long inactive knight must, if he is to escape, take some decisive action, he stands immobile before the onslaught of Orgoglio; the result is a startling image of inactivity: a knight suspended in a moment of complete inactivity and utter helplessness, caught in the stasis of the spiritually defeated.

The Red Crosse Knight is, quite naturally, overcome by Orgoglio, and the result is again described in images of inactivity. Sadly, he is felled not by one of the giant's powerful blows but by the wind of one of these thrusts, which "did him overthrow, / And all his sences stoond, that still he lay full low" (I.vii.12.8-9). Now a "slombred sencelesse corse" (I.vii.15.6), the knight is seized by Orgoglio and thrown into a dungeon at once physical and spiritual, the long-awaited hell of his own construction. For three months Red Crosse lies in this foul dungeon, physically restricted, "in balefull darkenesse bound" (I.viii.38.5) before he is finally rescued by Prince Arthur. During this time he lies "dying every stound" (I.viii.38.4), wishing for death to release him from his anguish (I.viii.38.9). However, even though physical death evades him, the knight does suffer death, the spiritual death of despair

that is the fate of fallen man when he has, sunk beneath the weight of sin and remorse, lost all hope of salvation. And without the hope of salvation, the "light of the world" (John 9:5), there is only the "outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12) of spiritual damnation and despair at the recognition of the absoluteness and endlessness of that darkness. Red Crosse, like all men, is, of course, powerless to rise from beneath the burden of his sin and guilt alone. He has always been powerless to do so; indeed, his blindness to this fact, his confidence in his ability to save himself, has always been his chief fault. Now, having long ago given up his faith in the only power that can save him, forgive his sins and banish his guilt forever, and having at last completely failed himself, the Red Crosse Knight no longer has any hope, and so he sinks beneath his burden of despair. Although the instrument of his salvation once promised in tones of triumph to all men and for all times, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), Red Crosse is blind to the truth of this promise. For him there is only, Williams notes, the "recognition of spiritual nothingness," more terrible, more truly deathlike[67] than the physical death the knight longs for. And so Red Crosse, like his faith, is "dead." The essence of this death Spenser conveys in the images of inactivity that describe the knight's long imprisonment.

However, because we cannot see spiritual death—a "nothingness"—Spenser delineates the results of the knight's imprisonment in an image of inactivity that describes Red Cross's physical condition,

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[67]Williams, p. 21.

using, Arnold Williams observes, the medieval technique of describing spiritual sickness in terms of physical illness and of equating physical diseases and wounds with sin or spiritual unsoundness.[68] When Prince Arthur at last opens the great prison door, he finds a man so weak from his long bondage that he cannot even raise himself up, a wasted man

> Whose feeble thighes, unhable to uphold
> His pined corse, him scarse to light could beare,
> A ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly drere.
> (I.viii.40.7-9)

> His sad dull eies, deepe sunck in hollow pits,
> Could not endure th' unwonted sunne to view;
> His bare thin cheekes for want of better bits,
> And empty sides deceived of their dew,
> Could make a stony hart his hap to rew;
> His rawbone armes, whose mighty brawned bowrs
> Were wont to rive steele plates, and helmets hew,
> Were clene consum'd, and all his vitall powres
> Decayd, and al his flesh shronk up like withered flowres.
> (I.viii.41.1-9)

Ironically, the knight who once willfully abandoned his arms is now too weak to lift himself up, much less to wield his mighty sword or hoist his weighty shield. These now lie waiting:

> His mightie armour, missing most at need;
> His silver shield, now idle maisterlesse;
> His poynant speare, that many made to bleed;
> The ruefull moniments of heavinesse.
> (I.vii.19.5-8)

Like his armor, lying unused and inactive against the enemy, the Red Crosse Knight lies inactive in Prince Arthur's arms, reduced by his bondage to sin to a deathly shadow of the vigorous and virtuous knight he once was.

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[68]Arnold Williams, Flower on a Lowly Stalk: The Sixth Book of the Faerie Queene (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 105.

Contrasted with this "ruefull spectacle of death" is the man who has just rescued Red Crosse, a knight at once vigorous and virtuous. Describing Prince Arthur's arrival on the scene (I.vii.29-33), Kathleen Williams writes, "Into the atmosphere of deathly hopelessness and grief rides a figure of vitality and victorious power, with chinkless armour and jewelled baldric, glittering in glancing light and shining far away."[69] Whereas the Red Crosse Knight's physical impotence represents his spiritual unsoundness, Arthur's physical prowess and energy announce his spiritual health and vigor. We have only to observe the number of action verbs Spenser employs in describing Arthur's arrival to discern that here is a man ready for action and able, because he apparently long ago heeded the advice that Red Crosse ignored to "add faith unto your force" (I.i.19.3), to see every action through to resounding victory. Because his virtue and faith make him immune to the power of sin, Arthur ably dispatches Orgoglio (I.viii.7-24) and moves quickly to the task of rescuing the Red Crosse Knight. Powerless to lift himself from beneath his burden of sin and guilt and so to deliver himself from the spiritual annihilation symbolized by the giant's dungeon, Red Crosse has for three months wasted away, physically and spiritually, for want of a savior. In the person of Prince Arthur this savior arrives. Indeed, riding into view in a burst of vitality and action, his ready armor announcing his determination to fight and quell every enemy of good, Arthur bears a remarkable resemblance to the armed Savior of Revelation, who will appear in the end times to make war and defeat the armies of the enemies

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[69]Kathleen Williams, p. 22.

of God (Revelation 19:11-21). And whereas Christ has eyes like "a flame of fire" (Revelation 19:12), Prince Arthur has a diamond shield that "so exceeding shone" (I.vii.34.5), the very sight of its "glistring ray" (I.vii.34.5) turns men to stone. The shining light associated with Arthur announces, then, another parallel between the knight and Christ, who pronounced Himself the "light of the world" (John 9:5). Finally, Prince Arthur actually becomes a type of Christ when he enters Orgoglio's prison, just as Christ entered the prison of the flesh for all mankind, and "with constant zele, and corage bold, / After long paines and labors manifold" (I.viii.40.4-5) that recall to us Christ's labor and suffering lifts Red Crosse from his prison and restores him to life. His actions thus reflect the words of Christ: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Just as Jesus, at this point, raised Lazarus from the dead, Prince Arthur, finding "the meanes that prisoner up to reare" (I.viii.40.6), brings the Red Crosse Knight up from his prison of spiritual death.

First, of course, Arthur must make his way past Orgoglio's jailer, a man described with several images of inactivity:

> with creeping crooked pace forth came
> An old old man, with beard as white as snow,
> That on a staffe his feeble steps did frame,
> And guyde his wearie gate both too and fro;
> For his eye sight him fayled long ygo:
> And on his arme a bounch of keyes he bore,
> The which unused rust did overgrow:
> Those were the keyes of every inner dore,
> But he could not them use, but kept them still in store.
> (I.viii.30.1-9)

This then is Orgoglio's jailer, Ignaro. Like Peter, to whom Jesus gave "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19), Ignaro also holds

keys, the keys to a kind of hell. The two men are, however, very different. Peter, because he believed that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), understood and accepted the law of divine mercy by which God saves men, all of whom are unworthy of salvation, through His Son. This saving mercy is a free gift from God to all men; in Christ this law of mercy replaces the law of divine retribution. Because Peter accepted God's gift of mercy, because he knew the truth that makes men free (John 8:32), the keys in his hands can open the gates of heaven, which offers eternal freedom to all men. Ignaro, on the other hand, is, as his name implies, ignorant of the law of divine mercy, is blind, as are his eyes, to God's offer of eternal freedom. That is, he believes only in the law of punishment, that law that has bound the Red Crosse Knight, who has forgotten about God's mercy, in Orgoglio's dungeon. Because Ignaro does not see the truth of divine mercy that offers freedom, the keys in his hand, unlike those of Peter, cannot open any doors to freedom. Thus, Ignaro and his prisoners are all in bondage to the law of sin and retribution.

Significantly, this aspect of bondage to sin, that is, the failure to believe that divine mercy is stronger than sin and can, thus, free from sin, is again presented to us in part through images of inactivity. First, Ignaro is lame and feeble, a man who makes his "creeping crooked" way through the halls of the dungeon only with the aid of a cane (I.viii. 30.1-4). In much the same way, man, ignorant of the way to spiritual freedom offered by Jesus Christ, makes his way through life with halting, feeble steps. Furthermore, Ignaro cannot use the keys in his hand; they hang unused and rusty on his arm (I.viii.30.6-9). Similarly, the

man who does not believe that Christ is the only true key to the kingdom of God but instead attempts to find salvation with the aid of various other keys, for example, wealth, position, power, self-righteousness, soon discovers that these keys open no doors and finds himself holding, like Ignaro, a bunch of useless, rusty keys. These images of inactivity, Ignaro's inability to walk steadily and his inability to use the keys, announce symbolically the debilitating effects of sin, especially the belief that sin is so powerful that it cannot be erased and forgiven by divine mercy. It is from this belief in the overwhelming force of sin and the absence of mercy in the face of deserved and therefore necessary retribution that Prince Arthur must deliver the Red Crosse Knight:

> Red Cross's physical passions were the prime cause of his fall but his ignorance of the true redeeming power of faith is what keeps him down, and Arthur's next task, therefore, is to rescue him from the prison of this ignorance.[70]

Realizing the uselessness of Ignaro's keys (I.viii.37.4-5), Arthur immediately acts on his faith in the law of mercy, and, this time adding force to his faith, he rends "that yron dore, / With furious force and indignation fell" (I.viii.39.5-6). After forcibly gaining entrance Prince Arthur then physically lifts the wasted knight in his arms and carries him from the dungeon. Here we note that at no time during these moments does Red Crosse ask to be helped out of his cell; indeed, so dull is his hope that a savior will ever arrive that the knight, upon hearing Arthur calling from the other side of the door, asks only for death (I.viii.38.9). So it is that salvation for the Red Crosse Knight comes unhoped for and thus unrequested. Here, then, Prince Arthur, as

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[70]Evans, p. 105.

O'Conner observes, represents "a redemptive force that is freely given and is even imposed, in a time of despair."[71] Thus, the knight receives the gift of mercy from God. Lifted from his dungeon of sin and despair, Red Crosse is freed to resume his quest and his search for righteousness: "Thus can grace which is unsought serve as an active force supplying the initial impulse toward the acquisition of virtue."[72]

Although the Red Crosse Knight rests before he resumes his quest (I.ix.2.1-5), recuperating, one would hope, both physically and spiritually, when he finally does "forward fare" (I.ix.2.5) with Una, he moves forward only to be stopped immediately in his progress by his most formidable enemy, Despair. Quite naturally, then, Spenser's description of the knight's encounter with this foe contains a notable image of inactivity. Because much has been written on the Despair episode of The Faerie Queene, we need not linger over the eloquence of Despair's words or the logic of his argument. These topics have been covered with great perspicacity by nearly all Spenserian scholars. However, in preparation for our discussion of this episode as it relates to inactivity and sin, let us note the following. First, although Red Crosse is, of course, physically unready to resume his quest, he is even more unprepared spiritually to take up the fight against his enemies and, we might add, God's enemies. That is, having only recently been "reborn," the knight is yet a babe in Christ, weak, in need of growth and guidance and especially a deeper understanding of the love and mercy that have given

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[71]O'Conner, p. 146.

[72]O'Conner, p. 146.

him a new life and another chance. Thus, Red Crosse is too weak spiritually to succeed in any adventure, much less an encounter with Despair, the enemy who generally assails new Christians as they begin their new lives. Second, although Arthur has saved the Red Crosse Knight and given him his first taste of divine mercy, he does not accompany Red Crosse on his mission. This is not to say that symbolically Christ, having saved the knight, now abandons him. On the contrary, Christ clearly promised, "lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:29). Indeed, this promise Spenser may have represented symbolically when he had Arthur place in Red Crosse's hand the box containing the gift of

> drops of liquor pure,
> Of wondrous worth, and vertue excellent,
> That any wownd could heale incontinent.
> (I.ix.19.3-5)

These drops may symbolize the healing blood of Christ poured out for all men on Calvary's cross. The point is merely that Christ, having offered His love and mercy by saving us from sin, does not dog our every step, forcing us to act in a prescribed manner and thus denying our freedom of will. Thus, our independence of action, as well as responsibility for our actions, is respected. In much the same manner, Prince Arthur allows Red Crosse to go his way alone.

The knight has not gone very far when he meets Despair. Just as Red Crosse earlier met externalizations of his own spiritual unsoundness in Sansjoy and Orgoglio, the knight is now forced to confront himself, that is, the sorrow and anguish long growing within him, in the person of Despair. And just as Red Crosse also met sin in his two earlier enemies, in Despair the knight meets the gravest of all sins, <u>acedia</u>,

the extreme form of sloth. However, before Red Crosse falls victim to his own acedia, he meets again two sins he perhaps believed were long ago vanquished and made powerless to harm him. These two sins are pride and pigritia, the lesser form of sloth. The first of these sins Red Crosse must engage in combat when he meets the hapless Sir Trevisan, who with great speed and even greater terror is trying to escape the malignant influence of Despair. Seeing the fleeing, unarmed knight, Red Crosse stops the terrified man and accuses him of behavior unbecoming a knight: "never knight I saw in such misseeming plight" (I.ix.23.9). If Red Crosse is indignant at the unseeming behavior of Sir Trevisan, we can only be surprised at this self-righteous indictment pronounced by a knight who himself only recently suffered defeat at the hands of Orgoglio as a result of his own unknightly conduct and was thrown, stripped of his honor and dignity, into the giant's dungeon. Red Crosse seems, however, to have forgotten his recent, and past, misadventures, and he who fled in terror from Lucifera's palace in the dead of night now berates another knight's similar show of fear. Perhaps because he has, at least momentarily, forgotten his own past failures and helplessness, Red Crosse now resumes his old self-confident attitude, and this self-confidence allows him to deplore Sir Trevisan's cowardly behavior. When he hears that Sir Trevisan is afraid because of Despair's "charmed speaches" (I.ix.30.9), he scoffs even louder. In doing so, he displays what Bradner calls "pride of intellect."[73] So incredulous is he that any man's words can incite such fear (I.ix.31.1-2) and so assured is he

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[73]Bradner, p. 117.

that he himself can never be influenced by Despair's "subtile tong, like dropping honny" (I.ix.31.5) that he loudly boasts, "hence shall I never rest, / Till I that treachours art have heard and tryde" (I.ix.32.1-2). And thus it is that the Red Cross Knight's pride, raising its head the moment he forgets the grave misfortunes attendant upon his last lapses into this sin, leads him to confront his most powerful and dangerous enemy.

Yet perhaps Red Crosse's pride has a different origin. Maybe he has not forgotten his recent failures and fears. Indeed, perhaps the knight remembers all too clearly and sees in Sir Trevisan an ugly image as in a mirror of his own shame. Repelled at this hateful reflection of himself, he upbraids Sir Trevisan-and himself. Also, having just recently been given another chance to prove himself, Red Crosse perhaps seizes the first opportunity to demonstrate that he deserves the chance afforded him and is worthy of the gift of mercy and love recently bestowed upon him. Yet this attitude also betokens a lapse into the sin of pride. The Red Crosse Knight is not now, nor will he ever be, deserving of God's mercy or love; no man ever is If any man could ever earn God's love and forgiveness on his own merit, the magnanimity of God's gift of love to man, His only Son, would be diminished, His gift becoming, as it were, another present stacked beneath the tree, and the death of the embodiment of this love on the cross would be rendered superfluous and pointless. Thus, in attempting to win over God with a show of loud talk and bold endeavors, Red Crosse is actually trying to be the instrument of his own salvation, attempting to take from God the Son the task of leading men to the Father and to salvation, trying, in

effect, to replace God. To such thoughts and actions the sin of pride compels men.

Although at first Red Crosse is compelled by the sin of pride to take speedy action (I.ix.37.4) to prove that he is strong enough to face what he considers Despair's "direct challenge to his own moral resources,"[74] he is no sooner inside Despair's dismal cave than he is stopped in his tracks by the haggard hermit's mellifluous words. Much may be said, of course, for the narcotic, lulling sound of Despair's voice. However, the content of the hermit's speech may do more than his honeyed tones to arrest Red Crosse in the midst of heroic action, for what Despair offers is, quite simply, rest. Having very recently succumbed to a need for rest by the woodland fountain and being yet weak and tired from his imprisonment, the knight is especially vulnerable to this temptation. And so, as he faces Despair, Red Crosse confronts head on the temptation to succumb to another sin, sloth as pigritia. Pointing to the body of one Sir Terwin, a knight who has just committed suicide as a direct result of the hermit's speech (I.ix.36.4-9), Despair offers to Red Crosse "eternall rest / And happy ease" (I.ix.40.1-2), the rewards, he argues, the dead enjoy. Thus, he paints for the knight visions of the final rest: "Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas, / Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please" (I.ix.40.8-9). In essence,

> Despaire repeats Duessa's appeal to fleshly intemperance but by way of sloth rather than lust. What Despaire offers is the slothful alternative to the heroic ideal: with suicide, Red

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[74]Paul J. Alpers, The Poetry of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 118.

> Crosse . . . will escape all the ills attending this "loathsome life."[75]

Thus, in general, Despair's argument is appealing to Red Crosse because it offers an escape from the struggle of living. In particular, however, Despair's argument is appealing because it offers death as an escape from the toils of knight-errantry. The argument is therefore particularly insidious because it strikes at the heart of Red Crosse's chosen profession and his heroic identity. Because Red Crosse is not only a knight but also a Christian knight, Despair's praise of death is even more treacherous. Although all men, caught up in the never-ending struggle of daily life, may long for peace, hardly any could long for peace more than the knight, whose daily fare consists of danger-fraught adventures, repeated calls for strenuous physical labor, and the necessity of sacrificing the desire to satisfy personal needs to the demands to fulfill the public obligations imposed by his profession. To desist, to be slothful, is, as we have seen, to fail as a knight. For a Christian knight, a warrior of God, however, to succumb to sloth is to allow the enemies of God to gain strength in the world, to allow the forces of evil to reign victorious while the forces of good, allowing themselves a moment of peace, temporarily give up the battle. The strength of Despair's argument lies, however, in the fact that he offers more than a moment of peace. In death one can find more than a temporary respite from the battle; one can abandon the struggle forever.

Thus, Despair takes advantage of Red Crosse's weariness, his desire to allow himself the rest he so badly needs by succumbing to the call of

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[75]Cullen, p. 63.

sloth, and attempts to create in him a desire for death, a desire particularly difficult to resist for those who, like the Red Crosse Knight, have often suffered defeat. Although the knight is on the verge of resigning himself to defeat and although Despair's offer of "eternall rest" and "happy ease" has begun to penetrate the knight's heart, his mind responds with a military metaphor that turns out to be his last act of resistance against Despair's argument:

> The terme of life is limited,
> Ne may a man prolong, nor shorten it:
> The souldier may not move from watchfull sted,
> Nor leave his stand, untill his captaine bed.
> (I.ix.41.2-5)

Thus, Red Crosse invokes a metaphor that suggests "not simply the necessity of enduring the burden of the flesh and the world, but also the dignity of accepting that necessity."[76] Man cannot embrace death; it may come only after he has patiently endured the vicissitudes of life, performed his duty, and sought glory and, thereby, virtue. To seek early release from life is to perform the final act of sloth.

Yet the sin of sloth as pigritia is not the greatest danger the Red Crosse Knight confronts in the cave of Despair. From our earlier study of sloth in Chapter III, we learned that the second form of the sin is acedia, that is, spiritual listlessness, a turning away from God, that eventually evolves into spiritual inactivity, stagnation, and decay. Oppressive grief, a deadness of the soul, and abject despair follow. This despair not even the presence of God can assuage. Thus, the result of this sin is complete atrophy of the soul that can only end in

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[76]Alpers, p. 354.

death. The seeds of this very type of despair we have seen growing in the Red Crosse Knight since his career began. Now the knight is finally face to face with the man whose name announces that he is the externalization of Red Crosse's fully grown despair, the outward enemy who symbolizes the enemy now ready to do battle in the knight's own soul. Let us now turn to a discussion of the sin of sloth in its more spiritualized meaning of acedia, the sin we will soon see as Red Crosse's most powerful enemy, the enemy within.

Looking back over Red Crosse's long career, we see an almost endless string of failures and defeats: the abandonment of Una and his quest on her behalf; his blindness to the machinations of Archimago and Duessa; his failure to see his own faults in those of Fradubio; his growing indolence, lack of purpose and direction, his movement further and further away from his vocation as a knight, all carefully nurtured by Duessa; his diminishing faith in God and its companion, his burgeoning pride in himself; his surrender to this pride at Lucifera's palace; his sins by the woodland fountain, sloth, pride, adultery; his devastating defeat at the hands of Orgoglio; and finally his long and wretched imprisonment in the giant's dungeon. With each defeat we have seen Red Crosse's sorrow grow. Now, standing in the cave of Despair, the knight is forced to acknowledge his failures and to do battle with his sorrow. Because Despair has failed to convince Red Crosse to reject life in hopes of receiving "happy ease," he now carefully redesigns his argument, reminds the knight of his recent failures and sins, and emphasizes the fact that the God of Justice exacts punishment for such sins (I.ix.43-47). This argument is successful for several reasons.

First, this argument is successful because it focuses on Red Crosse's recent sins, failures, and guilt. Counting on the knight's bad conscience, Despair cruelly enumerates Red Crosse's past offenses. Although, as Cullen notes, acknowledgment of corruption is essential to repentance and regeneration,[77] the knight, when he is forced to see his failures for what they are, offenses against a wrathful God, is suddenly so consumed with a sense of his own unworthiness that he is no longer able to see any possible goodness in his nature. Whereas conviction of sin is desirable when it leads to remorse, repentance, and regeneration, Red Crosse's acute sense of personal sin is destructive because it leads only to an intolerable self-hatred that blinds him to the possibility of beginning anew. Thus, instead of leading to a determination to start over, to endure, and to strive for success with renewed vigor, Red Crosse's remorse of conscience issues in sorrow so extreme that he despairs of a second chance; unable to see beyond his present failures to future victories, he resigns himself to defeat. Thus, his self-hatred results in a complete impairment of the will, and he stands immobile before Despair, reviewing his sins:

> And to his fresh remembraunce did reverse
> The ugly vew of his deformed crimes,
> That all his manly powres it did disperse,
> As he were charmed with inchaunted rimes,
> That oftentimes he quakt, and fainted oftentimes.
> (I.ix.48.5-9)

Thus, with an image of inactivity, Spenser conveys to us the beginning of Red Crosse's surrender to <u>acedia</u>, the sin so appealing to those who

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[77]Cullen, p. 58.

prefer "the easy way of despair and death to the hardness of strenuous discipline."[78]

Second, Red Crosse is yet one of the "babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1), that is, a young Christian who has just been offered the complete and never-failing love and mercy of God. For new Christians this love can be overwhelming, for suddenly one learns that there is a love so powerful that it reaches past all our sins and wickedness to embrace us and accept us as we are. This total acceptance despite our unworthiness is a source of a unique sorrow. Having discovered that he is truly loved despite his sins, the young Christian is awakened to a new awareness of the enormity of his sins against a God who loves so completely. Reading the words of Christ from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), he realizes for the first time the true meaning of the words, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). And more important, visualizing the suffering on the cross, the Christian also sees himself a party to those who crucified Christ:

> 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:
> yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
> 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised
> for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon
> him; and with his stripes we are healed.
>
> (Isaiah 53:4-5)

And the sorrow grows as the Christian realizes the crucial part his own sins played in this death, the part they play each time he slips, even for a moment, and sins anew. The love of Christ continues, however, and

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[78]Edward Dowden, Variorum, I (1932), 498.

this unquenchable love that contrasts so strongly with the Christian's unworthiness creates in the heart a profound sorrow made even greater each time the love of Christ reaches past sin and unworthiness to accept and forgive again. If the Christian can learn to accept himself, even his failures, just as Christ accepts him, he can grow and learn, knowing that if we were sinless and lovely in ourselves we would not need God or His love. However, when the Christian is overwhelmed by the unquenchable love of God and the knowledge of his own inability to obey one of Christ's last injunctions, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), he gives up in despair, his will to act incapacitated by his realization that he can never return in full measure the love offered to him. Like the Red Crosse Knight, standing motionless and sorrowful before Despair, remembering not only his sins but the love of God that lifted him out of prison, the sorrowful Christian succumbs to acedia.

Finally, because Red Crosse is a young Christian, he does not yet fully understand the true nature of God. Thus, Despair is able to erase from the knight's mind and heart the memory of a God of Love and replace it with the terrible image of a God of Wrath. This image of God Despair draws, of course, from the Old Testament, where God is represented as a zealous judge and executioner of the sinful. Because Red Crosse knows that he is a sinner fully deserving of punishment, he is plunged into the throes of remorse and dread when Despair enumerates his sins and conjures up a vision of the wrathful God who has seen the sinful depths to which the knight has sunk:

> Is not He just, that all this doth behold
> From highest heven, and beares an equall eie?
> Shall He thy sins up in His knowledge fold,
> And guilty be of thine impietie?

Is not His lawe, Let every sinner die:
Die shall all flesh?
(I.ix.47.1-6)

Reminded of his sins and convinced that God is indeed just, Red Crosse fails to see beyond the Old Testment concept of divine justice to the New Testament concept of divine mercy and love. Indeed, as Rose points out, the principal weakness of Red Crosse's faith, as demonstrated in the Despair episode, is his ignorance of God's love.[79] This ignorance includes, of course, the knight's failure to cling to the promise of salvation offered through God's greatest gift of love, His only Son. In denying this love, Red Crosse thus denies the true nature of God, and in denying the true nature of God, the knight, in essence, denies God. Having reached this point, Red Crosse can only despair of God and of God's mercy. Without this mercy there is no hope of redemption, of heaven, or of life. Bereft of God and of hope, Red Crosse is finally convinced by Despair that there is only death. And thus, the knight succumbs to the most fearful of all sins: acedia.

At this point Spenser presents the image of inactivity that compellingly reveals the effect that acedia has over those who succumb to this sin. Having rejected life the Red Crosse Knight now desires death and attempts to take his own life. However, grasping the knife Despair has conveniently thrust into his hands, the knight discovers that he is unable to act, stripped of the ability to do the fatal deed. Ironically, while acedia creates in its victim a desire for death, it is also characterized by a total incapacitation of the will; it paralyzes

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[79]Rose, p. 114.

action, resulting in a frustrated inertia. Thus, although he desires death, the victim of acedia is unable to rise above his inertia to complete the deed. So profound is the deadness he feels that he cannot summon the will or the energy to act. This deadness associated with the sin of acedia Spenser presents in one of the most memorable images of inactivity in The Faerie Queene. After placing a knife in Red Crosse's hand, Despair impatiently waits for the knight to take his own life. But Red Crosse does not act:

> his hand did quake,
> And tremble like a leafe of aspin greene,
> And troubled blood through his pale face was seene
> To come and goe, with tidings from the heart,
> As it a ronning messenger had beene.
> At last, resolv'd to worke his finall smart,
> He lifted up his hand, that backe againe did start.
> (I.ix.51.3-9)

That Spenser associates acedia with inaction is even more clearly revealed when we see Red Crosse saved from the peril of this sin by the sudden action of Una, who angrily snatches the knife from the knight's hand and throws it to the ground (I.ix.52.1-5). She immediately follows this action with an impassioned speech, a vigorous plea for action, in which she reminds Red Crosse of his quest (I.ix.52.8-9) and of his heroic identity (I.ix.53.9). Having restored his heroic self-awareness, Una then restores Red Crosse's Christian self-awareness with one eloquent appeal:

> In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part?
> Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?
> Where justice growes, there grows eke greter grace,
> The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,
> And that accurst hand-writing doth deface.
> Arise, sir knight, arise, and leave this cursed place.
> (I.ix.53.4-9)

Thus, reminded of God's mercy and his quest, that mission which confirms his link with God, Red Crosse is released from his paralyzing despair and immediately acts: "So up he rose, and thence amounted streight" (I.ix.54.1). As Osgood notes, Una forces Red Crosse "from contemplation of a miserable and hopeless past to consider the redeemable future in service to her. And he is saved for ever."[80] Once again "her Champion, and the Champion of the Cross,"[81] the Red Crosse Knight will now begin the walk on the long road back to spiritual health and the heights of Christian heroism.

Of course, the Red Crosse Knight still has much to learn before he can successfully complete his quest by destroying the dragon who terrorizes Una's land. In the House of Holiness he learns, among many other things, that virtue must be translated into action (I.x.36-43), that is, that "every good tree bringeth forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:17). When he expresses to the hermit Contemplation his desire to quit the world and spend his days peacefully enjoying the prospects of the New Jerusalem (I.x.63.1-5), he is sharply reminded that he has a job to do and cannot withdraw from the world until he has completed his quest (I.x.63.6-9). Thus, before he faces the final dragon, Red Crosse has been carefully taught the necessity of action, of laboring unceasingly in the service of God. Having gained moral strength and Christian understanding in the House of Holiness and having seen sin defeated in his own life, he is now ready to fight sin in the world. The symbol of the militant power

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[80]C. G. Osgood, Variorum, I (1932), 444.

[81]John Wilson, Variorum, I (1932), 281.

of goodness in the world, the knight moves forward steadily to fight "the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). As the Red Crosse Knight faces his final dragon, he becomes, for all time, a symbol of the Christian warrior victorious over sin, the triumphant Christian redeemed and revitalized by the power and love of God.

CHAPTER V

INACTIVITY AND THE DREAM

Throughout our study of The Faerie Queene we have seen that Spenser's Faery Land is a microcosm of the fallen world, a world, once beautiful and perfect, marred forever by man's first sin. Because of the entrance of sin into the world, man was alienated from his Creator and plunged into darkness, chaos, and despair. We have also seen that Spenser saw the quest as man's endeavor to work through the Fall toward a reconciliation with God. The quest is, therefore, fallen man's attempt to combat the darkness and chaos of sin and to work with God to defeat sin so that prelapsarian harmony and perfection may one day be restored. This vision of restoration is, then, Spenser's dream, a dream of virtuous and noble men and women united in the quest, that strenuous effort-physical, mental, and moral-to contain and control the evil that keeps the fallen world in darkness and disorder and to promote the triumph of good that must precede the return of the golden world of Eden. This vision is what MacCaffrey calls the "generative energy of The Faerie Queene": "the urge to make sense of the world's shapeless welter."[1] And just as this is the dream that compelled Spenser to create The Faerie Queene, it is also the dream of the virtuous men and women who people his world to whom the poet gave the task of making the dream possible. As the vehicle by which the vision is passed from poet

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[1]Isabel MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 145.

to character to reader, The Faerie Queene becomes, MacCaffrey asserts, a living record of the "human race's strivings and its dreams."[2]

The characters to whom the dream is bequeathed are, of course, the knights of the Faerie Queene. To the heroes of his poem Spenser gave the task of safeguarding the security of Gloriana's realm by quelling the various forces of disorder, of protecting the innocent and the good, of promoting virtue-in short, of ensuring, on the fictive level at least, the well-being of the dream, the possibility of the restoration of the golden world through the disciplined, heroic efforts of the noble and the virtuous. Thus, Parker observes, in his principal personages Spenser may be seen "reviving for an instant the ideal of Christian chivalry without fear and without reproach, which Chaucer had known, which Malory had depicted."[3] In order to serve as representatives of Christian chivalry and in order to preserve the dream, these knights must, of course, accept the obligation of the quest. For these characters life appears to offer, according to Evans,

> an inescapable moral imperative: there is a quest to be attempted, a choice to be made between the uncompromising opposites of good and evil, and only by scrupulous and unflagging attention can salvation be achieved and the will of God performed.[4]

Urged on by a sense of discipline and responsibility, these knights accept the challenge of the quest, that battle against the evil

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[2]MaCaffrey, p. 75.

[3]Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 11.

[4]Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 229.

principles of lawlessness and disruption that seized the world of man with the arrival of sin. Because these knights are the guardians of those virtues and "values without which no human society can long exist,"[5] their heroic deeds become a question of obligation, not of gratuitous derring-do.[6] In these champions of good Spenser saw the symbol of hope for a better society, a better England, and a better world. If his reader could be persuaded through art to embrace the values and virtues of these knights of Gloriana, then Spenser's poem would serve a noble purpose indeed. Bradner observes,

> It cannot be too often insisted that the Faerie Queene is not the dream world of a recluse. It is Spenser's attempt to state . . . an appeal to his countrymen to create an England in which heroic virtues would bring a closer approach to the kingdom of God on earth.[7]

The England that Spenser lived in was, however, far from the paradise he dreamed of it becoming. Even in Spenser's personal life there was a great disparity between the dreams he cherished and the reality he faced. A disappointed suitor for government office in London and preferment in Elizabeth's court and an unhappy "exile" in Ireland, a land he hated, Spenser hoped to win over his sovereign with the first three books of The Faerie Queene. He failed, however, and although he finished three more books of this work before his death in 1599, he never received from Elizabeth the favor he desired. These disappointments

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[5]Parker, p. 309.

[6]Harry Berger, Jr., The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's Faerie Queene (1957; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 169.

[7]Leicester Bradner, Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 6.

are, of course, reflected in The Faerie Queene, especially in the last three books, written after Spenser failed in his attempt to win Elizabeth's admiration and favor with the first three books. Indeed, Kathleen Williams notes that Books V and VI, in particular, underline Spenser's disenchantment with the disparity between his image of a just and glorious sovereignty and the "truth of a foolish world."[8] MacCaffrey agrees, saying that Spenser lost faith in the world and life in the "middest."[9] Hints of this lost faith appear in the poet's comments on the deterioration of the world in Book IV, canto viii, and in the prologues to Books V and VI.

Spenser's loss of faith is most clearly reflected, however, in his treatment of the quest. In his desire to escape both the personal and historical reality that blemished the ideal he cherished, the poet must often have longed to withdraw from the world, forget his public duties on behalf of a queen who did not appreciate his labors, and lay down the unfinished pages of The Faerie Queene, a work of love extolling the glories of a country and sovereign who failed to reward his poetic endeavors. This temptation to withdraw and to rest from labor, Richard Pindell observes, Spenser shares with many of the knights of The Faerie Queene.[10] The Red Crosse Knight, Mordant, Cymochles, Verdant, Marinell, Calidore, and others, all undergo temptations to withdraw, some

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[8]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 156.

[9]MacCaffrey, p. 422.

[10]Richard Pindell, "The Mutable Image: Man-in-Creation," in Eterne in Mutabilitie: The Unity of The Faerie Queene, ed. Kenneth John Atchity (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1972), p. 177.

succumbing completely to this temptation, others withdrawing only momentarily before resuming their knightly duties with renewed vigor. This desire to retreat joins with other factors that impede quests or stop them altogether such as failures in judgment, physical fatigue, and debilitating personal flaws (anger, pride, and slothfulness, for example) to produce a cumulative effect that reflects Spenser's dimmed hopes for the actualization of his vision of the return of a golden world, for the triumph of dream over reality. Thus, the poet's world-weariness and darkening vision are mirrored in the imperfect, although perhaps eventually completed, quests of the various knights of the poem. Because, as MacCaffrey notes, Spenser realized "that heroic virtue, however mighty its hands, will always to some degree fail in its undertakings,"[11] the quests of The Faerie Queene are invariably flawed, partaking of the poet's growing disappointment and despair at the realization that "the ideal cannot be realized on earth,"[12] that "all restorations or recreations of golden worlds" must remain incomplete "until time ends."[13]

However, although Spenser himself longed to escape the harshness of his personal and historical reality, there is ample evidence in The Faerie Queene that he never completely lost sight of his vision and his hope that noble men and women united in a common effort to better the world could achieve some success if they only strove long and hard enough. Thus, the major quests are all eventually achieved in some

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[11]MacCaffrey, p. 374.

[12]MacCaffrey, p. 424.

[13]MacCaffrey, p. 423.

fashion, and the heroic efforts of Spenser's knights, as well as their determination to continue their struggles, often, it is true, after moments of weakness, are always portrayed as praiseworthy endeavors. More important, succumbing to the temptation to abandon the quest, to withdraw from the active life of knight-errantry, is always represented, to greater or lesser degrees, as censurable behavior. However dim the vision grows, however strong the desire to withdraw becomes, throughout The Faerie Queene Spenser remains true to his belief, somewhat jaded at times, that man must remain true to the quest. According to Evans,

> The only moral imperative for Spenser is that we shall undertake the quest, and the attempt if "but endeavoured with sincere intent," will bring us safely home, regardless of incidental success or failure by the way. To accept the quest and to persevere in it however ineffectively is the only heroism.[14]

However impossible the achievement of the quest may seem and however ineffectual that achievement may appear in altering the state of the world or of man, failing to persevere in the quest, that is, failing to attempt to bring about change, is reprehensible and thus deserving of some indictment. This indictment Spenser again conveys, in part, through images of inactivity. In Chapter II we laid the foundation for our study of images of inactivity in The Faerie Queene, concentrating on establishing a basic understanding of the poet's use of these images to reflect a knight's failure to remain true to the quest. There we focused on images of inactivity associated with Britomart, Cymochles, and the Red Crosse Knight. Then in Chapters III and IV, covering the quests of Guyon and Red Crosse, we broadened our perspective, shifted

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[14]Evans, p. 230.

our focus, and discovered that for Spenser the failure to persevere in the quest often signals a falling into sin because the quest represents man's active battle against sin in himself and in the world. This falling into sin Spenser also portrays, in part, through images of inactivity. Now we shift our focus again to look at the poet's use of these images in a different light. In this chapter we examine these images as they reflect Spenser's growing disillusionment and loss of faith in the dream that gave birth to The Faerie Queene. As we have noted, this disillusionment grew in Spenser during the years he was writing The Faerie Queene; therefore, hints of his loss of faith appear throughout the work, in his treatment of Cymochles and Verdant in Book II, for example. Here, however, we examine the quests of the heroes of the last two books of the poem because Spenser's handling of their adventures reflects most clearly his growing understanding that his dream could not be realized on earth. We will begin with the quest of Artegall, hero of Book V, as it reflects Spenser's increasing disillusionment with the real world, examining in particular his encounter with Radigund, his defeat at her hands, and his subsequent enslavement. Then we will move to an examination of the quest of Calidore, hero of Book VI, again noting the evidence of Spenser's growing loss of faith. In our discussion of Calidore we will focus on the knight's withdrawal from the real world into the ideal world of the shepherds as a reflection of the poet's world-weariness and despair.

A panoramic view of The Faerie Queene reveals that, generally speaking, as Spenser progressed from book to book, he gradually shifted his focus from private to public concerns. The virtues of Books I

and II, holiness and temperance, concern the state of the individual man's soul. Chastity, the virtue of Book III, deals with the proper and healthy love relationship between a man and a woman while friendship, the virtue of Book IV, involves the love relationship between individual members of the community, including friends and lovers. In Book V Spenser continues to broaden his perspective, treating not isolated individual relationships but that intricate, cohesive network of relationships which we call society. According to Spenser's understanding, a healthy society is one guided by a respect for the rights of all men and preserved by the dedicated efforts of all members of the community to protect those rights. The preservation of the rights of all individuals of course necessitates an orderly, structured legal code at once rigid enough to prevent individual members of society from abusing one another and lenient enough to take into account the human factor present in all interpersonal relationships. The unwavering enforcement of this unique blend of discipline and clemency Spenser calls justice, the titular virtue of Book V of The Faerie Queene. This idea of society as an orderly structure nurtured by true justice gave the poet his conception of the state as a harmonious work of art that brings order to a chaotic world. The first, and only perfect, state consisted of only God, Adam, and Eve. The harmony of this small state was destroyed, however, when sin entered the world of Eden, setting man against his Creator (Genesis 3:1-6,8-10), man against wife (Genesis 3:12), and brother against brother (Genesis 4:5-8). Consumed by pride, envy, and anger, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Genesis 4:8). Thus, because of sin earth's first crime was committed, and God,

seeing the first fruits of the sin for which He punished Adam, Eve, and the serpent (Genesis 3:14-24), became the judge of the first murderer:

> 11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
> 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou in the earth.
>
> (Genesis 4:11-12)

Thus, the judgment against the first criminal was both stern and just. However, to prevent this punishment from becoming too great for the criminal to bear, God "set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (Genesis 4:15). In combining severity and mercy, God established the model of Christian justice that Spenser portrays in Book V of The Faerie Queene:

> Most sacred vertue she of all the rest,
> Resembling God in his imperiall might;
> Whose soveraine powre is herein most exprest,
> That both to good and bad he dealeth right,
> And all his workes with justice hath bedight.
> (V.x.1-5)

Although God provided the pattern of justice by which men were to govern themselves and thereby check the spread of chaos and wickedness unleashed upon the world by sin, the power of evil, Spenser writes, soon turned the hearts of men to "hardest stone" (V.ii.5), and the society of men grew daily "wourse and wourse" (V.i.9) until "the golden age" (V.ii.1) was transformed into "a stonie one" (V.ii.2). Looking at his own "stonie" age Spenser saw a world "corrupted sore" (V.iii.4):

> For that which all men then did vertue call
> Is now cald vice; and that which vice was hight,
> Is now hight vertue, and so us'd of all:
> Right now is wrong, and wrong that was is right,
> As all things else in time are chaunged quight.
> (V.iv.1-5)

Such was Spenser's view of the world as he wrote The Faerie Queene, a view that contrasted sharply with his vision of a just and harmonious state modeled on the golden age:

> So oft as I with state of present time
> The image of the antique world compare,
> When as mans age was in his freshest prime,
> And the first blossome of faire vertue bare,
> Such oddes I finde twixt those, and these which are,
> As that, through long continuance of his course,
> Me seemes the world is runne quite out of square
> From the first point of his appointed sourse,
> And being once amisse, growes daily wourse and wourse.
> (V.i.1-9)

This, then, is the source of Spenser's disillusionment and world-weariness: the betrayal of a dream. Instead of true justice Spenser saw, as Williams notes, "faulty human laws, exercised by erring humans upon their erring brothers."[15] That is, an awkward gap exists between the virtue of justice as contemplated and the virtue as practically applied,[16] making Book V the record of a disappointed man. In it there is evident less hope and more moral disgust than in the previous legends. The reader, like Spenser, is forced to face, Williams observes, the unpalatable truth that complete public justice is a very rare thing because its course is deflected by malice, greed, and ambition.[17] Thus, it is the duty of justice to impose heroic values upon unheroic people and virtue upon those who have no desire to be virtuous.[18] Quite simply, in the fallen world it is the nature of men to betray justice.

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[15]Williams, p. 166.

[16]Williams, p. 152.

[17]Williams, p. 153.

[18]Evans, p. 200.

Indeed, Evans asserts, the Fall is depressingly present throughout Book V.[19] Clearly, Spenser saw the reality of sin and the Fall as the reason justice, in the person of the goddess Astraea, left the earth:

> Now when the world with sinne gan to abound,
> Astraea loathing lenger here to space
> Mongst wicked men, in whom no truth she found,
> Return'd to heaven, whence she deriv'd her race.
> (V.i.11.1-4)

Perfect justice, then, is not to be found on earth. From this fact spring the sadness and bitterness of Book V of The Faerie Queene. This air of hopelessness is quite naturally reflected in Spenser's treatment of the quest of Artegall, titular hero of Book V, whose impossible task is to bring justice to a world where justice has little value. Thus, from the beginning Artegall's quest is doomed to result at best in qualified victory. Indeed, the knight is, Evans notes, the least effective of all the heroes of The Faerie Queene.[20] He is, after all, not justice itself but merely one just man working for justice in a world of unjust men who hamper the knight and prevent him from freely and fully promoting justice in the state.[21] Thus, the failures of Artegall, his quest, and Book V all result from the disillusionment that mars the last two books of The Faerie Queene.

We turn now to an examination of the knight created out of Spenser's disillusionment. Besides being the least successful of the poet's knights, Artegall is often considered to be the least attractive of

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[19]Evans, p. 200.

[20]Evans, p. 200.

[21]Williams, p. 156.

Spenser's champions. Perhaps the knight appears unattractive precisely because neither he nor his quest is completely successful. When we last see the knight, he is being dogged by Envy and Detraction, who revile him with taunts that cast a pall over his return to Gloriana's court following a quest achieved only after a nearly disastrous delay occasioned by his long imprisonment in the land of the Amazon queen Radigund (V.xii.35-43). However, Artegall is also unattractive because of several major character flaws that endanger his quest and make him appear at times as a less than ideal choice for the patron of justice. Again, we may attribute this characterization to Spenser's growing disillusionment. Disillusionment creates fatigue, which in turn dims poetic imagination. Thus, Artegall's unattractiveness may be the result of weakened literary skills, especially in this book where Spenser must have sensed the futility of his endeavors. Of course, Spenser also makes it clear that the virtue of this knight no longer exists. Although there is something noble and uplifting about a man striving for the impossible, the fact remains that Spenser's sense of futility in trying to characterize a knight who will never be all he is trying to be is reflected in the personality of Artegall.

Whatever the reasons, Artegall does have major character flaws, the most important of which are anger, pride, and uxoriousness. The first two flaws we witness in action when Artegall is first introduced to us at the tournament for Florimell's girdle in Book IV. Carrying a shield inscribed with the words "Salvagesse sans finesse" (IV.iv.39.9), Artegall bursts onto the scene with a show of violence and savagery (IV.iv.40-43) that lasts until he is overthrown by the "Knight of the Hebene Speare"

(V.v.8.2). When this knight is awarded the victory Artegall feels is rightly his, he is consumed with anger and a lust for vengeance (V.v.9.1-6). Thus, Artegall exhibits the personality traits of anger and pride, characteristics he shares with two heroes of antiquity with whom he is frequently compared: Hercules, the champion who quelled injustice with savage wrath and vengefulness (V.i.2.6-9), and Achilles, the proud and angry hero of The Iliad, whose armor Artegall wears (III.ii.25.6). With these heroes Artegall also shares the characteristic of uxoriousness, that is, a fatal weakness for and potential for submissiveness to female beauty. As Williams notes, the enslavement to women of a wrathful Achilles and a formidable Hercules lies like a shadow behind Artegall.[22] Indeed, all three characteristics follow him on his adventures, affecting the course of his entire quest.

Artegall's anger, pride, and uxoriousness all come into play in an episode in Book IV important to us here because it foreshadows the episode in Book V that results in the knight's downfall. Soon after his defeat at the tournament Artegall encounters the knight who there robbed him of his victory and glory. Riding toward his enemy "full of despiteous ire, / That nought but spoyle and vengeance did require" (IV.vi. 11.4-5), he is soon engaged in a savage contest during which he suffers several setbacks before he finally forces his enemy to the ground and with one mighty stroke shears away the helmet protecting his adversary's head. Suddenly he discovers that his foe is the beautiful lady knight Britomart, whose "angels face, unseene afore, / Like to the ruddie morne

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[22]Williams, p. 134.

appeard in sight" (IV.vi.19.5-6). Around her face appears the "golden border" (IV.vi.20.3) of her "yellow heare, / Having through stirring loosd their wonted band" (IV.vi.20.1-2). Although Artegall is amazed to find his enemy a beautiful woman, he is yet full of anger and hurt pride; therefore, he prepares to deliver the fatal blow:

> And as his hand he up againe did reare,
> Thinking to worke on her his utmost wracke,
> His powrelesse arme, benumbd with secret feare,
> From his revengefull purpose shronke abacke,
> And cruell sword out of his fingers slacke
> Fell downe to ground, as if the steele had sence,
> And felt some ruth, or sence his hand did lacke,
> Or both of them did thinke, obedience
> To doe to so divine a beauties excellence.
> (IV.vi.21.1-9)

This passage, containing a notable image of inactivity, makes several points. First, although Artegall is ruled to some extent by anger and pride, he is also subject to a dangerous weakness for female beauty. So great is this weakness that it robs him of his wrath; deprived of this he is powerless to seek further vengeance, and his sword falls from his loosened grasp. This image of inactivity, Artegall standing swordless and impotent before female beauty, Spenser uses to illustrate one of the knight's major character flaws. Second, this passage reveals that Artegall is a man who has little control over his emotions. Subject to the mercurial swing of his emotions, here from wrath to concupiscence to pity, Artegall may be said to be rather unstable in temperament. So swift is this emotional swing that his sword is at one moment raised on high to slay his enemy and is at the next seen lying useless on the ground. In the hands of this man who is unsure what to do with his own sword is placed the task of meting out justice, a task that demands control over one's own emotions and actions if it is to be successful.

Some critics pardon Artegall's actions. Dunseath, for example, asserts that "Artegall's abandoning his sword . . . is not a willful act. It is all involuntary. His arm is powerless, numbed with secret fear."[23] Hamilton, on the other hand, believes that Artegall's meeting with Britomart entails "a fall" because the knight "submits to woman's beauty and power of his own will."[24] In the final analysis, however, both views actually reveal that Artegall fails here. If his dropping his sword is voluntary, which it does not appear to be, he is, of course, to be faulted. However, even if his act is involuntary, he is also to be faulted because he shows himself powerless to control his emotions, his will, and his actions. The flaws revealed in this image of inactivity appear even more dangerous when we discover that the sword Artegall's emotions make him powerless to wield is Chrysaor, the weapon of Jove himself, left to the knight by Astraea as an instrument and symbol of the justice he is to administer (V.i.9-10). Artegall has, however, completely forgotten Chrysaor. Unmindful of his discarded sword and his empty hands before a powerful enemy now standing over him with an uplifted sword (IV.vi.23.1-4), Artegall

> long gazing thereupon,
> At last fell humbly downe upon his knee,
> And of his wonder made religion.
> (IV.vi.22.1-3)

So entranced is he that he cannot rise even when Britomart threatens to kill him where he is if he does not stand and fight (IV.vi.23.5-6):

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[23]T. K. Dunseath, Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 42.

[24]A. C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 183.

> But, die or live, for nought he would upstand,
> But her of pardon prayd more earnestlie,
> Or wreake on him her will for so great injurie.
> (IV.vi.23.7-9)

This adoration scene is more powerful from the vantage point of Book V, where we learn who Artegall is and what his mission is; in Book IV he has not yet been announced as the knight of justice. However, Artegall has always known his identity and his task, revealed to him in his childhood: "For Artegall in justice was upbrought / Even from the cradle of his infancie" (V.i.5.1-2). Once taught by Astraea to cherish and promote justice among men, the knight, it seems, has already found a new object of devotion. Although he has already undertaken his quest for justice (IV.vi.42.2-3), the symbol of this quest, Chrysaor, now lies unused at his feet while Artegall, reared to be the servant of justice, finds himself a new master. Even Dunseath, defender of the knight's previous actions, finds Artegall "guilty of prostrating himself at beauty's shrine."[25] Thus, these images of inactivity reflect dangers that will continue to assail the knight. Although Britomart, wooed by the knight until she finally consents to "be his love, and take him for her lord" (IV.vi.41.8), allows Artegall, "who all this while was bound / Upon an hard adventure yet in quest" (IV.vi.42.2-3), to resume his mission, when next he meets a beautiful female warrior, neither he nor his quest will be so fortunate.

The quest that Artegall pursues after his departure from Britomart, the subject matter of Book V of The Faerie Queene, consists of a series of encounters with offenders against the laws of the land and with

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[25]Dunseath, p. 43.

persons embroiled in what may be called civil suits that demand the intervention of an unbiased arbitrator. In both criminal cases and civil suits the knight performs quite well, showing wisdom and fairness as he arbitrates case after case, pronounces his verdict, and assigns his groom Talus to carry out the swift execution of the law. Only once in the course of these early adventures does Artegall betray any sign of weakness in meting out justice across the land. Again this weakness involves the sight of a beautiful woman in distress. This time the woman who arrests his attention and elicits his pity is Munera, a treacherous female who with her father robs travelers and fills her coffers with ill-gotten gains (V.ii.9.1-9). Having pronounced judgment upon this woman "full faire, and rich attired" (V.ii.10.1), Artegall watches as Talus carries out the verdict. Storming her castle Talus at last finds Munera hiding beneath a pile of gold:

> Thence he her drew
> By the faire lockes, and fowly did array,
> Withouten pitty of her goodly hew,
> That Artegall him selfe her seemelesse plight did rew.
> (V.ii.25.6-9)

Although Artegall does not impede the course of justice "which in Talus hand did lye" (V.ii.26.2), this brief display of pity at the sight of a beautiful woman in distress bodes ill for his quest. It reminds us of his defeat by Britomart, an episode that demonstrates the knight's capacity for submission to women and leaves him with what Williams calls a "new vulnerability" that poses a potential threat to his quest.[26] This episode also illustrates Artegall's as yet imperfect understanding

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[26]Williams, p. 168.

of justice as a blend of strictness and mercy. As his feelings for Munera illustrate, the knight understands pity, which can, in just the right circumstances, thwart justice; he does not yet understand mercy, which when tempered by sternness promotes justice. In particular, Artegall feels for Munera misplaced pity, for beneath her fair, helpless aspect she is a treacherous and dangerous woman. Dunseath notes that Artegall's lapse here is inexcusable, that he has violated the rules of justice in feeling pity for a woman whose gross wrongs he has both heard about and experienced firsthand.[27] Concluding, Dunseath asserts that the knight reveals a

> deep-seated weakness of character in feeling pity for the disfeaturing of fair Munera. . . . Artegall with his brief nod of pity for Munera raises considerable doubt about the successful completion of his quest.[28]

This episode, then, demonstrates anew the knight's vulnerability to women and his inability to control his emotions, this time pity, characteristics that threaten to impede the course of justice. Coupled with the episode in which Artegall is defeated by Britomart, this adventure foreshadows the knight's impending defeat at the hands of the Amazon Radigund.

In Radigund Artegall meets a woman warrior who shares many of his own personality flaws. Dunseath notes that Radigund is

> proud, irascible, and concupiscent. It is not coincidental that Spenser has pitted his hero against someone embodying the very qualities of character which have hindered him in his quest. . . . Since his fight with Radigund will determine

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[27]Dunseath, p. 93.

[28]Dunseath, p. 92.

whether or not he has succeeded in controlling his wayward temperament, the duel will be a true test of the patron of justice.[29]

This test Artegall fails. Of course, the knight is destined to meet Radigund in combat because she represents a form of injustice, the usurpation of authority by women. Spenser was not, however, condemning female sovereignty in general; after all, he was himself the subject of a powerful and noble queen, model for Gloriana, queen of Faery Land. Radigund, on the other hand, is a queen who has used power and deceit to create a kingdom in which women tyrannize men, who are reduced to the status of slaves:

> For all those knights, the which by force or guile
> She doth subdue, she fowly doth entreate.
> First she doth them of warlike armes despoile,
> And cloth in womens weedes: and then with threat
> Doth them compell to worke, to earne their meat,
> To spin, to card, to sew, to wash, to wring;
> Ne doth she give them other thing to eat,
> But bread and water, or like feeble thing,
> Them to disable from revenge adventuring.
> (V.iv.31.1-9)

Thus, Radigund and the kingdom she has created represent the improper dominion of women over men, an imbalance in the natural hierarchy of society. Artegall, of course, must challenge this perpetrator of injustice, this symbol, Parker notes, of "Tyranny itself, irresponsible Power, to Justice, most deadly enemy."[30]

In confronting this great enemy Artegall makes several crucial mistakes. The first is agreeing to fight Radigund on her own terms, which she sends a messenger to propose:

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[29]Dunseath, p. 129.

[30]Parker, p. 214.

> But these conditions doe to him propound
> That if I vanquishe him, he shall obay
> My law, and ever to my lore be bound;
> And so will I, if me he vanquish may,
> What ever he shall like to doe or say.
> (V.iv.49.1-5)

Artegall's agreeing to fight on these terms is foolish for several reasons. First, he has learned from Sir Terpin, a knight mistreated by the queen, that Radigund resorts to "guile" (V.iv.31.1) when she cannot win by force. To enter into a contract with an adversary who is not above using deceit is an act that betrays Artegall's great foolishness and lack of judgment. Second, the knight has also learned from Sir Terpin that the "law" by which Radigund rules her land, the same law she proposes that he submit to if he loses in battle, is an unjust one that allows women to tyrannize over men. According to Fletcher, "Radigund has laws which as pure command must be obeyed, which yet defy the larger dictates of wisdom and reason and in that sense are inequitable."[31] Yet Artegall agrees to abide by this law, submitting to Radigund's terms of unconditional sovereignty of the victor over the vanquished. Thus, justice agrees to fight injustice by her own rules, a decision Dunseath calls "mindless in the extreme."[32] In making this contract with Radigund Artegall commits a grievous error in judgment, an error unpardonable in a knight whose quest of promoting justice demands an exemplary ability to judge rightly. If we search for the cause of this error in judgment, we will discover Artegall's pride in control of

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[31]Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 175.

[32]Dunseath, p. 128.

the situation. Artegall, Freeman asserts, foolishly accepts what he regards as an opportunity to avenge Sir Terpin and establish his own military superiority.[33] He has been offered, after all, conditions that pose the problem of the superiority of one sex over another. Because the conditions come from a boastful female, Artegall cannot refuse the contest or the terms; his pride will not let him. To refuse the terms of unconditional sovereignty would be to betray doubts about his ability to defeat this member of the weaker sex. Of course, proud man that he is, Artegall does not foresee the possibility of being defeated. Thus, the knight agrees to abide by the terms of Radigund's contract: "His first error, owing perhaps to over-confidence, [is] making the pledge at all. However, this said, all is said."[34] At this moment Artegall's downfall begins: "By yielding to her conditions Artegall begins to yield to her."[35] Summing up his examination of Artegall's fatal agreement with Radigund, Dunseath concludes, "From the elaborate description of Radigund's character, we know that she will be Artegall's greatest enemy, and since he agrees to fight on her own terms, we know that he will fail."[36]

Although Artegall's defeat begins when he agrees to the terms of Radigund the warrior, his fall actually occurs when he comes face to face with Radigund the woman. Meeting her Artegall makes his second

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[33]Rosemary Freeman, The Faerie Queene: A Companion for Readers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 273.

[34]Parker, p. 215.

[35]Hamilton, p. 183.

[36]Dunseath, p. 129.

grievous mistake. After a violent battle in which one then the other gains the upper hand, the knight finally overpowers his adversary, actually bettering her in battle (V.v.6-9), and closes in to deliver the final blow. However, at this moment Radigund begins to revile him with "spightfull speaches" (V.v.10.4), claiming that he has won only by a stroke of good fortune (V.v.10.1-3). Her words, of course, wound Artegall's pride:

> his great hart gan inwardly to swell
> With indignation at her vaunting vaine,
> And at her strooke with puissance fearefull fell.
> (V.v.10.5-7)

So enraged is he at this blow to his pride occasioned by her boasting that

> He to her lept with deadly dreadfull looke,
> And her sunshynie helmet soone unlaced,
> Thinking at once both head and helmet to have raced.
> (V.v.11.7-9)

Beneath the helmet, however, he discovers the beautiful woman Radigund:

> He saw, his senses straunge astonishment,
> A miracle of Natures goodly grace
> In her faire visage voide of ornament,
> But bath'd in bloud and sweat together ment;
> Which, in the rudenesse of that evill plight,
> Bewrayd the signes of feature excellent:
> Like as the moone, in foggie winters night,
> Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkned be her light.
> (V.v.12.2-9)

Now, as before, when he caught sight of Britomart's face as lovely as "the ruddie morne," Artegall's manhood is overwhelmed by the sight of female beauty. And at this moment the knight makes his second error and throws away the victory he battled so hard to achieve:

> At sight thereof his cruell minded hart
> Empierced was with pittifull regard,

That his sharpe sword he threw from him apart,
Cursing his hand that had that visage mard.
(V.v.13.1-4)

And so in one brief moment of weakness Artegall is reduced from a knight engaged in battle, his sword delivering blow after blow, to a knight frozen in a trance, "Standing with emptie hands all weaponlesse" (V.v.14.2). In this image of inactivity we see the imminent defeat of Artegall.

This capitulation to woman's beauty of course parallels Artegall's earlier surrender to Britomart. In both episodes, and in the episode involving Munera, the knight displays a weakness for female beauty. As such, the Radigund episode, like the two previous episodes, is an attack on uxoriousness. Another parallel is that in all three episodes beauty moves Artegall to pity and a desire to do no further harm to the woman involved. In the Munera episode, however, the decision to act is out of Artegall's hands; Talus, disregarding his master's show of pity for Munera, performs without faltering his task of punishing the woman. In the other two episodes Artegall himself is in control of the action; ironically, in both cases he is unable to act. There are, however, major differences between the Britomart/Radigund episodes. First, in the earlier episode the knight surrenders to a noble and virtuous woman who threatens but is unable to attack her unarmed opponent. Radigund, however, is neither noble nor virtuous; indeed, she is a woman who will use force, deceit, her own beauty-any power at her disposal-to secure a victory. Thus, this second mistake in the battle with Radigund involves an impulse of misplaced pity, compassion for an enemy who deserves none. This feeling of pity returns us to Spenser's definition of justice as

severity tempered by mercy. Alone, neither is true justice. Artegall, however, does not yet understand justice as this unique blend; he merely swings from severity to pity, as his adventures with Britomart and Radigund illustrate. Freeman observes that this episode can be said to involve a misapplication of the principle of mercy and a failure on Artegall's part to discern when the rules of strict justice might be waived in favor of clemency and when not.[37] Furthermore, as we have seen, pity is an emotion that makes the knight unable to function effectively. Whereas mercy promotes justice, pity thwarts the virtue: "Artegall's weakness is compassion, which a just judge may and should feel, but not so that emotion should make him fail in his duty."[38] However, Artegall does fail; this failure is represented by an image of inactivity.

The second major difference between these two episodes involves the nature of Artegall's surrender. In the Britomart episode the knight's surrender is involuntary; in the second it is deliberate: "Before his sword had fallen from his fingers of its own accord: now he deliberately throws it away."[39] Thus, there can be no question that his submission to Radigund is a willful act and that Artegall must take full responsibility for the events that occur after he discards his sword. Significantly, the sword Artegall throws down is, we remember, Chrysaor, the weapon given to him by the goddess Astraea before she departed from the

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[37]Freeman, p. 273.

[38]Parker, p. 214.

[39]Hamilton, p. 184.

earth, leaving Artegall the divinely sanctioned task of promoting justice and restoring the order of the golden age, long since departed. Thus, Chrysaor becomes both the instrument of justice, that is, the symbol of Artegall's divine mission, and the symbol of hope for the restoration of the golden world. This weapon Artegall has just willfully discarded.

From this moment when the symbol of hope is hurled abandoned to the dust, a noticeable change takes place in Artegall and in his adventures. This change is also signaled by an image of inactivity. Radigund, realizing her advantage and having none of the virtue of Britomart or the pity of Artegall, renews her onslaught against her defenseless adversary:

> With fresh assault upon him she did fly,
> And gan renew her former cruelnesse:
> And though he still retyr'd, yet nathelesse
> With huge redoubled strokes she on him layd;
> And more increast her outrage mercilesse,
> The more that he with meeke intreatie prayd,
> Her wrathful hand from greedy vengeance to have stayd.
> (V.v.14.3-9)

Before this attack, Artegall, once pronounced by Spenser the "doughtiest knight that liv'd that day, and most of might" (IV.iv.42.9), can only cower, attempting to ward off blows with his shield:

> And evermore he gently did desyre
> To stay her stroks, and he himselfe would yield:
> Yet nould she hearke, ne let him once respyre,
> Till he to her delivered had his shield,
> And to her mercie him submitted in plaine field.
> (V.v.16.5-9)

Having before surrendered to Radigund's beauty, Artegall now surrenders to her martial strength. Alfred Gough remarks, "Spenser repeatedly insists on the voluntary character of Artegall's surrender, by which is

apparently meant that he was ready to submit as soon as he found himself attacked while without his sword."[40] We must also insist upon the apparent hopelessness with which Artegall regards his predicament. We can only surmise that in his heart the knight gives up all hope of defeating Radigund the moment he drops his sword, that symbol of the quest and of hope, at his feet. For Artegall there is no fighting to the death, for only a man with a vestige of hope or pride continues to fight. Hope and pride the knight lost when he abandoned his sword and his quest. In a last gesture at once devoid of both hope and pride, Artegall, Dunseath notes, hands Radigund his shield, the "emblem of justice" and symbol of his knighthood, an act that betrays the knight's "final and utterly complete defection."[41] And so Artegall becomes the thrall of the Amazon queen, "not through her strength, but his own weakness."[42] The knight "is defeated by his greatest enemy–himself. . . . Artegall is the sole agent of his own fall."[43] Spenser also insists upon this point, and we cannot fail to note the air of hopelessness with which the poet pronounces his verdict upon the knight of justice:

> So was he overcome, not overcome,
> But to her yeelded of his owne accord;
> Yet was he justly damned by the doome

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[40]Alfred S. Gough, quoted in Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, and Frederick Morgan Padelford, V (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), 202.

[41]Dunseath, p. 133.

[42]Elizabeth Watson, Spenser (London: Evans Brothers, Ltd., 1967), p. 130.

[43]Dunseath, p. 133.

Of his owne mouth, that spake so warelesse word,
To be her thrall, and service her afford.
For though that he first victorie obtayned,
Yet after, by abandoning his sword,
He wilfull lost that he before attayned.
No fayrer conquest then that with goodwill is gayned.
(V.v.17.1-9)

At this moment, for the poet, as for the knight, all is lost. The dream of the restoration of the golden age embodied in Spenser's vision of a virtuous and mighty knight faithfully wielding the sacred sword of justice is gone. Thus it is that Spenser's disillusionment, so obvious in the opening lines of Book V but silenced during the poet's hopeful account of Artegall's early career as the questing knight of justice, re-enters the poem. Spenser's hope lies with Artegall's sword, abandoned in the dust.

From this moment of defeat and disillusionment Artegall, his quest, the poet, and The Faerie Queene never completely recover. Artegall, having already willfully surrendered his sword and shield, is now stripped of the rest of his armor by Radigund (V.v.20.1-5), a situation humiliating in itself. But he is also forced to stand by helplessly while the Amazon breaks his sword (V.v.21.8) and orders that

his warlike armes
Be hang'd on high, that mote his shame bewray.
(V.v.21.6-7)

To complete the knight's humiliation Radigund dresses him in "womans weedes, that is to manhood shame" (V.v.20.7) and places in his hands the ultimate symbol of effeminacy, the distaff (V.v.23.2-3). For the better part of three cantos Artegall sits in captivity carding and spinning, degraded, Evans observes, "to the depths of unheroic

activity."[44] Indeed, the menial tasks that Artegall is forced to perform in this, one of Spenser's most extended episodes of captivity, contrast so sharply with the heroic activities a knight is properly engaged in that these lowly tasks may be said to constitute a kind of inactivity. Thus, in an extended image of inactivity Spenser makes Artegall's humiliation and degradation complete:

> Since his physical humiliation is complete, nothing remains to remind Artegall of his former glories—his armor hangs high in disgrace, Talus is gone, and his very clothes and present occupation deny his masculinity.[45]

Most humiliating of all is Artegall's knowledge that he alone is to blame for his predicament. Although Spenser half-heartedly attempts to restore to Artegall a vestige of his former glory by showing the knight enduring his bondage with dignity and grace and faithfully honoring the pledge he made to Radigund on the battlefield (V.v.23.6-9), this effort comes across as, Freeman notes, a "mere palliation" that cannot pardon Artegall's conduct as the patron of justice[46] or alter the picture of him that is slowly evolving, the portrait of the fallen knight who has failed not only himself but all those who placed their hopes in him and his quest.

Among those Artegall fails are Sir Terpin, the knight maltreated by Radigund who first advised Artegall of the Amazon's activities, and Irena, a lady whose lands are being terrorized by the tyrant Grantorto. To free her and her land is the object of the knight's quest. In

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[44]Evans, p. 204.

[45]Dunseath, p. 135.

[46]Freeman, p. 275.

agreeing to fight Radigund Artegall took to himself the task of defending and freeing Sir Terpin from the Amazon's tyranny (V.iv.34.1-9). When Artegall surrenders Radigund recaptures Sir Terpin and leads him

> Unto the crooke, t'abide the balefull stowre
> From which he lately had through reskew fled:
> Where he full shamefully was hanged by the hed.
> (V.v.18.7-9)

This consequence of Artegall's failures causes Parker to conclude that

> Artegall's fall is the most disastrous of all the knights'; the most shameful to himself, the most fatal to others; for the fault of the Red Crosse Knight, or Guyon, or Calidore if fault it were, hurts no one but themselves, whereas that of Artegall brings to shameful death the knight who had trusted him, and whom he had undertaken to save.[47]

Nor is Sir Terpin the only one to suffer because of Artegall's defeat. During the delay occasioned by his lengthy imprisonment, Irena and her people continue to suffer the cruelties inflicted by Grantorto. When Artegall is finally rescued by Britomart, he is suddenly reminded of his quest, and not even his love for the lady knight can delay him any longer:

> Yet could it not sterne Artegall retaine,
> Nor hold from suite of his avowed quest,
> Which he had undertane to Gloriane;
> But left his love, albe her strong request,
> Faire Britomart, in languor and unrest,
> And rode him selfe uppon his first intent:
> Ne day nor night did ever idly rest.
> (V.viii.3.1-7)

This determination to complete his quest without delay seems quite noble, of course. Indeed, in what appears to be an effort to brighten the tarnished image of the knight Spenser reminds us at least three more times that Artegall "Went on his way, ne ever howre did cease, / Till he

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[47]Parker, p. 215.

redeemed had that lady thrall" (V.vii.45.7-8). The poet's insistence upon this point, however, only serves to reinforce our realization that Artegall has changed drastically from what he once was. Moreover, he delays still further even after he has resumed his quest. For instance, he joins with Prince Arthur in rescuing a young maiden named Samient (V.viii.4-11) and slaying the tyrannous Souldan (V.viii.24-43). Then with Arthur he also slays the treacherous Malengin (V.ix.7-19). Afterwards the two knights proceed to the court of Mercilla, where they stay for quite some time (V.ix.20-V.x.17). These delays are, of course, unavoidable—after all, a knight must not turn his back on people in distress—but we cannot help but feel Artegall spends too much time at Mercilla's partaking of her "goodly chere" (V.x.5.3) even after he has learned his much needed lesson in the proper role of mercy in justice (V.ix.38-50). Although it is from Mercilla that the knight finally learns the true meaning of justice, during this delay Irena, going out to meet Artegall on the day he predicted he would arrive to free her land from Grantorto, is taken prisoner by the tyrant and given ten days to live. If her champion does not arrive within this time, Irena will die (V.xi.39-40). When Artegall finally arrives in Irena's land after many delays and detours, this news greets him. Immediately, the knight accepts full blame "that through his fault she had / Fallen into that tyrants hand and usage bad" (V.xi.40.8-9). Thus, he acknowledges his failure aloud for the first time:

> Now sure and by my life,
> Too much am I too blame for that faire maide,
> That have her drawne to all this troublous strife,
> Through promise to afford her timely aide,
> Which by default I have not yet defraide.
> (V.xi.41.1-5)

However, whatever good this acceptance of blame may accomplish in the way of returning to Artegall some of his former nobility, all is immediately lost again when the knight suddenly declares:

> But witnesse unto me, ye heavens, that know
> How cleare I am from blame of this upbraide:
> For ye into like thraldome me did throw,
> And kept from complishing the faith which I did owe.
> (V.xi.41.6-9)

And so, sadly, Artegall has apparently learned nothing, not even how to accept responsibility for his own actions. And if the patron of justice is no wiser, no more mature than he was when his adventures began, what hope remains for the world? If not to this man, the "doughtiest knight that liv'd that day" (IV.iv.42.9), to whom can the dream be entrusted?

Perhaps it is this dismal realization that brings to the closing cantos of Book V an unrelenting air of defeat and disillusionment. After one more delay (V.xi.44-65) Artegall scrambles to Irena's rescue with only one day's grace remaining (V.xii.11.1-2). He slays Grantorto, frees Irena and her land, and begins the long trek back to Gloriana's court (V.xii.17-27). Not surprisingly, for Artegall there is no joy after victory. Instead, he meets two ugly hags, Envy and Detraction, who begin to follow him and revile him with "most bitter wordes" (V.xii.42.1). Although we are not told the subject of these taunts, which Spenser protests are "Most shamefull, most unrighteous, most untrew" (V.xii.42.2), we can guess that the slanderous remarks capitalize on the knight's recent defeat and humiliation at the hands of the Amazon queen. Of Artegall's miserable ride home Davis writes,

> we cannot but recognize a certain poetic justice in the fate that condemns him, after his long-delayed battle with

> Grantorto, to return to Gloriana with nothing but the insults of Envy and Detraction to reward him for his pains.[48]

If Artegall is saddened by this bleak ride home, he is not alone. No doubt Spenser shared his knight's misery as he wrote the final lines of Book V. "But," we might ask, "if Spenser created the knight and the quest, could he not just as easily have handled Artegall's adventures differently and brought the knight home triumphantly to Gloriana?" The answer, of course, is "yes." But to do so would have been to lie to himself and to the world. For Spenser there was no other way; the hope, at least the hope vested in Artegall, was gone, the dream of justice in this world dead. For Artegall there remains only the long ride home, a journey made in the company of the poet and the betrayed dream they share.

This air of hopelessness that pervades Book V continues into Book VI of The Faerie Queene, which covers the quest of Calidore and Spenser's examination of the virtue of courtesy. The poet defines courtesy as the gentle heart revealing itself "In doing gentle deedes with franke delight" (VI.vii.1.2). As such, courtesy may be, as C. S. Lewis notes, "the poetry of conduct,"[49] treating others with concern, kindness, and goodwill. Thus, it is the outward expression of a deep-seated love for others. The truly courteous man, then, obeys the new commandment Jesus gave to the disciples His last night on earth: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved

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[48]B. E. C. Davis, Edmund Spenser: A Critical Study (1933; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), pp. 123-124.

[49]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 351.

you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Practiced by such a man courtesy is the embodiment of the spirit of love defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.[50] Because he truly cares for other people, the courteous man treats them with compassion, respect, and kindness. Spenser himself explains, "The gentle minde by gentle deeds is knowne" (VI.iii.1.2). Thus, courtesy exists only in so far as it reveals itself in a reaching out to others. Courtesy is, then, "the great social virtue," Kate Warren asserts, "the fine art of living together nobly with all other human beings."[51] As patron of this virtue Spenser chose Calidore:

> But mongst them all was none more courteous knight
> Then Calidore, beloved over all:
> In whom it seemes that gentlenesse of spright
> And manners mylde were planted naturall.
> (VI.i.2.1-4)

In his quest as the knight of courtesy, Calidore leads the fight against all forms of discourtesy, including "inhuman customs, railing moods, churlishness of many kinds, deceit, malice, cruelty, ignorance."[52] However, the object of Calidore's quest is to destroy the Blatant Beast, who by his name and actions is revealed to be "slander, detraction, backbiting, libel-all those irresponsible attacks by mouth or pen on the integrity of individual character."[53] As the enemy of courtesy, the great social virtue, the Blatant Beast, this creature of "cruel tongues

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[50]Bradner, p. 152.

[51]Kate Warren, Variorum, VI (1938), 324.

[52]Warren, Variorum, VI (1938), 324.

[53]Arnold Williams, Flower on a Lowly Stalk: The Sixth Book of the Faerie Queene (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 42.

and venomous teeth, spiteful and yet stupid, was in Spenser's eyes the impersonation of the worst social evil of his time and of all time."[54] Sale believes the Blatant Beast to be the distillation of all things senseless, infamous, slanderous, multitongued, and reckless that Spenser saw in the world around him.[55] Indeed, there is ample evidence that the poet experienced firsthand the bites of slander. Book VI concludes with this account of the Blatant Beast roaming the world again after escaping from Calidore:

> He growen is so great and strong of late,
> Barking and biting all that him doe bate,
> Albe they worthy blame, or cleare of crime:
> Ne spareth he most learned wits to rate,
> Ne spareth he the gentle poets rime,
> But rends without regard of person or of time.
> (VI.xii.40.4-9)

> Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,
> Hope to escape his venemous despite,
> More then my former writs, all were they cleanest
> From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite,
> With which some wicked tongues did it backebite,
> And bring into a mighty peres displeasure,
> That never so deserved to endite.
> (IV.xii.41.1-7)

Although Spenser does not reveal names, it is known that his great enemy in Elizabeth's court was her lord treasurer Burghley, who reportedly once prevented the poet from receiving a hundred-pound pension; later "the poet, by a rhymed appeal to his sovereign, secured the hundred pounds and a censure for his enemy."[56] Perhaps the slanderer of

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[54]Warren, VI (1938), 324.

[55]Roger Sale, Reading Spenser: An Introduction to The Faerie Queene (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 188.

[56]R. E. Neil Dodge, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser (1908; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), p. xx.

Spenser's work was Burghley, perhaps not. However, it seems that the poet blamed someone for his failure to receive favor from Elizabeth for his literary endeavors. It is also clear that Spenser conceived some ill-feelings toward the court in general as a result of his unsuccessful attempt to get preferment. In the Proem to Book VI Spenser praises the court of Elizabeth, "where courtesies excell" (VI.vii.9), and immediately afterwards he makes a more direct connection between courtesy and the court:

> Of Court, it seemes, men Courtesie doe call,
> For that it there most useth to abound;
> And well beseemeth that in princes hall
> That vertue should be plentifully found,
> Which of all goodly manners is the ground,
> And roote of civill conversation.
> (VI.i.1.1-6)

In these lines, of course, we hear Spenser the idealistic dreamer speaking. However, this same poet makes the shepherd Meliboe pronounce the court a place of "vainenesse" (VI.ix.24.9) and "idle hopes" (VI.ix.25.2). Thus, in the words of Arnold Williams,

> The flaw in the complete identification of courtesy with the court is the actuality of the court, the cut-throat strife for advancement which Melibee briefly sketches and which Spenser and many of his readers knew at first hand, and the tendency of the court to substitute artificial courtliness for true courtesy.[57]

Thus, once again Spenser was forced to confront the disheartening disparity between the ideal and the real. Of course, the confrontation posed difficulties for the creator of The Faerie Queene. On the one hand, Gloriana, the court, and the quest formed the structural center of the poem; all three were elements of Spenser's vision of the restoration

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[57]Arnold Williams, p. 79.

of the golden world. Through the efforts of a virtuous queen and her noble champions, the fallen world, blighted by sin and the First Fall, might be improved and men might live in closer harmony and peace until such time as God defeated sin, created the New Jerusalem, and restored all to perfection and order. Opposed to this dream was, of course, the reality of the world Spenser lived in, where he himself suffered from the cruelties and injustice men inflict upon their fellow men. How often must the poet have wished to withdraw from that world, escape to a place apart from the harsh reality he himself knew. And so it was that in Book VI of The Faerie Queene Spenser created such a place and effected his escape from the world. When he left, he took with him Calidore, the knight of courtesy.

With the withdrawal of poet and knight from the real world, a troubling paradox strikes at the very heart of the conception of The Faerie Queene. On the one hand, Spenser realized that men would never be as virtuous and noble as he willed them to be, that they did not, indeed could not, share his vision. Therefore, the world would remain the same, and the dream of the achieved quest for virtue was merely a will-o'-the-wisp, a product of the poet's self-delusion. This disillusionment we have already seen in Book V of the poem. From this same disillusionment comes the attractiveness of withdrawal in Book VI. With withdrawal comes, quite naturally, the abandonment of the quest. However, even before Calidore formally abandons his quest in canto ix, it is quite clear that the poet has lost interest in the idea of the quest as the framework of The Faerie Queene. For example, from canto iii to canto ix, Calidore disappears from the narrative; that is, for almost

one-half of the book he is offstage, unsuccessfully pursuing the Blatant Beast. When Calidore suddenly reappears at the beginning of canto ix, he does so only to abandon his quest several stanzas into the canto. Nohrnberg reflects on Spenser's treatment of the quest in Book VI: "A comparatively disengaged view of the action of the quest is taken by the poet, and the themes of holiday and contemplative withdrawal bulk large."[58] In Arcadia, the pastoral world to which he withdraws, Calidore finds beauty, simplicity, and peace; that is, he seems to have discovered an unfallen world. Thus, Evans asserts, "Calidore is deflected from his quest not by a vice but by the dream of an unfallen world which the pastoral idyll seems to offer him."[59] Evans concludes, "This is the world of nostalgic wishful-thinking into which Calidore is drawn."[60]

There is, however, another side to this paradox that surfaces in Book VI of The Faerie Queene. Although Spenser quite obviously shared Calidore's desire to withdraw into an idyllic world of peace and innocence, the poet knew that such a world no longer existed; Eden, Spenser realized, was no more. If man desired an Eden he could do only one thing: he could cherish the ideal and work toward it through virtuous endeavors. He could not do what Calidore does: wish into existence a world that is no more while forsaking the labor that is necessary if that world is ever to be restored. Evans notes that Spenser's

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[58]James Nohrnberg, The Analogy of The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 657.

[59]Maurice Evans, "The Fall of Guyon," in Spenser: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Harry Berger, Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 92.

[60]Evans, Anatomy, p. 220.

> profound sense of the Fall made him mistrustful of any day-dreaming after an innocence irrevocably lost, and forced him to distinguish very precisely between the ideal which spurs one to profitable effort and that which inhibits action or breeds complacency.[61]

That is, to reject the real world through escapism is to ignore the reality of the Fall and of sin, to ignore this reality is to deny the necessity of labor and the quest, to deny these is to betray the dream, the hope that men can, through noble endeavors and virtuous action, better the world. This dream Spenser could not abandon, not even for the beauty and peace of Calidore's idyllic retreat. And so, although sympathetic to Calidore's desire to retreat into the idyllic pastoral world, the poet felt compelled to censure the knight for abandoning his quest, for taking "refuge in an ideal world when he should be reforming the real one."[62] This criticism Spenser presents, in part, through images of inactivity. Thus, cantos ix and x, containing those episodes during which Calidore retreats into the world of the shepherds, constitute one of Spenser's most extended presentations of inactivity. We now turn to an examination of those cantos.

The poet begins canto ix by reminding himself and his reader that he has neglected to advance his central plot, the quest of Calidore:

> Now turne againe my teme, thou jolly swayne,
> Backe to the furrow which I lately left;
> I lately left a furrow, one or twayne,
> Unplough'd, the which my coulter hath not cleft:
> Yet seem'd the soyle both fayre and frutefull eft,
> As I it past, that were too great a shame,
> That so rich frute should be from us bereft;

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[61]Evans, Anatomy, p. 219.

[62]Evans, Anatomy, p. 220.

Besides the great dishonour and defame,
Which should befall to Calidores immortall name.
(VI.ix.1.1-9)

These lines tell us two things. First, Spenser realizes he has been derelict in serving the Faerie Queene, that is, in completing the poem extolling her glories to the world. Second, these lines make it clear that Spenser recognizes a parallel between himself and his knight, a parallel, Nohrnberg notes, "most marked in an analogous dereliction" of duty.[63] Being struck by his own neglect of his duties, the poet immediately picks up the narrative of Calidore's quest, reminding us that Calidore has not been idle since last we heard from him. Indeed, without rest he has pursued the Blatant Beast through all the countryside, from city, to town, to country, to farms, and finally to open fields (VI.ix.2-4). And so it is that, tired and sweating (VI.ix.5.7), Calidore reaches the pleasant fields of Arcadia. Even in this peaceful place, however, his foremost thought is for the Blatant Beast, but he is informed by the inhabitants that they have seen "no such beast" (VI.ix. 6.1). Thus, from the moment of his arrival in Arcadia it is clear to us, if not to the knight, that if Calidore is to continue his quest for the Blatant Beast, he must leave this land, for the creature is not there. The knight is tired, however, and when the shepherds bid him sit and drink (VI.ix.6.6-9), he readily accepts their offer. Thus, for the first time we see the knight succumb to his fatigue; according to Evans, Calidore's acceptance of the shepherds' offer of rest "marks the

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[63]Nohrnberg, p. 675.

beginning of his fall."[64] This fall is ensured when the knight, sitting contentedly with the shepherds after his long and frustrating search for the Blatant Beast, sees and falls in love with Pastorella, the beautiful shepherdess (VI.ix.11.1-9). At this moment Calidore forgets his quest:

> So stood he still long gazing thereupon,
> Ne any will had thence to move away,
> Although his quest were farre afore him gon;
> But after he had fed, yet did he stay,
> And sate there still, untill the flying day
> Was farre forth spent, discoursing diversly
> Of sundry things, as fell, to worke delay.
> (VI.ix.12.1-7)

Significantly, Spenser signals this moment when Calidore forgets his quest for love of the shepherdess with an image of inactivity. Hamilton opines, "When Calidore forgoes his quest of the Blatant Beast throughout the world, and chooses to pursue his love of Pastorella, he 'falls.'"[65] The swiftness with which this "fall" occurs may be attributed to one factor. Calidore has met with no success in tracking the Blatant Beast. Although he has heretofore been faithful to his quest, he has only met with disappointment and fatigue. Let us conjecture that the knight may have experienced some doubts about the possibility of the successful completion of his quest; indeed, he may even have begun to question the meaning of the quest and his own knighthood. Perhaps before he even sees Pastorella, he has already begun to reject the ideas of the quest and knight-errantry. Thus, he quickly accepts the offer from the shepherds to sit and rest, knowing that the distance between him and his quarry is growing greater each moment he delays, and is just as swiftly

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[64]Evans, Anatomy, p. 31.

[65]Hamilton, p. 203.

smitten by a love for Pastorella so overwhelming that it forces all thoughts of his quest from his mind. Sale believes that the "wooing of Pastorella can seem a quest only to one who has rejected chivalry."[66] Agreeing, Humphrey Tonkin asserts,

> Calidore's entry into the pastoral world may at first sight seem to be caused not by confusion but by an overpowering certainty-that he loves Pastorella. However, the fact of his love demonstrates his own confusion regarding the purpose and means of his quest.[67]

Confronted by this doubt about his quest and offered what appears to be a viable alternative, that is, respite in a land where the Blatant Beast does not range and where the knight may pursue, instead, the beautiful Pastorella, Calidore chooses to forget his quest.

Although Calidore actually foregoes his pursuit of the Blatant Beast the moment he first sees Pastorella, he does not formally renounce his quest until after he has spoken at length with Meliboe, the girl's father. Calidore begins this conversation by praising the peaceful life of the shepherds, which contrasts so sharply with the life he himself knows so well:

> "How much," sayd he, "more happie is the state,
> In which ye, father, here doe dwell at ease,
> Leading a life so free and fortunate
> From all the tempests of these worldly seas,
> Which tosse the rest in daungerous disease;
> Where warres, and wreckes, and wicked enmitie
> Doe them afflict, which no man can appease!
> That certes I your happinesse envie,
> And wish my lot were plast in such felicitie."
> (VI.ix.19.1-9)

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[66]Sale, p. 191.

[67]Humphrey Tonkin, Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 301.

Thus, the knight acknowledges aloud for the first time his world-weariness and his desire to be free of the duty that forces him to spend his days tossed by "the tempests of these worldly seas." Listening carefully to the words of the disheartened young knight, we can hear the voice of Edmund Spenser, himself a reluctant sojourner in a world fraught with "warres, and wreckes, and wicked enmitie." Because the poet's sympathy with the knight's disillusionment is obvious in these lines, we cannot fail to note that here Spenser has plunged directly into the paradox that figures so predominantly in Book VI. That is, while sympathizing with the knight's summation of his world-weariness, the poet feels compelled at the same time to make us see that Calidore's words betray feelings and attitudes unbecoming a knight. Thus, these words, indeed, Calidore's entire conversation with Meliboe, present, in the words of Nohrnberg, "an analysis of the hero's unheroic state of mind."[68] This unhappy state of mind continues to grow in Calidore as Meliboe launches into a monologue extolling the virtues of his simple life (VI.ix.20-21,23) far away from the world he has rejected:

> To them that list, the worlds gay showes I leave,
> And to great ones such follies doe forgive,
> Which oft through pride do their owne perill weave,
> And through ambition downe themselves doe drive
> To sad decay, that might contented live.
> (VI.ix.22.1-5)

Surely Calidore hears in these words a summary of his own situation, for his own ambition, seen in his desire to complete his quest, has brought him only disappointment and a sense of defeat. However, when Meliboe continues by condemning the court, where he worked for ten years as a

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[68]Nohrnberg, p. 717.

gardener, as a place of "vainenesse" (VI.ix.24.9) and "idle hopes" (VI.ix.25.2), he reinforces the doubts the knight may have already had about the quest and his service to the court of the Faerie Queene. Thus, in his reply to the shepherd Calidore expresses his own disdain of "this worlds gay showes" (VI.ix.27.4) and of ambition (VI.ix.28.5) and concludes by expressing his desire that

> the heavens so much had graced mee,
> As graunt me live in like condition;
> Or that my fortunes might transposed bee
> From pitch of higher place unto this low degree.
> (VI.ix.28.6-9)

Although there is a great deal of truth in Calidore's account of his reasons for wishing to exchange his present life for the life of a shepherd, Spenser makes it clear that the knight has a selfish ulterior motive for wanting to remain among the shepherds (VI.ix.27.1-2). During Meliboe's speech Calidore has been feasting his eyes on Pastorella, realizing that a stay in Arcadia will allow him to court the shepherdess. Thus, Meliboe's speech and Pastorella's beautiful face join forces to seduce the knight away from his quest:

> Whylest thus he talkt, the knight with greedy eare
> Hong still upon his melting mouth attent;
> Whose sensefull words empierst his hart so neare,
> That he was rapt with double ravishment,
> Both of his speach, that wrought him great content,
> And also of the object of his vew,
> On which his hungry eye was alwayes bent;
> That twixt his pleasing tongue and her faire hew
> He lost himselfe, and like one halfe entraunced grew.
> (IV.ix.26.1-9)

Caught between Meliboe and Pastorella the knight is virtually paralyzed. With this image of inactivity Spenser signals that Calidore, having "lost himselfe," that is, having forgotten his identity and his purpose, will soon abandon his quest. Indeed, Freeman notes, it is because he is

blinded by love that Calidore can so rapidly dismiss his knightly past as being too full of the dangers of death and enmity (VI.ix.27-28).[69] Agreeing, Evans observes that Calidore's love

> is of a sufficiently sensual kind to cloud his judgement. "Entrapt of love" in this way . . . he agrees with Meliboe's conventional strictures on the "vainenesse" of court, even though the courtesy which he serves takes its name from the noblest court of all.[70]

Again Spenser seems to be trapped in his own paradox. Although he agrees with Calidore's disillusionment about the court and life in the harsh world outside Arcadia, in condoning this attitude he weakens the structure of The Faerie Queene, centered as it is around Gloriana's court and the tradition of the quest. Perhaps the poet saw in the knight's overwhelming love for Pastorella a solution to his dilemma and the knight's. In any case, Spenser makes it clear that Calidore's prime motive for wishing to remain among the shepherds is his love for Meliboe's daughter. Thus, the knight sees the shepherd's praise of country life and disdain of life at court as a "meanes to worke his mind, / And to insinuate his harts desire" (VI.ix.27.1-2).

Determined as he is to have "his harts desire," Calidore seizes upon Meliboe's next words: "But fittest is, that all contented rest / With that they hold: each hath his fortune in his brest" (VI.ix.29.8-9). In essence, Meliboe is informing the knight that he must accept and be content with the fortune heaven allots him, with what and who he is. However, Calidore ignores the implications of the shepherd's speech and

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[69]Freeman, p. 324.

[70]Evans, Anatomy, p. 222.

interprets these words to mean that a man is free to choose the life he desires. And so, determined to choose his own lot in life, the knight asks permission to live among the shepherds:

> "Since then in each mans selfe," said Calidore,
> "It is, to fashion his owne lyfes estate,
> Give leave awhyle, good father, in this shore
> To rest my barcke, which hath bene beaten late
> With stormes of fortune and tempestuous fate,
> In seas of troubles and of toylesome paine,
> That, whether quite from them for to retrate
> I shall resolve, or backe to turne againe,
> I may here with your selfe some small repose obtaine.
> (VI.ix.31.1-9)

With these words Spenser begins his longest account of a knight's withdrawal from the world and the quest. It is a withdrawal precipitated by Spenser's own disillusionment and world-weariness, feelings he shares with the knight who turns his back on reality.

During his pastoral truancy Calidore discovers the delights of this world far removed from the stern, melancholy concerns of the life he has left behind. To finalize his rejection of his previous life and his quest, Calidore discards his bright armes (VI.ix.36.3) and dresses

> In shepheards weed, and in his hand he tooke,
> In stead of steelehead speare, a shepheards hooke.
> (VI.ix.36.4-5)

At first glance this action may seem commendable. After all, Calidore doffs his armor to "chaunge the manner of his loftie looke" (VI.ix.36.2); that is, he does not want the shepherds to feel that he believes he is better than they are. However, this is not the first time we have seen a knight lay aside his armor: earlier in the poem the Red Crosse Knight (I.vii.2.8), Cymochles (II.v.28.7), and Verdant (II.xii.80.1-5) all abandoned their armor and retreated from the cares attendant upon knight-errantry. In each of these cases Spenser made it clear that

forsaking one's arms was culpable behavior in a knight. At this point, however, the poet does not explicitly condemn Calidore's actions. His failure to do so signals, of course, his underlying sympathy with the knight's withdrawal. At the same time, however, Spenser's undying belief in the necessity of the quest as a means of reforming the world forced him to acknowledge the truancy from duty signaled by Calidore's abandoned armor. Therefore, Spenser, torn between approval and disapproval, allows the repetition of the image of a knight forsaking his armor to deliver the indictment he found himself incapable of pronouncing. Another indirect method of signaling the error Calidore commits in abandoning his arms, that is, in choosing a life of seclusion over a life of heroic action, is the image comparing the knight to Paris, "What time the golden apple was unto him brought" (VI.ix.36.9). With the apple in his hand Paris also made a choice, one that eventually led to the fall of Troy. Tonkin notes, "Certainly this reminder of the tragic train of events set in motion by Paris's fateful choice . . . casts an ominous shadow over the carefree pastoral world."[71] Calidore, however, is completely unaware of everything except the delights of this world he has discovered. In order to enjoy as fully as possible the pleasures to be found in Arcadia, Calidore, turning his back on the chores of the quest, the battles and all other confrontations with danger, begins to spend his days as the shepherds do. In the way of work he helps Pastorella with her sheep (VI.ix.37.1-9); the rest of the time he spends enjoying rural pastimes: singing and playing on pipes (VI.ix.5.3),

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[71]Tonkin, p. 275.

dancing (VI.ix.41.5), wrestling (VI.ix.43.6), and picking strawberries (VI.x.34.2). These activities may be fine for a real shepherd or even for a country gentleman. Calidore, however, is neither of these; underneath his peasant's garb is a knight trying to forget he is a fighting man, a man trained in the tasks of wielding a sword and charging in battle. Contrasted with the activities Calidore should be performing in the real world, the pastimes he enjoys in Arcadia constitute a kind of inactivity. Indeed, Arnold Williams states that Calidore "does almost nothing"[72] while in the land of the shepherds, adding that the knight's participation in these rural pastimes compounds the "departure from dignity"[73] he suffers when he forsakes his chivalric calling. As a matter of fact, many critics find censurable this stooping to such facile activities. Nelson believes that Calidore, in participating in activities other than those for which he has been trained, is "as unnatural as the effeminated Artegall and as useless for the work of the state."[74] Evans goes so far as to state that the knight's escape into the pastoral world leads him to slothfulness.[75] That is, Calidore has chosen soft pleasures over strenuous endeavors. Listening to the shepherds "Playing on pypes, and caroling apace" (VI.ix.5.3), Calidore is very reminiscent of the slothful Cymochles, being lulled to sleep by a murmuring stream in the Bower of Bliss (II.v.30.1-4). Evans believes

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[72]Arnold Williams, p. 19.

[73]Arnold Williams, p. 120.

[74]William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 292.

[75]Evans, Anatomy, p. 220.

that the poet himself indirectly expresses his disapproval of Calidore's choice of activities by his unimaginative method of presenting the shepherds' lifestyle:

> by the especially literary nature of his picture of the shepherd's life: the shepherds fleet away their time in the traditional ways of pastoral cliché, "playing on pipes and caroling apace," varied with the occasional dancing or wrestling match, and the only incursion into the world of action is the fight with the tiger which has all the mannered unreality of Greene's romances.[76]

Thus, Calidore enjoys "a recreative withdrawal from care,"[77] a retreat not altogether uncensured by the poet.

If Calidore has completely forgotten himself and his quest during this delightful adventure, Spenser has forgotten neither who this knight is nor what his mission is. As if awakening suddenly from a spell cast by the pleasures of Arcadia, the poet abruptly resurrects the knight's long-forgotten quest:

> Who now does follow the foule Blatant Beast,
> Whilest Calidore does follow that faire mayd,
> Unmyndfull of his vow, and high beheast
> Which by the Faery Queene was on him layd,
> That he should never leave, nor be delayd
> From chacing him, till he had it attchieved?
> But now entrapt of Love, which him betrayd,
> He mindeth more how he may be relieved
> With grace from her whose love his heart hath sore engrieved.
> (VI.x.1.1-9)

> That from henceforth he meanes no more to sew
> His former quest, so full of toile and paine.
> (VI.x.2.1-2)

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[76]Evans, Anatomy, p. 220.

[77]Harry Berger, Jr., "A Secret Discipline: The Faerie Queene, Book VI," in Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser, ed. William Nelson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 61.

With these words Spenser brings us-and himself-face to face with reality again. The truth brought brutally home by this reminder of the real world is that while Calidore enjoys his pastoral retreat, the Blatant Beast is free to wreak havoc where he will throughout Faery Land. Of course, one can, Sale notes, ignore the existence of the beast and his cruelties by withdrawing into seclusion and refusing to look out into the world again.[78] This Calidore has done; he has found a place of innocence and peace and closed his eyes to the horrors that plague the real world. In doing so, the knight has, Evans asserts, succumbed to the subtle temptation to "fall in love with innocence and thereby forget the fact of sin."[79] Moreover, Calidore has forgotten that he alone "stands between the monster and its power to infect the whole world."[80] Finally, the knight has forgotten that the "world is a battlefield, and we cannot withdraw from it without a neglect of duty."[81] Calidore has, of course, neglected his responsibilities to the Faerie Queene; more important, however, in abandoning his quest he has betrayed the helpless people in the world who depend upon him to protect them from the Blatant Beast. Thus, withdrawal, while delightful in itself, is wrong, Warren asserts, "for those who have a duty to fulfill in the midst of men and for the sake of men."[82] These failures of the knight who has abandoned

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[78]Sale, p. 190.

[79]Evans, Anatomy, p. 226.

[80]Hamilton, p. 195.

[81]Warren, Variorum, VI (1938), 320.

[82]Warren, Variorum, VI (1938), 320.

the quest and the world Spenser acknowledges in the opening lines of canto x, and we know from the poet's frank appraisal of Calidore's situation that the knight's stay in Arcadia is nearly over, that he must soon return to the real world.

However, although Spenser here indirectly announces his decision to end Calidore's pastoral interlude, he does so with the ambivalence that has characterized most of Book VI. Immediately after condemning Calidore for his dereliction of duty, the poet excuses the knight for his behavior:

> Ne certes mote he greatly blamed be,
> From so high step to stoupe unto so low.
> For who had tasted once (as oft did he)
> The happy peace which there doth overflow,
> And prov'd the perfect pleasures which doe grow
> Amongst poore hyndes, in hils, in woods, in dales,
> Would never more delight in painted show
> Of such false blisse, as there is set for stales,
> T' entrap unwary fooles in their eternall bales.
> (VI.x.3.1-9)

With these words Spenser once again suggests his own disappointment with the real world, where there is only a "painted show" of "false blisse" and his desire, long shared with his knight, to retreat to a place of "happy peace" and "perfect pleasures." However, the poet knows that this withdrawal from the real world of responsibility cannot last forever. The reluctance with which Spenser faces this fact is made clear by the event that occurs next in canto x. Before removing Calidore from the pastoral world, the poet allows the knight—and himself—one more delightful moment in Arcadia, a moment designed to serve as a reminder to Calidore and the poet in the days after they return to the real world of the perfect harmony and peace that are the desired ends of all our earthly quests and struggles: Calidore is granted a vision.

One day on an excursion around the countryside the knight comes upon Mount Acidale, where he sees "An hundred naked maidens lilly white, / All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight" (VI.x.11.8-9). Within this circle "Three other ladies did both daunce and sing" (VI.x.12.3), and within the circle formed by these three maidens stands "Another damzell, as a precious gemme / Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced" (VI.x.12.7-8). These maidens are the Graces, the chief of which are the three forming the smaller inner circle:

> These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
> Which decke the body or adorne the mynde,
> To make them lovely or well favoured show,
> As comely carriage, entertainement kynde,
> Sweete semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde,
> And all the complements of curtesie:
> They teach us, how to each degree and kynde
> We should our selves demeane, to low, to hie,
> To friends, to foes; which skill men call civility.
> (VI.x.23.1-9)

> Therefore they alwaies smoothly seeme to smile,
> That we likewise should mylde and gentle be,
> And also naked are, that without guile
> Or false dissemblaunce all them plaine may see,
> Simple and true, from covert malice free.
> (VI.x.24.1-5)

Thus, Calidore is granted a vision of true courtesy, the virtue whose patron he is. But he sees more. In the perfect precision and order of the dance he sees the harmony men should strive for in their interactions with one another. This harmony of men working together in peace is symbolized by the geometric perfection of the circle, which binds the maidens together, arm in arm, in their common effort to create the dance. The dance, therefore, symbolizes men working and living together peacefully, united as brothers in the circle that is all humanity. This then is Spenser's vision of courtesy. As such, this virtue comes close

to being the embodiment of the dream that inspired The Faerie Queene, the dream of all men united in the quest to restore harmony, peace, and love to a fallen world. For one fleeting moment Spenser again beholds the dream before returning to the real world with its disillusionment and despair.

The real world intrudes immediately, breaking the spell of Spenser's brief vision. First, the dancing maidens disappear as soon as Calidore approaches (VI.x.18.1-3). Their disappearance signals quite clearly that Calidore does not belong in the enchanted world of Arcadia; he is an intruder from the outside. Although he has been allowed to remain in order to learn about the nature of true courtesy from the simplicity and honesty of the shepherds and from the dance of the Graces, having learned his lesson he must now return to the world outside and put into action what he has learned. As Watson notes, Calidore's

> proper sphere is that of action. It is not his part to gaze on the Graces, any more than he should devote his life to the service of Pastorella, whose beauty is derived from theirs. He should rather implement their power in the world.[83]

However, it takes a more brutal intrusion of reality before Calidore acknowledges that it is past time for him to return to the real world and resume his quest. The blow that forces the knight back to reality is the destruction of Arcadia. One day while Calidore is away hunting (VI.x.39.1-2), the Brigants, a lawless band of savages, invade the land of the shepherds, destroying everything in their path and killing many of the inhabitants, including Meliboe. Pastorella and several others they lead away into captivity (VI.x.39-40). When the knight returns to

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[83]Watson, p. 141.

find the village razed and the inhabitants dead or gone, he grieves for his lost love and the destruction of Arcadia (VI.xi.33-34). He soon realizes, however, that tears will not restore Arcadia or Meliboe or deliver Pastorella. Thus it is that Calidore makes the decision to resume his role as a man of action in order to avenge the destruction and death around him (VI.xi.34.1-9). This decision the knight finalizes by again putting on his armor (VI.xi.36.3-4) and securing a sword (VI.xi.42.4-6). His armor on and his decision made, Calidore finds his way to the Brigants' den, destroys the savages, and rescues Pastorella (VI.xi.43-51).

Thus ends Calidore's pleasant retreat in the land of the shepherds. That this withdrawal ends because of violence and destruction is significant. First, it tells us that it is dangerous to turn one's back on the world and pretend that evil does not exist; to do so leaves one defenseless. In the words of Harry Berger,

> Precisely here, where we feel most secure, where we momentarily turn our backs on the outside world, the danger is greatest. . . . In other words, "Keep your eye always on the treacherous world around you; don't withdraw, don't relax, for a single moment."[84]

The shepherds, in trying to isolate themselves from the rest of the world and forget the evil on the outside, have left themselves with no means of defense. Naive and peaceful, they do not stand a chance against the Brigants. Calidore has also been guilty of trying to ignore the existence of evil. Thus, expecting no danger he is out hunting when the Brigants invade Arcadia. Had he been present, he would have been,

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[84]Berger, "Secret Discipline," p. 40.

without the armor long ago discarded, as helpless as the shepherds. Moreover, in withdrawing and closing his eyes to evil, he has essentially allowed the Blatant Beast to prey on innocent and helpless people. Next, the violence that destroys Arcadia reminds us that the world is indeed fallen. Paradise was lost when Adam and Eve were turned out of the Garden of Eden. Disillusioned by this fallen world, man may construct a paradise in his imagination, as Spenser did when he resurrected for a moment the idyll of Arcadia, or he may, like Calidore, desire to escape the real world so much that, on finding what appears to be a true paradise on earth, he allows himself to believe he has discovered another Eden by forcing from his mind all memories of the harsh reality of the fallen world lurking just outside the gates of his dreamed-of paradise. Spenser knew only too well, however, that Eden was no more. Evans claims,

> Although we are apt to think of book VI as the most idyllic of them all, the world it presents is a fallen one, and an important function of the idyll is to remind us that Ardens and Edens are no more to be found.[85]

Whatever paradise appears to exist is, in truth, only a temporary refuge, fragile and tenuous, created, Sales notes, as a "frail gesture of protection against a ravaging and senseless world"[86] of violence, sadness, and pain. Spenser also knew that if paradise was ever to exist again, if Eden was to be restored, man had to work for and earn it. Working for paradise means, of course, laboring in the real world against the evil in the hearts of men, that is, undertaking the quest.

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[85]Evans, Anatomy, p. 212.

[86]Sale, p. 190.

Thus, until such time as God eradicates sin and evil forever and forms the paradise of the New Earth, man's duty is to continue the struggle against evil and attempt to create in the hearts of men a paradise within consisting of love, compassion, and goodwill. To linger prematurely in what appears to be paradise is, therefore, to neglect the only real possibility for the return of a true paradise. MacCaffrey asserts that the destruction of Arcadia tells us that "An unearned literal eden [sic] can only be baleful now for a human soul; paradise has been definitively lost, and must be replaced, as Michael explains to fallen Adam and Eve, by a paradise within."[87]

Having realized this Spenser must now return Calidore to the real world. The destruction of Arcadia is the means by which the poet achieves this end. The first step is to enable the knight to hear once again the distressed cry of humanity against which he has insulated himself in the land of the shepherds. Significantly, this cry of human distress comes from within Arcadia itself. Seeing the shepherds' world destroyed, Calidore responds to the cries of sorrow he hears and realizes that to avenge this barbarity he must re-enter the world of action. This he does when he slaughters the Brigants and rescues Pastorella. However, the barbarity of the Brigants opens Calidore's ears to another cry, the cry of those in the world outside suffering from the brutal attacks of the Blatant Beast, "Who all this while at will did range and raine, / Whilst none was him to stop, nor none him to restraine" (VI.xii.2.8-9). Thus it is that the destruction of Arcadia causes

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[87]MacCaffrey, p. 344.

Calidore to remember his quest. His illusions shattered, he now realizes that he can no longer ignore his task, for by abandoning it in the first place and allowing evil in any form to roam the world unopposed, he has inadvertently contributed to the disaster in Arcadia. As Watson notes, "knightly virtue carries with it war-like responsibility to defend the good against the ever threatening forces of evil. So Calidore is recalled to the world of action."[88] Having ignored this responsibility during his pastoral retreat, when the knight finally remembers his quest, he does so with great remorse:

> Tho gan Sir Calidore him to advize
> Of his first quest, which he had long forlore,
> Asham'd to thinke, how he that enterprize,
> The which the Faery Queene had long afore
> Bequeath'd to him, forslacked had so sore.
> (VI.xii.12.1-5)

And so Calidore returns to the quest, seeking

> That monstrous beast by finall force to quell,
> Through every place, with restlesse paine and toile,
> Him follow'd by the tract of his outragious spoile.
> (VI.xii.22.7-9)

Although the knight commits himself totally to his quest, he meets with only partial success. Unable to kill the beast, Calidore manages to subdue him temporarily, muzzling the creature and leading him through Faery Land in chains (VI.xii.34-37). Yet even this victory is impermanent; before long the Blatant Beast breaks his chains and escapes into the world again:

> So now he raungeth through the world againe,
> And rageth sore in each degree and state;
> Ne any is, that may him now restraine,
> He growen is so great and strong of late,

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[88]Watson, p. 141.

Barking and biting all that him doe bate,
Albe they worthy blame, or cleare of crime:
Ne spareth he most learned wits to rate,
Ne spareth he the gentle poets rime,
But rends without regard of person or of time.
(VI.xii.40.1-9)

Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,
Hope to escape his venemous despite,
More then my former writs, all were they cleanest
From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite,
With which some wicked tongues did it backebite,
And bring into a mighty peres displeasure,
That never so deserved to endite.
(VI.xii.41.1-9)

Thus, the sixth book of The Faerie Queene ends on a disappointed note. Calidore, having reluctantly returned to the real world to "fight the good fight," finds that he cannot destroy the Blatant Beast because to do so he must first change the evil in the hearts of men that gives the creature being. Thus, Arnold Williams concludes, "It was not Calidore's ineptness that liberated the Beast, but the human condition."[89] Likewise, the poet returns to reality to face both the unchanged cruelty of those who attack his literary efforts and the saddening disparity between what man was in the golden world and will be again with the eventual restoration of Eden and what he is now. It is, then, the reality of man's present world that generates the despair we have noted in both Books V and VI of The Faerie Queene, making the two books, Evans asserts, mirror images of each other, the former showing "the vain attempts of the hero to enforce his ideal vision upon a world unwilling to receive it," the latter "presenting an ideal vision which the world

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[89]Arnold Williams, p. 60.

continually shatters."[90] With his dream of men united in a quest of love and courage for a new Eden betrayed, Spenser concludes Book VI of The Faerie Queene.

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[90]Evans, Anatomy, p. 212.

CHAPTER VI

INACTIVITY AND THE FINAL QUEST

The disillusionment of a dream betrayed that pervades Books V and VI of The Faerie Queene also affects the "Cantos of Mutabilitie," a fragment consisting of two complete cantos and two stanzas of a third canto first printed in the 1609 folio of The Faerie Queene. Generally considered to be the allegorical center of an unfinished book of the poem, the Mutability Cantos contain characteristics similar to those found in the first six books. In particular, the cantos, referred to, for the sake of convenience, as Book VII, reflect Spenser's continuing concern with the state of the fallen world and his vision of man working with God to defeat sin and restore moral order to a chaotic universe. As we have seen, the poet's faith in the possibility of the restoration of a moral universe led him to create The Faerie Queene. However, we have also seen that as Spenser, confronted by the disparity between his vision of restoration and the reality of the fallen world, worked his way through his poem, this faith grew weaker, leading eventually to the episodes of withdrawal from the real world in Book VI, which ends with the disillusioned poet's admission that it is impossible to ignore the reality of the fallen world. Thus it is that Book VII also reflects Spenser's inner turmoil over the conflict between dream and reality. In particular, the fragment reveals the poet's attempt to discover a way of reconciling himself to the reality of a fallen world, a way of looking at the universe that would allow him to cling to his vision. In the

Mutability Cantos Spenser expresses the belief that the fallen world, however chaotic it may seem, is actually part of God's orderly plan for His universe, a philosophy that allowed the poet to see the chaotic fallen world as one segment of an orderly universe fulfilling the divine purpose of its Creator. Behind the reality of the fallen world, then, Spenser glimpsed the reality of a universe held securely in the hand of God.

In order to explore poetically this philosophical insight, Spenser, in the Mutability Cantos, leaves the earthly plane of human life in the "middest" and travels "up aloft" (VII.vii.1.5) to the very realm of heaven, creating an allegory in which every aspect of God's creation—the fallen world, external nature, and man—makes an appearance and performs its role in His orderly universe. In the procession of Mutability, the goddess who apparently holds sway over the fallen world, Spenser explores allegorically the intricate workings of God's universe. In particular, the procession reveals that man, as the instrument through which sin entered God's universe, bringing with it chaos, darkness, and death, has a special responsibility to labor unceasingly within the fallen world created by his own disobedience. Only by accepting this responsibility and working diligently can man fulfill the divine purpose of his Creator and take his place in a universe still orderly despite the chaotic work of sin. Thus, as Evans asserts, the conception of human responsibility and divine purpose implied in the separate stories of the first six books of The Faerie Queene is defined

explicitly in the philosophical allegory of the Mutability Cantos.[1] And just as the fragment shares this concept with the preceding books of the poem, it also shares with them the concept of man as a laborer. As we have seen, in the first six books Spenser presents man the laborer in God's moral universe as the questing knight, indicating, in part through images of inactivity, that the knight who fails to pursue his quest actively is a knight who has abandoned his duties and responsibilities in that moral universe. In Book VII Spenser again presents the concept of man the laborer; however, there is in the fragment a difference in the poet's treatment of this idea. In the Mutability Cantos Spenser attempts to present poetically a vision, one that allowed him to see beyond the chaos of the fallen world and glimpse the harmony and order of God's universe. Enraptured by this vision the poet depicts each aspect of creation, including man, willingly performing its role in the divine plan. Significantly, as he describes this vision images of inactivity disappear, replaced by images of activity as man, envisioned as a willing laborer, performs his role in God's orderly universe. In this chapter, then, we will explore the concepts presented in the Mutability Cantos–Spenser's continuing concern with the state of the fallen world, the concept of man the laborer, and the concept of God's orderly universe–ending with a discussion of the vision that concludes The Faerie Queene: Spenser's vision of the end of time and of man's earthly labor in the final rest of eternity. Because the concepts presented in the Mutability Cantos restore us full circle to the concept

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[1]Maurice Evans, Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 230.

of a moral universe that began this study and because the final vision ends with an image of inactivity that signals the end of man's earthly labor, our discussion of the cantos will serve as a conclusion to this study of images of inactivity in The Faerie Queene.

Although the Mutability Cantos end on a note of joy occasioned by the poet's vision of the peace of eternity, the beginning of the fragment is marked by a note of despair similar to that which concludes Books V and VI. The cause of this despair is again Spenser's concern with the state of the fallen world. In particular, the poet is appalled by the adversity man must endure during his life on earth, the ravages of time, the apparently aimless force of destructive change that without warning quickly alters man's lot from one of joy to one of misery, the "chances and changes of mortal life-failures, accidents, diseases, war, death."[2] These vicissitudes that repeatedly thwart man's chances for happiness on earth Spenser symbolizes by a constantly turning wheel:

> What man that sees the ever-whirling wheele
> Of Change, the which all mortall things doth sway,
> But that therby doth find, and plainly feele,
> How Mutability in them doth play
> Her cruell sports, to many mens decay?
> (VII.vi.1.1-5)

The frighteningly aimless force of destructive change, then, is, according to Spenser, the cause of man's woes on earth. The embodiment of this destructive change is the goddess Mutability, the beautiful but willful descendant of the lawless and rebellious Titans "that did whylome strive / With Saturnes sonne for heavens regiment" (VII.vi.2.6-7).

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[2]Leicester Bradner, Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 157-158.

As a descendant of this ancient race that sought to destroy the order, harmony, and peace of heaven, Mutability is, then, a figure of disorder and chaos, a fitting symbol for the forces of change that rule man's world. The secret of Mutability's power over the lives of men, however, involves much more than her identity as a Titaness. According to Evans, "Mutability herself is Spenser's allegory of the fallen state: she is identified with both cause and effect of the Fall":[3]

> For she the face of earthly things so changed,
> That all which Nature had establisht first
> In good estate, and in meet order ranged,
> She did pervert, and all their statutes burst:
> And all the worlds faire frame (which none yet durst
> Of gods or men to alter or misguide)
> She alter'd quite, and made them all accurst
> That God had blest, and did at first provide
> In that still happy state for ever to abide.
> (VII.vi.5.1-9)

> Ne shee the lawes of Nature onely brake,
> But eke of Justice, and of Policie;
> And wrong of right, and bad of good did make,
> And death for life exchanged foolishlie:
> Since which, all living wights have learn'd to die,
> And all this world is woxen daily worse.
> O pittious worke of Mutabilitie!
> By which we all are subject to that curse,
> And death, in stead of life, have sucked from our nurse.
> (VII.vi.6.1-9)

As the cause of the First Fall Mutability may be identified as the pride and rebelliousness (VII.vi.4.1-9) behind Original Sin.[4] As the effect of this fall the goddess is the force of chaos, change, destruction, and death unleashed upon the world by sin. Furthermore, as the force of Original Sin Mutability is the agent behind the alienation of man from

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[3]Evans, p. 231.

[4]Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 226.

God, making man "accurst / That God had blest" (VII.vi.5.7-8) and bringing about, Bradner notes, "the progressive deterioration of the world and man"[5] occasioned by this separation of man from his Creator. Thus, separated from his Creator, the only true source of wisdom, and confronted daily by the chaos and darkness all around him, man begins to experience, Bradner adds, "doubts and questionings as to the purposes of God,"[6] another effect of Mutability as the force identified with Original Sin. Because he is blinded to the divine purpose in this way, it is no wonder man sees nothing but disorder in the world around him—in external nature and in other men—and in his own life. This, of course, is the goddess Mutability's greatest source of power, that she can blind man to the ultimate order and goodness of God's divine plan and keep him, in his ignorance, a slave to the chaos everywhere evident in his world. Indeed, it is because she has this ability to make man accept as truth the chaos all around him and prevent him from seeing the ultimate truth of a divine plan and an omnipotent God regulating all in an orderly fashion that Mutability is so persuasive and confident of success when she appears in court before the goddess Nature to claim supremacy over the world.

Appearing before Nature Mutability begins to plead her case by calling as evidence all the examples of random alterations and destructive change that make the fallen world over which she holds sway appear so chaotic and frightening, summoning evidence from "the Earth (great

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[5]Bradner, p. 158.

[6]Bradner, p. 158.

mother of us all) / That only seems unmov'd and permanent" (VII.vii. 17.6-7):

> For all that from her springs, and is ybredde,
> How-ever fayre it fluourish for a time,
> Yet see we soone decay; and, being dead,
> To turne again unto their earthly slime:
> Yet, out of their decay and mortall crime,
> We daily see new creatures to arize,
> And of their winter spring another prime,
> Unlike in forme, and chang'd by strange disguise;
> So turne they still about, and change in restlesse wise.
> (VII.vii.18.1-9)

> As for her tenants, that is, man and beasts,
> The beasts we daily see massacred dy,
> As thralls and vassals unto mens beheasts:
> And men themselves doe change continually,
> From youth to eld, from wealth to poverty,
> From good to bad, from bad to worst of all:
> Ne doe their bodies only flit and fly;
> But eeke their minds (which they immortall call)
> Still change and vary thoughts, as new occasions fall.
> (VII.vii.19.1-9)

Thus, Evans asserts, "The creation which Mutability assembles to support her claim and hear Nature's judgement is inevitably the fallen creation which owes her its allegiance."[7] To this evidence she adds the example of the other continually changing elements: water (VII.vii.20-21), air (VII.vii.22-23), and fire (VII.vii.24). To strengthen her case, as she presents her evidence Mutability repeatedly emphasizes the fact that change in the world is unpredictable and chaotic and thereby destructive. All is subject to whim, and the whim, Mutability claims, is hers, making her sole sovereign of the world and of what Fletcher calls the "random, jagged mutations"[8] of its natural processes.

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[7]Evans, p. 232.

[8]Angus Fletcher, The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 221.

Mutability's most persuasive piece of evidence is, however, the procession of "The rest which doe the world in being hold: / As times and seasons of the yeare that fall" (VII.vii.27.3-4). Although the Titaness expects the procession of times and seasons to provide irrefutable evidence of universal flux, ironically the procession has the opposite effect. As Alastair Fowler concludes, "In spite of its ostensible purpose, the method of narration is such that it persuades both the court and the reader of the measured governance and direction of time's course."[9] Indeed, the orderliness with which the procession proceeds, beginning with the seasons, who are marshaled by Order, Nature's sergeant (VII.vii.27.9), suggests a regularity, a repeated sequence, that, as Sherman Hawkins claims, "scarcely supports the claims of restless and uncertain change."[10] Kathleen Williams concurs, noting that the procession does, of course, demonstrate change but that it also suggests recurrence and stability.[11] The evidence that Mutability uses is actually proof that the world is not governed by "random motions"; the orderly procession itself demonstrates not only variety and change but also "the coherence of the created world."[12] Thus it is that the goddess defeats herself in calling up the procession of seasons and months, whose orderly passing in front of the judge establishes the

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[9]Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1964), p. 232.

[10]Sherman Hawkins, "Mutabilitie and the Cycle of the Months," in Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser, ed. William Nelson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 90.

[11]Williams, p. 229.

[12]William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 304.

repeated cyclical movement of the year, a fact that Mutability does not recognize because she erroneously assumes, Hawkins observes, "that constancy means changelessness, and that all change therefore is inconstancy."[13] Therefore, "the more Mutabilitie proves her case, the more she refutes it. For it is precisely in the pattern of continual mutation that the permanence of Nature consists."[14] Thomas Roche concludes, "the paradox of the procession of Mutabilitie" is that its "apparent multiplicity is the expression of the principle of universal order."[15]

Let us now examine in detail this procession of cyclical, orderly change that ensures Mutability's defeat in the court of Nature. In the procession, Hawkins asserts, "Spenser uses the revelation of his 'masquers' to mark the turning point, the defeat of the forces of disorder, the establishment of harmony in color, music, and motion." He concludes, "Spenser feels no need to interpret his pageant: the splendor of the vision, its order and its perfect rightness, should suffice."[16] The perfect order of this procession begins with the passing of the four seasons:

> First, lusty Spring, all dight in leaves of flowres
> That freshly budded and new bloosmes did beare.
> (VII.vii.28.2-3)

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[13]Hawkins, p. 76.

[14]C. S. Lewis, Spenser's Images of Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 76.

[15]Thomas P. Roche, Jr., The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 184.

[16]Hawkins, p. 88.

The appearance of Spring, bringing with it tender new life bursting into bloom, signals, of course, the beginning of the cyclical movement of the year. Then Summer comes, followed by

> Autumne, all in yellow clad,
> As though he joyed in his plentious store,
> Laden with fruits that made him laugh, full glad
> That he had banisht hunger, which to-fore
> Had by the belly oft him pinched sore.
> Upon his head a wreath, that was enrold
> With eares of corne of every sort, he bore:
> And in his hand a sickle he did holde,
> To reape the ripened fruits the which the earth had yold.
> (VII.vii.30.1-9)

Thus, "The burgeoning of spring is directed towards a harvest. And when that harvest is in, it is time to begin planning for the coming year."[17] The planning, of course, is the work that takes place during winter, when the earth lies "cloathed all in frize" (VII.vii.31.1) while beneath the frosty ground new life lies waiting to bloom, signaling yet another completed cycle and the beginning of a new period of growth. Thus, as the first part of her procession ends, Mutability has succeeded in showing not evidence of the chaotic change with which she hoped to win her case, but proof of the never-ending cyclical perfection of the seasons of the year.

Although the basic order of the seasons is clearly already present, it is man who must "labor to bring the fruits of earth to their perfection."[18] That is, man must use his skill to harness the natural abundance of the earth and convert "the potential of the four seasons

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[17]Hawkins, p. 92.

[18]Hawkins, p. 80.

[19]Evans, p. 233.

into the fulfillment of the farmer's year."[19] Thus, in the next part of the procession of Mutability, that of the months of the year, Spenser, Evans notes, represents the twelve months "in terms of the traditional calendar of the farmer's year, so that they walk past Nature's throne in the guise of twelve good labouring-men performing the cycle of yearly tasks."[20] First comes March, holding in his hand a spade

> And in a bag all sorts of seeds ysame,
> Which on the earth he strowed as he went,
> And fild her womb with fruitfull hope of nourishment.
> (VII.vii.32.7-9)

The seeds that lie in the ground in March receive the plentiful rains of April that bring forth "the fairest flowres and freshest buds" (VII.vii. 33.7) of spring. When June arrives he comes with his "plough-yrons" (VII.vii.35.4), preparing for the labor of the coming harvest. Even July, who has cast away all of his garments because of the heat, wears "a sickle circling wide" (VII.vii.36.9) under his belt, willing to do his share of the work to follow. August rides in with a lovely maiden crowned with "eares of corne" (VII.vii.37.5), symbol of the bounty soon to be reaped:

> Next him September marched eeke on foote;
> Yet was he heavy laden with the spoyle
> Of harvests riches, which he made his boot,
> And him enricht with bounty of the soyle:
> In his one hand, as fit for harvests toyle,
> He held a knife-hook.
> (VII.vii.38.1-6)

Arriving next is October, "and eeke by his side / He had his ploughing-share and coulter ready tyde" (VII.vii.39.8-9). Then comes November:

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[20]Evans, p. 233.

he full grosse and fat,
As fed with lard, and that right well might seeme:
For he had been a fatting hogs of late,
That yet his browes with sweat did reek and steem.
(VII.vii.40.1-4)

After comes December, who feasts merrily (VII.vii.41.2) on the earth's bounty, and January, who carries "An hatchet keene, with which he felled wood, / And from the trees did lop the needlesse spray" (VII.vii.42.6-7). And last appears February, who carries

His plough and harnesse fit to till the ground,
And tooles to prune the trees, before the pride
Of hasting Prime did make them burgein round.
So past the twelve months forth, and their dew places found.
(VII.vii.43.6-9)

Thus, the months pass in perfect order, and as each month moves past Nature's throne, man as laborer is seen to be an essential ingredient in the order and harmony of the passing year. Symbolically each month is a man who cooperates with nature, preparing the soil, planting seeds, and harvesting the bounty of the earth. Through labor, then, man, Hawkins notes, "imposes a direction on the cycle of the months."[21] Evans adds, "the human labourers establish and maintain the details of the pattern, and without their labours, the regular cycle of the human year would not exist."[22]

This, then, is the creation Mutability assembles to support her claim to universal sovereignty. Certainly her procession proves that change is part of the cycle of the year and of man. Yet the change is orderly, purposeful change that man and nature achieve by working

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[21]Hawkins, p. 92.

[22]Evans, p. 233.

together. More important, however, is the fact that Mutability's procession transforms the ever-whirling wheel of change into the perfect cycle of seasons and months. Such perfection and order are not the work of chance, as the Titaness claims; they are the work of a master planner, the "handwriting," MacCaffrey reminds us, "of Nature's God."[23] Thus, the endless change that marks the passing of the year and sends man endlessly from one task to another is part of a divine plan in which both man and nature have a crucial role. Man, as we have seen, must labor. Of course, it was not always so. Once man dwelled in the Garden of Eden, surrounded by the abundance of the earth, the fruit, not of his own labor, but of the beneficence of God. Man, however, desiring more than the bounty his Creator had already allotted him, ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6), bringing down upon himself and all future generations the curse of labor (Genesis 3:17-19). Thus, because of sin man was forced out of Eden to work the earth. This, then, is man's role in the procession of the fallen world that Mutability presents. Paradoxically, however, it is through labor, the result of sin, that man works against sin and finds his place in God's divine plan. Indeed, by laboring willingly man can demonstrate his desire to work with God to re-establish the perfect harmony between God, man, and nature disrupted when man first sinned. It is Mutability's hope that she can blind man to the divine plan of which he and his labor are a part, to make him see only the pain and hardship brought on by change and the rapidly shifting fortunes man must endure on earth. Because of her efforts to pass

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[23]Isabel MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 427.

change off as evil and negate the good that may come of change, the procession, Evans observes, "embodies the double vision of life as it appears to man and as it is understood by God. To man good and evil are in eternal opposition, to God, in ultimate harmony."[24] The man who can see the order of a divine plan behind the apparent chaos of his life, or the man who has faith that there is a divine plan despite his own inability to discern it, will soon understand, as Hawkins notes, that there is "a purpose persisting through mutability, redeeming it. . . . [I]t is not a denial of change but a direction for work."[25] Once man understands, he must then undertake the labor, the quest that makes him a participant in God's divine plan and brings him closer to his Creator. Evans concludes,

> In this respect, the pageant of the months summarises the ethical code of the quest, insisting on the need to avoid sloth . . . and asserting the vital responsibility of human virtue in the establishment of God's order.[26]

By accepting this responsibility and laboring through the changing year, man will have the comfort of knowing that "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Secure in this knowledge that he is performing the will of God, man can "eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

Although Mutability tries to strengthen her argument by bringing as evidence the figures of Day and Night (VII.vii.44.1-9), the Hours

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[24]Evans, p. 235.

[25]Hawkins, pp. 101-102.

[26]Evans, p. 233.

(VII.vii.45.1-9), and Life and Death (VII.vii.46.1-9), these but confirm the regularity and order of the divine plan as established by God. Furthermore, when the Titaness cites as proof of her sovereignty the changing position of the planets (VII.vii.50-52), she does no more than include in the far-reaching scheme of God the heavenly spheres themselves, for although the planets shift in their orbits, over the course of a year the planets continue to move until they have resumed their original positions, thus participating in the cyclical perfection of all creation. Therefore, even the heavenly bodies obey the dictates of their Creator, who placed them in the firmament, saying, "let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Genesis 1:14). And with this evidence Mutability concludes her argument. Only the verdict of Nature remains.

The identity of Nature is, of course, important, for to her judgment even Mutability has appealed. Hawkins offers this opinion on the identity of Nature: "Nature is here, I think, the Wisdom or Sapience which, in the 'Hymne of Heavenly Beautie,' rules all things so that they 'do in state remaine, / As their great Maker did at first ordaine.'" He adds, "Wisdom is that stability of the divine thought which orders all change and generation. As referred to God, this stable order is called Providence." Concluding, Hawkins says, "Nature corresponds to Providence, the divine Wisdom that decrees."[27] As such, Nature is, then, the agent through whom God manifests Himself to His creation. That is, she is the representative of God the Divine Planner, who manifests Himself in the world in the harmony and perfect order of all that He has created.

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[27]Hawkins, pp. 80-81.

Because it is through Nature that God shows Himself to His world, she is, Parker notes, the "intermediary between creatures and creator."[28] Having seen all of creation pass before her throne, Nature, as the representative of God's law and order, must now pronounce the truth of God to all who hear-and read. This is the divine truth revealed by Nature as she speaks to Mutability:

> I well consider all that ye have sayd,
> And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
> And changed be: yet being rightly wayd,
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate:
> And turning to themselves at length againe,
> Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:
> Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne;
> But they raigne over Change, and doe their states maintaine.
> (VII.vii.58.1-9)

First, we note that in her verdict Nature does not challenge any of Mutability's evidence; that is, Nature does not assert that the universe has a static and unchangeable order. Indeed, the procession clearly proves that all of creation is subject to change. Rather, Nature shows, as Fowler states, that "this change is not a haphazard flux, as Dame Mutabilitie asserts. Instead, it is the constant process of development that brings creation to its fulfillment."[29] This process of development and fulfillment is, of course, ordained by God, without whose guiding hand the universe would indeed be doomed to purposeless flux and chaos. Bradner notes,

> Unwilling to be satisfied with a merely chaotic universe with no plan or purpose, Spenser adopted the theory which he had used in describing the functioning of the Garden of Adonis in

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[28]Pauline Parker, The Allegory of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 267.

[29]Fowler, p. 229.

> Book III. Just as Adonis, the father of all forms, is "eterne in mutabilitie," so here the physical world and human institutions are declared to be constantly changing but subject to the eternal control of a directing power. They work their own perfection through their changes.[30]

The perfection that all creation seeks is, of course, the perfection of its Creator. Thus, as each aspect of creation changes, it moves toward God. Hawkins asserts, "Nature's choice, then, is not between changelessness and change, but between the aimlessness of change for its own sake, and the constancy of movement directed by love and law towards a perfect goal."[31] Therefore, all of creation moves through change toward its source; that is, the end returns to the beginning, achieving in the movement the perfection for which it was first ordained by God. Of this movement toward God and perfection Hawkins says,

> all things conquer change by achieving a perfection implicit in their origin; they finally become what they were first created to be. Since God is the source and end of this movement, its efficient and its final cause, the movement is a circle.[32]

Because the movement is circular, ending with the perfection from which it began, this process by which all things change is seen to be subject to the will of a benevolent God bringing His creation back to Him.

Like the rest of creation man participates in the circular movement toward God. Hawkins notes that for creatures lacking reason this movement is a natural process.[33] To man, however, God gave freedom of

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[30]Bradner, p. 167.

[31]Hawkins, p. 79.

[32]Hawkins, p. 79.

[33]Hawkins, p. 79.

choice, which he soon exercised in choosing sin in the Garden of Eden. Thus, because man, by his own choice, originally alienated himself from God, his movement back to God must now be a conscious decision directed again by free will. This conscious decision, as we have seen, manifests itself in labor. Hawkins affirms, "The fall has made this a cycle of labors: but if a man is constant . . . he too can make his circle just and end where he began."[34] If we view labor, change—indeed, all the evidence Mutability assembles to prove that chaos reigns in the fallen world—in the light of Nature's verdict, we can, MacCaffrey notes, "look down upon the universe with the eyes of God."[35] In doing so, we can share the vision of the poet who saw beyond the "ever-whirling wheele / Of Change" to the eternal stability of God's master plan.

Although Spenser devotes two cantos to the narration of this vision, comforting himself and his reader with the belief that there is a divine purpose controlling and directing the apparently erratic changes and chances that affect man's life on earth, it is not long before the poet again falls prey to the despair that first surfaced in Book V of The Faerie Queene. We can only assume that once again the vision of Spenser the poet was darkened by the reality of Spenser the man. Thus, the final stanzas of the Mutability Cantos echo the note of despair evident earlier in the poem:

> When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare
> Of Mutability, and well it way,
> Me seemes, that though she all unworthy were
> Of the heav'ns rule, yet, very sooth to say,

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[34]Hawkins, p. 79.

[35]MacCaffrey, p. 428.

In all things else she beares the greatest sway:
Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
And love of things so vaine to cast away;
Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short Time shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.
(VII.viii.1.1-9)

This reappearance of a note of disillusionment causes Bradner to assert that Spenser's

> reaction to his own picture of great Nature, moving yet unmoved, is like that of the Red Cross Knight seeing the vision of the New Jerusalem after all his trials and defeats. Both would for the moment give up the love of this vain life if they could only be transported to eternal peace.[36]

Thus it is that The Faerie Queene concludes with a final vision, that of the perfect peace and changeless order of eternity:

Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
Of that same time when no more change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things, firmely stayd
Upon the pillours of eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie:
For all that moveth doth in change delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
O that great Sabbaoth God graunt me that Sabaoths sight!
(VII.viii.2.1-9)

For a moment, then, the poet shares with the knight of Book I the desire to quit this present world. Having caught a glimpse of the New Jerusalem the Red Crosse Knight says to the hermit Contemplation:

"O let me not," quoth he, "then turne againe
Backe to the world, whose joyes so fruitlesse are,
But let me heare for aie in peace remaine,
Or streight way on that last long voiage fare,
That nothing may my present hope empare."
(I.x.63.1-5)

Contemplation's reply is, of course, "That may not be" (I.x.63.6), that the knight must not withdraw or abandon his duties on this earth:

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[36]Bradner, p. 168.

> Then seek this path, that I to thee presage,
> Which after all to heaven shall thee send;
> Then peaceably thy painefull pilgrimage
> To yonder same Hierusalem doe bend,
> Where is for thee ordaind a blessed end.
> (I.x.61.1-5)

Therefore, Red Crosse, like Calidore, is instructed to quit his dreams of entering paradise at the present and to resume his earthly warfare. The lesson is clear: man may one day enjoy the peace and rest of God's new universe, but heaven, as Contemplation insists, must be won. While he is on earth man must work against the forces of chaos and sin until such time as God, after defeating sin and darkness forever, establishes the new earth and restores all of creation to its original harmony and perfection. Until that time man must, Hawkins notes, "labor in all good works towards the endless rest when 'no more Change shall be.'"[37] Only then may man lay down his sword and quit his earthly labors to join in the perfect rest of eternity.

Thus, although The Faerie Queene concludes with an image of inactivity, the ending is not, Evans asserts, a recantation, nor does the vision invalidate in its perfection "the struggles proper to the life lived in Time."[38] Writing these final lines Spenser might have wished with all his heart that time was no more. It is difficult to believe, however, that this poet with a vision of virtuous men and women struggling to win their place in God's new universe, that dream which inspired and directed the writing of The Faerie Queene, would have, in the final lines of the poem, allowed his desire for peace and order to undercut

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[37]Hawkins, p. 93.

[38]Evans, p. 239.

all that had gone before. Dreams do not so easily die. Indeed, this image of the final rest of eternity serves, as do many of the images of The Faerie Queene, to remind us, for instance, of the poet's insistence that Red Crosse and Calidore return to their earthly labors to hasten the creation of the New Jerusalem. The image of inactivity that concludes the poem, therefore, paradoxically reminds us, as we are so often reminded within the poem, that embracing inactivity prematurely, that is, forsaking one's earthly battle, is tantamount to destroying one's chances of enjoying the final rest reserved for those who join God in eternity after all earthly struggles are over. To the end, then, Spenser remained true to the vision of actively questing men and women undertaking the valiant struggle that precedes the rest of eternity.

That the poet cherished this vision to the very end of The Faerie Queene becomes even more obvious if we examine one final detail of the last lines of the poem. This point involves Spenser's use of the word "Sabaoth," meaning hosts or armies. Certainly the choice of this word was calculated. If we try to imagine God's new earth, the final home of all His creatures, we find ourselves perhaps wondering what this new place will be like. With all the battles won, will there be nothing to do but engage in the "stedfast rest of all things"? Spenser's choice of the word "Sabaoth" quickly answers this question. Describing his vision of the new earth John the Revelator says,

> 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
> 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.
> 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth,

> and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.
>
> (Revelation 5:11-13)

These lines reveal that the hosts ("Sabaoth") of God will spend eternity worshipping their Creator: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple" (Revelation 7:15). Thus, although The Faerie Queene ends with an image of inactivity, it is one qualified by Spenser's use of the word "Sabaoth." That is, paradoxically, this image of inactivity is transformed into an image that reflects the activity that all creation will engage in for eternity: the easy task of adoring its Maker. Janet Spens remarks,

> Had [Spenser] lived to complete the last canto of the Book of Mutabilitie, he would have told us of his vision of the eternal world which subsists behind this physical one that we perceive by the senses, the world in which the armies of the living God rest in creative activity.[39]

Thus, Spenser's final image of activity makes it clear that for all eternity man will continue to serve God, just as he served Him in his earthly quest. While on earth man serves, and thus worships, God through his quest against sin, his efforts to attain perfection in his own life, and his attempts to achieve reconciliation with God. In eternity this quest continues as man joins the heavenly hosts or armies praising God and striving to attain the perfection for which all were originally created. However, unlike the earthly quest, fraught with danger, despair, and death, the eternal quest will be a serene one, undertaken as it will be before the very face of God:

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[39]Janet Spens, Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation (London: Edward Arnold and Company, 1934), p. 138.

> 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
> 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.
> (Revelation 7:16-17)

Of this final quest Herbert Cory explains that Spenser did not believe in "pale inaction after death." To Spenser "life after death was rather an eternal quest, within all-hail of peace, but ever restless in noble achievement and self-development."[40] Cory concludes,

> To [Spenser] the "Sabbaoths sight" was not, I repeat, a fleeing from life into an ivory tower on earth or in heaven, but a projection of the great adventure into eternity where, cherishing all that was best in earthly life-love, beauty, chivalry-the pilgrim-soul might hurry on, exalted by a fuller understanding, within all-hail of peace, serene, but ever restless in its quest of unattainable perfection.[41]

Thus, The Faerie Queene ends with an emphatic reaffirmation of the dream of the quest, returning us once again to all that has gone before. We are reminded of the labors of Spenser's knights, who, through their quests, attempt to transcend and conquer sin and corruption in the fallen world. We remember, as Watson notes, that the quest is the perfect expression of the "struggles of active life, where Spenser's Virtues go armed, properly to express themselves in knightly action."[42] We are reminded once again of Spenser's insistence upon action: "The

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[40]Herbert Cory, quoted in Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, and Frederick Morgan Padelford, I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), 273.

[41]Cory, Variorum, VI (1938), 392.

[42]Elizabeth Watson, Spenser (London: Evans Brothers, Ltd., 1967), p. 85.

warrior, when action seems impossible, must still act. . . . The Christian, having done all, must stand."[43] Finally, we are reminded of the guiding vision of The Faerie Queene, a vision of world order Spenser never allowed to die. Bradner asserts,

> From beginning to end he saw clearly the defects of society and the tragedies of human life. At the same time, he never failed to set himself courageously to the task of urging upon the readers of his poetry the creation of a better world. The time setting of the Faerie Queene is in the remote past, but the faces of the heroes are set resolutely forward. The "gentleman or noble person" whose fashioning is the purpose of the poem is not a static ornamental figure. He is busy creating a better society. . . . [H]is sword will not sleep in his hand until he has "built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land."[44]

The Faerie Queene is the outcome of this personal vision that transcends the confusion and disappointment of all our earthly struggles, a vision that compelled Spenser to urge all men to undertake the quest that leads, as MacCaffrey notes, to "the source where we shall be made whole again beyond confusion."[45] Spenser's poem is one man's attempt to overcome this confusion and allow the world to share a vision that lives forever in the pages of The Faerie Queene.

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[43]Williams, p. 7.

[44]Bradner, pp. 168-169.

[45]MacCaffrey, p. 75.

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