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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by April Phillips Boone entitled "Cognitive Dissonance: The Apocalyptic Poetics of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

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COGNITIVE DISSONANCE:
THE APOCALYPTIC POETICS OF
SPENSER'S *FAERIE QUEENE*

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

April Phillips Boone

December 2007

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated: to my parents, Gary Phillips and Wanda Phillips, for filling my childhood home with books, stories, and an environment of thoughtful reading and creativity; to my sister, Amy Mace, for our collaborative childhood projects inspired by that creative environment; and to my husband, Kevin Boone, for all the support and the sacrifices made to foster the realization of this goal.

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ABSTRACT

While sixteenth-century citizens of England and the Continent read, interpreted, and appropriated The Book of Revelation for a number of purposes, Edmund Spenser's primary motivation was to find a source of his poetic theory and practice, as well as his poetic themes and imagery. Spenser began his literary career in 1569 with the anonymous publication of his English translation of Jan van der Noot's *Theatre for Worldlings*, which concluded with four sonnets based on scenes from Revelation. My project examines the ways in which Revelation, or Apocalypse as it was frequently called in the period, remained a significant creative fountainhead to Spenser throughout his career, well beyond his initial affiliation with Van der Noot's work. Though I demonstrate evidence of this claim in a number of Spenser's poems, my primary focus is upon *The Faerie Queene*, which is not only an interpretation of Apocalypse, but is also itself an apocalyptic work of literature.

Although scholars have noted Spenser's allusions to Apocalypse primarily in Books One and Five of *The Faerie Queene*, my project cites passages and poetic strategies from each of the poem's seven books in order to demonstrate a more pervasive apocalyptic presence in the work than has been previously thought. My analysis examines *The Faerie Queene* in the context of the contemporary readings of Revelation prevalent in the poem's immediate culture, and explores the hermeneutics by which contemporary Reformed readers would have approached the Bible, Revelation in particular, and Spenser's poem. In addition, this project examines the ways in which Spenser's poetics utilizes the apocalyptic strategies of recapitulation, intensification, and augmentation.

Like Revelation, Spenser's work evokes a pious form of cognitive dissonance in its readers, evident in the intensifying complaints of figures in the poem. Ultimately, the dissonance, first experienced by the poet-prophet who sees a transcendent vision yet to be fulfilled, is passed to readers, in whom it fosters the desire for transcendence (otherwise known as faith). Though many exegetes of Revelation in the late sixteenth century promoted absolute mastery of apocalyptic knowledge as a sign of the godly, Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene*, argues that indeterminacy is the virtue of Apocalypse, and that cognitive dissonance is necessary for the faith of true believers who remain active in the fight, waiting for the End and trusting that their longing for consummate knowledge will one day be fulfilled.

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Introduction: Apocalyptic Poetics and the Longing for First Things

> 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
> Vpon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is contrayr to *Mutabilitie*:
> For, all that moueth, 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.
> – Narrator, *The Faerie Queene* (VII.viii.2)

Perhaps it is surprising to begin a discussion of Spenser's apocalyptic poetics with a contemplation of "first things first." Apocalypse, or Revelation, after all, has held the place as the final book in the Christian canon for centuries.[1] Moreover, the apocalyptic genre typically is associated with the study of last things as opposed to first. To modern sensibilities, the term "apocalypse" connotes visions of the horrific, cataclysmic end to all things, but many sixteenth-century Reformist readers of Revelation had more of a sense that, in addition to such an end, Apocalypse means a return to the purity of the beginning for true believers.

For Reformers such as William Fulke, friend of John Foxe and mentor of Gabriel Harvey[2], for example, eschatology is as much about first things (albeit new and improved first things) as about last things. In *Praelections upon the sacred and holy Revelation of S. John*, in 1573, Fulke comments on Revelation 22:2:

> In the earthly paradise, there was [only one] tree of life in the middest of the garden which was a sacrament and pledge of blessed and eternal life, if they

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[1] Robert Bast points out that "The canon of the Bible (including the Book of Revelations) was ratified at the Council of Trent (1545-64) after being challenged by Protestants, but for practical purposes that canon was fixed in the 5th century already, and standardized in practice by the ubiquitous use of Jerome's Latin translation." Private commentary, University of Tennessee, September 2007.

[2] See *Letter-Book of Gabriel Harvey*, ed. Edward John Long Scott (New York and London: Royal Historical Society, Johnson Reprint Corp, 1965), 80, for a brief letter written by Fulke in August 1578 offering "very harty commendacions" of Harvey to the fellows of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge.

> would stand in the obedience of God and when man was cast out of the garden, together he was deprived of the figure of eternal life. Gen. 3. But after he shalbe received into the heavenly blessedness, he shall eate of the fruite of the tree of life for ever. For to all the citizens of new Jerusalem, access shalbe open to the tree of life, which shall spring forthe most happily.[3]

To Reformers such as Fulke, the events of Revelation point to a return to an improved Genesis, a prelapsarian golden age, a new Edenic state manifested in New Jerusalem with the heightened force of "for ever." Hence, such readers put "first things first" in the sense that they emphasize returning to origins, and also in the sense that they rank this return as the time of highest perfection, foremost in all of history. To James Brocarde, for example, the end of time is marked by a revision of the Edenic events, by permission to eat of the fruit once forbidden in Eden:

> [W]e perceive that the son of God in the middle of times brought the garden of Paradise into the Apostles Church, when the Son of God being made man, offered himselfe a sacrifice for the sinnes of the world: who was the tree that stoode in the middle of Paradise, which Eve & Adam presumed to touch: who shalbe our tree of Life in the middle of Gods Paradise, whereof wee shall eate in the latter ende of the worlde.[4]

To such sixteenth-century Reformers, history's end, its highest, culminating moment, is in its cycling back to a perfected beginning.

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[3] William Fulke, *Praelections upon the sacred and holy Revelation of Saint John* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), 146. *Early English Books Online*, Hodges Library: University of Tennessee Knoxville. http://eebo.chadwyck. com/home (accessed August 2006).

[4] Iacopo Brocardo [James Brocarde], *The Revelation of S. Ihon Reveled*, trans. James Sanford (London: Thomas Marshe, 1582), 32. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed March 2007).

This idea appealed to the young Edmund Spenser as he began his literary career in 1569 with the anonymous publication of his English translation of a collection of sonnets titled *A Theatre for Worldlings*. Francis Petrarch and Joachim du Bellay were the original authors of most of the sonnets which had been translated into Dutch and French by Jan Van der Noot, but the collection ended with four sonnets by Van der Noot himself.[5] These four poems, placed by Van der Noot at the end of his translations of Petrarch and Du Bellay, were based on evocative scenes from the Book of Revelation, which Van der Noot and a host of others had interpreted as supporting Reformed doctrine. In his prose commentary on *Theatre*, Van der Noot had explained Revelation 22:2 in a way similar to that of Fulke. Van der Noot, who, like Fulke, views the tree as an image of Christ, writes:

> As the tree of life, in the beginnyng was planted in the middest of *Paradise*, even so is hee spiritually in the middest of his Churche, which is his moste pleasaunt garden: if that grounde or earth which maketh the trees twice fruitfull in the yeare, be called happy, so may this garden by good reason, well be called happy and blessed. Where this tree standeth, which never is without frute, nor drieth up, or withereth . . . . [a]ll they which are thys Congregation of people have continually so long as they lyve, greate Consolation in all their assaultes and trialles, and in

[5] Jan van der Noot, *A Theatre wherein be represented as wel the miseries & calamities that follow the voluptuous worldlings as also the greate joyes and plesures which the faithfull do enjoy. An argument both profitable and delectable, to all that sincerely love the word of God* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1569). *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck. com/home (accessed January 2007). Note: The following edition of *A Theatre* edited by Malcolm C. Smith does not include the first six poems and four line envoy translated from Petrarch, but they were included in the 1569 version as published in London and as included in the aforementioned entry provided by *Early English Books Online*, which is thus more useful for this study: Jan Baptista Van der Noot, *Theatre for Worldlings,* trans. Edmund Spenser, in *Antiquitez de Rome* (London, 1569). Ed. Malcolm C. Smith (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York, 1994).

all kinde of adversitie bothe spirituall and temporall.[6]

Note, however, that there is a significant difference in the time frames posited by Fulke and Van der Noot for the spiritual state of plenty. While Fulke uses the future tense, saying "to all the citizens of New Jerusalem, access *shalbe* open to the tree of life," Van der Noot, on the other hand, uses the present tense, stating "Where this tree *standeth*, which never *is* without fruite . . . [a]ll they which *are* thys Congregation . . . *have* continually so long as they *lyve*, greate Consolation." The difference marks a debate among those of Reformed faith in regard to just when this new golden age is to be enacted and just what it means to be a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, yet still in the earthly body of a worldling.[7] To Spenser, even the faithful are encumbered by worldly things and in that sense, are worldlings, and to him, as to Fulke, the golden age "shalbe" the future fulfillment of Revelation.

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[6] Ibid., 89-90.

[7] All definitions in this book are taken from *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2007), http://dictionary.oed.com. There are several senses of the term "worldling" cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The definition which is the most commonly used in the sermons and treatises of mid to late sixteenth century is "one who is devoted to the interests and pleasures of the world; a worldly or worldly-minded person." The *OED* cites the first recorded use to have been in 1549, in Coverdale *Erasm.Par.Jude* 23b: "They bee worldelinges, and gevyng themselves in to the service of worldly affectes." *OED* also cites, as an example of this use of the term, Saunders in Coverdale in 1553 *Lett Martyrs* (1564) 214: "You have dronke of the holy spirite with other, unto whom the knowledge hereof semeth not folyshnes (as it doth unto worlynges)." In my own reading of sixteenth-century sermons and treatises in *Early English Books Online*, I also find common use of the term to mean one who is not a believer, as in Thomas Becon's 1550 *Fortress of the Faithful*: "[W]o be to that wicked worldling, which deckinge himself gorgeously with sumptuous apparel, suffereth his poore Christian brother to go naked, & to die for cold;" in Thomas Becon's 1577 *The actes of Christe and of Antichriste,* in which Becon calls Antichriste "a wicked worldlyng;" in Henry Barrow's 1591 *A brief discoverie of the false church,* in his indictment of Catholicism: "[T]hough he never had any knowledge, love, or feare of God in his life, but lived and died like a wretched worldling: yet if he be rich inough . . ." the church will glorify him to saint status; and in Gervase Babington's 1592 *Certaine plaine, briefe, and comfortable notes vpon euerie chapter of Genesis*, commentary on Gen. 15:9: "The lighting of the fowles upon the carkeises to eate them, if they might have been suffered, shewed Abraham in such sorte, howe both his seede according to the flesh, and according to promise, should of the prophane Gentiles and wicked worldlings, bee molested." However, in *OED*, there is a more general sense of the term "worldling," which Van der Noot, by calling his work *A Theatre for Worldlings*, utilizes: "an inhabitant of the world." As I shall demonstrate, the experiences of the viewers of visions in Van der Noot and in Spenser apply indiscriminately to all inhabitants of the world, believer and unbeliever alike.

Of course, citizens of England and the Continent were motivated to read, interpret, and comment upon Revelation for a plethora of additional reasons relevant to their time. Some, such as Brocarde in 1582, read Apocalypse to make sense of strange and turbulent current events in their culture, on the political stage, and in religion. For example, Brocarde offers this explanation of the thunder at the opening of the seal in Revelation Chapter 8:

> The Preaching of the Gospel [that] is hearde farre, and wyde, and not without stryfe [and] blowes. . . : the Renowne of the Worshyppers of God, of the Patriarckes, of the Israelites, the voyce of Moyses, and the Prophets: the voyce of Paule, of the Apostles, and of the Doctoures: the voyce of Luther, and of other, was the thunder hearde over all the Worlde.[8]

Some, such as John Foxe in *Actes and monuments*, used Revelation as a staging ground for interpretive battles regarding explications of history, and as a means of the periodization of all of time.[9] Quite often, such explications used apocalyptic terms to demonize political enemies, to glorify political allies, to support the cult of the monarch, and to gain personal political favor. In addition, the most common purpose of reading Revelation in this way was to indict the corruptions of Papal religion of Rome. The most

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[8] Brocardo [Brocarde], 80. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed March 2007).

[9] John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happening in the Church with an universal history of the same, wherein is set forth at large the whole race and course of the Church, from the primitive age to these latter tymes of ours, with the bloudy times, horrible troubles, and great persections against the true martyrs of Christ, sought and wrought as well by heathen emperours, as nowe lately practiced by Romish prelates, especially in this realme of England and Scotland. Newly revised and recognized, partly also augmented, and now the fourth time agayne published and recommended to the studious reader, by the author (through the helpe of Christ our Lord) John Foxe, which desireth thee good reader to helpe him with thy prayer* (London: John Daye, 1583). *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed April 4, 2007).

bilious of these tirades were those by John Bale,[10] who highly influenced Foxe, and whose view that the Pope himself was Antichrist became widely accepted as the standard Reformed interpretation. Besides these more weighty reasons for writing about Revelation, perhaps, some, like today's pop-prophets of the end-times industry, published readings of Apocalypse primarily to sell books. Sheltco à Geveren's *Of the end of the world*, for example, went through six different printings between 1577 and 1589, and however sincere Geveren may have been in his efforts to "draw the wicked from securitie, and drive them to a care of godlynesse and virtue" and to comfort "the beloved spouse of Christe,"[11] someone was reaping financial profits from such numerous and popular publications.

Though Spenser's great poem, to varying degrees, engages all of the above motivations for use of Apocalypse, it is ultimately, for him, a source of his poetic theory and practice, as well as his poetic themes and imagery. Writers such as Van der Noot, Gabriel Harvey, and Spenser found the Book of Revelation to be quite entertaining and engaging reading, and found its mysteries regarding truth, time, and temporal versus spiritual reality to be the makings of mystical, visionary, and legendary literature. In fact,

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[10] For a few examples of his numerous publications on the Roman Catholic Church as Antichrist, see John Bale, *The epistel exhortatorye of an Inglyshe Chrystian vnto his derely beloued co[n]trey of Ingland against the pompouse popysh bisshops thereof, as yet the true membres of theyre fylthye father the great Antychryst of Rome. Made by Henry Stalbrydge* (London : A. Scoloker and W. Seres, 1548?); *The apology of Iohan Bale agaynste a ranke papyst anuswering both hym and hys doctours, that neyther their vowes nor yet their priesthode areof the Gospell, but of Antichrist. Anno Do. M.CCCCC.L. A brefe exposycyon also upo[n] the .xxx chaptre of Numerii, which was the first occasion of thys present varyaunce. Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum* (London : S. Mierdman for Ihon Day, 1550); and *The image of bothe churches after the moste wonderfull and heauenly Reuelacion of Sainct Iohn the Euangelist, contayning a very frutefull exposicion or paraphrase vpon the same. Wherein it is conferred with the other scripturs, and most auctorised historyes. Compyled by Iohn Bale an exile also in this life for the faythfull testimonye of Iesu* (London : Richard Iugge, 1548?). Significantly, *The image of bothe churches* was the first full-length commentary on Revelation to be published in English.

[11] Sheltco à Geveren, *Of the Ende of this world and second coming of Christ, a comfortable and necessary Discourse, for these miserable and daungerous dayes* (London: Thomas Gardyner and Thomas Dawson 1577), iii of Thomas Rogers's "Epistle Dedicatorie," and 1 of Geveren's dedication. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck. com/home (accessed August 2006).

in a collection of correspondence between Spenser and Harvey published in 1580, Harvey cites Revelation as the epitome of such writing:

> In whiche respecte notwithstanding, as well for the singularitie of the manner, as the Diuinitie of the matter, I hearde once a Diuine, preferre *Saint Iohns Reuelation* before al the veriest *Maetaphysicall Visions*, & iollyest conceited *Dreames* or *Extasies*, that euer were deuised by one or other, howe admirable, or superexcellent soeuer they séemed otherwise to the worlde. And truely I am so confirmed in this opinion, that when I bethinke me of the verie notablest, and moste wonderful Propheticall, or Poeticall Uision, that euer I read, or hearde, me séemeth the proportion is so vnequall, that there hardly appeareth anye semblaunce of Comparison: no more in a manner (specially for Poets) than doth betwéene the incomprehensible Wisedome of God, and the sensible Wit of Man.[12]

Harvey's view of Revelation as the consummate literary achievement apparently struck a common chord with Spenser (who in 1569 had already published the English translation of Van der Noot's apocalyptic *Theatre*) as he worked on *The Faerie Queene*, his own magnum opus. As Joseph Wittreich remarks, "*The Faerie Queene* is finally not an historian's or a theologian's but a poet's Revelation."[13]

The critical consensus is now that Revelation had a major influence on Spenser's allegory, especially on the imagery of *The Faerie Queene*, Book One.[14] A number of

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[12] Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey, *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters: lately passed betvveene tvvo vniuersitie men: touching the earthquake in Aprill last, and our English refourmed versifying With the preface of a wellwiller to them both* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), 41. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed February 2007). See also Kenneth Borris, *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy in The Faerie Queene V* (Victoria, Canada: University of Victoria, 1991), 9.

[13] Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "Apocalypse," *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 48.

[14] One of the first modern critics to explore the connections at length, Josephine Waters Bennett (1942) still has much to offer on how Spenser's poem might have evolved. However, like all intensive studies on

scholars have, in fact, seen the influence of Revelation as significant enough to refer to the poem, particularly Books One and Five, as a Tudor or Elizabethan Apocalypse. Florence Sandler assigns this label to Book One mainly because it is "patterned" on the Apocalypse of John and because the "manner of the literary imitation suggests that Spenser read the Apocalypse itself chiefly as a moral allegory where 'historical' elements were subordinate."[15] According to Sandler, such a reading of Apocalypse by Spenser was representative of those of his Elizabethan contemporaries. Sandler's explanation needs qualification, though, for English readings of Revelation showed variations across the sixteenth century, even during Elizabeth's reign, in which the historical elements typically were viewed not as subordinate but instead as immediately relevant. Frank Kermode bases his statement that "Book I might fairly be designated a Tudor Apocalypse" on a slightly different premise, that the spiritual and historical elements, interrelated in both texts, are synchronous and equally important:

> Like [Spenser's] own poem, [Revelation] has a spiritual as well as an historical aspect; for if, according to St. Augustine, it is an allegory of the soul's escape from bonds of sin, it is also, by weight of tradition, a prophecy to be fulfilled by events in time. Spenser's first book has intentions closely parallel to these, for it proceeds on the old assumption that the history of mankind is the history of man's

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Spenser and *Revelation* to date, Bennett focuses on *Revelation* as a *source* for Spenser's imagery and makes the vast majority of these observations in regard *only* to Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. John Erskine Hankins (1945, rev. 1971) does the same in his exploration of *Revelation* and *The Faerie Queene*. See Josephine Waters Bennett, *The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), and John E. Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of* The Faerie Queene, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[15] Florence Sandler, "*The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse" in *The Apocalypse in English Reformation Thought and Literature*, eds. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 148. See also Josephine Waters Bennett.

> soul writ large.[16]

More recently, Richard Malette has called Book Five of *The Faerie Queene* an Elizabethan Apocalypse because the book is not only "shaped by biblical apocalypse but also, just as pervasively, confronts and so becomes a part of apocalyptic commentary of the post-Armada period."[17] Therefore, Malette's argument complicates the discussion in important ways by acknowledging the distinctions between readings of Revelation at various points during Elizabeth's reign, and by demonstrating that Book Five uses the strategies of Apocalypse not only to "allegorize ecclesiastical history" but also to take part in "late Elizabethan apocalyptic commentary."[18]

In what sense are such classifications appropriate? To answer the question, we must first consider two others: one, what are *the poem's* claims to status as a revelation or a vehicle of revelation, and two, what argument does the poem ultimately make about The Book of Revelation and the proper hermeneutical approach to Apocalypse? Readers of the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* would have been introduced to it by Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, in which Spenser states:

> the Methode of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and there recoursing to the things forepaste, and divining of things to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all. The beginning therefore of my

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[16] Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge, and K. Paul, 1971), 14.
[17] Richard Mallette, "Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse," *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 11 (1994): 130-31.
[18] Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "Apocalypse," *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 48.

> history, if it were to be told by an Historiographer should be the twelfth booke, which is the last.[19]

Here, Spenser deems the Historiographer's knowledge to be always belated: if the Historiographer stands at the end of a series of historical events and begins to describe them, by proxy, this means that the end has already been completed in historical time. The poet, by contrast, stands in the middle, with a 360 degree view of time, "recoursing to" the past and "divining of things" in the future, hence yielding a "pleasing Analysis of all" by virtue of this ability to spiral through time at will, and as we shall see, foregrounding the repetitious patterns of the cycles of history.

However, as we are well aware, to the dismay of many a novice to *The Faerie Queene*, the Letter to Raleigh contains more than a few pitfalls and miscues. In the letter, Spenser claims that unlike the Poet, the Historiographer can only examine historical events, "orderly as they were donne," but he cannot divine "of things to come." Furthermore, he states that the Historiographer "accounts as well the times as the actions," careful to contextualize events in the order of their historical moments, but he lacks the perceptive powers of the Poet who examines events "where it most concerneth him." Spenser's use of the word "divining" does constitute a claim to revelatory power and a claim that the poem itself is a revelation of sorts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* reveals several shades of meaning available to Spenser for the verb "divine." If we take Spenser's explanation at face value, we would eliminate the sense of the word meaning "To make out by sagacity, intuition, or fortunate conjecture" and "to . . . guess" because Spenser soon states that he *knows* what the end of the story will be. He claims here that

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[19] All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* in this project are from A.C. Hamilton's edition (London and New York: Pearson Education, 2001). Citation from the Letter to Raleigh is on 716-17.

he is not guessing. Thus, the other two meanings of the word available to Spenser seem to be the relevant ones. First, "divine" could have meant "*To make out or interpret* [italics mine] by supernatural or magical insight (what is hidden, obscure, or unintelligible to ordinary faculties)," as when Langland states in *Piers Plowman* that "Daniel divined the dreams of a king."[20] Second, the word could have meant "To have supernatural or magical insight into (things to come); to have presentiment of; hence gen. *to predict or prophesy* by some kind of special inspiration or intuition" (italics mine). Both of these meanings apply to Spenser's somewhat misleading statement that he, as Poet, is "divining of things to come." This is significant because, as Malette claims above, *The Faerie Queene* derives shape from Apocalypse but also becomes a reading of Apocalypse. The poem is, in an ironic fashion which will be made clear in this project, in *itself* a text that predicts or prophesies things to come, but it is also an *interpretation* of *The* Apocalypse. Quite frequently, texts which undertake to interpret The Book of Revelation wind up becoming, in themselves, revelations or claims regarding how the future will proceed. However, as this analysis will argue, *The Faerie Queene* progressively presents the notions that much in prophecy itself is intentionally indeterminate, and that revelations, ironically, tend to reveal the limitations of human capacity for transcendent knowledge.

Clearly, there is more than imagery to be considered in regard to the relationship between Spenser's reading of the Apocalypse and his poetic vision for Book One and beyond. To this end, Darryl Gless's observations seem especially timely:

From early in twentieth-century Spenser studies, Revelation has so often been

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[20] See reference to Langland, *Piers Plowman*, 1362, in entry for "divine," *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://dictionary.oed.com.

> counted among the most important influences on Spenser's Legend of Holiness that recent work often takes the view for granted. Reconsideration of apocalypse as a kind, and re-examination of the content of John's book and of the responses it typically received during Elizabethan times, can provide grounds for fresh perceptions of climactic episodes of Red Cross Knight's quest.[21]

To date, no one has provided an in-depth response to Gless's call for re-examination of Apocalypse, and of Elizabethan readings of the book, in relation to Spenser's poem. Therefore, this project will do so, with an effort to broaden the focus of Spenser's uses of Apocalypse in *The Faerie Queene* from Books One and Five (the two books upon which the critical gaze regarding apocalyptic matters has predominantly been directed) to the entire poem. Though an entirely comprehensive reading of *The Faerie Queene* is beyond the scope of this present book, the project does intentionally select segments from each of the poem's seven books in order to explore the ways in which Spenser's apocalyptic poetics extend throughout the entirety of his work.

With that point clarified, however, because Book One is the segment of the poem most apparently influenced by Revelation, Chapter One of this project uses primarily The Legend of Holiness in order to begin to illustrate the ways in which Spenser's poetics are particularly apocalyptic. This first chapter, entitled "'Wonderous Augmentation': Apocalyptic Recapitulation and Intensification in *The Faerie Queene*, Book One," examines the salient qualities of Spenser's apocalyptic poetics that are generally common to allegory as well. As Gordon Teskey explains, Revelation itself could reasonably be considered to be the first allegory. However, the fundamental concern of this chapter is

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[21] Darryl J. Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 118.

to distinguish particular aspects of *The Faerie Queene*'s antilinear narrative that are unique to Revelation, but are *not* shared by all allegories. The chapter highlights two narrative features of Apocalypse, recapitulation and intensification, and demonstrates the ways in which they are relevant to *The Faerie Queene*, primarily, here, to Book One. These two aspects of Revelation chapters 6-16 help provide the structural and rhetorical force of Spenser's poem, as well as determine the hermeneutic practices necessary for its epistemological and spiritual efficacy. Therefore, this chapter also illuminates major elements of the hermeneutics of Spenser's Reformist readers, and demonstrates the fact that the bewildering narrative tendencies of recapitulation and intensification had been well-noted and sometimes even defended by sixteenth-century exegetes of Revelation at the time of *The Faerie Queene*.

Chapter Two, entitled "'The Ende and Vanishing Tyme': *The Faerie Queene*, Complaints of Love's Martyrs, and the Purpose of Apocalyptic Delay," explores the relevance of Van der Noot's *A Theatre for Worldlings* as well as Spenser's *Complaints, Amoretti, Epithalamion,* and *Fowre Hymnes* to the apocalyptic poetics of *The Faerie Queene.* At issue in this chapter are some of the same questions asked by Teresa M. Krier in her *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision*: "How does vision evoke desire? Are there kinds of desire besides lust which are aroused through vision?"[22] My approach to the questions and, therefore, arrival at answers differs from Krier's, though. While Krier views *Theatre* as a passing influence on the young Spenser,[23] I see its apocalyptic poetics as important for his mature work as well. In this chapter, I argue that in *A Theatre for Worldlings*, Van der Noot uses vision

[22] Teresa M. Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 4.
[23] Ibid., 13-14.

to evoke apocalyptic desire for fulfillment. Van der Noot presents poems by Petrarch and Du Bellay in an order that forms a coherent statement on the post-Genesis fallen state of everything in this world, and he strategically places his own apocalyptic poems at the end of the collection to point to a reversal of the state shown by Petrarch and Du Bellay – a reversal which is yet to come. Spenser's 1591 collection of poems entitled *Complaints* shares this purpose of evoking apocalyptic desire, accomplished in the opening series of poems called "The Ruines of Time," for example, by using a variation on the technique of Van der Noot's apocalyptic ending.

Like these works, *The Faerie Queene* is concerned with the gap in time between Christ's defeat of evil on the cross and the fulfillment of Revelation, when the victory will be actualized in the new and improved Eden of New Jerusalem. Chapter Two demonstrates the ways in which, as *The Faerie Queene* proceeds into Books Three and Four and beyond, it highlights the long progression of time involved with this gap before Apocalypse-fulfilled, and thus espouses a Protestant mysticism in the tradition of Van der Noot and other Reformed exegetes of Revelation, which represents a longing for the Edenic perfection of love that will only be achieved in Apocalypse-fulfilled. In the central books of *The Faerie Queene*, much of the apocalyptic recapitulation and intensification is seen in progressively increasing suffering of chaste lovers and, consequently, a progressively increasing sense of disturbance in the sufferers, as seen in their numerous poetic complaints. I argue in the last half of this chapter that the similar techniques of revision in *Fowre Hymnes* and *The Faerie Queene*, make the apocalyptic argument also present in many Reformed readings of Revelation that the fulfillment of Apocalypse will result in restoring to the souls of believers the mirror which in Eden

reflected the image of God, a restoring which replaces the postlapsarian (and Neoplatonic) concept that one's soul should reflect one's earthly lover.

Chapter Three, entitled "'To Signifie Nothing Else': *The Faerie Queene,* Apocalyptic Hermeneutics, and the Fight of Faith," addresses the further engagement of *The Faerie Queene* in Books Three through Six with Reformed readings of Revelation in Spenser's time. Although in the citation at the beginning of this introduction Brocarde claims that Christ "was the tree that stoode in the middle of Paradise, which Eve & Adam presumed to touch: who shalbe our tree of Life in the middle of Gods Paradise, whereof wee shall eate in the latter ende of the worlde,"[24] many sixteenth-century exegetes of Revelation, Brocarde included, were greedy to pluck from the tree of knowledge now, to achieve absolute mastery over the apocalyptic secrets known only to God himself. Like Sheltco à Geveren in 1577 and John Foxe in 1583, both of whom are cited above, others such as John Chardon in 1580, Stephen Batman in 1581, and Franciscus Junius in 1592, worked out readings of Apocalypse[25] much more ingenious than the writing of Saint John himself, in order to feel that they knew certain details of how and when the world would end, so that they might comfort the saints and warn the unbelievers. As this chapter demonstrates, these writers are fixed upon calculating when the end of time will occur

[24] Brocardo, 32. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed March 2007).
[25] Even the comprehensive titles of these works are worth noting: John Chardon, *A sermon preached in S. Peters Church in Exceter, the 6. day of December last: wherein is intreated of the second coming of Christ unto judgement, and of the end of the world* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1580); Stephen Batman, *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment, wherein are contained for the most parte all the straunge prodigies hapned in the worlde, with divers secrete figures of revelations tending to mannes stayed conversion towards God: in maner of a generall chronicle, gathered out of sundrie approved authors by St. Batman professor in divinitie* (London: Imprinted by Ralphe Nubery assigned by Henry Bynneman, 1581); Franciscus Junius, *Apocalypsis: A Briefe and Learned Commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, applied unto the history of the Catholicke and Christian Church* (London: Richard Field for Robert Dexter, 1592). *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home.

based on precise historical periodization or upon reading prophetic signs, both of which derive from their desire to master and manage Revelation and other prophetic scriptures.

Chapter Three argues that Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* however, sides with another, less commonly popular, school of readers of the late sixteenth century,[26] for whom Apocalypse provided a vehicle through which epistemological and eschatological issues such as proper perspective in regard to human vision could be explored. While the goal of many readers of Revelation in Elizabethan times was to comfort the faithful and reassure them that the end of time was coming soon, Spenser's poem complicates this focus by emphasizing the recapitulative, repeated deferral of ending. As this chapter demonstrates, *The Faerie Queene* works to counter erroneous beliefs that faith should be defined by absolute knowledge and total understanding of prophetic signs, which by nature are indeterminate. By showing the error of figures in the poem who seek to calculate certainties based on prophetic statements, and by presenting in the poem many of the signs (popularly cited in Revelation commentaries) as already fulfilled, yet without the immediately-expected endings, the poem argues for prudence in matters of interpreting prophecy, and for hermeneutics based on faith – not contrived notions of fixed knowledge of how and when the End of time, or even the end of the poem, will occur. Readers who came to the poem trained to read history as well as current events for signs of the End would have been struck by the poem's engagement with signs fulfilled. The allusions to Revelation in *The Faerie Queene* Book One have been well-documented. However, the ways these allusions work in concert with others throughout the poem to make an argument about sound hermeneutics for approaching prophecy have

[26] The more prudent school of apocalyptic hermeneutics includes Heinrich Bullinger, Augustine Marlorate, William Fulke, William Perkins, and John Dove. See Chapter Three for full citations of various works.

never been sufficiently explored. Therefore, Chapter Three demonstrates that many of the well-known signs depicted in Book One as being fulfilled, are recapitulated (fulfilled again and again) in later books, with building intensity each time, and thus, again, arguing that the End is quite a fickle matter.

Nevertheless, although *The Faerie Queene* cautions against attempts at fixed calculations of the End, the poem does reflect the belief that the world is in its last days, however long the final era may endure. Thus, the final half of Chapter Three explores the ways in which *The Faerie Queene*, most notably in the figure of Talus in Book Five, addresses contemporary political events through an apocalyptic lens, again, enacting the longing for Apocalypse-fulfilled. This segment of the project further illuminates how the poem functions to correct erroneous definitions of faith. While many of the godly have become distracted, described by William Perkins in 1587 as standing "agast at the signes of Heaven,"[27] looking for precise knowledge of when the End will come, the poem manifests the belief that the true faithful will remain actively engaged in the fight of faith. In the process, the poem addresses the late sixteenth-century English debates as to whether the fight of faith should be waged with a spiritual sword or a literal, material one. Either way, the poem reminds readers, Queen Elizabeth included, that they should be found actively fighting because the End, which has been repeatedly deferred through time, will come suddenly rather than at a predictable moment.

Hence, my project concurs with recent critics who argue that *The Faerie Queene* pushes readers toward less rigid interpretations. In *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, Carol

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[27] William Perkins, *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world, betweene a Christian and a Worldling,* 1587, in *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins, the third and last volume* (London: John Haviland for James Boler, 1631). *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed May 2007).

Kaske states that Spenser is attempting to "jar the reader into some moral flexibility," and Anne Lake Prescott, in "Complicating the Allegory," claims that "*The Faerie Queene*'s fully–fashioned gentleman will have to live with cognitive dissonance and hope God understands."[28] Similarly, Lauren Silberman, in *Transforming Desire,* states that "In Book III, Spenser develops an allegory that is the shared enterprise of writer and reader who join in the quest to make meaning in order to accommodate epistemological uncertainty in the fallen world, as he seeks to construct a reader fit to cope with this uncertainty," and adds that

> Although Book IV largely functions as a critique of strategies of literary closure that seek to fix meaning, its conclusion, with the marriage of Thames and Medway, undermines the self-critical stance of Book IV by showing how limited an ideal of closure and totalizing control seems when compared to a poetic vision of universal fluidity and limitless plenitude.[29]

The Faerie Queene, at least on some levels, is a critique of interpretive certainties and foregone conclusions. The poem progressively works to lead readers of its own day as well as modern day critics to a level of cautious uncertainty, ambiguity, and tentativeness rather that blind certainty. Instead of encouraging readers to seek precise guarantees, *The Faerie Queene* actually works, as Adela Collins describes the function of Revelation, to create tension in readers,[30] then to direct them to a transcendent faith which is not based on things which may be seen with the eyes. By defining and illustrating the criteria of

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[28] Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Anne Lake Prescott, "Complicating the Allegory: Spenser and Religion in Recent Scholarship." *Renaissance and Reformation* 25.4 (Autumn 2001): 15.
[29] Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of* The Faerie Queene (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5, 10.
[30] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 141.

Spenser's apocalyptic poetics, most importantly his use of recapitulation and intensification, his depiction of temporal and spatial realities, his use of prophetic typology that both reveals and conceals, and his focus upon transcendence, I demonstrate how *The Faerie Queene* works through creating cognitive dissonance[31] in its readers and thereby educating them to deeper faith, even in the face of confusion, uncertainty, and frustrated desire.

Spenser's work foregrounds a phenomenon of theological dissonance observable in the theodicy of Scripture,[32] when the righteous confront the cognition that problems of evil and injustice exist—in light of the simultaneous cognition that God is thoroughly good. Additionally, there is the cognition of believers that Christ has already defeated evil on the cross, but the simultaneous cognition that evil continues in the present earthly realm until the future heavenly absence of evil will be realized at the time of Apocalypse-fulfilled. Hence, my ultimately pious cognitive dissonance here differs markedly from the deconstructive variety of Jonathan Goldberg, for example, who argues that "The text [of *The Faerie Queene*] undergoes continuous reconstitution in the empty spaces between stanzas. Denying that where it has been has any conclusive force, the last word always produces a new one."[33] Instead, as will become clear, I am arguing that Spenser's poetics of apocalyptic intensification (which repeatedly builds to deferral rather than highest culmination) manifests the belief that the cognitive dissonance experienced by true believers is ultimately edifying to (and necessary for) their faith: a belief that, as the

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[31] Cognitive dissonance is defined as the psychological discomfort of simultaneously holding apparently conflicting truths in the mind.

[32] See for example, the book of Job; the apocalyptic book of Esdras; Psalm 79 with Asaph's cry of "How long?"; and Revelation with the martyrs' plea for justice.

[33] Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 21.

narrator finally explains, the time will come when "no more *Change* shall be, / But stedfast rest of all things firmely stayd / Vpon the pillours of Eternity" (VII.viii.2).

Chapter One – "Wonderous Augmentation": Apocalyptic Recapitulation and Intensification in *The Faerie Queene*, Book One

"John useth a wonderous augmentation in words. For firste he saide the hayle was great: next he saide it was as it had bin Talents: then addedth he that it fell upon men out of heaven. Afterwarde he tearmeth it a plague and a greate stroake: and at the last hee augmenteth great with exceeding" – Augustine Marlorate, *A Catholike exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John* (1574), 236,37.

The goal of this present chapter is to demonstrate a distinctive aspect of Spenser's apocalyptic poetic theory and practice. Thus, I will examine Spenser's reading of Revelation as allegory in light of what makes Apocalypse distinct from other allegories, and in light of how readers of Spenser's time responded to Revelation.[34] In fact, many of the prominent features of Spenser's apocalyptic poetics are also prominent qualities of allegory in general.

In order to get at what distinguishes Apocalypse from typical allegories, it helps first to consider what Revelation and *The Faerie Queene* share with them. One, allegories are commonly enigmatic. As in Revelation, there are moments in *The Faerie Queene* that defy logic and concrete representation. In the very first stanzas, readers of the poem face an enigma long noted by Spenser scholars: it is logically impossible to link the incongruous travel speeds of Redcrosse Knight, pricking his spirited horse, and Una, riding her gentle palfrey, with the fact that they ride together, side by side.

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[34] Carol Kaske's definition of biblical poetics in *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) is useful here: "Biblical poetics comprises, first, in its most central meaning, the poetic practice of the biblical authors, especially the prophets and psalmists; then, what biblical commentators and Judaeo-Christian literary critics have perceived that poetics to be—a branch of hermeneutics; and finally, in the remoter sense in which we use it in literary criticism, that poetics which a poet might have derived from these two sources," 1. My definition of apocalyptic poetics derives from a similar methodology: examining the poetic practice of the author of Revelation, examining how Biblical commentators in the sixteenth century perceived that poetics (as a branch of hermeneutics, often allegoresis), and finally, examining how Spenser's poetics is derived, at least in part, from these two sources.

Furthermore, Una is leading a lamb beside her while keeping up with Redcrosse as he gallops on his stallion.[35]

In such scenes, Spenser's poem demonstrates a visionary aesthetic, similar to that of the apocalyptic genre, in which details are often more symbolically than logically significant. Just as *The Faerie Queene* begins with details that resist logical explanation, the opening of St. John's Revelation presents readers very quickly with a description of Christ, who has a sharp two-edged sword as a tongue, yet is still able to speak (Rev 1:16-20). Likewise, in Revelation 13:1, John "sawe a beast rise out of the sea, having seven heads, and ten hornes, and upon his hornes were ten crownes, and upon his heads the name of blasphemie."[36] As Revelation scholar Gilbert Desrosiers points out, "Some questions of logic arise when trying to figure out how to distribute ten horns on seven heads or how anyone can speak with a sword coming out of his mouth."[37] Logic does not work here, as it does not work in the aforementioned scenes from *The Faerie Queene*, but logic is not always the point. At issue in the creation of apocalyptic works such as Revelation is the struggle to represent spiritual concepts in material terms. For example, where John resorts to symbolic words in an effort to express a spiritual characteristic of Christ, Albrecht Dürer (in his 1498 series of woodcuts titled *Apocalypse*) extends the representation into the plastic arts by visually depicting Christ with a literal sword protruding from his mouth.[38] Thus, the visionary artist's objective is actually to present

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[35] All quotations and citations from *The Faerie Queene* are from A.C. Hamilton's edition (London: Pearson Education, 2001).

[36] Revelation in *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). All Biblical quotations in this project are from this edition of *The Geneva Bible*, unless otherwise noted. Throughout my work, I have modified the use of "v" in the Geneva text to reflect the modern "u," as in the change of "vpon" to "upon," and, likewise, have modified the use of "u" to reflect the modern "v," as in the change of "haue" to "have."

[37] Gilbert Desrosiers, *An Introduction to Revelation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 62-63.

[38] See *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, ed. Willi Kurth (New York: Bonanza Books, 1946),

spiritual conditions in vivid, though figurative, terms. John and the apocalyptic artists who echo his work present Christ's word as piercing and definitive, and present the overreaching tendency of evil in the beast crowned with more worldly power than it has heads to wear. Spenser, writing roughly a century after Dürer's woodcuts, effectively captures the nature of apocalyptic symbolism: he presents a knight, at least at this point in the narrative, too eager to gallop toward accolades to think of slowing down for spiritual caution, and a lady graced by the spiritual purity, innocence, and holiness of Christ and the supernatural ability to stay by the knight's side.

Spenser's poem shares the cryptic qualities commonly attributed to Apocalypse during the Renaissance, but commonly attributed to allegory in general as well. Most everyone would have agreed that, by nature, the Book of Revelation was sometimes frustratingly confusing and difficult to understand. In *Orlando Furioso*, one of Spenser's poetic models for *The Faerie Queene*, Ariosto calls it "the obscure Apocalypse."[39] Sixteenth- century readers of Revelation also expected the sort of enigmatic qualities described in the scenes above. Heinrich Bullinger, considered by Renaissance Reformers to be one of the authorities on the Apocalypse partly because of his role in writing marginal notes for Apocalypse in the Geneva Bible, acknowledged the reputation of Revelation as difficult if not impossible to fully understand. In his 1561 Preface to his massive *Hundred Sermons Upon the Apocalypse*, he states that previous expositors of

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[39] Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso,* trans. Sir John Harrington (1591), ed. Robert McNulty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), Canto 34.

Revelation have said "oftener than once, that hardly should this book be understood before it were fulfilled."[40]

In his letter to Raleigh, Spenser introduces his own poem in the same fashion, presenting it as a difficult work that contains hidden truths obscured by the very nature of the form. Then, in the remainder of the letter, he, ostensibly, gives advice on how to interpret his allegory. Spenser's well-known miscues in the letter are in line with the tradition that, by nature, apocalyptic literature is purposefully difficult to understand. Although the word "apocalypse" comes from the Greek word for an uncovering or a revealing, ironically, revelations tend to reveal that the ultimate truth remains hidden. Apocalyptic scholar David E. Aune refers to this quality of the genre as "the reveal/conceal dialectic," and states, "the literary presentation of revelation is expressed in obscure modes so that the substance of the revelation is not clarified once-and-for-all."[41] Therefore, although Spenser states near the end of his letter to Raleigh that "from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handfull gripe al the discourse, which otherwise may happily seeme tedious and confused," the letter really has not cleared up the poem for readers at all. The word "happily" plays on the notion of the intentional difficulty level of Apocalypse. The pun is that in one sense "happily" refers to "hap," "by chance," or "in the course of," but in a second sense refers to "in a happy state" or "in an adequate, fitting, or successful manner." For Spenser's apocalyptic poetics, it would indeed be in this last sense that the poem happily seems tedious and confused, for this is fitting for the apocalyptic aesthetic of opacity.

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[40] Heinrich Bullinger, *A hundred Sermons upon the Apocalyps of Jesu Christe* (London: John Day, 1561), sig. [B.iii^{V}]. *EarlyEnglish Books Online*. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed December 2005).
[41] David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986), 84-85.

Such obfuscation is also typical, however, of the dark allegorical tradition in which Spenser was writing many segments of his poem. As Isabel MacCaffrey writes, "Spenser's allegory is designed to demonstrate the darkness of our situation as fallen human beings, with special reference to the accessibility of truth; the demonstration proceeds by introducing us to a fictive world whose enigmatic surface darkly reflects the everyday darkness in which we grope."[42] She adds that "Almost every defender of allegory in the Renaissance insists that its darkness is a way of concealing the deep and high truths of ultimate reality from the profane vulgar." We should note, however, that in 1574 French Reformer Augustine Marlorate, in his exposition of the Book of Revelation, claims the same function for Apocalypse:

> [T]he things that are sette foorth in this prophecie darkly, and in manner riddlelyke, muste not hinder the godlie from readyng of it. For John doth therefore use figures, because the thing that he writeth is a Revelation, which it pleaseth God to disclose unto him under the manner of figures: which thing even the Prophets dyd: whereupon also all this booke is called a Prophecie.[43]

He further states that Saint John "disclosed all these things howebeit wrapped in mysticall figures, and overshadowed with images: to the intent the studious sort might not sette light by them, nor Gods holy tokens be discovered to the unworthy. . . ."[44] Thus, Spenser's situation of his poem in the tradition of dark allegory demonstrates its affinity

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[42] Isabel MacCaffrey, *Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 40,62.
[43] Augustine Marlorate, *A Catholike exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John* (London: H. Binneman for L. Harison and G. Bishop, 1574), 2. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed August 2006).
[44] Ibid., 5.

with Revelation, which as Reformers noted, shared the allegorical aim of concealing sacred truth from "the unworthie."

In addition, the tendency of both Revelation and *The Faerie Queene* to make deliberate use of symbols and allusions that simultaneously invite and resist one-to-one, definitive interpretation could be equally ascribed to their allegorical nature. This polyvalent quality allows the all-encompassing scope of apocalypses. Speaking of John's Revelation, Aune states that "the ingenuity and imagination of the audience is allowed greater challenge and fuller scope than in the case of most apocalypses."[45] Since its composition, the symbols of Revelation have been widely and variedly interpreted and reinterpreted, perhaps more than any other text in history. Part of the appeal of any given symbol is such potential for myriad interpretations, thus defying the precise identification of a symbol as only one person or thing at only one particular point in time. The symbols of Spenser's poem share such potential for polyvalence. Like Revelation, Book One of *The Faerie Queene* has its fair share of horrific beasts that can be interpreted on many levels. For example, through the centuries, the giant Orgoglio of Book One, Canto Seven has perhaps been interpreted in as many different ways (morally, historically, politically, spiritually) as the seven-headed beast of Revelation 13:1. Arguably, before *The Faerie Queene* was published in 1590, there had been no English poem that offered such a pleasing array of potential for symbolic interpretation, just as with the possible exception of Daniel, before Revelation, no Biblical book had offered such opportunity for interpretive ingenuity.

Thus far, we have enumerated several qualities as intrinsic to Spenser's apocalyptic poetics, qualities which are also intrinsic, however, to allegory in general:

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[45] Aune, 85-86.

enigmatic descriptions of events that defy logic and concrete representation, intentional obscurity, form that simultaneously reveals and conceals, and symbols that invite yet resist one-to-one interpretation. Joseph Wittreich, in regard to *The Faerie Queene*'s visionary and apocalyptic quality, also has noted many of these features, and concludes, "as a hybrid genre and literary microcosm, and in its literary pictorialism, multi-perspectivism, prophetic obscurity, multifarious allusiveness, antilinear narrative, and continual veiling and unveiling, it accords in every detail with the salient features of Renaissance visionary poetics."[46] All of the qualities discussed to this point as part of Spenser's apocalyptic poetics, including these features outlined by Wittreich, are common to works of allegory in general,[47] such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

Of course, much of this overlapping of apocalyptic and allegorical qualities can be understood by acknowledging Revelation itself as the prototypical dark allegory. Gordon Teskey claims that "Although the *Psychomachia* is traditionally regarded as the earliest allegory, a case could be made for the Book of Revelation (late 1st c) because it deliberately engages the reader in interpretative play by presenting itself as a mysterious text."[48] As previously noted, scholars who call segments of *The Faerie Queene* "an Elizabethan Apocalypse" or "a Tudor Apocalypse" point out that Spenser read Revelation as allegory. Frank Kermode claims that "Spenser would have been happy to

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[46] Joseph Wittreich, "visions," *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, eds. A.C. Hamilton et al (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 723. See also Wittreich's *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1979).
[47] See Gordon Teskey's entry on allegory in *Spenser Encyclopedia,* 16-22. Virtually point for point, each quality of allegory outlined by Teskey is also a quality of Apocalypse.
[48] Ibid., 19.

call the book of Revelation 'a continued Allegory, or darke conceit.'"[49] Many of Spenser's near contemporaries certainly read it this way. In fact, the leading Reformers initially hesitated to embrace Revelation because of the challenges it presented to their hermeneutics based on the perspicuity of scripture. William Tyndale, for example, in 1536, acknowledges the text as allegory that purposefully engages in obfuscation: "The apocalypse, or revelations of John, are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places."[50] Despite similar reservations, Martin Luther, in 1545, eventually views Revelation as "a prophecy about 'tribulations and disasters for the Church'; and he comes to regard the Apocalypse as a very special form of prophecy, composed exclusively of pictures or visions."[51]

Spenser and his fellow writers value Revelation for just this reason: that its pictures and visions, its reveal/conceal methodology, are especially suited to the most important subjects which literature could address, namely, the mysteries of the end of time, already decided but still yet to be. In fact, as Spenser was in the process of composing *The Faerie Queene*, Revelation was highly recommended to him by his friend and mentor Gabriel Harvey, who articulated the goal of visionary poetry as having "nothing vulgare, but in some respecte or other, and especially in *liuely Hyperbolicall Amplifications*, rare, queint, and odde in euery pointe, and as a man woulde saye, a degrée or two at the leaste, aboue the reache, and compasse of a common Schollers

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[49] Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge, and K. Paul, 1971), 14.
[50] William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises. Expositions, with the Practice of Prelates. An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue,* 3 vols, ed. for Parker Society by Rev. H. Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848-50), 305.
[51] See Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics,* 6, 220n.

capacitie."[52] Harvey's discussion of such ideal poetry takes his thoughts further to Apocalypse, as noted in the Introduction to this project. Reformer and playwright John Bale, at the midpoint of the sixteenth century, also had emphasized the importance of Revelation by declaring, "He that knoweth not this book, knoweth not what the church is whereof he is a member. For herein is the estate thereof from Christ's ascension to the end of the world under pleasant figures and elegant tropes decided, and nowhere else thoroughly but here. . . ."[53] These "pleasant figures" have long appealed to writers of allegory, for as Gordon Teskey claims, Revelation's "imagery pervades every major allegorical work up to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*"[54] Bale and Harvey argue that not only is Revelation a vehicle of truth, but it is also the highest vehicle of Truth because it coordinates all of time by describing an end that is already determined but still yet to be. Thus, it has been reasonably argued that, not only is Revelation allegorical itself, but it also has influenced the content and methodology of many allegories which followed, Spenser's allegory included.

However, of primary concern for this chapter is the fact that there are particular aspects of *The Faerie Queene'*s antilinear narrative that are distinctive to Revelation, but are *not* common to all allegories, and it is these aspects which help to drive the structural and rhetorical force of the poem, as well as determine the hermeneutic practices necessary for its epistemological and spiritual efficacy. To understand the structural aesthetics of both Revelation and *The Faerie Queene*, we could point to that quality of

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[52] Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser, *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters: lately passed betweene two universitie men* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), 41. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed February 2007).
[53] John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (London, 1548) in *Selected Works of John Bale,* ed. for Parker Society by Rev. Henry Christmas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1849), 252.
[54] *Spenser Encyclopedia,* 19.

visions or (common to the experience of us all) dreams, which defies the laws of chronology in favor of the power of recurring images. Granted, allegories also typically work this way, but as we shall see, there is a distinct difference in the apocalyptic recurrence. As scholars such as Humphrey Tonkin have noted,[55] the entire narrative structure of *Faerie Queene* Book One is set out in miniature in the Error scene: like Error's tail, the story spirals in its patterns of recurring errors and recurring evil. The structural tendency of the narrative of *The Faerie Queene* to coil and recoil is well known, but few scholars have explored this aspect of the poem in light of the parallel tendencies of Revelation (tendencies noted by many sixteenth-century readers).

Revelation is unique among books of the Bible because, as typical of most allegories, most of Revelation's content does not follow a clearly straightforward, chronological narrative. In Chapter One, John tells of the origin of his book, specifies his audience, and describes his initial vision of Christ, who gives him the mandate to write what he sees (though John sometimes seems to struggle for words to describe what he sees because the visions "happily seem tedious and confused," as Spenser describes his own poem). Chapters Two and Three provide the messages that Christ directed John to give to each of seven churches. Next, John is carried to heaven in Chapter Four, providing a vision of God and His throne. In Chapter Five, John sees that God holds in his right hand a book sealed with seven seals. Up to this point, the flow has been relatively straightforward. From this point on, however, John often leaves readers disoriented as to the circuitous ordering of events.

Examining the bewildering structure of Revelation Chapter Six through Chapter Sixteen, and the various sixteenth-century views of interpreting that structure, can give us

[55] Humphrey Tonkin, Introduction, *The Faerie Queene* (London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

insight into how Spenser conceived the narrative tendencies of his own poem, as well as (in later chapters of this project) how Spenser's prominent themes derive from his reading of such apocalyptic structure, and how *The Faerie Queene* takes an active voice in sixteenth-century dialogues regarding the proper hermeneutic theory for approaching Revelation. In Revelation 6-16 and subsequent chapters, John is allowed to see visions of the greatest matters of all time: the cosmic conflicts between good and evil, the need for and the delay of ultimate justice, the final righting of all wrongs, and the definitive consummation of all things, all issues which also are at the heart of *The Faerie Queene*.

The similarities between the works go well beyond thematic ones, though. What distinguishes Revelation from allegories in general is its structure that uses the technique of repeated, recurring events, and its rhetoric of intensification and diminution, all of which, as we will see, were noted by Reformers of Spenser's day. Revelation Chapter Six through Sixteen describes events organized by three series of sevens: the opening of seven seals, the blowing of seven trumpets, and the pouring out of seven vials. To say the least, the text's structure is perplexing and continues to be the subject of much debate. Many scholars, particularly those now referred to as Dispensationalists, claim that the three series of sevens should be read as a chronological ordering of events. However, there are some problems with reading the series as linear. Many readers will soon wonder why certain events seem to be repeated. For example, after the seventh seal is opened, there is thunder, lightning and earthquakes (Rev 8:5). The same thing happens after the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:19) and, later, after the pouring out of the seventh vial (16:18, 21). Readers are confused as to whether this indicates one event repeated three times throughout the narrative, or whether this indicates three different

occurrences of such an event. Furthermore, readers wonder why some events that seem definitively concluded in one series are brought up again in the next series as only partially concluded. For example, after seal six is opened, the text states that the sun turned dark and the moon turned blood red, but in the next series, after trumpet four is blown, the text states that only *one third* of the sun and moon turned dark. Read chronologically, these events make no narrative sense. Most significantly, readers sometimes wonder why evil appears completely defeated in one chapter but must be addressed again in the next.

Sixteenth-century readers of Revelation ask similar questions and propose answers that anticipate the views of modern scholars. Rather than being viewed as linear, Revelation is viewed by a number of Reformers as having a sort of circular structure because of its repetitive tendency. John Napier, in *A Plaine Discovery*, writes of Revelation Chapter 16, "The Spirit of God intend[s] to repeat the prophesie of the seaven ages now under the tearmes of vials, which before were expressed by seaven trumpets, to the effect, the one may be a commentarie to discipher the other. . . ."[56] John Bale, in *Image of Both Churches*, notes the repetition in Revelation Chapter 20 and elsewhere:

> As a brief rehearsal of all that is in a manner spoken afore, was this unto John, lest he should of obliviousness forget (as man's nature is forgetful) these wonderful mysteries and singular premonishments of the Lord, most expedient to be known of his church, that she might by them see aforehand the wily crafts of the devil and his members, and to beware of them . . . . For a thing oft rehearsed departeth not so soon the memory as that is but once told. Which caused this evangelist . . .

[56] John Napier, *A Plaine Discovery of the whole Revelation of Saint John* (London, 1593), 186. *Early English Books Online*. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed December 2005).

> oft to repeat the sayings, lest he should seem faintly to pass them over, and because the reader should the more earnestly mark them.[57]

Thus Napier and Bale illustrate the ways in which St. John's Spirit-guided literary and rhetorical strategy of repetition facilitates two primary practices of Protestant reading: memorization and collation. Bale highlights the repetition that would help readers "more earnestly mark" and remember passages, and Napier points out that through repetition, one passage may be used to interpret the other.

For further evidence that Reformers were skilled in such techniques, we may turn to John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, commonly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Often, in Foxe's accounts, the climactic moment is when Protestant readers who were not formally schooled in academic study of scripture actually teach the teachers. For example, Foxe tells of a man named Marbecke called before a Church council because he is accused of making a Biblical concordance through the letter L, an activity off limits for the layperson in England at that time. To prove that he has in fact done so, and that it can be done in English, Marbecke accepts the challenge to have Church officials write words from M-Z and then to allow Marbecke to create a scriptural concordance for those words. Because he has remarkable recall of memorized Bible passages, he meets the challenge, to the surprise of Church officers.[58] In *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, Carol Kaske proposes that "Spenser—who, like all good Protestants, must have spent considerable time in meditating on the Scriptures—developed themes in pieces scattered throughout a work and related them with hook-words," and that in reading Spenser's work

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[57] Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (1548) in *Selected Works of John Bale,* Parker Society (1849), 558.
[58] John Foxe, "The fourth examination of Marbecke" in *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 2, first half (London: John Day, 1583), 1216-1217. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed October 2007).

> we should pay attention to the signifiers, collate those passages that contain the same hook-word, and compile a mental concordance. Because the Bible was perceived as requiring this kind of reading, and because every Protestant was required to read the Bible, Spenser could count on readers to read his work in the same way, provided he dropped enough hints.[59]

Like Marbecke, Anne Askew is included in Foxe's work and held up as a model of such "concordantial" (as it is called by Kaske) reading ability, particularly in the skills of collation.[60]

In other examples from Foxe's accounts, the reading practices of two women from across the spectrum of social classes demonstrate the Protestant interpretive technique, mentioned above by Napier, which uses textual context to interpret individual passages. As in many of the inquisitions on the correct interpretation of the Mass, when Lady Jane Gray's inquisitor asks her the meaning of Christ's statement that "This bread is my body," she responds (as Reformers often would respond to the same question) by pointing to other scriptural passages in which Christ states "I am the vine" and "I am the door" to show that such passages should be read figuratively, not literally.[61] In addition, Foxe even records the story of Joan Waste, a poor blind woman who goes to extreme lengths to be able to "read" scripture. She saves money, buys a New Testament, and has people read to her (including a prisoner in jail and other people whom she pays to read to

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[59] Kaske, 21.
[60] John Foxe, "The first examination of Mistres Anne Askew before the inquisitours 1545" in *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 2, first half (London: John Day, 1583), 1234-1240. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed October 2007). For more on Askew's reading skills, particularly in collation, see Peter Stallybrass's chapter in *Readers in Early Modern England*, eds. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).
[61] Foxe, "The communication had betweene the Ladie Jane and Fecknam" in *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 2, first half (London: John Day, 1583), 1419-1420. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed October 2007).

her). Most notable, though, is Foxe's attention to the fact that she had memorized much of the Bible and could use it to point out errors in religion.[62] Thus, we see the common Reformist practices of memorizing passages of scripture and of reading similar Biblical passages as commentaries to each other. Protestant readers, such as those in Spenser's audience, trained to do so would have been particularly suited to the rhetorical efficacy of recapitulative strategies in Revelation and in *The Faerie Queene*.

As Susan Felch reminds us, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* also makes use of repetition to affect its readers: "[W]hile many of the woodcuts in the 1563 edition do not have captions, nearly all those in the 1570 text do, again demanding the reader's attention and shaping a desired reaction by the sheer weight of repetitive visual and verbal cues."[63] Such conditioning of readers to link cues is also witnessed in the numerous Biblical commentaries of the time which were heavily annotated with cross references to similar passages of scripture. Bullinger's marginal notes to the Geneva Bible provide one example of many.

As modern scholars of the Idealist school such as John Collins explain:

> [T]he apocalyptic paradigm, either entirely or in part, may be repeated more than once in a single apocalypse. So Daniel 7-12 and Revelation, to take the most familiar examples, juxtapose visions or series of visions which go over the same material in slightly different ways . . . . The repetition of variant formulations

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[62] Foxe, "The Martirdome of Ioane Wast, a blynde woman in the Towne of Darbye" and "Articles ministred unto her" in *Actes and Monuments*, vol. 2, second half (London: John Daye, 1583), 1951-1953. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed October 2007).
[63] Susan Felch, "Shaping the Reader in the *Acts and Monuments*" in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1997), 64.

draws attention to the underlying structure which is common to all.[64]

This view of the apocalyptic technique, also given in-depth attention in Adela Yarbro Collins's work, is called recapitulation. While *The Divine Comedy* and *Piers Plowman* both have narrative content that works in a circular manner and contains intensification, neither has the recapitulative effect of combining *recurring or repeated* events that are modified through amplification of greater intensity each time around and that ultimately build toward the highest end that marks a return to a perfected beginning.

Hence, the image of a circle does not seem completely adequate for Revelation, or for the narrative coiling and uncoiling of *The Faerie Queene*, which has also been described as circular. If we think of narrative events as happening in a literal circle, that would mean we return at various intervals to the same events, over and over. However, as Reformers who wrote commentaries on Revelation frequently noted, and as John J. Collins points out above, there are "variant formulations" in the repetition, often a sort of incremental refrain – repetition with a slight difference. Joseph Wittreich also comments that "In John's prophecy . . . the seven visions rather than relating to one another sequentially reiterate the same materials . . . each time adding new materials that clarify, often amplify, what has gone before."[65] (The same is true of *The Faerie Queene*, Book One, and is one of the most prominent strategies driving the entire poem, as my later chapters will demonstrate). Therefore, rather than circular, there is a more accurate way to describe this apocalyptic form.

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[64] John J. Collins, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia* 14 (1979), ed. John J. Collins (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 8. For more on recapitulation, see also Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

[65] Wittreich, *Visionary Poetics*, 42. Richard Malette also notes the "narrative principles of incremental repetition and overlapping" at work in apocalyptic literature, in post-Armada commentary, and in FQ Book V: see Mallette's "Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse," *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 11 (1994): 145.

Although the predominant and definitive methodology behind my project is to examine Spenser's uses of Revelation within the context of the late sixteenth-century readings that surrounded his work,[66] I cannot fail to note, albeit briefly, the similarities between notions of apocalyptic form in Spenser's work and that of an apocalyptic thinker of a future era. William Butler Yeats, like Spenser and St. John before him, was interested in metaphysical truth, particularly in regard to the patterns that drive time: past, present and future. To Yeats, the workings of history were more than merely circular. In order to get at their complexity, he articulated a system in which the events of history take place in gyratory patterns, or spiraling cycles of building and lessening intensity. The theory is commonly depicted as a sort of tornado or cone shaped figure in which the action begins at the narrow point and moves simultaneously upward and outward toward the widest section at the top. In his apocalyptic poem "The Second Coming," Yeats describes events in the cycle as "Turning and turning in the widening gyre."[67] The observations of a number of Reformist exegetes foreshadow the perceiving of history in such terms, in which one sees not a mere circle that repeats the same events, but instead a pattern of events that do move in circular motion, returning to points already

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[66] Like Rosemund Tuve, my focus is, quite frequently, "what was involved in reading allegorically to certain writers at a given time, and for reasons we can trace," Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 33.

[67] W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" (1921) in *W.B. Yeats: The Poems*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 187. The "widening gyre" seems to me to be anticipated in what Patricia Parker calls the "characteristic 'dilation'" of Spenser's form. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 54. In addition, see *The Faerie Queene*, Book Three: "After that they againe returned beene, / They in that Gardin planted be againe; / And grow afresh, as they had never seene / Fleshly corruption, nor mortall paine. / Some thousand yeares so doen they there remaine; / And then of him are clad with other hew, / Or sent into the chaungefull world againe, / Till thither they returne, where first they grew: / So like a wheele around they runne from old to new" (vi.33). The thousand year cycles in the Garden of Adonis described in this stanza sound rather gyratory in nature and seem to be predecessor to Yeats's theory which also includes the notion that at the widest point of one historical gyre, another gyre was beginning at its most narrow point, so that one gyre gains in intensity while another lessens in intensity.

similarly touched upon, but occurring with increasingly higher increments of intensity with each turn.

This idea clarifies much of Revelation 6-16. Interpreting Revelation in terms which, as I shall demonstrate, are quite relevant to Spenser's structuring of *The Faerie Queene*, Luther, in his 1545 Preface to Revelation, writes:

> In chapters ix and x the real misery begins, for these earlier bodily and spiritual tribulations are almost a jest compared with the plagues that are to come. At the end of chapter viii, the angel himself announces that three woes are to come, and these woes are to be inflicted by the other three angels—the fifth, sixth, and seventh—and then the world is to end. Here both kinds of persecution, the bodily and the spiritual come together, and there are to be three of them—the first great, the second greater, the third the greatest of all.[68]

In 1573, in his commentary on Revelation, William Fulke also highlights the intensification of events in the central chapters:

> In the opening of the sixte seale, there was given power to death to sley the fourth part of men, with sword, with famine, with pestilence, and with wilde Beastes: But here at the sowndinge of the Trumpettes, it is foreshewed that the thirde part shalbe afflicted. And there is signified onelye the dearthe of victuals, as that Chenix of wheate shoulde be sould for a peny, but here is described a mervailouse gret scarcitie, when as everie greene herbe is burnt up. Whereby it is gathered that these calamities should be greater than those, for the third part is greater then the fourth parte, and the scarcitie of victuals is more grievouse than the dearnes of

[68] Martin Luther, *Preface to the Revelation of Saint John (I)* (1545), in *Works of Martin Luther,* v. 6, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 482-83.

the same.[69]

Later, in regard to Revelation 16:17, which shows the pouring out of the seventh vial, Fulke adds, "This last plague seemeth the most grievouse of all, bycause the other toucheth a parte onely, but this striketh the whole body of Antichrist with extreme destruction."[70] As such readers point out, from the seals to the trumpets to the vials (and in the woes between them) similar events are repeated but with greater intensity each time around.

For example, the seventh vial enacts similar events to the previous seventh trumpet and to the seventh seal before that, but to a much-intensified degree. Subsequent to the seventh *seal* being opened, "there were voyces, and thundrings, and lightenings, and earthquake" (Rev 8:5). After the seventh *trumpet* is blown, the events have the added intensity of hail: "there were lightnings, and voyces, and thõdrings, and earthquake, and muche haile" (Rev 11:19). At the pouring out of the seventh *vial*, however, the events are similar but clearly of more conclusive magnitude: "And there were voyces, and thundrings, and lightnings, & there was a great earthquake, suche as was not since men were upon the earth, even so mightie an earthquake. . . . And there fell a great haile . . . out of heaven upon the men, and men blasphemed God, because of the plague of the haile: for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Rev 16:18, 21).

The use of intensification or augmentation in this passage was frequently highlighted by sixteenth-century exegetes. In his 1574 exposition on Revelation, Augustine Marlorate writes:

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[69] William Fulke, *Praelections upon the sacred and holy Revelation of Saint John* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), 52-3. *Early English Books Online*. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed August 2006).
[70] Ibid., 108-09.

> The reprobates are ever in daunger of Gods vengeance, bycause his wrath cannot be eschued but by faythe in Jesu Chryste. . . . And therefore the stroake of the hayle is sayde too bee greate and there is joyned with it, Exceeding. John useth a wonderous augmentation in words. For firste he saide the hayle was great: next he saide it was as it had bin Talents: then addedth he that it fell upon men out of heaven. Afterwarde he tearmeth it a plague and a greate stroake: and at the last hee augmenteth great with exceeding. All which is done to shew that thing to be most true, which the Apostle saith in these words. It is a dreadfull thing to fall into the hands of the lyving God. Hebr. 10.f.31.[71]

Similarly, Fulke, whose commentary on Revelation was published in London one year prior to that of Marlorate, observes the intensification of the series of events to the highest culmination. On Revelation 16:18, which describes the thunder, lightning, and most violent earthquake known to man, Fulke explains, "[T]hose turmoles of the ayre, and chiefly the earthquake so wonderfull, doe foreshow the most grevouse and great chaunges in the worlde, of which as we see the beginninges, so verely the end will be tragicall and horrible."[72] James Brocarde, in his 1582 *The Revelation of S. Jhon Reveled*, also observes the intensification building to the greatest degree:

> When all those thynges [lightning, thunder, and hail] which are spoken of in this chapter, and before come to passe, there shall ryse such a greate hurly burly, murder, dashying of armies together, clashyng of weapons, destruction of men,

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[71] Marlorate, 236-37. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 2006). I have borrowed Marlorate's phrase, "wonderous augmentation in words," of course, for my chapter title, because of the centrality of the concept to Spenserian poetics. As chapter two will explain, modern scholars such as Joanne Craig have noted that Spenser often revises his work by augmentation, adding latter parts of a work which ostensibly serve to correct or amend what came before, but without eliminating the previous parts (revision by augmentation rather than substitution). See Craig, "'Double Nature: Augmentation in Spenser's Poetry," *English Studies in Canada* IX.4 (December 1983).

[72] Fulke, 109. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 2006).

> overthrowing of buildings, spoyle of Countries, that the lyke (as both Chryst and Danyell sayth) was never seene before.[73]

Such observations thus anticipate those of modern Revelation scholars Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Gerhard A. Krodel, and Eugene M. Boring, who as Gilbert Desrosiers explains, "see this recapitulative aspect of Revelation as being progressive, like an upward conical spiral" in which "Things are being revisited while being simultaneously intensified."[74] Such an "upward conical spiral" is consonant with Spenser's uses of Revelation in *The Faerie Queene*. In general, the events of Revelation 6-16 are read by Spenser and a number of his contemporaries this way, indicating that history is a spiral of figures and events building toward the absolute final judgment of God against evil and completion of the cycle.

Even as late as 1596, George Gifford continues this practice of foregrounding recapitulation and intensification in Revelation. In his *Sermons Upon the Whole Book of the Revelation*, Gifford observes, "For the plagues which come at the sounding of these [last] three trumpets are exceeding great, yea the greatest of all other."[75] Furthermore, he adds:

> And then [in Revelation chapter 11] commeth the third woe of the three which the Angell proclaimed, which is the last and the greatest, even the everlasting woe, which beginneth with great terror, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which is the last. And thus have wee the whole matter of

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[73] Iacopo Brocardo [James Brocarde], *The Revelation of S. Ihon Reveled*, trans Iames Sanford (London: Thomas Marshe, 1582), 140-41. *Early English Books Online.* http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed March 2007).
[74] Desrosiers, 59.
[75] George Gifford, *Sermons Upon the Whole Book of the Revelation* (London: Thomas Man and Toby Cooke, 1596), "To the Reader." *EarlyEnglish Books Online* (accessed March 2007).

> the revelation layde open in the opening of the seven seales. All matters, as ye may see, are opened, but briefely and darkely.[76]

Thus, Gifford, in addition to highlighting Revelation's technique of building intensity, notes an important quality of the structure of Revelation as a whole: the first narrative series, which includes the opening of the seven seals, "lays open" or outlines "the whole matter of the revelation."

The rhetoric of intensification observed in Revelation also lends itself quite readily to the Protestant hermeneutic practice of reading typologically, particularly, reading the events of Old Testament history typologically. Erich Auerbach explains such "figural thinking":

> [T]he Judaeo-Christian method of interpretation, consistently applied to the Old Testament by Paul and the Church Fathers, conceives of Adam as a figure of Christ, of Eve as a figure of the Church, just as generally speaking every event and every phenomenon referred to in the Old Testament is conceived as a figure which only the phenomena and events of Christ's Incarnation can completely realize or 'fulfill'.[77]

This idea should recall the passage by William Fulke with which the Introduction to this book opens. The cycles of history are building toward the highest perfection of everything: earthly Jerusalem will become New Jerusalem, and even the tree of knowledge in the garden will become the eternal tree whose fruit springs forth from Christ.

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 170. For further study on Protestant figuralism and typology, see Thomas H. Luxon's *Literal Figures: Puritan Allegory and the Reformation Crisis in Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Spenser's poetic vision for *The Faerie Queene* involves a similar apocalyptic paradigm, especially in regard to battling evil. While Kaske claims that Spenser's use of Psalms is pervasive, whereas his use of Revelation is localized,"[78] I would argue that the rhetorical strategies of recapitulation and intensification used throughout *The Faerie Queene* derive, to a considerable degree, from the Book of Revelation. Though a number of scholars[79] have examined Spenser's use of repetition in *The Faerie Queene*, none have explored the incremental refrain based on alternating intensification and diminution derived from Revelation and from Reformist readings of Revelation. Kaske comes closest to my argument when she briefly points to "good-better-best, bad-worse-worst" as two of several "ways of distinguishing that are both exegetical and useful for Spenser."[80] These strategies of intensification in Book One and throughout the poem[81] are worthy of greater examination.

Just as the first narrative series of Revelation outlines the whole book, as George Gifford observes above, the progression of Book One reveals the fundamental pattern for the whole. After the defeat of Error and her spawn, note the brief calm in stanzas 27 and 28 before a spiral of evil schemes takes its point of origin. When the events regarding Redcrosse's defeat of Error and her offspring end, Redcrosse and Una soon meet

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[78] Kaske, 13.

[79] In *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, Carol Kaske examines the ways in which "Spenser imitates the variation of repeated imagery revealed in the Bible by the medieval method of tracing a repeated image known as 'distinguishing' *in bono et in malo*, in a good sense and a bad" (3). Kaske, on page 19f, points out the studies of Northrop Frye, A.C. Hamilton, James Nohrnberg, Stephen Barney, and John Hollander on repeated images in *The Faerie Queene*. However, my study differs from that of Kaske and others because of my focus on the particular strategies of incrementum, amplification, or augmentation in the repetition.

[80] Kaske, 24.

[81] The concept of intensification which permeates *The Faerie Queene* as a whole is nicely figured in one stanza of Book IV, which describes the servants of Care, the blacksmith: "In which his worke he had sixe servants prest, / About the Andvile standing evermore, / With huge great hammers, that did never rest / From heaping stroakes, which thereon soused sore: / All sixe strong groomes, but one then other more; / For by degrees they all were disagreed; / So likewise did the hammers which they bore, / Like belles in greatnesse orderly succeed, / That he which was the last, the first did farre exceede" (v.36).

Archimago, and this meeting propels the action into a series of encounters with the evil conspiracies of Archimago and Duessa, encounters which become progressively more intense. Though we do not see these two deceivers working hand-in-hand until the incident with the false letter at the end of Book One, we get the strong sense that they have been partners in plotting all along.

As we have seen, the number seven is highly significant in Revelation,[82] so it seems fitting that the encounters with Archimago and Duessa in Book One are structured in a series of seven evil schemes, which grow in intensity as the narrative progresses. The first three schemes involve being deceived into believing false identity. Scheme one is the force that starts the whole series of encounters turning. In a scene that is reminiscent of the locusts rising from the pit in Revelation 9:1-10, Archimago calls legions of evil spirits up from the underworld and chooses two spirits to carry out his plan to deceive Redcrosse into thinking Una is sexually impure. Though the first two deceptive illusions fail to completely undo Redcrosse, the third time is the charm, and believing Una to be unfaithful to him, Redcrosse leaves her behind. Significantly, the Church of Ephesus, the first of the seven churches which receive letters from Christ via St. John, is told, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev 2:4).[83] Though the poem's plot has been initiated by the quest given to Redcrosse by Gloriana, the departure of Redcrosse from Una is the event that sends Book One's universe of conflict with evil deception into motion.

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[82] For extensive studies of Spenser's numerology, see Alastair Fowler *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964) and A. Kent Hieatt *Short Time's Endless Monument: The symbolism of the numbers in Edmund Spenser's* Epithalamion (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

[83] I believe it is possible that Spenser designed the events of Redcrosse's journey to occur, roughly, in a parallel with the order of content expressed to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, but the parallels are less explicit than others.

Once Redcrosse and Una are separated, the second evil scheme comes from Duessa, who (unlike Una) actually *is* sexually impure, to put it mildly. Though he has defeated Error, Redcrosse will continue to make devastating errors, here in believing the exact opposite of what is true: that Una is impure and Duessa, who calls herself Fidessa, is pure. In the relatively short span of stanzas 12-45 of Canto Two, we see three men Duessa has deceived: Sans foy, Fradubio, and Redcrosse. Perhaps Archimago has recruited Duessa to help work out his schemes by simply acting out her own lustful desires, as Satan in the Book of Revelation recruits the kings of the earth to act out their own lust for power but ultimately to serve Satan's design. When Redcrosse comes upon Duessa, she is engaged in flirtation with Sans Foy, but immediately starts a fight between Sans Foy and Redcrosse. Falling victim to this second evil scheme, Redcrosse battles and defeats Sans Foy, winning the unfortunate prize of Duessa whom he mistakenly believes to be worth winning. Thus, by nature of the gyratory apocalyptic structure, this second scheme is more intense than the first, in the sense that this scheme puts Redcrosse in mortal danger as well as causing him to be guilty of the very thing he has wrongly believed of Una. The first scheme had put him in spiritual distress, but did not bring physical danger. Furthermore, the first scheme led him to the sin of doubt and erroneous belief, but the second scheme led him to the sin of lusting after someone besides his first love, which is one step higher on the progression.

Evil scheme three actually begins when we see Archimago disguise himself as Redcrosse in Canto Two, but the scheme is not enacted until Canto Three. Again, the number seven can be found in the underlying narrative structure: between the time when Redcrosse and Una are separated in the early part of Canto Two and the time they are

reunited in Canto Seven, there are seven narrative shifts back and forth between action involving Redcrosse and action involving Una. In this third evil scheme, Archimago, disguised as Redcrosse, comes to Una. Perhaps because she has been so frantically searching for her hero, she quickly believes that this is he. As they ride, Sans Loy sees Archimago and of course, because of the disguise, thinks he is Redcrosse. Therefore, seeking to avenge his brother's death at the hands of Redcrosse, Sans Loy attacks and defeats Archimago. At this point, Una discovers the disguise and realizes she is still separated from her love. It is also worth noting here that, although Sans Loy defeats Archimago, he does not kill him. As in Revelation, evil in *The Faerie Queene* is quite frequently stopped, but inconclusively stopped, thus allowing it to rear up again later in the narrative.

After the first three schemes involving the believing of false identity, scheme four takes us back to Redcrosse, who has been led into the House of Pride by the scheming Duessa. Sans Joy arrives on the scene in quite a rage because of his brother Sans Foy's recent demise. Seeing the shield of his slain brother in the possession of Redcrosse, Sans Joy immediately wants to fight. Lucifera, Queen of the House of Pride, convinces them to delay the battle until the next day. The night before the battle takes place, Duessa secretly goes to Sans Joy, pledges her fidelity to him, accuses Redcrosse of taking her and keeping her against her will, asks Sans Joy to avenge Sans Foy's death, and tells him that Redcrosse has a charmed shield and enchanted arms (I.iv.44-50).

As in reading Revelation Chapters 6-16, Spenser's audience conditioned to read concordantially would have noticed repetition or recapitulation here when Redcrosse fights a battle in many ways similar to that with Sans Foy. Sans Joy bears more

similarities to his brother than just the almost identical name. Both are described as daunting in their armor: Sans Foy described as "A faithlesse Sarazin all arm'd to point" (I.ii.12), and Sans Joy described as "the cruel Sarazin, / In woven maile all armed warily" (v.4). Both have an attitude of animosity and defiance: Sans Foy "cared not for God or man a point" (ii.12), and Sans Joy "not a pin / Does care for looke of living creatures eye" (v.4). In many ways, readers may almost think Redcrosse is fighting the same enemy again in slightly different form and setting. Again, the comments of Napier and Bale on Revelation are pertinent: Spenser's readers, applying similar techniques to these passages, would use one fight as a commentary upon the other, to remember or to reexamine the previous fight, and to mark the similarities between the persistent enemies. Aside from the similarities in appearance and demeanor, both fights are depicted as extremely bloody and hard fought between well-matched foes.

However, in terms of rhetorical amplification, this latter battle is more intense. As Fulke and Marlorate noted of Chapters 6-16 of Revelation, the event in Spenser's subsequent series is given additional content. Protestant habits of formulating a mental concordance would have made them more likely to note (or at least sense) that while the battle with Sans Foy had taken six stanzas to describe, the battle with Sans Joy takes just over double that number: thirteen stanzas. While the fight with Sans Foy had been for self-defense and for winning Duessa, the fight with Sans Joy was for those things, but also for more of a public pride, which is fitting, for it takes place at the House of Pride, in a public arena such as that of a jousting match. Thus, the battle here is more intense because of the greater pomp and circumstance surrounding it, and the higher stakes in terms of glory. Redcrosse ends up winning the fight by default when Sans Joy disappears

just as Redcrosse is about to deal the death blow. Subsequently, Duessa continues her scheming by taking the body of Sans Joy to the underworld for healing and by calling on Night to avenge the Sans Brothers.

For the fifth evil scheme, Archimago is back in action, again working his wiles of deception. While Redcrosse has been busy fighting for prizes of dubious worth, Una meanwhile has met Satyrane who travels with her as she searches for Redcrosse. The two meet Archimago who, disguised as a poor and weary traveler, tells Una that Redcrosse has been killed in a battle with Sans Loy. Archimago's lie is interesting here because, ironically, Sans Loy is the only one of the three brothers that Redcrosse never *actually* fights, yet Archimago's fabricated description of the battle between them sounds very similar to the actual battles with Sans Joy and Sans Foy.

The story certainly convinces Una, and her reaction demonstrates why this point in the spiral is more intense than the previous deceptions of Archimago:

> That cruell word her tender hart so thrild,
> That suddein cold did runne through every vaine,
> And stony horrour all her sences fild
> With dying fit, that downe she fell for paine. (I.vi.37)

This lie is definitely harsher than Archimago's tricking of Redcrosse in Canto One. Redcrosse has been tricked into thinking Una is *unfaithful*; Una here is tricked into thinking Redcrosse is *dead*. This is also crueler even than Archimago's raising Una's hope by disguising himself as Redcrosse in Canto Three. With this latest lie, Archimago has deprived her of hope.

Notice that in Revelation 21:8, liars are included in the list of those bound for hell: "the feareful and unbelieving, and the abominable and murderers, & whore-mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, & all liars shal have their parte in the lake, which burneth with fyre and brimstone. . . ." Seeing them in the midst of such a list of evildoers, today's readers may think that liars seem out of place. However, sixteenth-century Reformists such as John Bale explain that in the context of Revelation, truth is of utmost importance, especially in regard to Christ's resurrection. In his commentary on this verse, Bale explains that these liars include those who schemed to convince others that Christ remained dead: "so were the bishops and priests that waged the soldiers after Christ's resurrection, to say that his disciples had stolen him away by night."[84] Therefore, given the fact that Archimago is most ruthlessly lying to Una, who represents Truth itself or the True Church, and that he is telling her that her true love is dead, we begin to understand why this particular scheme can be viewed as the most intense thus far. When a battle ensues between Satyrane and Sans loy, Una flees, followed by Archimago. The lines "He left his stond, and her pursewd apace, / In hope to bring her to her last decay" (I.vi.48) also reveal the heightened maliciousness of Archimago's intentions at this point, and his desire to amplify her downfall to the greatest degree: her *last* decay.

In Canto Seven, the cycle of evil conspiracy continues to widen, for Redcrosse also meets his greatest confrontations with sin and malevolence thus far in the poem. While Duessa has been traveling to the underworld, Redcrosse has left the House of Pride, and we now find him resting in a grassy spot by a fountain. Again demonstrating an apocalyptic persistence of evil, Duessa seeks and finds him, and begins to enact evil

[84] Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (1548) in *Selected Works of John Bale,* Parker Society (1849),593.

scheme six. Notably, Duessa also fits into the list of hell-bound evildoers just mentioned, in more ways than one, for she is whore, sorceress, and liar. The fact that the narrator refers to Duessa as "The Witch" is significant because although the narrator's language is much more straightforward here about Duessa's true nature, Redcrosse has yet to catch on (unlike the Protestant readership who probably by this point has already filed Duessa as a type in their concordance). The only other time that Duessa is referred to as a witch is much earlier by Fradubio (I.ii.38), who also calls her "a false sorceresse" (34) and a "divelish hag" (42). Readers trained in the Reformed manner would have had greater chance of noticing the "hook-word" (to borrow Kaske's term)[85] of "witch," and would now make the connection in their mental index. Once again, Spenser would have expected his readers to see a form of apocalyptic recapitulation here because we should recall that Duessa had imprisoned Fradubio in the form of a tree (30-45), and now she apparently wants to turn Redcrosse into another sort of Fradubio, but this time literally imprisoned in a dungeon rather than in a tree. Redcrosse, however, has been so taken into the erroneous belief that she is Fidessa that he fails, here, as in Canto Two, to see that Fradubio's story is his own.

To this point, Redcrosse has won all three of the physical battles he has faced, but makes the serious error of failing to realize the greater importance of the spiritual battles, and their eventual, ultimate interconnectedness with physical battles. Finding Redcrosse resting totally disarmed, at the beginning of Canto Seven, Duessa sets him up for his first loss of a physical battle. Again, this scene brings the most intense confrontation, both spiritually and physically, thus far for Redcrosse. Finding him weak not only from lack of armor but also from drinking from the enchanted fountain, Duessa seduces Redcrosse

[85] Kaske, 20f.

into sex in the grass. This is his most serious spiritual offense yet, for while Archimago's initial scheme has caused Redcrosse to lust for Una, and the next scheme has caused him to lust for Duessa, this one causes him to act on lust with Duessa.

While he is in this act of committing his worst spiritual offense (which has led to the interconnected physical sexual sin), Redcrosse hears the dreadful bellow of his most daunting physical foe, thus far, approaching. Again, we see the sort of magnification that Reformist exegetes notice in the series of Revelation: though each of the three Sans Brothers was a formidable physical specimen, Orgoglio's "stature did exceed / The hight of three the tallest sonnes of mortall seed" (I.vii.8). Too weak to fight this giant, Redcrosse manages for a short time just to dodge the blows, "Yet so *exceeding* was the villains power, / That with the wind it did him overthrow, / And all his sences stound, that still he lay full low" (vii.12, italics mine). The term "exceeding" here calls to mind not only John's description of the greatest plague of hail in the third series of Revelation 6-16, but also Marlorate's comment that by adding "exceeding" to the term "greate," John has used "a wondrous augmentation in words" to capture the intensified dreadfullness. The description of Redcrosse having his senses overwhelmed and being knocked to the ground by Orgoglio is very similar to the description of Una's reaction to Archimago's latest lie that Redcrosse is dead, both descriptions revealing the amplified power of evil in these final schemes of the spiral. While the hero is down, Orgoglio is then about to pulverize him, but Duessa convinces him to imprison him instead. Once again, as in Revelation, evil works in tandem with evil to accomplish its ends. Later, Duessa even tries to help Orgoglio fight against Arthur (I.viii.12-20), but her plan fails.

Like the battle against Christ at Armageddon (Rev 19:19-21), the battle of Orgoglio and Duessa versus Arthur and his squire really is not much of a battle. Granted, the evil powers of Orgoglio and Duessa are greater than any hitherto in the poem. Their wicked force is also described in terms similar to the recent powers that have knocked Redcrosse and Una to the ground and overwhelmed their senses: Duessa's charms against Arthur's squire have the effect that "all his senses were with suddeine dread dismayd / So downe he fell before the cruell beast" (I.viii.14-15), and Orgoglio lands a blow against Arthur that "upon his shield so heavie lites, / That to the ground it doubleth him full low" (18). Despite this overwhelming evil that has stunned the senses of and knocked down Redcrosse, Una, and the squire, and has knocked down even Arthur, Orgoglio is no match for the holiness of Arthur, represented by his brilliant shield that deflected the mighty blow. Though he does fall to the ground, Arthur has not been wounded even once in this battle, and he quickly renders Orgoglio a lifeless, empty bag devoid of the hot air that had propelled him. Arthur wins, Redcrosse is released, and he and Una are reunited.

Still, there is a seventh evil scheme to be confronted. As in Revelation, there are many moments when justice seems to have been served and evil seems to have been crushed definitively, yet it soon rises again for another round. John sometimes records misleading statements that cause us to think that the time for consummate justice and total victory of good has arrived. For example, after the sixth seal is opened, the inhabitants of earth ask, "For the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand?" (Rev 6:17), a question which could also be asked by the powers of evil in *The Faerie*

Queene after Arthur powerfully defeats Orgoglio. Similarly, after the seventh trumpet is blown in Revelation, the saints in heaven proclaim:

> [F]or thou hast received thy great might, and hast obteined thy kingdome. And the Gentiles were angrie, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they shulde be judged, and that thou shuldest give rewarde unto thy servants the Prophetes, and to the Saintes, and to them that fear thy Name, to smale, and great, and shuldest destroye them, which destroye the earth. (Rev 11:17-18)

This passage, which speaks of Christ rewarding the saints and punishing the wicked, could also apply to Arthur at this point in the poem, in his fighting for Redcrosse and utterly destroying Orgoglio who, incidentally, does "destroye the earth" by pounding it as he fights. These statements presented here, which occur fairly early in the narrative progression of Revelation, are only a few of the many such proclamations that sound conclusive. Yet after each of them, as in *The Faerie Queene*, evil continues to demand attention. As we have noted, the judgments of God against evil do generally get progressively more intense as Revelation progresses, but there is also a persistent tendency of delay and inconclusiveness.

Perhaps to a greater degree than Revelation itself, Spenser foregrounds this tendency throughout *The Faerie Queene*, highlighting the deferral of resolution. In Book One, this tendency relates most prominently to the seventh evil scheme of Archimago and Duessa. In Revelation, immediately following the most intense series of plagues, the vials, the text shifts to address the Whore of Babylon: "Then there came one of the sevé Angels, which had the seven viales, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come: I wil shewe thee the dánacion of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters, With whome

have committed fornication the Kings of the earth" (Rev 17:1-2). Chapters 17:1-19:2 describe the judgment against the great Whore and Babylon her city, and the saints rejoice at their destruction. Afterward, there is rejoicing that the time of the marriage of Christ and his church has come, and there is the battle of Armageddon, which as mentioned, is only a battle in name. However, even after this battle in which the antichrist and the false prophet are thrown into a lake of fire, Satan is not destroyed, but is bound for one thousand years then released again to deceive people (Rev 20: 1-3, 7-9). Finally, after Satan has deceived more people into trying to mount another battle against God, these people are destroyed and Satan is cast into the same lake of fire as his two major cohorts "for evermore" (Rev 20: 9-10). Then, there is discussion of the final judgment of all humanity in which some are cast into the lake of fire, and some enter the New Jerusalem.

As they follow the progression of the Book of Revelation, readers may begin to grow weary with the resiliency of evil that requires fighting again and again and causes the narrative to loop in the spiraling motion noted by Reformers, and this is the tendency that relates to Archimago and Duessa at the end of Book One, and beyond. After Redcrosse and Una are reunited in Canto Eight, Redcrosse must undergo a process of spiritual purification and learning, so that he can complete his quest and defeat the dragon that has possessed Una's homeland. In Canto Eleven, he slays the dragon in his most intense physical battle of all, and in Canto Twelve, readers see jubilation in this homeland that parallels that of the saints in Revelation when they proclaim that the time of victory has come. Una's father in the spirit of freedom from the foe, "bad[e] to open wyde his brazen gate, / Which long time had bene shut" (I.xii.3), which is clearly an allusion to the

end of Revelation, when all evil has been defeated and John observes of the New Jerusalem that "the gates of it shal not be shut by day: for there shalbe no night there" (Rev 21:25). However, readers soon find that Una's father has acted prematurely, an action of the sort referred to by Lauren Silberman as foreclosure, a premature attempt at closure which actually ends up precluding definitive closure.

The events of Revelation Chapters 19 and 20 parallel those of *Faerie Queene* I.xii, in which Spenser again shows the delay of final containment of evil in the form of scheme seven from Archimago and Duessa. In Revelation Chapter 19, the Whore of Babylon has been condemned and the smoke from her burning flesh is said to rise up "for evermore" (19:2-3). Then, the saints rejoice and proclaim, "Let us be glad and reioyce, and give glorie to him: for the mariage of the Lābe is come, and his wife hathe made her self readie" (Rev 19:7). In the final canto of *Faerie Queene* Book One, evil, at least it is thought, has been defeated and the dragon lies dead in public view in Una's homeland. However, just as in Revelation, though the Whore of Babylon has been destroyed and the antichrist and the false prophet cast into a lake of fire, Satan has been bound temporarily, but not yet permanently defeated. Similarly, when Arthur has defeated Orgoglio, there is an opportunity to permanently do away with Duessa, but she is only shamed and then allowed to go free (I.viii.45-50), like Satan chained for a time then released.

As in Revelation, just at the moment when the bride appears in shining brilliant white (19:7-8), and the time is come for the marriage, there is an interruption and evil must be confronted again. In the *Faerie Queene*, the wedding of Redcrosse and Una (who has major similarities to the bride of Revelation 19) is interrupted by the seventh scheme of Archimago and Duessa. In the midst of the ceremony, Archimago disguised

as a messenger rushes in with a letter from "Fidessa" accusing Redcrosse of already being pledged to marry her. However, this scheme is quickly unraveled because of Redcrosse's newfound spiritual maturity in recognizing the true nature of Fidessa as Duessa, and because of Una's perceptive explanation that this ploy is coming from none other than Duessa in concert with Archimago, whom she recognizes as the messenger. Now, Una's father commands Archimago to be chained and imprisoned, and the wedding continues. In terms of the "widening gyre," this last ditch scheme is intense, but since it is unsuccessful, perhaps this implies that the machinations of Archimago and Duessa are beginning to lose steam. This could account for the reverse cycle of rising good that begins in Book Two with Guyon, who from the start shows a spiritual fortitude which Redcrosse Knight lacked in the opening of Book One, and had to reach through his journey toward slaying the dragon.

Interestingly, Archimago, like Satan, does get off of the chain once more to show up again from the very first line of Book Two, for a few more schemes beyond Book One. After exiting his captivity in Una's homeland, Archimago immediately seeks to create animosity toward Redcrosse, by trying to convince Guyon that Redcrosse had raped "Fidessa" and thus to cause Guyon to attack Redcrosse. This scheme bears another striking similarity to Satan's efforts, even after Armageddon and his imprisonment, to wage one last battle against Christ. In "The Epistle Dedicatorie" to Marlorate's *A Catholike exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John,* Henry Binneman warns in 1574 that "[T]he divell perceyving his kingdome uppon earth to drawe apace too utter ruine, laboureth the more earnestly to worke all the spight and mischief he can to Christ and his members" and that in "these latter days . . . the fury of Antichryst shoulde rage farre

extremelyer than ever it had done since the first creation of things."[86] Likewise, the character of Christian, in William Perkins's 1587 *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world*, claims, "[B]ecause these are the last times, and Satan seeth, that he hath but a short time to continue, therefore he bestirreth himselfe, his desire is to bring confusions, and to make havocke of all: it is a death to him to see Gods kingdome to be advanced."[87] Archimago, like Satan, sees that his propulsion of the spiral has reached its widest possible point, and that his enemy is gaining momentum to spin a cycle of good into action, so he desperately tries to regain power:

> And now exceeding griefe him overcame,
> To see the *Redcrosse* thus advanced hye;
> Therefore this craftie engine he did frame,
> Against his praise to stirre up enmitye
> Of such, as vertues like mote unto him allye. (II.i.23)

Of course, Duessa, his conniving partner, is also present in this scene, for Archimago has, as we suspected earlier, recruited her for his ends (22). However, like the seventh scheme at the end of Book One, this one also quickly fails and Archimago flees. So again, we are tempted to believe that we have seen the last of this deceiver, but he does continue a few of his old tricks in Books Two and Three. However, any problems that he causes Redcrosse in these sections are quite minimal compared to the building intensity

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[86] Marlorate, *A Catholike exposition*, "The Epistle Dedicatorie" by Henry Binneman, iiif. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 2006).
[87] William Perkins, *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world, betweene a Christian and a Worldling* (1587), in *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins, the third and last volume* (London: John Haviland for James Boler, 1631), 475. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

of his works in Book One, the main structure of which is built on the incremental refrain of increasingly successful schemes of Archimago and Duessa.

When Spenser contemplated time (past, present, and future), he did so through an apocalyptic aesthetic that anticipated the widening gyres of Yeats. Thus, when in *The Faerie Queene* readers see one evil force's intensification of power coming to an end, as it begins to do for Archimago at the close of Book One, they soon learn not to breathe a sigh of relief, but to instead ask, as Yeats does, "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" This pattern is continued throughout the poem, even to Books Five and Six in which the Blatant Beast rises to his hour, wrecks havoc, is captured and chained, but finally, at the end of Book Six, escapes to enact further evil. Like Revelation, *The Faerie Queene* is driven by the mystery of the deferral of ultimate justice. Barbara Lewalski, in associating the structure of George Herbert's *Temple* with Revelation and the apocalyptic genre, claims that Herbert alludes to the "circular and distressing" though "providential course . . . of earthly history."[88] *The Faerie Queene* is also often distressing, seeming "tedious and confused" in its complex type of circularity in which the evil that intensifies at intervals, as in Revelation, could be abolished at various points along the way, but is instead allowed its hour. As the poem progresses beyond Book One, it works upon readers in the manner of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which leads them to question the ways of God, in order to ultimately justify these mysterious ways.

In Book One, Canto Ten, Spenser makes a nod to the theodicy of Apocalypse. Fidelia, the female character whose teaching perfects the knowledge of Redcrosse, is

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[88] Barbara K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 305.

described as holding fast in one of her hands "A booke, that was both signd and seald with blood, / Wherein darke things were writ, hard to be understood" (I.x.13). Spenser seems to be hinting that the difficulty of attempting to understand Revelation and his own poem will make the end result of effort all the more rewarding. Redcrosse *must* go through the strenuous process of reaching the highest possible understanding of the things in Fidelia's book before he can complete his quest. For Spenser's readers, part of this process was the challenge of collating new characters and events with previous ones in the text, and recognizing the "wondrous augmentation" that drives the narrative, both of which were actions performed by those whom Spenser would have considered the most discerning readers of Revelation in his time.

Chapter Two – "The Ende and Vanishing Tyme": *The Faerie Queene*, Complaints of Love's Martyrs, and the Purpose of Apocalyptic Delay

"[A]s in the middle, and flourishing state of the world, God caried Elias by a firy chariot into heaven, so in the ende and vanishing tyme thereof, he will exalt us with him selfe into the celestiall habitation, of which no doubt Elias was a figure constituted of God" – Sheltco à Geveren, *Of the End of this World and second coming of Christ, a comfortable and necessary Discourse, for these miserable and daungerous dayes* (1577), 6.

During the 1580s and 1590s, as Spenser worked on his greatest poem, Jan Van der Noot's *A Theatre for Worldlings* was still very much at the forefront of his creative inspirations. In fact, as Spenser composed *The Faerie Queene*, he was simultaneously revising sections of *A Theatre* for publication with his own works in his 1591 *Complaints.* This work, fully titled *Complaints Containing Sundrie Small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie*, and Van der Noot's earlier collection on the same theme, bear notable significance for the study of Spenser's apocalyptic poetics.

Van der Noot's *A Theatre*, first published in English translation by Spenser in 1569, consists of six poems by Petrarch, eleven poems by Du Bellay, and four poems based on Apocalypse by Van der Noot himself. Each of the poems by Petrarch, inspired by the death of his beloved, unattainable Laura, begins with the sight of something beautiful on earth and ends with the sudden fall of that thing: a hind that falls to the ground and dies after being chased by hounds; a treasure-laden ship that sinks upon being caught in a sudden storm; a bird-filled laurel tree worthy of Paradise that is struck by sudden lightning and utterly rent; a gentle waterfall surrounded by singing Muses and Nymphs with the whole scene suddenly swallowed by the gaping earth; a beautiful bird which smites himself to death with his beak upon seeing the destroyed tree and the dried waterfall; and a fair lady walking through a garden who is bitten on the heel by a serpent and dies. The poems which Van der Noot includes by Du Bellay, based on the theme of

the fall of Rome,[89] are equally jarring, containing, to cite a few: a shiny building utterly thrown down by an earthquake; a stately spire which is the tomb of an emperor struck down by a sudden tempest; a triumphal arch that suddenly falls and is broken to dust; a fair tree uprooted by villains; a sweet smelling fire that perfumed the air turned to a sulphur-laden flame; and a great warrior queen struck down with clap of thunder. Van der Noot closes his collection with the four apocalyptic poems of his own, depicting a seven-headed beast rising from the sea; the Whore of Babylon who has delighted in the blood of martyrs but whose kingdom is fallen; the glorified Christ with flaming countenance riding a white horse and defeating the armies who attack him; and the New Jerusalem in which the sea is no more, which "from hye / Descendeth garnisht as a loved spouse,"[90] and where life's fruit grows unto the Church's good.

In his prose commentary to *A Theatre*, Van der Noot outlines his purpose, which is twofold: "to shewe how vaine, transitory, deceitfull, unprofitable, and uncertain worldly things be, and that heavenly things only are everlasting, immortal, excellent, good, and most to be desired."[91] Thus, the poems by Petrarch and Du Bellay are used by Van der Noot to lead readers to lament the vanity of all earthly things. Then, ending the collection with the apocalyptic sonnets, Van der Noot addresses his second purpose: to lead readers to crave the transcendence to heavenly things, in light of the mere illusions

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[89] As Millar MacLure argues, Rome is, for Spenser, "doubly a 'fallen city': a house of pride built upon the sands of time, opening to the compassionate and imaginative observer the melancholy vistas of mutability . . ." and "the Babylon of popish idolatry" which "falls each time the high heroic enterprise destroys the enemies of the Faerie Queene, on the battlefield or in the soul." See MacLure, "Spenser and the ruins of time," in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, eds. Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 8.

[90] In this chapter, all references and quotations from Jan Van der Noot are from *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1569), in Facsimilie edition (New York: Scholars' Facsimilies & Reprints, n.d.).

[91] Van der Noot, 3.

of stability that surround them in this present world, as seen in the exemplum from Petrarch and Du Bellay, presented prior to the final four sonnets.

Spenser's 1591 collection of poems entitled *Complaints* shares this purpose, accomplished in the opening series of poems called "The Ruines of Time," for example, by using a variation on the technique of Van der Noot's apocalyptic ending. "The Ruines" begins with a woman's complaint[92] upon the death of a loved one, recorded by the speaker. Subsequent to witnessing the woman's lament, the speaker experiences a series of twelve visions that he begins by stating, "Before mine eies strange sights presented were, / Like tragicke pageants seeming to appeare,"[93] thus echoing the visionary experience of the author of Revelation, and paralleling similar moves by Petrarch, whose lines open the first section of *A Theatre*: "Being one day at my window all alone, / So many strange things hapned me to see, / As much it grieveth me to thinke thereon," and Du Bellay, whose sonnet continues the next section:

Then did a ghost appeare before mine eyes

On that great rivers banke that runnes by Rome,

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[92] See Richard F. Hardin's "Convention and Design in Drayton's Heroicall Epistles," *PMLA* 83.1 (March 1968): 35. Here, Hardin notes the "popular Elizabethan convention of complaint poems, exemplified in Daniel's *Complaints of Rosamond* (1592) and Shakespeare's *Lucrece* (1594)" and adds that "These in turn owe their origin to the earlier complaints or 'tragedies' of the *Mirror for Magistrates*; but they are also influenced by Ovid's love-complaints in the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*." One may also find relevant women's complaints in the dramatic works of John Bale and in John Foxe's *Christus Triumphans* in which Ecclesia, who represents the Bride of Christ, laments her persecution. See also *Esdras*, an apocalyptic work included in *The Geneva Bible* available to Spenser, for a woman's complaint. In addition, there is William Lightfoot's 1587 *The Complaint of England*, a piece in which England herself speaks a first-person complaint on "the practices of Traitrous Papists against the state of [her] Realme, and the person of her Majestie [Elizabeth]," title page. England states, "How might I now expresse the moitie of grief that I then felt when my bosome was bedewed with the warm blood of guiltless martirs . . . . Thinke with your selves how I groned under the importable waight of so lamentable distresses: which if they did then craze my hart, they would now force it to breake in sunder." See Lightfoot, *The Complaint of England* (London: John Wolfe, 1587).

[93] Spenser, "The Ruines of Time" in *Complaints*. All references to Spenser's *Complaints* are from *Complaints Containing Sundrie Small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie* (London: William Ponsonby, 1591). *Early English Books Online*. http:///eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed February 2007).

And calling me then by my proper name,

He bade me upwarde unto heaven looke.[94]

The first six visions of Spenser's "Ruines" consist of five sonnets plus a sixth poem of twenty-eight lines. Notably, each of the six poems begins with the appearance of something of earthly glory and ends with the sudden falling of that glorious thing, much in the manner of the visions by Petrarch and Du Bellay included in *A Theatre*. As Malcolm C. Smith notes in his introduction to Du Bellay's 1558 *Antiquitez de Rome*, the poems in *Antiquitez* are antithetical: "Very commonly, individual sonnets project this antithesis, with Du Bellay conveying the grandeur of Rome in his quatrains and its decline in the tercets."[95]

The final six visions of "The Ruines," however, modify the pattern that had been inspired by Petrarch, Du Bellay, and Van der Noot. Each of the last six sonnets also begins with a depiction of something of earthly majesty, but ends, in the same poem, with a sudden transcending or moving heavenward,[96] rather than a falling. This transcendence is achieved by a tropological disappearing act in each poem: one moment the speaker sees the earthly object, the next it is gone to another world. In sonnet one, for example, a snowy swan sings his own death song in the first seven lines, then in the final seven lines, "With loftie flight above the earth he bounded, / And out of sight to highest heaven mounted: / Where now he is become an heavenly signe;" at which the speaker states, "There now the joy is his, here sorrow mine."[97] Sonnet two depicts a harp, made of gold

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[94] Van der Noot, *A Theatre*.
[95] Malcolm C. Smith, ed., Introduction, *Antiquitez de Rome* (1558) by Joachim du Bellay, trans. by Edmund Spenser as *Ruines of Rome* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1994), 9.
[96] MacLure explains that the second set of poems in "The Ruines" "celebrates the entrance into immortality of Sir Philip Sidney," 17.
[97] Spenser, "The Ruines of Time."

and ivory and strung with silver twine, floating in a river where it would surely be ruined. In the last seven lines, however, the harp is mysteriously taken from the river:

> And borne above the cloudes to be divin'd,
> Whilst all the way most heavenly noyse was heard
> Of the strings, stirred with the warbling wind,
> That wrought both joy and sorrow in my mind:
> So now in heaven a signe it doth appeare,
> The Harpe well known beside the Northern Beare.[98]

In this manner, creating poems which in their first half depict the fallen state of earthly things but in their last half point to an apocalyptic transcendence of those things to achieve heavenly permanence and perfection, Spenser has adapted Van der Noot's technique of using Petrarch's and Du Bellay's poems to demonstrate the fallen nature of everything in this world, then using Apocalypse to point to the eventual and sudden reversal of the fall at the close of his entire collection. In effect, then, each of these poems in this opening part of Spenser's *Complaints* becomes *A Theatre for Worldlings* in miniature: first showing readers the illusory, transitory and fallen state of even the most glorious earthly things, then showing the reformation or perfect recreation of those things in heaven. This transformation is virtually instantaneous in the sonnets of "The Ruines of Time": readers make a quick, barely perceptible, probably rarely noticed jump over the gap of blank space between the two seven-line stanzas of each sonnet to be experientially transported through the fall of earthly glory to a vision of paradise regained.

However, the gap is more significant than its short space on the page indicates. The speaker of the poems realizes the span of time between vision and earthly reality, for

[98] Ibid.

he often comments at the ends of the poems that seeing the vision leaves him to mourn or grieve his own state of being left on earth. That theme is in itself apocalyptic, for as Adela Yarbro Collins explains, "It was the tension between John's vision of the kingdom of God and his environment that moved him to write his Apocalypse."[99] One of the highest concerns of *The Faerie Queene*, then, becomes the long span of time between the fallen world and the transcendent one of Apocalypse fulfilled.[100] Though the godly believed that Christ had already accomplished the defeat of evil, the final fulfillment in New Jerusalem marked an end that was yet to be. Therefore, Reformers such as John Bale read Revelation as describing the events during the span of time after Christ's victory over evil but before the end of time. In his conclusion to *Image of Both Churches*, the first full length English commentary on Revelation, Bale writes that Revelation reveals "the vniuersall estate of the church from Christes ascencion to the ende of the world."[101] This gap has left the faithful waiting for ages in a realm where everything, even love, is imperfect or incomplete, and all worldlings, even those aspiring

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[99] Adela Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 106.

[100] Teresa M. Krier argues that in Spenser's "translations of *A Theatre for Worldlings* and the related *Complaints* of 1591 . . . vision is largely a matter of poetic and visionary inspiration," that "The body of the viewer in these works is an impediment left behind in order that the pageant may unfold," and that "it will become more present to objects viewed in the mature work," 13-14. She adds, "The pieces in *A Theatre for Worldlings* and the *Complaints* are thus peripheral to the main concerns of [her] book. The same is true of *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), in which the questions that Spenser later raises about sight simply do not occur," 14. She notes one exception: that the "Aprill" eclogue marks "a crucial shift" in Spenser's work, "from emblematic or other-worldly spectacles to hierarchic vision of a woman, ideal but of this world, viewed by other corporeal creatures," 14. Thus, my view differs from Krier's thesis here in that I see a continuity from Spenser's early interest in *A Theatre*, through his own *Complaints* inspired by Van der Noot, and into his mature work such as *Fowre Hymnes* and *The Faerie Queene*. I believe that in all of these works, Spenser holds that the imperfection, the transience, the insatiety of earthly vision lead to complaint, and thus to the longing for perfection and realization of vision that comes with Apocalypse fulfilled. The notion of the "impediment" of the body is still very much at issue in the latter half of *The Faerie Queene*, as I will argue here.

[101] John Bale, "A conclusion of the whole worke," *The Image of Both Churches after the most wonderfull and heauenly Reuelation of sainct Iohn the Euangelist, contayning a very fruitfull exposition or paraphrase vpon the same. Wherin it is conferred vvith the other scriptures, and most auctorised histories. Compyled by Iohn Bale an exyle also in thys lyfe, for the faithfull testimony of Iesu* (London: Thomas East, 1570), 143. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 3, 2007).

to the virtues that guide the poem, live in a state of perpetually recurring estrangement and persistent fear. In the conclusion of *Image*, Bale writes, "Marke heere the condition of Iohn being in most paynefull exile, for he in misterie through all this booke representeth euery godly beleuer."[102] Spenser's allegory illustrates this "paynefull exile," for as *The Faerie Queene* proceeds into Books Three and Four, there is a greater emphasis on delay and deferral, partly through the effect of recapitulative cycles of lovers united only to be estranged. Like the images of Petrarch, Du Bellay, and Spenser's *Complaints*, the beauty of unity is built up only to be torn down, painted only to be erased. To a greater extent than the visions of the second sonnet series of "The Ruines," *The Faerie Queene* foregrounds the long, slow movement of time and thus heightens the longing for apocalyptic closure in its readers.

In Spenser's *Complaints* (1591), in *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* (1595), in *Fowre Hymnes* (1596), and in *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596), there is a consistent awareness of the flaws inherent in love in this world, even the most chaste earthly love, because it is, in fact, earthbound. This realization, in all of these works, fosters a Protestant mysticism, which can, in a general sense, be equated with faith itself, as defined by the writer of Hebrews: "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."[103] As Carl J. Rasmussen points out, "For Protestants of the time faith was indeed a mode of knowledge," and "For Van Der Noot, as for Calvin, spiritual knowledge, or faith, is a

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[102] Ibid. See note 55 below. In *Spenser and Ovid*, Syrithe Pugh points to "Ovid's exile" as explanation for the underlying tone of pessimism in the second installment of *The Faerie Queene*. Perhaps a conflation of Christian and Ovidian notions of exile accounts for the theme in Spenser. As Patricia Parker notes, "Nature in the *Mutabilitie Cantos* uses 'dilate' from the perspective of the end, the perfection of being come full circle. But the circle of Spenser's poem is not finally closed and we remain within the period of dilatio as exile, or process. Continual deferral is part of the sorrow of wandering, the prospect of a Sabbath which remains very distant indeed. But if is also part of the 'delightfull land of Faery'" See Parker, *Inescapable Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 64.

[103] Hebrews 11:1, cited here from The New King James Version.

kind of visionary knowledge of transcendent things,"[104] everlasting things which surpass the vain, perverse, transitory, and illusory things of the phenomenal world. However, while Rasmussen argues that such knowledge "manifests itself in a spiritual condition of calm and beatitude,"[105] Spenser's poetics frequently aim to create dissonance in readers, as is the manner of apocalyptic literature. Spenser's work foregrounds and, consequently, heightens an unfulfilled longing for divine union and for intimate union with the divine, which is behind much of the symbolism of brokenness, cyclical turbulence, and dissatisfaction.

Though Spenser has been called the poet of married love, there is always something that hinders the glory of marital love in Spenser's work. Hence, there is need for qualification of A.R. Cirillo's claim that the married lovers in the ending of *Epithalamion* "have become 'that faire Hermaphrodite'" of *The Faerie Queene* and that they "have reached the moment of transcendence which is timeless."[106] *Epithalamion* ends with a seven-line stanza unexamined by Cirillo:

> Song made in lieu of many ornaments
>
> With which my love should duly have bene dect,
>
> Which cutting off through hasty accidents,
>
> Ye would not stay your dew time to expect,
>
> But promist both to recompense,
>
> Be unto her a goodly ornament,

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[104] Carl J. Rasmussen, 5. For a discussion of Protestant mysticism in Van der Noot's *Theatre*, see the complete article by Rasmussen: "'Quietnesse of Minde': *A Theatre for Worldlings* as a Protestant Poetics," *Spenser Studies* 1 (1980): 3-27. Though Rasmussen's piece was the first article in the first edition of *Spenser Studies*, there has been remarkably little work done by subsequent scholars to relate Spenser's work to that of Van der Noot.

[105] Ibid., 5.

[106] A.R. Cirillo, "The Fair Hermaphrodite: Love-Union in the Poetry of Donne and Spenser," *Studies in English Literature* 9.1 (Winter 1969): 95.

And for short time an endlesse moniment.[107]

Such a disappointing note, substituting the poem for his bride's delayed wedding gifts, is in stark contrast to what has come before. The shorter, apologetic final stanza interrupts the tone of timelessness in the wedding song with its temporally-conscious phrasing: "*cutting off* through *hasty accidents*, / Ye *would not stay* your dew *time* to expect" (italics mine). It is unclear whether the bride would not stay or wait for the ornaments or for the wedding song, but, in any case, the idea of "cutting off" becomes very significant to *The Faerie Queene* in terms of interruption of marital fulfillment and consummation. The phrase "Ye would not stay your *dew* time to expect" may also bear relation to these themes in *The Faerie Queene* and *Fowre Hymnes*, in which Spenser uses the term "dew" to connote sexual implications: the "deawy head" in the passage of Arthur's complaint (*FQ* III.iv.61) and the "one drop of dew reliefe" in *Fowre Hymnes* (*HB* 284). Though the speaker of *Epithalamion* "promist both to recompens,"[108] it is significant that the poem ends with a disappointment rather than a more consummate fulfillment.

Surprisingly, readers often have failed to note the similar tendencies in *The Faerie Queene*. For instance, despite the fact that the marriages in *The Faerie Queene* are almost always disrupted or delayed, John King calls the work "a Protestant poem committed to celebrating married love."[109] Similarly, Althea Hume's claim that "Book IV

[107] Spenser, *Epithalamion*, in *The Renaissance in England: Non-dramatic Prose and Verse of the Sixteenth Century*, eds. Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1954), 371.
[108] Ibid.
[109] John King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 148.

. . . portrays the resolution of emotional discords into lasting friendships and marriages"[110] and Mark Rose's assertion that "at the end of Amoret and Scudamour's adventures" there is a "reaffirmation of love, an assurance that the pains and troubles lovers suffer are outweighed by the permanent joys of faithful union,"[111] altogether disregard the revised ending of Book Three (in which Amoret and Scudamour are *separated*). In regard to the work of Sidney and Spenser, Rose further claims, "To be struck by Cupid's arrow is still to fall from the virtuous state of temperance, but it is also, in the Protestant view, to receive a divine calling to marriage. To the commonsensical mind of England, the ladder of love leads to no heights of transcendent wisdom but to the placid virtues of sensible domesticity."[112] Why, then, do we not *see* this domesticity at all in *The Faerie Queene*, as we do in Felicia Hemans's 1827 poem, "Homes of England," for example? In Spenser's work, the relationships never culminate in home and hearth, and that is part of the point. The goal of reaching "transcendent wisdom" that Rose discounts is, instead, the key issue. In *The Faerie Queene*, even chaste lovers attempting to climb the ladder of love find themselves bound by the ceiling of earth, and they also find themselves estranged from domesticity. Certainly, the poem points to marital union as the best possible worldly state, but this state, because it is earthly, has difficulty in being realized, or, in being sustained long enough in the poem to be "celebrated."

Thus, instead of aiming at celebrating happy marriage, the poem espouses (pun intended) a constant yearning for the perfection of love that will only be achieved beyond

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[110] Althea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 126.
[111] Mark Rose, *Heroic Love: Studies in Sidney and Spenser* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 134.
[112] Ibid., 139.

this life and beyond, in fact, the confines of human love. In his Commentary to *Theatre*, Van der Noot states that Petrarch, after years of chaste love for Laura, concluded that "there was no comfort, hope or salvation in worldely love to be loked for" and "turned himselfe to Godwarde, lamenting and sorrowing the rest of hys lyfe, and repented hym of his former life so ydlely and undecently spent."[113] In this same passage, Van der Noot claims that Petrarch's visions inspired by the loss of Laura show that "all that man doth stay hym selfe upon in thys worlde, is nothing but vayne fancie, wynde, and smoake."[114] In Spenser's *Complaints*, the woman's lament that opens "The Ruines of Time" contains a corresponding passage: "all that in this world is great or gaie, / Doth as a vapour vanish, and decaie."

This notion is behind the frequently mystical quality of Spenser's portrayals of earthly courtship and its forestalled consummation. For example, sonnet four in the second series of poems in "The Ruines" depicts a stately Bed, adorned with cloth of gold, decked with flowers, "as if it shold / Be for some bride, her joyous night to hold." In the second half of the sonnet, however, a voice from far away bids the bride to "quickly dight" (meaning "to put in order, dress, prepare" but also meaning "to have to do with sexually," *OED*, sv), and the rest of the poem states:

> For lo her Bridegroom was in readie ray
> To come to her, and seeke her loves delight:
> With that she started up with cherefull sight,
> When suddenly both bed and all was gone,

[113] Van der Noot, 15.
[114] Ibid., 14.

And I in languor left there all alone.[115]

Significantly, this is the only poem in the series of six which does not mention a heavenly counterpart in the final lines of the poem for the thing which has disappeared (as in the Harp which has become a heavenly sign, mentioned above). The replacement of intimate love between men and women with intimate love between humans and God is more ineffable than the other tropes, and more central to Spenser's entire body of work. The nuptial bedchamber scene is, instead, totally recreated as the marriage of humans to God: the bride (with a lower case b representing the earthly realm) unites with the Bridegroom (with the upper case B representing the higher realm), thus vanishing even beyond the vision of the speaker and the time-bound confines of the poem.

In *The Faerie Queene,* as in *Complaints*, there are similar moments in which something or someone pulls a disappearing act that erases or interrupts earthly consummation of love.[116] Of course, Spenser is not arguing for encratism of all believers any more than he is arguing for the abandonment of earthly harps because there is superior Harp music in heaven. To argue that love between the sexes is imperfect and will be replaced in heaven by love between God and humans is not to argue that earthly love should be repudiated altogether. Examination of the central sections of *The Faerie Queene* reveals that there is an eternal significance and purpose in the trials of chaste

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[115] Spenser, "The Ruines of Time."

[116] The same can be said for earthly justice, in the case of Astraea, the goddess of justice who has left the earth and now has a place amongst the signs in the heavens: "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; / Where she hath now an everlasting place, / Mongst those twelve signes, which nightly we doe see / The heavens bright-shining baudricke to enchace; / And is the Virgin, sixt in her degree, / And next her selfe her righteous balance hanging bee" (V.i.11). The vanishing act of Astraea is a literary presentation of James Brocarde's (Iacopo Brocardo's) observation that "that common complaynte is every where, that judgment and justice hath forsaken the earth," 100. Brocardo, *The Revelation of S. Jhon Reveled,* trans. James Sanford (London: Thomas Marshe, 1582). *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

earthly love, a purpose also illuminated by Spenser's reading of Apocalypse in *Fowre Hymnes* in which apocalyptic themes transcend the ideals of the Neoplatonic ladder of love.

In light of the gap between present earthly reality and future heavenly perfection, which had also motivated John to write his Apocalypse, visions in *The Faerie Queene* Books Three and Four have a tendency to turn into complaints. And with good reason, given the suffering that comes even (and especially) to those who love faithfully as the poem progresses. Granted, lovers do suffer in the first two books of the poem. The trials of Redcrosse Knight and Una, as we have seen, become increasingly intense as their story advances. In Canto Six, Una even faces the threat of rape, cries out for help in her distress, and is rescued (after an apocalyptic falling of the stars and darkening of the skies upon her cries)[117] by a band of satyrs. There is one great difference, though, in the presentation of Una's cries versus that of the figures of Books Three and Four. In Book One, the narrator reports in third person that Una, "with loud plaints importuneth the skyes" (I.vi.6), but in Books Three and Four, the figures in distress generally speak their complaints in first person, thus directing greater emphasis upon the nature of their distress and, in the most pathetic cases, upon the One who is capable of abridging the delay and ending the sorrow.

[117] See Revelation 6:13. Immediately subsequent to the martyrs' question in verse 9 of "How long" before justice would be enacted for their deaths, the earth quakes, the sun turns black, the moon becomes like blood, and the stars fall as a prelude to the judgments to come upon those who had slain the martyrs. Likewise, here in *Faerie Queene* I.vi.5-6, Una cries and the stars fall, and the sky turns cloudy, just after the narrator asks, "Ah heavens, that do this hideous act behold, / and heavenly virgin thus outraged see, / How can ye vengeance iust so long withhold, / And hurle not flashing flames vpon that Paynim bold?".

From Book One onward, the poem presents a fallen world, a world where virtually every pool of water is formed of tears and blood.[118] In Book Two, for example, the well which will not wash the blood from an innocent baby's hands flows from the tears of a maid who wished to die chaste and was thus transformed into that stone fountain. However, in Book Three, instead of a small fountain, the all pervasive nature of suffering associated with love is captured in the apocalyptic image of "a long bloudy river" weaving in and out of the border of broken bows and arrows that surrounds the corpses of casualties of love depicted on the tapestry in the House of Busirane (III.xi.46). Here, Spenser appropriates the sanguinary river of Revelation 16:4 to make it flow with the blood of those martyred for love, victims of Cupid. Thus, overall, Books Three and Four present a progressive intensification of suffering on the part of those who love, and an examination of the complaints of these figures in light of readings of Apocalypse by sixteenth century Reformist exegetes illuminates Spenser's use of apocalyptic delay and deferral as well as mystical images of apocalyptic transcendence still unrealized.

The words of the speaker of the first Petrarchan sonnet that was included in *A Theatre for Worldlings* as he laments the death of the hind chased by hounds also fittingly capture the sentiments of figures of the central section of *The Faerie Queene* who complain of the state of earthly love and its mortal effects: "Cruell death vanquishing so noble beautie, / Oft makes me waile so harde a destinie." Because of the Fall, all of the loves in these passages are destined to be like the one depicted by Albrecht

[118] In addition to the instances from *The Faerie Queene* cited in this paragraph which show love's suffering associated with fountains and rivers, see also the tears of Timias after he is exiled from Belphoebe: "No other drinke there did he ever tast, / Then running water, tempred with his teares, / The more his weakened body so to wast" (IV.vii.41), as well as Timias's tears shed when he again sees Belphoebe: "He her beholding, at her feet downe fell, / And kist the ground on which her sole did tread, / And washt the same with water, which did well / From his moist eies, and like two streames procead" (IV.viii.13).

Dürer in his 1503 engraving titled *Coat of Arms with a Skull*. The work shows a lady and a goatish-looking man smitten possibly by love, but definitely by lust, given the posture of the man whispering closely into the lady's ear and the look of pleasant arousal on her face. What dominates the engraving, however, is the huge death skull on the man's coat of arms at the center of the work. The man and woman seem oblivious to the portent, though they are destined for estrangement, if not through circumstances, then ultimately through death. Similarly, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* depicts in its love affairs the continual presence of that something that doesn't love love, that ever-present, postlapsarian death factor that interrupts indefinitely the capacity of love on earth to thrive consistently.

It is precisely this condition that turns visions to complaints in *The Faerie Queene* Books Three and Four. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the poem operates by a strategy of apocalyptic intensification, but the intensification nearly always builds to a breaking point rather than a culmination. In these central books of the work, much of the intensification is seen in progressively greater suffering of chaste lovers and, consequently, a progressively increasing sense of disturbance, or cognitive dissonance,[119] in the sufferers. Although the term "cognitive dissonance" was coined by social psychologist Leon Festinger in 1957, the phenomenon itself, of course, has existed for centuries, present even in The Book of Job, which scholars now consider to be the oldest work in Scripture. Festinger defines dissonance as "the existence of nonfitting relations

[119] My initial inspiration to explore the implications of this concept in Spenser's work comes from Anne Lake Prescott, who, as cited in my Introduction, recently claimed that *The Faerie Queene*'s "fully-fashioned gentleman will have to live with cognitive dissonance and hope God understands," in "Complicating the Allegory: Spenser and Religion in Recent Scholarship," *Renaissance and Reformation* 25.4 (Autumn 2001): 15. See also Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 3.

among cognitions" and defines cognition as "any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior."[120] In *The Faerie Queene* Books Three and Four, the dissonance, as in Job and Revelation, comes primarily from the inconsistency between two theological cognitions held at once: the sufferers are righteous, chaste and generally acting according to a virtuous desire for good, but at the same time, their suffering is being allowed by a righteous God. The complaints, then, are manifestations of the psychological discomfort of simultaneously holding apparently conflicting truths in the mind. In these instances, the complaints may be viewed as products of the cognitive dissonance that Festinger describes as "an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction."[121] In the poem's complaints, the action taken to reduce dissonance is simply giving voice to the distress, and hence, the laments demonstrate Festinger's observation of the typical initial response to cognitive dissonance: "initial bewilderment."[122]

The first major formal complaints, spoken in first person, as mentioned above, come in Canto Four of Book Three: Britomart's complaint on the ravages of love's passion which are making realization of her vision emotionally tempestuous (III.iv.7-10); Cymoent's dirge upon the supposed death of her son Marinell, when she thinks that a prophetic vision of his doom has come to pass in an unexpected manner (III.iv.36-39); and Arthur's invective against Night who evokes dreadful visions, facilitates evil acts, and obscures the Truth (III.iv.55-60). Georgia Ronan Crampton concurs that these complaints "form a progression, increasing one over the other in length, scope, and animus" and that "It appears . . . they are arranged . . . to compose a cumulative protest

[120] Festinger, 3.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., 249.

against the inelectable accidents and the dreaded certainties that make human beings finally vulnerable and subject to destiny."[123] All three complaints in Canto Four confront visions unrealized, and each confronts a problem of fallen life that awaits transformation through Apocalypse 21 fulfilled, when there will be no sea, no death, and no night.

Britomart's vision turns to complaint in Canto Four because to this point her love has been *only* a vision. Prior to her complaint, she has *fallen* in love (note the possible significance of the phrase)[124] with a man whom she has never seen in person, but only in a magic mirror, "a world of glas" that has the power to reveal secret knowledge pertaining to the one who looks into it (III.ii.19). She ascertains his name, Artegall, from the writing on his armor in the mirror image, and now seeks him in her lovestruck condition. Since she has been hit by Cupid's subtle arrow, the fixed vision from the mirror spawns multiple, variable visions in her mind, in the form of "fancies fraile" (ii.27) which cause her sleeplessness, sighs, sorrows, and tears (ii.28), and in the form of bad dreams in the few times when she is able to sleep (ii.29). Therefore, her complaint grows out of dissonance resulting from the simultaneous existence of two additional conflicting cognitions: that she is experiencing the "sacred fire" (iii.1) of love for Artegall, but that this love is manifesting itself in the form of torturous emotional and physical experiences.

Britomart's lament is significant because it engages questions central to the entire poem and to Spenser's poetics. As she sits on the rocky shore of the ocean and watches

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[123] Crampton, "Spenser's Lyric Theodicy: The Complaints of *The Faerie Queene* III.iv," *ELH* 44.4 (Summer 1977): 205.

[124] The phrase "fall in love" is used in the four line argument introducing Book Four, canto six: "Both Scudamour and Arthegall / Doe fight with Britomart. / He sees her face; doth fall in love, / and soone from her depart." Here, Artegall is the one falling in love. According to the *OED*, the first recorded use of the phrase in English was c1530.

the waves beating loudly against the cliffs, Britomart questions love's sea of passion: "Why do thy cruell billowes beat so strong, / And thy moyst mountains each on others throng, / Threatning to swallow vp my fearefull life?" (iv.8). Then she pleads for a "gentle gale of ease" (iv.10) that would bring her ship to port. Here, she is articulating questions that have been intimated already by the previous cantos. Britomart's nurse has called love an "evil plight" (ii.30), "this wicked evil [that] infest[s]" (ii.32), and "[t]he growing evill" (ii.46) because of its turbulent effects on Britomart. However, the narrator has begun Canto Three by praising Love:

> Most sacred fire, that burnest mightily
> In living brests, ykindled first above,
> Emongst th'eternall spheres and lamping sky,
> And thence pourd into men, which men call Love. (iii.1)

Furthermore, the narrator distinguishes Love from "filthy lust" (1). Alert readers would be led, then, to ask questions also asked in many *trattati d'amor*e of the Renaissance: what is the true nature and purpose of love? [125] Is it evil, sacred, or both? If sacred, why such cruel effects? Can love be simultaneously heaven-sent and hellish? A portion of the answers are found in Spenser's allusions to Apocalypse.

The most important question underlying all of the complaints (in Canto Four and beyond) is: "How long?" In the most intense complaints, the question is asked directly, and in others it is an unstated but foundational theme. For example, Arthur's direct articulation of this question is what makes his complaint, the third major complaint of

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[125] See Etienne Pasquier's *Monophylo: A Philosophical discourse, and division of love*, for example, translated from the French into English by Geffray Fenton (London: Henry Denham for William Seres, 1572). *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007). The nature of love was a common subject of Neoplatonic interpretations of Plato by Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola and others. See also Pietro Bembo and Baldassare Castiglione.

Canto Four, the most intense of the three. Arthur's vain pursuit of Florimell in this canto figures the estrangement of humankind from the divine which resulted from the Fall. Sheltco à Geveren, in 1577, describes this estrangement in terms of a spouse long separated from her love. To the True Church, Geveren writes,

> I am not ignorant (sweet Sion daughter of the celestiall Jerusalem, and entirely beloved spouse of Christe) in howe great miseries thou hast beene plunged nowe a long tyme, for the lacke of thy kinde and loving husband . . . . [T]hou canst not doubt but that he is faythfull, and favours thee with all his hart. And yet it greatly greeves thee that thy glory which thou wishest for, thy comfort, which thou hopest for, and thy king and bridegrome for whom thou so lookest, and longest for, is so long from thee.[126]

Geveren adds that this separation from the beloved, combined with the fact that the wicked are spared such experience, leads to the Church's "deep sighes . . . , mournfull countenance, and the intolerable vexation of minde which [true believers] ar[e] in."[127] Again, such dissonance stems from the inconsistency of several cognitions: the Church is righteous, yet the Church is suffering, and the wicked are being spared such "vexation of minde."

Arthur comes to symbolize this state of mind, for just as Night begins to obscure the clarity of daylight which would facilitate his search, Florimell eludes him. As rest also eludes him, Arthur thinks of his ultimate elusive vision:

> And thousand fancies bet his idle braine

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[126] Sheltco à Geveren, *Of the Ende of this World and second coming of Christ, a comfortable and necessary Discourse, for these miserable and daungerous dayes* (London: Thomas Gardyner and Thomas Dawson, 1577), first page of Dedication. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 2006).
[127] Ibid.

With their light wings, the sights of semblants vaine:

Oft did he wish, that Lady faire mote bee

His Faery Queene, for whom he did complaine. (III.iv.54)

Thus, in the symbolism here, Arthur is thrice removed from ultimate fulfillment. Florimell, a symbol of Arthur's beloved Faerie Queene, has escaped him, and the Faerie Queene, a trope of the divine, has also eluded him.[128] He only has "sights of semblants vaine" (iv.54), and he laments nightfall because Night "doest all things deface, ne lettest see / The beautie of [God's] worke" (iv.56). *Hymn to Heavenly Beauty*, the final poem in *Fowre Hymnes*, argues that humans contemplate God by meditating on his creation. Night therefore obscures Arthur's most immediate means of getting an immutable vision of the divine to replace the "thousand fancies" and "semblants vaine" which trouble him.

Just as *Hymn to Heavenly Beauty* presents heaven in apocalyptic terms that transcend those of Plato, stanza 59 here demonstrates that Arthur's lament is more apocalyptic than Platonic, for he states, "Dayes dearest children be the blessed seed, / Which darknesse shall subdew, and heauen win," pointing to Revelation 21:25 which proclaims that New Jerusalem's gates "shal not be shut by day: for there shalbe no night there." The higher degree of disquiet which Crampton observes in Arthur's complaint is, I believe, directly related to his next, most important questions and longings:

O when will day then turne to me againe,

And bring with him his long expected light?

O Titan, haste to reare thy ioyous waine:

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[128] As MacLure notes, "Florimell's shortcoming is simply that of necessity she can only image the one true fair. Thus Arthur's pursuit corresponds on a loftier plane to pursuit of false Florimell by baser characters: as the false Florimell is to the true, so is the true to Gloriana," 73. I would add, as Florimell is to Gloriana, so is Gloriana to the divine.

Speed thee to spred abroad thy beames bright,

And chase away this too long lingring night,

Chase her away, from whence she came, to hell. (iv.60)

The "how long" factor leaves Arthur in "restlesse anguish and vnquiet paine" (61) as he waits for the end of this long night and, at the same time, waits for the final, apocalyptic, permanent end of Night altogether.

The greater intensity of Arthur's complaint may also be explained by his direct observation in Book One of the complaints of the martyrs of Revelation. In the dungeon where Arthur rescues Redcrosse, there is an altar on which holy saints have been martyred. Here, Arthur hears the voices of the martyrs:

Whose blessed sprites from underneath the stone

To God for vengeance cryde continually,

And with great griefe were often heard to grone,

That hardest heart would bleede, to heare their piteous mone. (I.viii.36)

This is a direct allusion to the vision John receives at the opening of the fifth seal in Revelation:

I sawe under the altar the soules of them, that were killed for the worde of God, & for [the] testimonie which they mainteined. And they cryed with a lowde voyce, saying, How long, Lord, holie and true doest not thou iudge & avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And long white robes were given unto everie one, and it was said unto them, that they shulde rest for a litel season until their felowe servants, and their brethren that shulde be killed even as they were, were fulfilled. (Rev 6:9-11)

Therefore, Arthur's complaint of impatience is in chorus with those which he has heard coming from beneath the altar that he has seen firsthand. Note, though, that as William Fulke explains in his 1573 *Praelections vpon the sacred and holy Reuelation of S. Iohn*, Revelation Chapter Six includes both the "complaints & consolation of the martyres."[129] Arthur, on the other hand, in the process of rescuing Redcrosse, only hears the complaints from beneath the altar; he does not hear the divine response of consolation to the questions. This accounts, then, for why his complaint is the least consoled: he has witnessed firsthand the grief and groanings of righteous martyrs, but absent of any divine comfort.[130] In showing Arthur (and the poem's readers) only the first half of the passage from Revelation, Spenser imparts to them the martyrs' experience, along with a sense of dissonance that overgoes, however, that of the apocalyptic martyrs themselves. Arthur has seen the broken state of things, but will have to wait a long time for apocalyptic consolation. Obviously, though, his observation of the martyrs' grief has had the desired effect typical of apocalyptic literature: it has increased his longing for the end of Night.

Arthur's encounter with the martyrs in Book One, when considered in combination with the earliest disappearing act in the entire poem, also serves to indicate the direction in which Spenser's poem will move. In the opening stanzas of Book One, we see Una leading "a milke white lambe" (I.i.4). This detail defies logical sense because she is supposedly leading this lamb while riding a gentle palfrey and keeping up with Redcrosse as he gallops on a stallion. The Dwarfe, who lags behind carrying Una's bag, remains in the story for a time, but the lamb is never mentioned again after Canto

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[129] William Fulke, *Praelections vpon the sacred and holy Revelation of S. Iohn*, trans. George Gyffard (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), 37. *Early English Books Online* (accessed January 2007).

[130] In this regard, Arthur's complaint is closer to that of Ezra in the apocalyptic book of *2 Esdras*, for Ezra frequently asks "How long" but does not seem consoled by the explanations offered to him by an angel. *2 Esdras* would have been available to Spenser in *The Geneva Bible*, in the Apocrypha.

One, stanzas 4 and 5. If the lamb had been literally significant to Una, she would have bothered more with it in the long and eventful course of her journey, and Spenser would have bothered more with it in the course of his narrative. However, the lamb is here for a brief moment, gone the next, as in a dream or a vision, where people, places and things often vanish without further explanation. If we consider the increasing number of martyrs to love as the poem progresses, however, we observe that Una's lamb becomes figuratively dispersed into the multiple lovers of the remainder of the poem, lambs slain to the slings and arrows of the imperfections of earthly love. Regarding Revelation 6:9, the passage alluded to in Arthur's observation of the altar, William Fulke comments, "The opening of the fifte seale declareth the state of the faithfull after they are departed this life. For when as they beinge oppressed with infinite calamities, were all the daye long as shepe apointed to the slaughter." Arthur's encounter with the martyrs' cries in Book One, as well as the disappearance of Una's lamb, indicates that there is more intense sacrifice of lambs to come on the altar of love. Una's lamb is erased and redrawn as many lambs throughout the poem who experience a mystical fellowship of suffering with Christ.

To an increasing degree, as Spenser's poem progresses beyond Book One, readers also find themselves echoing the question: "How long?" Often, the conclusions they look for and the endings they expect fail to materialize. Even the narrator himself does not always know where the narrative is headed or when it will end. For example, in stanza one of the final canto of Book One, Spenser depicts his narrator as naïve, for he states, "Behold I see the haven nigh at hand, / To which I meane my wearie course to bend" and, using the metaphor of a ship's journey for his narrative, he adds that he will guide the

ship to Una's homeland which "seemeth safe from stormes, that may offend" (xii.1). Of course, the term "haven" has multiple meanings here: first, the literal place in the story that is Una's homeland; second, a figure for the sexual consummation[131] of love between Redcrosse and Una; third, a peaceful resting place where he plans to find resolution for his narrative; and fourth, an allusion to the term "heaven," which would be the transcendental haven of the New Jerusalem at the end of Revelation. As readers soon see, though, his hopes that Una's homeland will provide either a definitive resolution for his narrative or a place "safe from stormes, that may offend" are misguided. Book One does not end with any sort of definitive resolution: Redcrosse, just after the wedding, leaves Una again to mourn (as she did when he left her in Canto Two), and the storms of evil are still blowing strong enough to carry Archimago and Duessa from the story of Book One into the story of Book Two. It is also significant that the narrator, in the first line of Book One, Canto Twelve, states that he *sees* the haven (which is also a play on the visions of St John) "*nigh* at hand," but by the two closing lines of Book One, he calls it "a *long* voyage whereto [his ship] is bent" (xii.42, italics mine). Like the visions of grandeur in "The Ruines of Time," the vision of haven has pulled that tropological disappearing act.

Even at this early point in his poem, Spenser's plan was to foreground the "how long" aspect of Revelation in the rest of the work by creating continual cycles of intensification that build only to be broken or completely dissipated. Thus, the very last line of Book One is a pun on the idea of finishing, or perhaps more accurately, not finishing: "Well may she speede and fairely finish her intent" (xii.42). First, the narrator

[131] Etienne Pasquier, in *Monophylo*, refers to the sexual consummation of love as "haven," 34. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).

shows his naiveté here, because the rest of the poem's narrative will get nowhere *speedily*, but will work, in fact, through delay and winding spirals. Second, the pun is in "fairely finish," which could mean 1) finish well, as in finish pleasingly, or 2) finish fairly, as in finish equitably, with justice, or 3) fairly finish, as in finish nearly, as in getting as close as possible to finishing – being fairly finished, to the degree that an apocalyptic work *can* be *finished*. This pun would then indicate that even this early in the poem, Spenser knows he will not finish the project, and that he is toying with the idea that even Apocalypse itself is yet to be fulfilled. Therefore, in Book Three, the narrator's "haven nigh at hand" that courts closure in Book One has become Britomart's complaint that she is "Far from the hoped hauen of reliefe" (III.iv.8); Cymoent's commendation of dying "with speed" (III.iv.38); and Arthur's "O when will day then turne to me againe" (III.iv.60) which echoes the apocalyptic martyrs' "How long?".

Beyond the fourth canto of Book Three, the intensification of the complaints continues. While, as Crampton notes, Arthur is the least consoled of the three who complain in Canto Four, even in his state of anguished impatience, he still holds to the hope that permanent day (and union with his beloved) will eventually come. This hope provides at least a measure of consolation. However, Scudamour's complaint in Canto Eleven reveals anguish turned to despair. Unlike Arthur's invective addressed to Night, Scudamour's complaint turns its accusations directly at God himself:

> [O] soueraigne Lord that sit'st on hye,
> And raignst in blis emongst thy blessed Saintes,
> How suffrest thou such shamefull cruelty,
> So long unwreaked of thine enemy?

> Or hast thou, Lord, of good mens cause no heed? (III.xi.9)

The next two stanzas reveal the source of this lament: Busirane's kidnapping of Scudamour's wife, Amoret, which took place "before the bride was bedded," as we are later informed (IV.i.3). The grief of Scudamour at these events is so great that Britomart, who witnesses Scudamour's complaint, fears that he will grieve himself to death as he breaks off into sobs that choke his speech. When he is again able to speak, we see his utter despair in the refrain, "What boots it plaine, that cannot be redrest?" (III.xi.16-17). This lament, then, surpasses even that of the martyrs in Revelation who do not question whether God will hear or respond to their cries.

Of course, in regard to Revelation 6:9, William Fulke explains in *Praelections* that the martyrs of Apocalypse are in the immediate presence of Christ:

> Christ taketh away this scruple or doubt, when as he sheweth, that those which were slaine for the worde of God, and the testimonie of the Gospell, which they alwaies boldly and frelye professed, do after this wretched life, inioye blessed tranquillitie in heauen and do looke and waite for iust reuenge vppon there wicked enemies. And the soules of those that were departed out of this life are placed vnder the altar, that is, they rest vnder y^{e} defence of Christ, which is made to god, for them, the priest, altar and sacrifice . . . .[132]

Therefore, Scudamour, at a distance from God, questions whether God can or will redress the source of his angst.

The subsequent complaint of Florimell, like that of Scudamour, sounds at many points more like the despairing cry of a soul in hell than the prayer of a saint. In fact,

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[132] Fulke, *Praelections*, 41.

Florimell's complaint, in the closing canto of Book Four, begins with just this observation:

> For heauen that vnto all lends equall eare,
>
> Is farre from hearing of my heauy plight;
>
> And lowest hell, to which I lie most neare,
>
> Cares not what euils hap to wretched wight
>
> And greedy seas doe in the spoile of life delight. (IV.xii.6)[133]

Exercising their sharply-honed hermeneutical skills of collating repeated images,[134] Protestant readers of the poem would note that this lament recapitulates many aspects of Scudamour's complaint (the interruption of the speech with weeping and wailing, the surprising degree of doubt and despair, the awareness of her sorrows lasting "too long"), but also that her complaint has a greater degree of pathos because she is the one in captivity. Scudamour sorrows over Amoret's captivity, but Florimell is suffering the hellish dungeon firsthand.

Florimell's situation also recapitulates that of Malbecco, one of the poem's most pitiful figures. Like Florimell, Malbecco is entrapped in a hard, rocky prison walled in by the roaring waves of the sea (III.x.56-60). Because Malbecco brings this situation upon himself by his jealousy and greed, there is a dark humor in the poetic justice of Malbecco's fate that isn't present in the situation of Florimell: Malbecco, in despair of

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[133] This passage is foreshadowed by the description of the interior décor of Ate's home. Ate, the sower of discord who dwells by hell's gates, has decorated her home with relics and monuments of earthly things ruined, love being no exception: "Some of deare lovers, foes perpetuall: / Witnesse their broken bandes there to be seene, / Their girlonds rent, their bowres despoiled all; The moniments whereof there byding beene, / As plaine as at the first, when they were fresh and greene" (IV.i.24).

[134] Carol Kaske refers to this practice as "'concordential' reading," 19, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics.* Kaske argues that "Spenser's audiences had memories that were more capacious than ours because more exercised" and that "Spenser composed . . . with a concordance of his own poem in mind and expected readers to compile one too," 20, 27.

losing Hellenore, the young wife whom he has jealously overprotected, attempts to jump off a cliff but lands on a ledge and crawls into a sea cave. The juxtaposition of his desperate death leap with his landing "so flit and light, / That he thereby received no hurt at all, / But chanced on a craggy cliff to light" causes readers to smile at this ironic twist of fortune even as they pity his plight. However, the recapitulation of his sea-walled imprisonment in that of Florimell is meant to evoke a dissonance in readers conditioned to read concordentially. The similarity between the two situations begs the apocalyptic question of justice: why would Florimell, the most chaste and righteous of women, end up suffering the same (and possibly worse) torments as Malbecco, who deserves his punishment?[135]

In the depictions of the complaints of the righteous, Spenser has used sea imagery which builds in intensity to its height in Florimell's predicament, making her plight parallel that of Malbecco. In the opening scenes of Book Three, Canto Four, Britomart observes the sea just prior to her complaint:

> Tho hauing vewd a while the surges hore,
> That gainst the craggy clifts did loudly rore,
> And in their raging surquedry disdaynd,
> That the fast earth affronted them so sore,
> And deuouring couetize restraynd,
> Thereat she sighed deepe, and after thus complaynd. (III.iv.7)

[135] See Ezra's complaint in *2 Esdras* 3:28-36 for similar questions: "But do they that dwell at Babylon any better, that they shulde have the dominiõ of Sion?" 28. "For I sawe, how thou sufferedst them that sinne, and sparedst the wicked doers, where as thou hast destroied thine owne people, and preserved thine enemies. . . . I can not perceive how this commeth to passe. Are the dedes of Babylon better then they of Sion?" 30, 31.

Here, of course, the turbulence of the waves that stir up the hore (dirt and filth, *OED*, sv) represents the waves of passionate desire discontentedly restrained by the "fast earth" of chaste morality. There is no indication that Britomart comes in physical contact with the sea, though, as the text indicates Arthur does. In the closing stanza of Canto Four, Arthur rises in a foul mood after his anguished complaint and restless night: "And earely, ere the morrow did vpreare / His deawy head out of the *Ocean* maine, / He vp arose, as halfe in great disdaine" (III.iv.61). Though the reference to the ocean here is primarily one of the sun's "deawy head" not yet risen over the sea, we get the sense that Arthur's head is also in the sea, that he has fallen into fitful sleep after his complaint, and that the waves of the sea, again representing passionate desire, have actually come into palpable contact with his head. Thus, while Britomart has sat on the shore observing the crashing waves of passion, Arthur has lain prostrate on the sand and has been immersed in the rise and fall of the waves, perhaps also symbolizing the "deawy head" of a sexual fantasy of a more physical nature.

The poem's greatest focus on the sea as it relates to the torment of a chaste character is found in the depiction of Florimell's captivity in the opening stanzas of Book Four, Canto Twelve. The narrator leads into Florimell's complaint with a three-stanza complaint of his own:

> O what an endlesse worke have I in hand,
>
> To count the seas abundant progeny,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> For much more eath to tell the stares on hy,
>
> Albe they endlesse seeme in estimation,

Then to recount the Seas posterity:

So fertile be the flouds in generation,

So huge their numbers, and so numberless their nation. (IV.xii.1)

The narrator has his own "how long" moment here, as he considers the possibility of never being able to finish his account of those affected by the turbulence of passion. It would be easier to count the stars, which seem innumerable, than to look down through time and relate all the stories of those ravaged by Venus, of whom he says "the seas by her are most augmented" (IV.xii.2). This passage recalls the earlier one in which Venus leaves heaven to seek her son Cupid, whom she finds implicated in a wide array of complaints from people of all facets of earthly society: court, city, and country (III.vi.12-15). Thus, the sea of passion that has distressed Britomart and Arthur is shown to have affected innumerable people in the earth's long history. The narrator's complaint comes just after his description of the wedding party of the rivers Thames and Medway, but his statement "blame me not, if I haue err'd in count / Of Gods, of Nymphs, of rivers yet vnred" is a pun, using "vnred" in the sense of unread or not listed with those who attended the wedding, but also using it in the sense of un*red*, which alludes to the river filled with blood of Cupid's victims (III.xi.46) appropriated from the bloody river of Apocalypse 16:4.

The narrator's lament at the opening of Book Four, Canto Twelve is a prelude to the broadening revelation, in Florimell's story, of what the sea represents in many contemporary Protestant readings of Apocalypse. While Britomart and Arthur complain of the separation and the long delay in the fulfillment of their visions, they do have more of a free capacity to pursue fulfillment. In contrast, Florimell, in her "sea-walled fort"

(IV.xii.18), is not only estranged from her love, but is physically imprisoned and thus completely incapable of taking action that would bring about the union she desires. Her claim that "greedy seas doe in the spoile of life delight" comes two lines after she states that she lies "most neare" to "lowest hell" (IV.xii.6). As Arthur has correlated Night with hell, Florimell here relates the seas that delight in the spoil of life to her utterly isolated condition and therefore to "lowest hell." Both of the references allude to the pre-apocalyptic world, before the fulfillment of Revelation 21 in which the sea and night have been abolished.

Many of the sixteenth century's most popular and well-known commentators on Revelation interpret the sea of Apocalypse to mean exile, obstruction and turbulence. In *The Image of Both Churches*, the first full length English commentary on Revelation, John Bale interprets Revelation 21:1, which states "[and] there was no more sea," as meaning that "all impediments and needes, all dangers and doubts, all fearful movings and outragings that we now have of the sea, shall cease in that day of the Lord."[136] Commenting on the same verse, William Fulke, in *Praelections*, writes, "Nothing that is terrible or deformed such as the sea seemeth to us, shalbe seene in that blessed renovation of the world. Nothing which shall sever the electe dwelling as it were in one citie, nothing shalbe to them any stoppe of passage, or any danger in there way."[137] Likewise, the character of Christian in William Perkins's *A fruitfull Dialogue* views earthly life itself as a sea that exiles believers from New Jerusalem: "[T]he Church of God hath always beene subject to the crosse, and none must marvell if it be: how can the world love them that hate it, and have little acquaintance with it, and are on the earth as

[136] Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (1570), commentary part 3, v.5, 79. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[137] Fulke, *Praelections*, 137.

pilgrims, waiting every day for happy passage through the troublesome sea of this life, to their owne home, even to the heavenly city of Jerusalem?"[138] Similarly, Stephen Batman writes, "[B]y the spirite is the Church made holy, yet tossed in the sea of persecution, through the vehement blast of violent Errors."[139] Thus, Spenser's depiction of Florimell and Malbecco in their sea-bound caves engages this Protestant view of the sea as symbolizing the force that impedes any progress toward lasting peace, obscures truth, severs unity, and estranges even the elect in a state of "fearful movings and outragings."[140] Taken by its overall spirit rather than the letter, Spenser's work generally concurs with the view that estrangement is the postlapsarian earthly human condition.

Of course, few Spenserians of today ascribe to the premise that Spenser's poetry can be plausibly interpreted as supporting any completely systematic theology.[141] For example, in *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, Carol Kaske demonstrates a number of theological contradictions in *The Faerie Queene*. Kaske asserts that the contradictions can be attributed to Spenser's use of the Bible as model for his poetics, his Melanchthonian reading of the Bible as intentionally contradictory, and his use of the

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[138] William Perkins, *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world, betweene a Christian and a Worldling* (1587) in *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins, the third and last volume* (London: John Haviland for James Boler, 1631), 475. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

[139] Stephen Batman [Konrad Lykosthenes], *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment* (London: Ralphe Nubery assigned by Henry Bynneman, 1581), Preface, sig. [¶¶ir]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

[140] Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (1570), 79. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

[141] See Kaske, Ch. 4, "Propositional Contradictions and Their Resolutions," 98-157. As Kaske points out (118n), scholars such as Virgil K. Whitaker, in *The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950), and Daniel Doerksen, in "'All the Good is God's': Predestination in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book I," *Christianity and Literature* 32 (1983): 11-18, do argue that Spenser supports the predestinarian side of the debate, and that sometimes Darryl Gless does the same. See Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univesrity Press, 1994). Clearly, like Gless, I argue that Spenser's work is most highly influenced by Reformed theology, and particularly in my view, by Reformed interpretations of Revelation. Kaske holds that "not only is the indeterminate poetics of Book I Melanchthonian, but so are the compromises in both I and II as well: works prevent loss of salvation; works earn rewards in heaven; and they are performed by the will cooperating with grace," 155.

poem to voice various positions in theological debates of the day in order to foster religious tolerance. As with the Bible, one can, in fact, select certain random passages from *The Faerie Queene* and argue for a wide variety of theological points, which will contradict other passages left unexamined.

This observation is particularly true in regard to the issue of human nature pertaining to salvific matters. The question of whether (as in Calvin's overall view) humankind is totally depraved and unable to even attempt to approach God for salvation or (as in Melanchthon's view) humankind is capable of cooperating with God in an act of free will choosing of salvation, was highly debated in the sixteenth century. Given some of the contradictory passages in Spenser's work regarding this issue, one may readily concur with Kaske's claim that *The Faerie Queene* reflects the Bible itself, as well as contemporary theological debates. For instance, the narrator's homiletic stanza in which he states, "But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will" (I.x.1) seems at odds with Una's advice to Redcrosse that in his battles with Error he should "Add faith unto [his] force" (I.i.19). Thus, it is untenable to argue that Spenser clearly endorses either side of the debate. Furthermore, it is fallacious (pun intended) to equate Spenser the poet's theology with that stated by his narrator (whom I have shown to be naïve at various points) or any of his individual poetic figures at any given point (for they sometimes contradict themselves or change their views). Therefore, rather than arguing here that Spenser's work systematically defends the view of total depravity, I am arguing that his work does consistently depict a world in which the Fall has enacted certain observable consequences for humankind on earth such as obscurity of vision, transience of harmony

and beauty, imperfection of love between humans, and estrangement, all of which are experienced as dissonance that ultimately is efficacious for faith.

The poem does frequently depict the idea that just as the action of Una's father at the end of Book One, when he confirms the death of the dragon and bids the gate of the kingdom "Which long time had been shut" to be "open wyde" and "Proclaim[s] joy and peace through all his state" (I.XII.3) is premature, all claims of definitive closure on earth are destined to be broken. Though the most oppressive wicked enemy has been eliminated from this kingdom, there remain a host of others, Duessa and Archimago included, who will line up to plant thorns in the path of the King's descendents, as well as the figures in the rest of the poem. The incomplete close of *The Faerie Queene*, Book One is a poetic reminder that the Fall of humanity has enacted a condition of perpetually recurring estrangement, of being closed outside the gates, figuratively and sometimes literally, and that this condition will only be definitively reversed when Apocalypse 21: 25-27 is fulfilled and God himself has bidden the gates open wide that long time have been shut.

In "Faerie lond," the Fall has corrupted or at least tainted everything, including all the personal, social, political, and sexual relationships amongst worldlings, and has, in this world, estranged all who dwell on earth in each of these relationships. Michael F.N. Dixon claims that "Spenser's persuasive strategies court our understanding that in only one state, that of holiness, are all fundamental estrangements, erotic, social, and transcendent, capable of resolution, and his rhetorical structures consistently define that goal as one common to all the elemental strivings of human life."[142] However, in the same vein as Van der Noot's *Theatre*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* foregrounds the ever-

[142] Michael F.N. Dixon, "Rhetoric in Spenser's poetry," *The Spenser Encyclopedia,* 602.

elusive nature of the resolution of estrangement in this world. The "Fierce warres and faithfull loues" promised in the narrator's introduction to the Book of Holiness are, ironically, often interconnected. For example, the description of Britomart's nurse helping her to don her armor (after they have heard Merlin's prophetic vision of the love between Britomart and Artegall) sounds at some points more like the preparations of a bride and her lady for a wedding processional than preparation of a knight for battle:

> In th'evening late old *Glauce* thither led
> Faire *Britomart*, and that same Armory
> Downe taking, her therein appareled,
> Well as she might, and with braue bauldrick garnished.
> . . . . . .
> Thus when she had the virgin all arayd,
> Another harnesse, which did hang thereby,
> About her selfe she dight, that the young Mayd
> She might in equall armes accompany,
> And as her Squire attend her carefully. (III.iii.59, 61)

In *The Faerie Queene*, love is a battlefield,[143] both external and internal. Holding onto a substantial, faithfull love in the poem involves the fiercest war of all, one in which even the holiest of fighters face odds stacked against them. Spenser, like Van der Noot, reads Petrarchan and courtly love through the lens of Apocalypse, and thus depicts worldly love at its worst as monstrous and even at its best as ephemeral, fragmented, inferior and

[143] See also 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), 55f.

incomplete. Even if lovers see fading glimpses of the perfection of Apocalypse fulfilled, they can't quite get there from here.

More compelling evidence of Spenser's focus on this theme comes in the parallels between his revised ending of *The Faerie Queene* Book Three and his work entitled *Fowre Hymnes*, both published in 1596. Again, in both of these works, Spenser is adapting Van der Noot's technique of presenting something of earthly beauty, then showing its evanescence, causing dissonance in the observers in the poem and in readers. The first of the four hymns, *An Hymne in Honour of Love*, begins as a song of praise to Cupid, who is called "thou mightie God of love" (line 22). However, the effects of Cupid's arrows, aside from procreation, quickly begin to sound like the laments of the lovers in *The Faerie Queene*. The hymn states:

> Thenceforth they playne, and make ful piteous mone
> Unto the author of their balefull bane;
> The daies they waste, the nights they grieve and grone,
> Their lives they loath, and heavens light disdaine. (lines 127-30).

Cupid laughs at their complaints "Whylest they lye languishing like thralls forlorne" (line 136), and "their dying to delay, / . . . doest enmarble the proud hart of her, / Whose love before their life they doe prefer" (138-40). Though these love pains obviously result from the unyielding Petrarchan mistress, the parallels with the suffering of even the chaste married lovers of *The Faerie Queene*, such as Scudamour and Amoret, are evident. Recall, for example, Cupid looking on with joy as Amoret undergoes a torturous spell in which her heart is removed and stabbed through with a dart—one of the most gruesome scenes of the poem (III.xii.21-22).

The hymn also distinguishes between lust and love, which, in the tradition of Marsilio Ficino's Neoplatonism, "makes him [the lover] mount above the native might / Of heavie earth, up to the heavens hight" (188-89) and refines the mind (192). The idea of the Neoplatonic ladder by which one "praises, of course, the beauty of the body, but through it . . . contemplates the more excellent beauty of the soul, the mind, and God . . ."[144] is central to the first hymn. In this hymn, the agonizing sufferings of the lover, "The gnawing envie, the hart-fretting feare, the vaine surmises, the distrustfull showes, / The false reports that flying tales doe beare, / The doubts, the daungers, the delayes, the woes" (259-62) which "make a lovers life a wretches hell" (265),[145] are meant to lead him to climb the Neoplatonic ladder that will give him a clear vision of heaven. The speaker of the first hymn declares:

> By these, O Love, thou doest thy entrance make,
>
> Unto thy heaven, and doest the more endeere
>
> . . . . . .
>
> As after stormes when clouds begin to cleare,
>
> The Sunne more bright and glorious doth appeare;
>
> So thou thy folke, through paines of Purgatorie,
>
> Dost beare unto thy blisse, and heavens glorie. (273-79)

However, though these lines refer to the Neoplatonic rising "Above the reach of loathly sinfull lust" (179), the speaker envisions even the heavenly transcendence in sexually-laden, physical terms. The "heavens glorie" of line 179 is pictured as a Paradise where

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[144] Marsilio Ficino, *De Amore* [*Commentary on Plato's 'Symposium' on Love*], trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1985), 143.

[145] Scholars have speculated that this hymn, in fact, is Spenser's lost poem entitled *The hell of lovers*, mentioned by the original publisher in the introduction to *Complaints*.

the lovers who have suffered on earth will then "lie like Gods in yvorie beds arayd, / With rose and lilies over them displayd" (285-86)[146] and will, with Cupid's daughter, Pleasure

play

Their hurtlesse sports; without rebuke or blame,

And in her snowy bosome boldly lay

Their quiet heads, devoid of guilty shame,

After full joyance of their gentle game. (287-91)

While the speaker of *An Hymne in Honour of Love* has claimed that chaste love has the capacity to raise him from his base desires to a pure vision, even his vision of heaven fails to transcend the terms of physical desire, similar to the experience of Sidney's Astrophil, who, with a more fierce degree of irony, states, "Desire still cries, 'Give me some food,'"[147] and of Britomart, who envies those who find quick gratification of their lusts and states, "But wicked fortune mine, though mind be good, / Can haue no end, nor hope of my desire, / But feed on shadowes, whiles I die for food" (III.ii.44-46). Likewise, *An Hymne in Honour of Beautie*, the second of the four hymns, though generally appearing to support the Neoplatonic ladder, contains moments of self-contradiction. For example, lines 134-37, which state:

Therefore where ever that thou doest behold

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[146] The language here is similar to that of the Biblical *Song of Songs*. However, while *Song of Songs* depicts the love between Christ and the Church figuratively as an allegory of sexual intimacy between man and woman (as did the Reformers which I cite in this chapter), *An Hymne in Honour of Love* which is written as an address of honor to Love as a god, intentionally literalizes what is symbolic in *Song of Songs*, showing the lovers in heaven literally lying in snowy bosoms, thus ironically calling attention to the imperfect Neoplatonic premise of transcendence.

[147] Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet 71, in *The Renaissance in England: Non-dramatic Prose and Verse of the Sixteenth Century*, eds. Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1954), 328.

A comely corpse [body], with beautie faire endewed,

Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold

A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed,

are quickly qualified with the refrain, "Yet oft if falles" (clearly a pun on the Fall) and with surrounding lines which provide exceptions to this rule about beauty. Thus, in the first two hymns, Spenser presents a beautiful but earthbound and, therefore, ultimately limited philosophy.

When Spenser concludes the work with the final two hymns that transcend or "reforme" the first two, then, he is again working in the tradition of Van der Noot's *Theatre* by pointing to an apocalyptic elevation of the fallen. The final two hymns, *An Hymne of Heavenly Love* and *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, reveal that human efforts at love tend to fall and dissipate like those of Petrarch's and Du Bellay's images of earthly grandeur, and point to the Christian apocalypse as the reformation of imperfect human love. Although *An Hymne in Honour of Beautie* states that earthly "Love is a celestiall harmonie" (197) and that "lovers eyes more sharply sighted bee / Then other mens, and in deare loves delight / See more then any other eyes can see" (232-34), the speaker begins the *Hymne of Heavenly Love* (which directly follows that poem) with a prayer for transcendent sight:

Love, lift me up upon thy golden wings

From this base world unto thy heavens hight,

Where I may see those admirable things,

. . . . . .

Farre above feeble reach of earthly sight,

That I thereof an heavenly Hymne may sing

Unto the god of Love, high heavens king. (1-3, 5-7)

These lines, which parallel the narrator's plea for "Sabbath's sight" at the close of The Mutabilitie Cantos, demonstrate the inability of earthly lovers' eyes to ascend a ladder to heavenly vision by means of contemplating their beloved.[148]

The problem is most clearly illustrated in the Renaissance Neoplatonic image of the lovers' mirror. Ficino states that "A lover imprints a likeness of the loved one upon his soul and so the soul of the lover becomes a mirror in which is reflected the image of the loved one,"[149] an idea exemplified in *An Hymne in Honour of Love*:

Such is the power of that sweet passion,

That it all sordid basenesse doth expel,

And the refined mynd doth newly fashion

Unto a fairer forme, which now doth dwell

In his high thought, that would it selfe excel;

Which he beholding still with constant sight,

Admires the mirrour of so heavenly light.

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[148] Thus, I see Spenser's view of the potentiality of earthly sight as less optimistic than Krier's reading of passages from Book II. She asserts, "The [mutually satisfying] actions of eye and soul in . . . Plato's fables of eros [in *Phaedrus*] enter Neoplatonism along with the *Symposium*'s account of the ascent of a hierarchy of beauties toward the One; these models of vision and desire are assimilated to the responses of vision to beauty in courtly love lyric and in Dante. This loose alliance underlies and makes possible treatments of love throughout Renaissance culture, from the systematic Platonic commentaries of Ficino and the *trattati d'amore* of those influenced by him, to lyric, dramatic, and narrative genres. It underlies the operations of love in Spenser's *Hymns* and in the romance-epic middle books of The Faerie Queene. In its exaltation of sight and the hungers aroused through sight, and in its optimism that the perceived beauty of the beloved is revelatory of divine beauty, it underlies the actions of sight in the blazon of Belphoebe, the Proem, and the description of the Angel," 87. In contrast, I believe the continued thwarting of the attempts of earthly vision to reach lasting visions of divine, transcendent beauty enacts the apocalyptic longing necessary to bring one to heaven.

[149] *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's 'Symposium',* trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne, *The University of Missouri Studies* 19 (1944): 146.

Whose image printing in his deepest wit,

He thereon feeds his hungrie fantasy,

Still full, yet never satisfyde with it. (190-99)

Again, this initial poem points to the contradiction in its own philosophy: "the refined mynd" and "hungrie fantasy" have a fierce war in attempting to coexist, as in the Platonic war between reason, spirit, and appetite.[150]

Such a mind finds, as Britomart does, that the heavenly vision has the tendency to turn into complaints, as already discussed, and also that the vision becomes dispersed into more earthly fancies. "Hungrie fantasy" frequently dominates and squelches the "refined mynd." For example, immediately after Britomart sees the image of Artegall in the mirror:

Thenceforth the feather in her loftie crest,

Ruffed of love, gan lowly to auaile,

And her proud portance, and her princely gest,

With which she earst triumphed, now did quaile:

Sad, solemne, sowre, and full of fancies fraile

She woxe (III.ii.27)

Rather than transcendent vision, the "fancies fraile" predominate in Britomart, as they do in Arthur who, as previously noted, is tormented by "thousand fancies" of Gloriana that "bet his idle braine / With their light wings, the sights of semblants vaine" (III.iv.54). Lovers enamored with the images of their beloveds but trying simultaneously to transcend earthly baseness, then, find themselves bumping against "the worlds great

[150] Plato, *The Republic*, Book IV, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Paul Shorey, eds. Huntington Cairns and Edith Hamilton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 684. See also the image of the soul's chariot and charioteer in *The Phaedrus*, eds. Cairns and Hamilton, 493.

frame, in which al things / Are now containd" (22-23), the sphere of the stars enclosing the spheres of the planets, mentioned in the opening lines of *Hymne of Heavenly Love* as a comment on the limits of the earthly vision in the two previous poems.

Because earthly vision is generally limited to what can be seen by the eyes, as in the image of the stars in the heavens above the earth, *Hymne of Heavenly Love* evokes the idea of another mirror: one in which humans reflect the image of God. The final two hymns, as mentioned, are apocalyptic, but as is typical of contemporary Protestant readings of Apocalypse, they view Revelation as the reversal of the Fall of Genesis. Therefore, before turning to apocalyptic transcendence, *Heavenly Love* describes the creation account in terms of God placing a mirror in humans, a glass in which He wants to behold His own image:

> Such he him made, that he resemble might
> Himselfe, as mortall thing immortall could,
> Him to be Lord of every living wight,
> He made by love out of his owne like mould,
> In whom he might his mightie selfe behould:
> For love doth love the thing beloved to see,
> That like it selfe in lovely shape may bee. (113-19)

Geveren, in *Of the Ende of this World*, describes the church's apocalyptic reunion with Christ in terms that indicate a renovation (restoration to the original, supreme state) of this mirror in their souls. Geveren explains that Christ will return to "be revenged upon his enemies," but adds, "[H]is chiefest coming shalbe to draw thee unto him, and to bring thee into his bed chamber where all sorrow and sighing layd a part, thou shalt injoye the

pleasant speech, and sweete embracements of thy loving husband, and shalt be beautified with al celestial benefites which have been appointed for thee since the beginning of the world."[151] Similarly, William Fulke, in *Praelections*, interprets Revelation 21:2 in which John describes the church "prepared as a bride trimmed for her housband" by concluding:

> He exposideth in what the blessednesse of the saincts doth chiefely consist, namely that they may be perfectly ioyned to god, that the bride may come into the imbracinges of the bridegrom . . . . But the Churche hath not this decking of abride wherwith she cometh so beautifull into the presence of god, of her self, but she boroweth all her righteousnes, wisedome & holines of Christ with which ornamentes being garnished, she excelleth all quenes in glorie & beautie. And vntill that most renowned day of that mariage shall come a great part of hir doth wander as a stranger here in earth, which notwithstanding doth possesse these dowries in the meane time by faith, but at length she shal perfectly obteyne them for euer.[152]

Here, the soul's mirror is seen in the fact that "she boroweth all her righteousness, widedome & holiness of Christ." The church's perfection is nothing of earth, but is a reflection of the heavenly attributes of Christ.[153]

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[151] Geveren, *Of the Ende of this World*, sig. [Ai^{V}]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 2006).
[152] Fulke, *Praelections*, 137.
[153] Therefore, I would qualify Teresa M. Krier's claim that Britomart's revelation that she is a female knight (when she removes her armor in Book III, canto 9) contains "ideals of gratified pleasure fused unproblematically with religious awe," 177. Though this scene is one in which the viewers do find the most possible satisfaction, it may be too much to call the satisfaction "gratified pleasure" because if we look at the lines which directly follow those quoted by Krier, the viewers' pleasure at seeing Britomart's beauty only leads to the desire for more: "Yet note their hungry vew be satisfide, / But seeing still the more desir'd to see" (III.9.24). Furthermore, Krier's statement that "They feast on a 'divinitie' not elusive but fully present and sustaining," 179, also needs qualification. Though the passage does say "And ever firmely fixed did abide / In contemplation of divinitie" (III.9.24), we must also note that their love gaze is unreciprocated: "Yet none of all them her thereof amoved, / Yet every one her likte, and every one her loved" (III.9.24). Therefore, the pleasure with which the viewers gaze on Britomart is actually problematic rather than unproblematic. Metaphorically, the soul mirror of the beloved was to reflect the image of the

Again, however, Spenser's work illustrates how the lasting achievement of this reflection is yet to come. Just after the passage on God's placing of the mirror in the human soul, *Heavenly Love* describes the Fall from this ideal state:

> But man forgetfull of his makers grace,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Fell from the hope of promist heavenly place,
>
> Into the mouth of death, to sinners dew,
>
> And all his off-spring into thraldome threw:
>
> Where they for ever should in bonds remaine,
>
> Of never dead, yet ever dying paine. (120, 122-26)

Next, the poem relates how Christ restored humanity to "that happie state" through the crucifixion (139).

The description of Christ's suffering in *Heavenly Love* sounds very similar to that of Amoret and Scudamour in *The Faerie Queene*:

> O huge and most unspeakeable impression
>
> Of loves deepe wound, that pierst the piteous *hart*
>
> Of that *deare* Lord with so entyre affection,
>
> And sharply launching every inner part,
>
> Dolours of death into his soule did *dart.* (*Heavenly Love*, 155-59, italics mine)

This passage applies the conventional Petrarchan symbolism for male–female love

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lover, but, according to Spenser's brand of apocalyptic Christianity, for the mirror of divinity to be totally reflected in one's soul mirror, one would need to be perfected in the holiness of heaven. Thus, Britomart is unmoved, and their gaze is not reflected or reciprocated. As Fulke explains (see previous page of this present chapter), only the God of Apocalypse-fulfilled can reflect the image of every one who loves him, so Spenser draws attention to Britomart's lack of reciprocation to "every one her loved" (everyone who loved her). In light of Spenser's critique of the Neoplatonic ladder in *Fowre Hymnes,* Britomart is not the proper object of religious awe.

pursuits (the hunt of a deer or "piteous hart," the "deare" Lord, the use of the dart as weapon in the hunt) to the crucifixion, and in line 163, the "deare wound" puns on the hunted deer to describe the "dear" or sacred wound of Christ who allowed himself to be pierced in the "hart." Therefore, Amoret's heart wound takes on new significance in light of *Heavenly Love*, which states: "Learne him to love, that loved thee so deare, / And in thy brest his blessed image beare" (258-59). These lines illuminate not only the scene in which Amoret's heart is pierced with a dart (III.xii.20, 21), but also the idea that through her suffering, she literally bears a mirror image of Christ in her brest.[154] Likewise, Scudamour, as he later dreams that Amoret is disloyal, experiences a wound at the hands of Care that is similar to that of Christ:

> [T]he wicked carle the maister Smith
> A paire of redwhot yron tongs did take
> Out of the burning cinders, and therewith,
> Under his side him nipt, that forst to wake,
> He felt his hart for very paine to quake. (IV.v.44)

Like Christ who was pierced in the side upon the cross, Scudamour bears a painful wound in his own side as well as a pain in the hart and mind at the thoughts of his love rejecting him (IV.v.44; IV.vi.1).

The final two poems of *Fowre Hymnes*, then, offer an apocalyptic explanation of and solution to the problem experienced by figures such as those who complain in the

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[154] In *The Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative: Conditional Pleasure from Spenser to Marvell*, Dorothy Stevens (1998), 31, quotes Maureen Quilligan from *Milton's Spenser*: "Blesser, in French, is to wound; such wounding, a real anatomical event in sexual consummation, is bliss." We may also note the transcendent tone of Paul, who writes in Galatians 6:17, "From hence for the let no man put me to busines: for I beare in my bodie the markes of the Lord Jesus." Similarly, the passage in Revelation 19:9 which proclaims "Blessed are they which are called unto the Lambes supper" connotes a woundedness and a blessedness that are somehow interrelated: the earthly suffering of the saints, which identifies them with Christ, and the bliss of eternity are mystically intertwined.

central books of *The Faerie Queene*. As both hymns explain, vision frequently turns to complaint because the Edenic vision in the human mirror reflecting the image of God has been distorted. Stephen Batman, in his 1581 *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment*, states that God punished Adam's disobedience by "taking away from Adam that shape and resemblance of God, wherewith before he was indued: thereby all mankindes posteritie was infected, even with the corruption of sinne, and made subject to death and other punishments for sinne." Like the speakers in Van der Noot's *Theatre* and Spenser's *Complaints*, the figures in *The Faerie Queene* are left grieving when the worldly objects of their awe dissipate, because they are attempting to replace the image of God in their soul's mirror with an earthly vision of their beloved. According to *Fowre Hymnes*, such figures are mesmerized by the wrong things, and their vision is amiss. To redirect the vision to its proper focus, the language of both *Heavenly Love* and *Heavenly Beautie* is filled with mystical terms of apocalyptic ecstasy, such as "ravist" (*HHL* 268, 281) and "Rapt with the rage of mine own ravisht thought, / Through contemplation of those goodly sights, / And glorious images in heaven wrought" (*HHB* 1). Furthermore, *Heavenly Beautie*, as the closing poem, contains multiple allusions to God's throne in Revelation.

> In order to achieve such rapture of vision, both works call for a radical shift:
>
> All other loves, with which the world doth blind
>
> Weake fancies, and stirre up affections base,
>
> Thou must renounce, and utterly displace,
>
> And give thy selfe unto him full and free. (*HHL* 262-65)

The replacement of the beloved's image in the mirror with the image of God will perfect the vision:

> Thenceforth all worlds desire will in thee dye,
>
> And all earthes glorie on which men do gaze,
>
> Seem durt and drosse in thy pure sighted eye,
>
> Compared to that celestiall beauties blaze. (*HHL* 274-77)

While *Heavenly Love* concludes by stating that with this purified vision "thy bright radiant eyes shall plainely see / Th'Idee of his pure glorie, present still / Before thy face" (283-85), *Heavenly Beautie* extends the reference to Plato's Ideas by explaining that there are heavenly sights "Yet fairer" (85) than "those Idees on hie, / Enraunged be, which Plato so admyred" (82, 83), though Plato had reached a higher level than "these heavens which we here see" (64). This passage (50-101) builds by intensification from the earthly Sun and Moon, through Plato's Ideas, higher to the Angels and Archangels, and finally to the Highest, who is "farre beyond all telling" (101) which echoes the awe of Saint John at his visions of the New Jerusalem. Spenser's Platonism, then, is subsumed by his apocalyptic Christianity.

At the end of *Heavenly Beautie*, which refers to Apocalypse-fulfilled, the earthly beloved has been replaced by Christ the Beloved (241), described in feminine terms. In contrast to the fleshly-oriented scene of Pleasure's Paradise in the first hymn, this fourth and final one depicts a celestial scene of union with Christ which is far beyond the flesh. From "Within the closet of her chastest bowre" (249) Christ bestows "Th'eternall portion of her precious dowre" (250). The bridal analogies continue as the veil is lifted:

> None thereof worthy be, but those whom shee

Vouchsafeth to her presence to receave,
And letteth them her lovely face to see,
Whereof such wondrous pleasures they conceave,
And sweete contentment, that it doth bereave
Their soule of sense, through infinite delight,
And them transport from flesh into the spright.

In which they see such admirable things,
As carries them into an extasy" (255-61).

Thus, *Heavenly Beautie* closes with a transcendent vision that parallels Van der Noot's use of Apocalypse to close his *Theatre* and Spenser's use of apocalyptic evanescence to end the poems in "The Ruines of Time."

Other Reformist exegetes describe such future resolution of fleshly dissonance into spiritual consonance. John Bale, commenting on Revelation 2:1, illustrates the earthly longing of the congregation of Ephesus for such transcendence: "dwelling in this earthly mansion . . . full of wholesome desires . . . she longeth for to be delivered from this body of death, she coveteth to be *dissolved* and to be with Christ; yea, fervently she desireth to rest in the arms of her almighty spouse."[155] Likewise, Heinrich Bullinger, in *Hundred Sermons upon Apocalypse* uses bridal analogies to describe the spiritual consummation that takes place after the rapture of the elect: "[A]t the resurrection cometh the marriage of the lamb, that is of Christ our redeemer. Then are we carried to meet Christ in the air, then he brings in his wife into the bed chamber of eternal glory and bliss, then shall be holden that feast and deinty supper, then shall the bride enjoy for ever

[155] Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (1570), 23-24. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

the love of the bridegroom. This shall be verily the marriage of the lamb."[156] The ecstasy described by Spenser and these Protestant commentators is a spiritual and epistemological rather than a physical consummation, and the word "conceave" in Spenser's poem refers not to the procreation typically invoked in epithalamia, but to the realization of mystical knowledge that had been out of reach on earth, but for faith.

Upon the completion of the transformation of vision, earthly love is no more, for *Heavenly Beautie* states: "And that faire lamp, which useth to enflame / The hearts of men with selfe consuming fyre, / Thenceforth seemes fowle, and full of sinfull blame" (274-76). The final stanzas of the poem bear notable similarity to Van der Noot's *Theatre*:

> Ah then my hungry soule, which long hast fed
> On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,
> And with false beauties flattring bait misled,
> Hast after vaine deceiptfull shadowes sought,
> Which all are fled, and now have left thee nought,
> But late repentance through thy follies prief;
> Ah ceasse to gaze on matter of thy grief.
>
> And looke at last up to that soveraine light,
> . . . . . .
> Even the love of God, which loathing brings
> Of this vile world, and these gay seeming things;

[156] Bullinger, *A hundred Sermons upon the Apocalyps of Jesu Christe* (London: John Day, 1561), 563. *Early English Books Online* (accessed December 2005).

With whose sweete pleasures being so possest,

Thy straying thoughts henceforth for ever rest. (288-95, 298-301)

Like Van der Noot's *Theatre,* this passage fosters an awareness of the evanescent glories of earth, and effects a reprioritizing of them by contemplation of apocalyptic closure.

The 1590 version of the ending of *The Faerie Queene*, Book Three contains the poem's greatest image of reunion, an image which sounds remarkably similar to that of the union with Christ described above in *Heavenly Beautie*. After their long and turbulent separation, Scudamour glimpses Amoret:

There did he see, that most on earth him ioyd,

His dearest loue, the comfort of his dayes,

Whose too long absence him had sore annoyd,

And wearied his life with dull delayes:

Straight he vpstarted from the loathed layes. (III.xii.44a)

Scudamour rises from his prostrate position on the "cold earth" (III.xii.43a), abandons his complaints ("loathed layes"), and runs to embrace Amoret. The reunion is described in terms of a heavenly transcendence:

But she faire Lady ouercommen quight

Of huge affection, did in *pleasure* melt,

And in *sweete* rauishment pourd out her spright.

No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,

But like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt. (III.xii.45a, italics mine)

The terms used here are analogous to those used in *Heavenly Beautie* to describe those who see Christ face to face:

Wherof such wondrous *pleasures* they conceave,
And *sweete* contentment, that it doth bereave
Their soule of sense, through infinite delight,
And them transport from flesh into the spright.

In which they see such admirable things,
As carries them into an extasy. (255-61)

Like those who see Christ are carried "into an extasy," that "bereave[s] / Their soule[s] of sense," Scudamour and Amoret are overcome in "ravishment" that renders them "like two senceles stocks." In this moment of union, Scudamour and Amoret are even more enraptured than Redcrosse after his vision of the New Jerusalem, when "dazed were his eyne, / Through passing brightnesse, which did quite *confound / His feeble sence*, and too exceeding shine" (I.x.67, italics mine).

The unity of the couple in the original end of Book Three appears so complete, in fact, that the narrator claims:

Had ye them seene, ye would haue surely thought,
That they had beene that faire *Hermaphrodite*,
Which that rich *Romane* of white marble wrought,
And in his costly Bath causd to bee site:
So seemd those two, as growne together quite. (III.xii.46a)

As Lauren Silberman points out, since no one has satisfactorily identified the particular statue in the passage, the statue "may be purely imaginary."[157] Furthermore, even if the passage refers to a real statue, it is significant that Spenser would compare the heavenly

[157] Silberman, "Hermaphrodite," *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, 357.

embrace of Scudamour and Amoret to a work of plastic art: the comparison highlights the notion of artifice rather than reality.

Either way, the erasure of the reunion that takes place in the revised ending of 1596 marks one of the most prominent disappearing acts in the poem. Structurally and thematically, the revision is literally central to the poem. There is no critical consensus as to why Spenser chose to undo the reunion of Scudamour and Amoret.[158] Joanne Craig claims that "Spenser struck out the five concluding stanzas of Book Three to make a transition between the old Book Three and the new Book Four," thus allowing continuity of the quest.[159] She adds that because Spenser "saw no need to bring what goes before into line with what follows," he failed to smooth out the narrative with a new reunion scene between Scudamour and Amoret when they later do cross paths. Craig claims that this is "apparently because he has not noticed."

However, a comparison between Spenser's revision of the ending of Book Three and his revision in *Fowre Hymnes* yields another possibility, one that enriches my claims about the adaptation of Van der Noot's apocalyptic mysticism in Spenser's *Complaints* as well as in *The Faerie Queene*. Although Joanne Craig discusses *Fowre Hymnes* and *The Faerie Queene* Book Three as two separate examples of Spenser's strategy of "revision by augmentation" rather than by substitution, she makes no thematic correlation between

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[158] For some of the critical readings of Spenser's hermaphrodite and its revision, see Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltmore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of* The Faerie Queene (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Camille A. Paglia, "The Apollonian Androgyne and the *Faerie Queene,*" *ELR* 9:42-63; C.S. Lewis, *Spenser's Images of Life*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

[159] Craig, Joanne, "Double Nature: Augmentation in Spenser's Poetry," *English Studies in Canada* IX.4 (December 1983): 386.

the methodology of the two revisions.[160] Yet the means of revision in the two works, both published in 1596, make the same apocalyptic argument. In his dedication to *Fowre Hymnes*, Spenser claims that in the latter two hymns in the work, he "resolved at least to amend, and by way of retraction to reforme [the first two hymns], making in stead of those two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestiall."[161] Seemingly, then, the two latter poems are meant to replace the previous inferior ones. However, Spenser published all four poems together, therefore inviting readers to see for themselves just why the latter two poems are worthy to replace the previous ones. Similarly, though the new ending of *The Faerie Queene* Book Three is ostensibly intended to replace the one that had been previously published, those reading concordentially would have come to it with the hermaphrodite still in mind. That is part of the point of Spenser's "revision by augmentation":[162] in order to understand the superiority of the celestial, one must first experience the jarring imperfections of the earthly. Protestant readers, in their habitual act of collation, would have been shaken by the dissonance of holding the memory of the transcendent hermaphroditic union of Scudamour and Amoret in mind while simultaneously reading the new version in which the entire event does not occur. The effect is not unlike that created by a lawyer who intentionally makes a damning statement in court, then quickly says, "withdrawn."

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[160] Ibid., 385-86. John Bale observes the idea of "revision by augmentation" in the progress of scripture which culminates in Revelation: "A prophecye is this *Apocalips* called, and is much more excellent then all the other prophecies. Lyke as the lyght is more precious then the shadowe, the veritie then the figure, the new testament then the olde, and the gospell then the lawe, so is this holy oracle more precyous then they." Like Spenser's method of revision, the New Testament seems to replace the Old, yet both are printed together. The use of "revision by augmentation," then, makes the point that readers must have one part to appreciate the significance of the other. John Bale, "A Preface vnto the Christian Reader," in *The Image of Both Churches* (1570), sig. [Aiii^{v}]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 25, 2007).

[161] Spenser, *Fowre Hymnes*, in *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*, ed. Hugh Maclean (London and New York: Norton, 1982), 507.

[162] This term is borrowed from Joanne Craig (see note 71).

Though the judge may instruct the jury that the statement should be stricken from the record and from consideration, the image and its effect remain. Once readers have been given the cognition of beautiful union, and then the cognition that the union never existed, they will experience the cognitive dissonance of longing for such harmony to be real, and will be motivated to seek it through faith in greater, permanent, heavenly realization.

Thus, the description of the hermaphrodite in *The Faerie Queene* as a statue rather than a living being, like the first two poems in *Fowre Hymnes*, bears within itself the critique of its own philosophy. By likening the embrace of Scudamour and Amoret to a statue of a hermaphrodite, a statue which is most likely itself a fictional creation of Spenser rather than one which was sculpted in real wood or stone, the unity of the transcendent embrace is several times removed from earthly reality. Neoplatonists such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola read Genesis 1:27 (God's creation of man in his own image) and Genesis 2:24 (they shall become one flesh) as hermaphroditical: first in that the ideal creation of God was an androgynous being in his image, and second in that the union of Christian marriage refigured that ideal.[163] Similarly, Frenchman Etienne

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[163] See A.R. Cirillo, "The Fair Hermaphrodite"; Lauren Silberman on "Hermaphrodite" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia,* 357-58; Wayne Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men's Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 189-91, 194-96; Thomas Roche, *The Kindly Flame* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); Syrithe Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 149. Pugh concurs that "the 1590 edition closes on an image which invokes Ovid's Hermaphroditus not, as in I.vii, as a warning against unmanning sensuality, but as an emblem of marriage, in which man 'shal cleave to his wife, and they shalbe one flesh'." Pugh adds that the second installment of the poem, in contrast, bears "the skeptical and pessimistic tones of Ovidian satire and exile." Pugh explains, "In the dark vision of society which prevails in the 1596 edition Amoret's and Scudamour's achievement of a true love-union has no place, and the changed ending to their tale, with the lovers perpetually separated and Scudamour racked by the jealous distrust which flows from his own predatory attitude towards her, is one index of a society marred by iniquitous 'maistrie' at all levels." Pugh does see "coherence between the two installments and the two aspects of Spenser's Ovidian vision which they reflect": his "high valuation of faithful mutual love" and "his political concerns and adoption of the skeptical and alienated stance of Ovid's exile," 149. Thomas Roche notes that in *The French Academie*, (London, 1618), Pierre de la Primaudaye applies the hermaphroditic notion of the soul's mirror to

Pasquier, in his *Monophylo: A philosophical discourse and division of love*, published in London in 1572, creates a dialogue which debates the meaning of true love. Monophylo, suffering with chaste love himself, is given the most authoritative voice, and declares:

> The true and onley Androgina is that which was presented unto us . . . by a marveylous effect in the person of Adam, when this mightie Architeuctor of all things, of a sovereigne wisdome reserved onely to himselfe, framed of one bodie, and one spirite, two bodyes and two myndes, which proves this amitie to bee more devine and heavenly than the common sort can presume.[164]

Pasquier, like Spenser, sees Plato as having received a partial revelation of Christian truth, and thus places Plato's Androgina in the context of the creation of Genesis. As Lauren Silberman and James Nohrnberg have noted, such hermaphroditism also could be intimated in the fact that the names of several lovers in *The Faerie Queene* fit together into coherent wholes: Scudamoret, Britomartegall, Thamedway, and Claribellamour.[165] The implication of this unity of names is implicit, but never explicitly realized in the poem.

Even if Spenser ascribes to the Neoplatonic interpretation of one flesh as a hermaphroditic, Edenic ideal, his revision of the ending of Book Three foregrounds the notion that such an ideal is too harmonious for earth. The union of Scudamour and Amoret is too unified for this world, where such unity always dissipates. Spenser (in

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friendship as well: "Whereby it appeareth to us, that a friend is a second selfe, and that whosoever would take upon him this title in regard of another, he must transforme himselfe into his nature whom he purposeth to love, and that with a steadfast and settled minde to continue so for ever. Hereupon one of the auncients speaking of him that loveth perfectly, saith that he liveth in another man's body" (quoted in Roche 135-36n). In *Fowre Hymnes*, particularly the last two hymns, Spenser extends this notion by describing the mirror which God the creator placed in each human soul to reflect his divine attributes.

[164] Pasquier, *Monophylo*, 34-35. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).

[165] See James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of* The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 606-7; and Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of* The Faerie Queene (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 49-70.

these two interwoven endings that, taken together, indicate an affinity with Van der Noot's concepts but also a poetic achievement far surpassing anything in Van der Noot) shows us a mesmerizing image of the most beautiful that earth has to offer, then snatches it away because it can only be permanent in heaven. The unity of Scudamour and Amoret is not that described by John Bale in his *Image of Both Churches*, as he comments on the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:

> And as concerning the cytie within the great strete thereof was as of pure golde, so fyne, fayre, and cleare all the bryght shining glasse, that *maye be séene through without any maner of impediment or dymnesse*. Thys strete is the large commynalty or the sayntes, whom the father of heauen by his power made of froward stones, the perfect children of Abraham, whan he couched them here togyther in the verity of one christian fayth, & shall here after ioyne in such perfection of loue as possible *can not be dissolued*. Precious are they here through fayth in Christes bloud, and there shal they be pure both in loue and lyfe incorruptible. Oure reioyse (sayth saint Paule) is not in carnall wisdome, but in the greate grace of God, in singlenesse of hart, & in a sincere fayth. Your glorye are we, euen as you are ours also in the day of our Lord Iesus Christ.[166] (italics mine)

Unlike this perfect love of Apocalypse-fulfilled, which *cannot be dissolved*, Spenser, in his retraction of the original ending, calls attention to the perpetual breaking of earthly love and beauty.

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[166] Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (1570), 110. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

The replacement of the first ending by the new one highlights the problem of the indiscriminate transience of this world. The original ending was preceded by Britomart's observation that the spell of Busirane has been broken:

> Returning backe, those goodly roomes, which erst
> She saw so rich and royally arayd,
> Now vanisht utterly, and cleane subuerst
> She found, and all their glory quite decayd. (III.xii.42)

Though Busirane's house of torment had been gruesome, Britomart still laments the disappearance of the splendor that had surrounded the horror at its heart. However, the "dreadfull flames" which had impeded her course of rescuing Amoret have also disappeared ("quenched quite, like a consumed torch, / That erst all entrers wont so cruelly to scorch") (III.xii.42), which alludes to the apocalyptic reversal of the curse of Genesis 3:24, in which angels with flaming swords were set to forbid entrance to Eden and access to the tree of life. Thus, the original ending is prefaced by an allusion to Apocalypse fulfilled, which (like the Apocalyptic opening of the gates and abolishing of the sea, death and night) facilitates the union with the beloved: "And there shalbe no more cursse, but the throne of God & of the Lambe shalbe in it, and His servants shal serve him. And they shal se his face, and his Name shalbe in their forheades" (Revelation 22:3, 4). Therefore, the disappearance of the flames transitions smoothly into the scene of reunion of Scudamoret, which also figures a reversal of the postlapsarian separation of the ideal hermaphroditic being, raising Scudamor from "cold earth" (III.xii.43a) to Amoret's "body bright" (III.xii.45a).

The revised ending, in contrast, works like the technique of Van der Noot's *Theatre* and Spenser's "Ruines," taking a previously offered intimation of the apocalyptic glory to come, but breaking the image, and thus creating in readers the same awareness of earthly imperfection that led John to write his Apocalypse. The addition of the new stanzas creates a chain of references to disappearance which argues that the transient nature of earthly things is indiscriminate: whether beautiful, evil, or both at once, all things worldly will fade. In the revised ending, Britomart's lament for the riches that have "vanisht utterly" (III.xii.42) is now followed by the additional emphasis on the disappearance of the flames that in the new stanza have "vanisht quite" (xii.43). This new stanza closes, however, with Busirane's lament at the disappearance of his evil spell: "Th'Enchaunter selfe, which all that fraud did frame, / To haue efforst the loue of that faire lasse, / Seeing his worke now wasted deepe engrieued was" (xii.43). Britomart laments the evanescence of beauty; Busirane grieves the disappearance of his "fraud," but the most intense disappearance comes in the final two added stanzas. When Britomart and Amoret arrive at the place where Scudamor should have been waiting to embrace his love, he is nowhere to be found. Thinking Britomart to have been consumed by the flames, Scudamor left in despair to look "for further aide" (xii.45). Therefore, the revision undermines the gesture toward apocalyptic closure represented by the extinguishing of the impeding flames. More importantly, it erases the "sweete rauishment" of the hermaphroditic embrace that, if lasting, also would reverse the curse of Genesis. Taken together, then, the original stanzas and the new ones create in readers a dissonance like that effected by *A Theatre* and "The Ruines of Time:" readers glimpse a shadow of transcendence, lament the fall of it, then long for a more permanent haven.

This pattern is seen throughout the remainder of the poem, as the very first lines of Book Four promise: "Of louers sad calamities of old, / Full many piteous stories doe remaine" (IV.i.1). The revision (by augmentation) of the hermaphrodite passage is the most intense disappearing act of the poem, but from Book One through the end of the work, harmonious love is elusive. After seeing the vision of New Jerusalem, Redcrosse states, "As for loose loues they'are vaine, and vanish into nought" (I.x.62). By "loose loues," he means not promiscuous or lustful ones, for he will be returning to Una, the most chaste of women. Instead, "loose" refers here to the tendency of all love, even the most pure, to evade our earthbound grasp and "vanish into nought." Similarly, Calidore in Book Six, who stands "long astonished in spright, / And rapt with pleasaunce" (VI.x.17) as he observes the dance of the Graces and Colin's love, breaks the spell with his earthly presence: "But soone as he appeared to their vew, / They vanisht all away out of his sight" (VI.x.18). The disappearance causes Colin to break his bag-pipe and leaves Calidore to ask, "But why when I them saw, fled they away from me?" (VI.x.18, 19).

There is a mystical and edifying purpose behind this tantalization of figures in *The Faerie Queene*, and in all the poems discussed here, as well as the tantalization of readers. The goal of these works is a reprioritization of vision. The cumulative effect of the recapitulative disappearances of the poem is to heighten the longing for permanence, resolution, stability, and closure.[167] The chasing of the elusive image of a beloved's face

[167] Carol Kaske makes a similar claim in regard to the contradictions in Spenser's poem—a claim that resembles the theory of cognitive dissonance: "The hermeneutical steps that Martyr recommends model the experience of a reader of one of Spenser's contradictions: first, reading concordentially; second, perceiving a contradiction; third reconciling by a distinction that reduces the primary statement to a heuristic and propaedeutic rather than an ultimate validity," 129. Kaske's third factor here is consistent with Festinger's observations of the means of coping with dissonance, for he lists reduction of the importance of one of the conflicting cognitions as a means to lessen the dissonance. However, I would argue as my third factor that another of Festinger's options is most relevant: the addition of another

to fill the mirror of one's soul leads to the necessary and efficacious spiritual martyrdom of those who would love. The obscure yet mesmerizing vision is reduced to "fraile fancies" and complaints, questioning how long the unjust state of a world in which the lustful are gratified and the righteous are frustrated will last. The lament serves an affective function in apocalyptic literature. As modern-day Revelation scholar John Collins explains, apocalypses evoke "the impression of the inadequacy of the present world and the need to derive revelation from elsewhere."[168] Once this longing is stirred, according to David Aune, apocalyptic literature encourages "recipients of the message . . . to modify their cognitive and behavioral stance in conformity with transcendent perspectives."[169] In light of the dissonant cognitions of 1) the righteous who suffer the long ravages of time and 2) a righteous God who is aware of the suffering but allows time's continuance, the reduction in dissonance, beyond the initial bewilderment expressed in complaints, comes in the form of adding other cognitions: the faith that there is a purpose in the suffering, and the faith that apocalyptic transcendence will eventually come. In 1580, in *A sermon preached in S. Peters Church . . . wherin is intreated of the second coming of Christ unto judgement, and of the end of the world*, John Chardon poignantly expresses such sentiment:

> [T]here is nothing more certaine then that Christ shal come unto judgement: Nothing more certain then that the fashion of this worlde shalbe changed. The fashion of this worlde that now is, shal vanish: Not onely the creature, but wee

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cognition to help make sense of the contradiction. In my opinion, Spenser's apocalyptic poetics foster the addition of the cognitions of faith.

[168] John Collins, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia* 14: (1979). Ed. John J. Collins (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 12.

[169] Aune, David E. "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65-96. Ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986), 87.

> also that now mourne in our selves, and wayte for the adoption of the children of God, even the deliverance of our bodies, shalbee delivered from the bondage of corruption.[170]

The added cognition or belief in such deliverance is the means of reducing dissonance which enables one such as Britomart to move beyond her own complaint in III.iv.8-10, to encourage Scudamour to rise from his more desperate lament and continue seeking his own lost love (xi.19-20).

Therefore, there is an underlying irony in the statement in the first of the *Fowre Hymnes*: "By these, O Love, thou doest thy entrance make, / Unto thy heaven" (273-74). By the pains of their efforts at human love, the lovers *are* brought to heaven, but not in the primary sense of heavenly sexual consummation intended by this speaker. The visions and fancies that vanish before them are neither evil in themselves, nor entirely vain. "By these," the longing is enacted for the transcendent divine love that *will* bring them to Heaven, eventually. Ironically, according to Van der Noot's Commentary to *A Theatre for Worldlings,* Petrarch himself came to lament his fixation with the vision of Laura:

> And thus as he hadde passed over many a yeare in greate and unfayned love towards hir (during hir life time) what with flatterie and what in commendyng of hir beautie, caused him upon a sodaine change after hir departure (as it is sayde) so long a time to mourne and to lamente, but considering with him self, that there was no comfort, hope or salvation in worldely love to be loked for, turned

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[170] John Chardon, *A sermon preached in S. Peters Church in Exeter the 6. day of December last: wherein is intreated of the second coming of Christ unto judgement, and of the end of the world* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1580), 7-8. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007). Note that in this passage, Chardon is collating a number of scriptural references, including I Corinthians 7 and Romans 8.

> himselfe to Godwarde, lamenting and sorrowing the rest of hys lyfe, and repented hym of his former life so ydlely and undecently spent.[171]

While Van der Noot praises Petrarch for turning at the end of his life from sexual love to contemplation of the divine, Spenser does not promote encratism. As Syrithe Pugh points out, "Guyon's Stoic temperance" in Book Two of *The Faerie Queene* is as troubling as the "perverse expressions of sexuality in the Bower" which he destroys.[172] Spenser's work does, however, call for the realization of the imperfections in human love even in the best of conditions, and thereby, like Sidney, argues for a recontextualization of the Petrarchan, Neoplatonic tradition of the ladder of love.

In Spenser's work, Platonic idealism is subsumed by or encompassed within the more comprehensive apocalyptic Christianity to which it is subordinate. Thus, while Silberman's claim that "Books III and IV manifest an intellectual flexibility and exuberance and a joy in the protean as well as an uncompromising sense of how many ways the mortal world falls short of its most beautiful ideals"[173] is true, the sense of falling short predominates in the recapitulative deferrals and disappearances, in order to fulfill part of the poem's apocalyptic goals. As Adela Collins explains, "The task of Revelation was to overcome the unbearable tension perceived by the author between what was and what ought to have been. His purpose was to create that tension for readers unaware of it, to heighten it for those who felt it already, and then to overcome it in an act of literary imagination."[174] *The Faerie Queene* accomplishes this purpose by showing readers how the present condition, even in its fleeting moments of glory, falls short of

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[171] Van der Noot, Commentary to *A Theatre*, 14-15.
[172] Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 113-15.
[173] Silberman, *Transforming Desire*, 11.
[174] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 141.

"that blessed renovation of the world" described in Fulke's *Praelections*, and in Anthonie Marten's *A Second Sound*, in which Marten reminds believers of the world to come: "Where time shall be no more time; where night and darknesse shall be banished . . . Where yee shall neither lust nor desire . . . Where ye shall live in pleasure and felicitie for evermore."[175] Thus, *The Faerie Queene* works, like Apocalypse itself, to lead its figures and its readers to long for "that Sabaoths sight" of otherworldly, consummate love and desire permanently fulfilled.

Spenser presents a current world aching for the apocalyptic golden age to come. Thus, his view parallels that of Fulke, who writes in *Praelections*:

> Wherfore then do we so much esteeme this world which waxeth old, & almost rotten for age**,** & not rather with dayly praiers earnestly grone for that new heauen & new earth, in which righteousnes doth dwell. *For the first heauen and the first earth were passed away.* . . . All thinges are so subiecte to vanitie & corruption, in this heauen & this earth, in which we nowe liue, that they must of necessitie be abolished, that there may be place for the new heauen, & the new earth**.**[176]

Like Van der Noot's *Theatre* and Spenser's "Ruines of Time," Fulke's *Praelections* describes the breaking of an earthly icon and its replacement by a perfected eternal counterpart:

> And hir [the Church's] state is compared to the most holy citie new Ierusalem, garnished with a newe & wonderfull buylding, whose buylder is God him selfe, whose foundations are layd from heauen, which doth so much exceade the glory

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[175] Anthonie Marten, *A Second Sound, or Warning of the Trumpet unto Judgement, wherein is proved, that all the tokens of the Latter day, are not onelie come, but welneere finished* (London: Thomas Orwin for Andrew Maunsell, 1589), 39. *Early English Books Online* (accessed February 2007).
[176] Fulke, *Praelections*, 137. *Early English Books Online* (accessed January 2007).

> & beautie of that old Ierusalem, as it hath more noble beginnings. For that Ierusalem was set in an vneuen place, of the earth & not well watred with springes, first buylded of certen prophane Iebusites, so often vanquished & at length rased vp from the foundations & made euen with the ground. But this most holy citie hath god for her buylder, & she came downe from heauen, bringing all the bewty of heauen with hir.[177]

So it is with love, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Like the old Jerusalem, love in this poem has been "set in an vneven place", and is "so often vanquished" and "made euen with the ground." The delays, deferrals, and disappearances of love in the poem mark the belief that perfectly divine love is out of sight to this earth, as well as the faith that one day love will be perfected in its apocalyptic consummation, when the soul's mirror completely reflects its Creator, as originally designed. This restoration to the Edenic state is expressed by James Sanford in his dedication to James Brocarde's 1582 commentary on Revelation. Sanford states that in the time of Plato and Aristotle "all things were judged by the outwarde shewe, and sacrifices done with solemne sights, which ceased at the coming of Chryste in flesh" and adds that "[N]ow at the coming of Christ in spirite, or in the tyme of the holy Ghoste all thynges are to be measured by the inwarde man beinge become the perfect Image of God, deformities of the body ought now to fayle in discovering mens qualities." *The Faerie Queene* manifests a belief that this will be love intensified to its highest degree, so that it will "so much exceade the glory & beautie" of love in the fallen age.

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[177] Ibid.

Chapter Three – "To Signifie Nothing Else": *The Faerie Queene,* Apocalyptic Hermeneutics, and the Fight of Faith

"But because the godly, uppon whose shoulders this burden and care doth rest, might demaund, how long time this other beast should rage, and waste the kingdome of Christe, and blaspheme the name of the eternal God: Daniel preventeth this thing and saith They shalbe delivered into his hands, until a time and times, and half a time. In whiche dark kinde of speaking, he seemeth to signifie nothing else, but that the Saints must constantly abide in that fight, whether the time, that they must fight in, be long or short. For no certain determinate time is declared, and therefore none must be looked for" – Heinrich Bullinger, *Of the end of the world* (1580), sig. [Hii^{v}].

For centuries, The Book of Revelation has tempted its exegetes to claim absolute mastery over its eschatological mysteries. This thirst to lay eyes on the sacred secrets is typified in the words of James Brocarde, who states in the Preface to his 1582 *The Revelation of S. Jhon Reveled*, "And here shall seeme to bee the opening of the Arcke, into which we have all wyshed to looke."[178] Here, Brocarde compares revealing the meaning of Revelation to looking into the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant, first mentioned in Exodus 25. He fails to mention, however, that the ark, which contained the sacred word of God revealed to his Prophet Moses, was to be handled with extreme caution. In fact, looking into it brought death on one occasion: "And [God] smote of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had loked in the Arke of the Lord" (I Samuel 6:19), and touching it brought death on another occasion: "But the wrath of the Lord was kindled against Uzzá, and he smote him, because he laied his hand upon [the] Arke: so he dyed there before God" (I Chronicles 13:10). Though John Foxe does include a number of people killed in the sixteenth century for reading or merely possessing a copy of

[178] Iacopo Brocardo [James Brocarde], *The Revelation of S. Jhon Reveled*, trans. James Sanford (London: Thomas Marshe, 1582), fol. 3 B2[^{r}]. *Early English Books Online*. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home (accessed March 2007).

Apocalypse in English,[179] misinterpreting the Book of Revelation generally has not brought the death penalty, unlike handling the Ark.

However, for as long as Revelation has existed, interpreters (who shun cautious reserve but instead claim fixed, historically-specific meaning) consistently join the ranks of those whose folly is proven simply by the slow, methodical passing of time.[180] The widespread fascination with such fixed calculations in late sixteenth-century England persisted, despite the admonitions by those such as John Dove, who in a 1594 sermon refuting such claims, states, "Some Protestants have published a booke [identified in the margins of Dove's sermon as *The Second Comming of Christ*] greatly esteemed of amongst the common people, in which is maintayned this argument: That the frame of Heaven must needs be dissolved within a certainty of daies. . . ."[181] Those seeking such certainty of eschatological knowledge were failing to heed the warnings of Martin Luther, who, in his 1545 *Preface to the Revelation of St. John,* writes of Apocalypse, "Many have tried their hands at it, but until this very day they have reached no certainty;

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[179] John Foxe, *Actes and monuments,* vol. 2, first half (London: John Day, 1583). For example, see the story of a man referred to as Stile, whose martyrdom account is related as follows: "With him there was burned also a book of the Apocalips, which belike he was wont to read upon. This book when he saw fastened unto the stake to be burned with him, lifting up his voyce, O blessed Apocalips (sayd he) how happy am I, that shal be burned with thee? And so this good man, and the blessed Apocalips were both together in the fire consumed," 1279.

[180] Both Hal Lindsay, in his 1970 *Late Great Planet Earth*, and Edgar Whisenant, in *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*, predicted that the end of the world as we know it would come in 1988. Obviously, they miscalculated. If we rewind 400 years to the time just before 1588, we see that writers had made the same predictions regarding that particular year, but were also misguided. See Lindsay (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) and Whisenant (Edgar Whisenant, 1988). Interestingly, Lindsay's book had gone through 25 printings as of December 1998. Whisenant, apparently undaunted by his failed prediction regarding 1988, has continued to publish dozens of books, including titles such as *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989* and the slightly less confident sounding *23 Reasons Why a Pre-tribulation Rapture Looks Like It Will Occur on Rosh-Hashanah 1993.*

[181] John Dove, *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse, the 3 of November 1594 intreating of the Second coming of Christ, and the disclosing of Antichrist, with a confutation of diverse conjectures concerning the end of the world* (London: V.S. for William Jaggard, 1594). *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 12, 2007).

and some have brewed into it many stupid things out of their own heads."[182] Likewise, Heinrich Bullinger, in a sermon published in 1580 entitled *Of the end of the world* cautions:

> I doo advise all men, heerin earnestly to take heed, lest in scanning and sifting out of the time or els the day or year of the last end, we be to bolde or rather to rash: as some lewd felowes there have been of late yeeres, who have (as it were) with their finger pointed out the day and the year of the finall judgement, therein shewing forth their folly worthy to be mocked of all men.[183]

These exegetes warn that not only do the erroneous predictions make the interpreters themselves look foolish, but the errors reflect negatively on those who had given credence to the claims, and they lead to a skewed conception of true faith.

The potential for getting it wrong, then, should inspire thinking believers to consider the fundamental issue of prophecy's function in regard to defining faith and in regard to awaiting the eschatological fulfillment of faith. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, taking its place amid the sixteenth-century debates on these issues, argues this point. In *Transforming Desire*, Lauren Silberman states that in Books Three and Four, "Spenser examines the role of desire in both moving us to function in an uncertain world and tempting us to foreclose that uncertainty by various strategies that seek to frame knowledge in such a way as to posit total mastery of it."[184] She adds that "Spenser

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[182] Martin Luther, *Preface to the Revelation of Saint John (I)* (1545), in *Works of Martin Luther,* v. 6 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 480.

[183] Heinrich Bullinger, *Of the end of the world and judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ to come, and of the moste perilous dangers of this our most corrupt age* [*The first Sermon*], trans. from Latin by Thomas Potter (London: John Allde, 1580), sig. D[r]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 13, 2007).

[184] Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of* The Faerie Queene (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 4-5. Silberman also claims, "The conclusion to Book IV validates what has been implicit throughout Books III and IV: the value of invention, risk, and improvisation over against the temptation to play it safe and seek guarantees . . ." 141.

exposes fictions of total understanding and total control as just that: fictions, seductive, and empowering ones, but fictions nonetheless."[185] Though Silberman mentions Apocalypse only in passing, sixteenth-century discourses on prophecy, particularly The Book of Revelation and Esdras, are quite relevant to the insights that she reaches through other paths. In Elizabethan culture, there is no better example of what Silberman calls "strategies that seek to frame knowledge in such a way as to posit total mastery of it" than the hermeneutical strategies in the numerous apocalyptic commentaries and sermons of the day. In fact, the engagement of *The Faerie Queene* itself with these dialogues is a primary explanation for its concern, throughout the poem, with dispelling seductive fictions of total understanding, and, in turn, reminding readers of the elements of genuine faith.

In several instances, *The Faerie Queene* illustrates the imprudent reliance of figures upon precise interpretations of prophecies. Most often in the poem, the interpretation of prophecy is sought (as by many contemporary sixteenth-century Protestants of England and the Continent) for comfort, certainty, and security in the face of uncertainty as to how the future will unfold. For example, shortly after she is afflicted with lovesickness for Artegall, Britomart is taken to hear Merlin, whom the narrator calls "the Prophet" (III.iii.21), in hopes that Merlin can tell her where to find this man she has seen in her mirror. As Harry Berger, Jr. points out, "Spenser lists Merlin's magical powers (iii.8-14) only to relegate them to the archaic cluster of legends and superstitions

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Arguing that risk-taking is central to Spenserian poetics, Silberman explains, "Spenser's reader is denied the security of separating the meaning of Spenser's work from the process through which that meaning is produced and conveyed. . . . [R]etrospective vision cannot be assured in advance, and the ultimate 'Sabaoths sight' is something for which one must pray. Spenser exposes fictions of total understanding and total control as just that: fictions, seductive, and empowering ones, but fictions nonetheless . . ." 42.

[185] Ibid. See also Anne Lake Prescott on cognitive dissonance and Carol Kaske on moral flexibility.

which adhere to the Merlin he is now revising for his own purposes. This Merlin will offer aid through prophecy."[186] As the plea of Britomart's nurse to Merlin reveals, the aid would come in the form of certain knowledge of Britomart's future, from this one whom Britomart and Glauce see as a source of sacred knowledge, much as Brocarde views the Ark of the Covenant and the Book of Revelation. Glauce implores Merlin, "Sith then thou knowest all our griefe, / (For what doest not thou know?) of grace I pray, / Pitty our plaint, and yield us meet reliefe" (iii.21).

The prophecy spoken by Merlin about Britomart's future, Britain's future, and Britomart's prominent part in that future is not entirely comforting, for it reveals that she and Artegall are destined to marry and have a son, but then to be separated by Artegall's death. Furthermore, it illuminates a cyclical pattern of history based on recapitulated rise and fall of kingdoms, a cyclical pattern that shows no apparent sign of culminating in a time of extended peace for the just as depicted in the Apocalypse's millennial reign of Christ.[187] In fact, after Merlin predicts "Then shall a royall virgin raine" (iii.49), he soon adds, "But yet the end is not" (50). He then has a momentary fit of paralyzed silence, "As overcomen of the spirites powre, / Or other ghastly spectacle dismayd, / That secretly he saw, yet note discourse" (50), implying that he sees a perpetuation of the cycle of rise and wane of evil that seems endless. Even the reign of Elizabeth, the "royall virgin" (49) whom some had hailed as a new Constantine ushering in a reformed Christian era, will not alter the mercilessly recurring pattern to come. In regard to Merlin's prophecy, Berger notes that "[d]evelopment from cycle to cycle is easy to show, but it is hardly

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[186] Harry Berger, Jr., "The Structure of Merlin's Chronicle in The Faerie Queene III (iii)," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 9.1 (1969): 41.

[187] In Apocalypse Chapter 20, Satan is bound for a thousand years and the believers reign in peace with Christ during that time.

millennial and one may wonder why Britomart conceives 'hope of comfort glad' from what she hears (51)."[188] If her comfort seems a bit shallow, that is because it is. As Kenneth Borris claims, interpretations of Biblical prophecy in Spenser's day "are often highly self-seeking."[189] This passage in which Britomart is comforted by the bittersweet prophecy because it satisfies her immediate desire provides an example prior to those Borris highlights from Book Five.

Though Glauce and Britomart are frightened and confused by Merlin's strange fit, they do leave with the assurance they sought:

> Then, when them selves they well instructed had
> Of all, that needed them to be inquird,
> They both conceiving hope of comfort glad,
> With lighter hearts unto their home retird;
> Where they in secret counsel close conspird,
> How to effect so hard an enterprise,
> And to possesse the purpose they desird. (51)

Their comfort comes largely from their narrow perspective. They seek Merlin's prophecy solely for assurance about the future of Britomart and Artegall, and come away confident that they would find Artegall. Thus, they make plans to bring Merlin's vision to reality, by dressing themselves as knights so that Britomart might fight by Artegall's side as seen in the vision. Focused on the narrow perspective of one woman seeking to unite with one man, Britomart and Glauce are comforted because the prophecy yielded

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[188] Berger, Ibid., 42.
[189] Kenneth Borris, *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy in* The Faerie Queen V (Victoria, B.C., Canada: University of Victoria, 1990), 35.

what they personally sought, regardless of any uncertainties about the larger perspective of time and human history.

Similarly, Book Five again shows Britomart seeking the assurance of prophetic interpretation to comfort her troubled mind in the absence of Artegall. By Book Four, Canto Six, the two have met, fallen in love, and are betrothed. Immediately after Britomart agrees to marry Artegall (IV.vi.41), however, he informs her that he must leave to fulfill his vow to Gloriana. Britomart is "displeasd" (42) that they must part, but Artegall promises to return soon:

> For which his faith with her he fast engaged,
> And thousand vowes from bottome of his hart,
> That all so soone as he by wit or art
> Could that atchieve, whereto he did aspire,
> He unto her would speedily revert:
> No longer space thereto he did desire,
> But till the horned moone three courses did expire. (43)

Thus, Artegall appears to give Britomart a specific time of his return.

The complete phase cycle (or course) of the moon through its eight phases is about 30 days average duration. The second phase is the waxing crescent, or horned moon, in which "The Moon appears to be partly but less than one-half illuminated by direct sunlight. The fraction of the Moon's disk that is illuminated is increasing."[190] The eighth phase is the waning crescent, also known as the horned moon, in which "The Moon appears to be partly but less than one-half illuminated by direct sunlight. The

[190] See "Phases of the Moon and Percent of the Moon Illuminated," U.S. Naval Observatory, Astronomical Applications Department (Sept. 23, 2003). http://aa.usno.navy.mil/ (accessed March 3, 2007).

fraction of the Moon's disk that is illuminated is decreasing."[191] One cycle of the moon goes from the horned moon pointing one way to the horned moon pointing the opposite way over the course of a lunar month, so three courses of the horned moon would be about three months. Therefore, it appears that all Britomart will have to do to mark Artegall's return is look to the sky and track its changes.

However, is Artegall's promise that straightforward? Should Britomart take his words literally? Possibly. Yet there is another possibility. Though Mark Hazard has argued, in regard to his battle with the Egalitarian Giant, that "Artegall is a lawgiver, not a prophet," and that "he has been granted no visions, such as Red Crosse's on the Mount of Holiness,"[192] it is possible that this particular statement by Artegall has a prophetic symbolism which makes it less definitive than it first seems. At the time of the Ottoman Empire, "the crescent moon and star became affiliated with the Muslim world. When the Turks conquered Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453, they adopted the city's existing flag and symbol."[193] In 1589, George Puttenham notes the significance of the symbol as it had become associated with Islam: "Selin Emperour of Turkie gave for his device a crossant [crescent] or new moone, promising to himself increase of glory and enlargement of empire."[194] The rise of the Turks is sometimes referred to in eschatological commentaries and sermons of Spenser's day as the final sign that must be

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[191] Ibid.
[192] Mark Hazard, "The Other Apocalypse: Spenser's Use of 2 Esdras in the Book of Justice," *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 14 (2000): 170.
[193] "The Crescent Moon" (2007) About, Inc. http://islam.about.com (accessed April 20, 2007).
[194] George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie Contriued into three bookes: the first of poets and poesie, the second of proportion, the third of ornament* (London: Richard Field, 1589), in "The Second Booke, Of Proportion Poetical," Chapter XI: "Of Proportion in figure." *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 26, 2007).

fulfilled before Christ's return.[195] Therefore, Artegall, in discussing his return, could be alluding to that of Christ, which was prophesied to occur after this last sign, the rise of Turkish rule, a sign which is rather general and imprecise.

Furthermore, Artegall's reference to three courses of the horned moon could be a prophecy telling only part of what must happen before he can return to Britomart. After Artegall makes this promise to her, we see three episodes (each more intense than its prior) in which Arthur and Artegall must fight and defeat Arabs or Muslims, referred to in the poem as Pagans, Paynims, or Saracens, as Muslims were called during the Crusades (*OED*). First, Arthur quickly defeats "the Pagan" Corflambo (IV.viii.43) who vows by Mahomet that Arthur will die (44-45), and who had "many Nations into thraldome led, / And mightie kingdoms of his force adred" (47). Then, after a much longer, fiercer struggle, Artegall conquers Pollente, "A cursed cruell Sarazin" (V.ii.4)

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[195] In the introduction to his sermons on Revelation published in 1596, George Gifford states that the tenth chapter of Revelation contains "great comfort: for after that darke kingdome of Antichrist, & that cruel kingdome of the Turkes, the Lord commeth downe with brightnes from heaven, with the booke of Gods word open, to expel that smoake of Antichrist," ("The Argument of the booke unto the Christian Reader"). Furthermore, he begins his twentieth sermon on Revelation chapter 10 by stating, "This vision is joyfull: for after the dark kingdom of Antichrist, & that horrible murthering armie of the Turks, a mightie Angell commeth downe from heaven to relieve the poore Church, and to be avenged of those cruel enemies. The Lord preserved a remnant in the middest of those plagues, even when the smoke of the bottomles pit did darken the Sunne and the ayre, when those scorpion locusts did sting and torment men, and when that horrible armie whose horses had heads like lions, & fire, smoke and brimstone comming out of their mouths, and destroying the third part of men: but now he sendeth foorth the Gospell againe, dispelling the darknes and errors which came by the smoke of the pit, scattering and destroying the stinging locusts, reforming his Church, and gathering great multitudes of his Saints together. This vision is fulfilled, or at the least begun to bee fulfilled in our dayes: for we live under the opening of the seventh seale, and under the sounding of the sixt trumpet, as it doth evidently appeare by this chapter. I will come to the text as it lieth. The mightie Angell which commeth downe from heaven is the Lord Iesus, Christ himselfe. . . ." See George Gyffard, *Sermons vpon the whole booke of the Reuelation* (London : T. Orwin for Thomas Man and Toby Cooke, 1596), 181. *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 23, 2007). In addition, Bart van Es points out that "Heavenly signs, old prophecies, and the general sinfulness of the age all lead" Gabriel Harvey's brother John "to conclude 'that some prophane hellbound, some fierce and cruell *Antichrist*, some outrageous and irreligious Mahomet, some Turkish Martial Tyrant shall arise, who will play the second *Athila,* or *Totilas*, by scourging the zealous people of God'" (sig. C5), in van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 190. Van Es's citation is from John Harvey, *An Astrologicall Addition or Supplement to be Annexed to the Late Discourse upon the Great Conjunction of Saturne and Jupiter* (1583). Significantly, John Harvey's claim about the Turkish tyrant comes in the context of a work contemplating the heavenly bodies.

who has been viciously attacking, robbing, and killing anyone who attempted to cross a bridge. Finally, in the longest and most involved battle, which occupies the bulk of Book Five, Canto Eight, Artegall defeats an unnamed Pagan knight (7-8), and then, in concert with Arthur, defeats the associated band of Pagan knights (with Arthur conquering the Souldan, or Muslim king, in stanzas 28-42, and Artegall defeating the entire band of nearly one hundred knights loyal to the Souldan in stanza 50). Thus, if we view the three episodes in terms of symbolizing the rise and wane of Turkish power, Artegall's words to Britomart about three courses of the horned moon (waxing and waning) seem to refer to the three uprisings and defeats of the Muslims encountered by Arthur and Artegall. Still, the words "No longer space thereto he did desire, / But till the horned moone three courses did expire" (IV.vi.43) leave room for interpretation, for Artegall, even after defeating the Paynims, continues on his quest to aid Irena. Perhaps the prophetic statement about the horned moon means three months; perhaps it means three courses of Islamic power rising and falling, and perhaps these three triumphs are only part of what Artegall must accomplish before his return.

Clearly, however, Britomart takes the words of Artegall literally, for she calculates the days for an expected time of his return, and is grieved when that time passes with no sight of him. Early in Book Five, Canto Six, the narrator tells us:

> For after that the *utmost date, assynde*
> For his returne, she waited had for nought,
> She gan to cast in her misdoubtfull mynde
> A thousand feares, that love-sicke fancies faine to fynde. (3, italics mine)

Although Artegall had given her what seemed a specific time for his return, as I will

demonstrate, Spenser's poem concurs with those who argue that even when prophecies provide specific numbers or terms, those numbers usually are not meant to indicate a literal, calculable time, but instead symbolize more indefinite periods. Again, though Hazard faults Artegall for later overstepping his bounds by taking on a prophetic role that assumes more knowledge than he has, readers should note that even prophets are limited. Possibly, like Saint John or Daniel, even Artegall himself does not know the full meaning of the prophecy he speaks. We see in Britomart, then, the distress that comes with attempting to exact specifics from prophetic statements meant to express certain but nebulous events to come. Here, Britomart, wracked with doubts and fears, vainly and erroneously tries to assure herself by rechecking her calculations:

> And then, her griefe *with errour* to beguile,
> She fayn'd to count the time againe anew,
> As if before she had not *counted* trew.
> For houres but dayes; for weekes, that passed were,
> She told but moneths, to make them seeme more few:
> Yet when she *reckned* them, still drawing neare,
> Each hour did seeme a moneth, & every moneth a yeare. (V.vi.5, italics mine)

Still, she did not see Artegall return as expected.

The woes of Cymoent and her son provide another cautionary tale on the dangers of ignoring the fact that prophecy, by nature, leaves room for diverse interpretation. Like Britomart, Cymoent seeks comfort and certainty in prophecy and its interpretation because of her anxieties about the future. Particularly, she fears that her son, Marinell,

will be killed in one of his many "bloudie battell[s]" at arms (III.iv.24). Therefore, she consults Proteus, who delivers the requested information:

> And for his more assurance, she inquir'd
> One day of *Proteus* by his mightie spell,
> (For *Proteus* was with prophecie inspir'd)
> Her deare sonnes destinie to her to tell,
> And the sad end of her sweet *Marinell*.
> Who through foresight of his eternal skill,
> Bad her from womankind to keepe him well:
> For of a woman he should have much ill,
> A virgin strange and stout him should dismay, or kill. (25)

There is room for interpretation in Proteus's prophetic injunction: he merely warns that Marinell should avoid women.

However, Cymoent exacts a very specific interpretation from Proteus's general statement. To her, there is one and only one possible meaning of his words: that Marinell should avoid "*The love* of women" (iv.26, italics mine). Granted, this reading does seem to be the most logical interpretation, that he could be destroyed by love of a woman, in the Petrarchan tradition of the ailing lover. Perhaps, though, if Cymoent had looked more closely at Proteus's description of the woman as "[a] virgin strange and stout" (25), she would have noticed the possibility that the woman in question would be more of a martial than a marital foe (stout virgins surely must have been a rarity). Instead, Cymoent's certainty in her reading leads her to warn Marinell daily to avoid

even entertaining the love of a woman (26). As a result, he lives an unnatural life, "From love in course of nature to refraine" (26).

The narrator's reflections on Cymoent's error and its results are quite relevant to Spenser's apocalyptic poetics and its engagement in the contemporary sixteenth-century debates regarding the interpretation of Revelation. As we shall see, one of the motives of the "end-is-near" readings of Revelation is to warn the unbelievers to come to faith. However, the narrator declares of Marinell and humankind in general:

> But ah, who can deceive his destiny,
> Or weene by warning to avoyd his fate?
> That when he sleepes in most security,
> And safest seemes, him soonest doth amate,
> And findeth dew effect or soone or late. (27)

A few lines later, the narrator adds, "His mother bad him womens love to hate, / For she of womans force did feare no harme; / So weening to have arm'd him, she did quite disarme" (27). Ironically, in her efforts to help Marinell avoid his destiny, Cymoent unwittingly becomes an instrument of its fulfillment.

The next stanza is even more important because of its commentary on the hazards of interpreting prophecy. The narrator explains:

> This [Britomart] was that woman, this that deadly wound,
> That Proteus prophecide should him dismay,
> The which his mother vainely did expound,
> To be hart-wounding love, which should assay
> To bring her sonne unto his last decay. (28)

The phrase "vainely did expound" could bear a number of meanings: for example, one, that Cymoent herself (like Britomart) is vain to initiate her own fixed interpretation of prophetic words (even the Reformers who cried "sola scriptura" would have held it vain to read Scripture apart from heavily annotated Reformed versions); two, that her exposition is in vain, or useless, because it is erroneous; and three, in the Calvinistic sense, that even her act of exposition is in vain because it is irrelevant and powerless to change Marinell's destiny. His fate is to receive a literal heart wound rather than a figurative hart-wound from Cupid.

Most important, though, as we shall see, are the final words of the stanza:

So tickle be the termes of mortall state,
And full of subtile sophisms, which do play
With double senses, and with false debate,
T'approve the unknowen purpose of eternall fate. (28)

This statement in stanza 28, near the center of this important canto of 61 stanzas, is a linguistic, hermeneutical, theological, eschatological and epistemological tenet of Spenser's apocalyptic poetics. As is common in Spenserian diction, each word in these lines is richly laden with potential meanings. Spenser's great awareness of the dynamics and subtleties of the senses of words, an awareness demonstrated in his own work, particularly enables him to see the follies of rigid readings of Apocalypse.

Because Cymoent's interpretive error is not sophisticated or complicated enough to be termed a "subtle sophism," the narrator is apparently addressing much more here, including the plethora of contemporary commentaries written to pin down exact meanings for the eschatological symbols of Apocalypse. Here, "tickle" indicates "Not to

be depended upon; uncertain (in fact, action, [or] duration); . . . changeable, inconstant, capricious, [and] fickle," and also refers to the sense of a place or condition being "Insecure; precarious, slippery; risky, [or] dangerous" (*OED*). In this passage, "tickle" describes the "termes of mortall state," which primarily seems to refer simply to the conditions of human existence. However, other relevant senses of "termes" available to Spenser include:

> I.1a) That which limits the extent of anything; a limit [or] . . . boundary . . . (of a territory or space); 1b) Utmost or extreme limit, end; esp. end of duration or existence, final cessation, close, conclusion, termination, and II.4a) a portion of time having definite limits; a period, esp. a set or appointed period; the space of time through which something lasts or is intended to last. (*OED*)

It is in this last sense which Merlin uses the word in his prophecy to Britomart regarding Britain's fall and captivity: "Nay but the terme . . . is limited" (iii.44) and "when the terme is full accomplished" (48). The general significance of "limits and boundaries" in *The Faerie Queene* will become clear later in the conclusion to this project, as they relate to the most important sense of "termes" here, which is "final cessation."

If we read "termes" as meaning "final cessation," the narrator's statement would then mean that the final cessation of the mortal state is fickle, thus arguing against those who would predict with certainty when and how the apocalyptic end of time will unfold. Furthermore, if we read "termes" as also meaning the appointed space of time which something is intended to last, the statement would relate to the closing words of the passage, "the unknowen purpose of eternall fate," because if the space of time for mortal life has an *intended* duration, there must be One who bears the intention, and by

appointing this space of time, bears an unknown purpose. This purpose is also reflected by an additional meaning of "termes": "1c) That to which movement or action is directed or tends, as its object, *end or goal*" (*OED*, italics mine). Thus, the narrator's statement also bears the meaning that the ultimate purpose or goal of the mortal state is not yet understood by those who are in the midst of it.

In a number of ways, *The Faerie Queene* counters many interpretations of Revelation of its day, particularly interpretations which use "subtile sophisms" and which wrest one literal or very specific meaning from the general senses of apocalyptic language, in a misguided effort "T'approve the unknowen purpose of eternall fate," or stated otherwise, to look into the sacred Ark. Of course, an additional meaning of "termes" involves the basic elements of language: "13a) A word or phrase used in a definite or precise sense in some particular subject . . . ; 14a) Words or expressions collectively or generally; manner of expressing oneself, way of speaking, language" (*OED*). Therefore, the phrases "subtle sophisms" and "play with double senses" refer to manipulating the fickle, slippery quality of language in order to make definitive statements about the mortal state and its ends, or its End. In regard to efforts "T'approve the unknowen purpose of eternall fate," the word "approve" means "1) to make good (a statement or position); to show to be true, prove, demonstrate; 2) to attest (a thing) with some authority, to corroborate, confirm; 3) to demonstrate practically or to the experience of others, display, exhibit, make proof of" (*OED*). Thus, like other portions of this narrator's statement, this segment is paradoxical: the narrator states above that the "termes" (the limit or *definite* point of the end of time) are fickle or *uncertain*, and states here that the hermeneutic efforts are meant to *prove* the *unknown*. Like the irony of

Cymoent's efforts to detail Marinell's end, and the futility of Britomart's efforts to calculate the specific time of Artegall's return, attempts to prove certain details in matters of the world's end only wind up proving, with greater force, that its manner and time are unpredictable. Clearly, the narrator's statement not only expresses one of the poem's greatest themes regarding the caution that should be taken in interpreting Apocalypse, but the diction in these lines, with their complex web of potential and simultaneous word meanings, also invites the reader to experience and to practice that hermeneutical process here.

When one examines a number of representative samples of the late sixteenth-century treatises, commentaries, and sermons which *did* offer precise understanding of Revelation's symbolism, worked out in elaborate detail, one appreciates the significance of the narrator's statement just discussed. Furthermore, one appreciates the wisdom of William Tyndale, whose only recorded statement on Revelation is a comment that "The apocalypse, or revelations of John, are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places,"[196] and the prudence of John Calvin, who frankly states that he does not know what the author of Revelation meant.[197] Likewise, many late sixteenth-century Protestants such as John Dove cite Christ's cautionary statement from Matthew 24:36 that "of that day and houre knoweth no man, no not the Angels of heaven, but my Father onely." In a 1594 sermon preached at Paul's Crosse, Dove explains that there are three

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[196] William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises. Expositions, with the Practice of Prelates. An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue,* 3 vols, ed. for Parker Society by Rev. H. Walter (Cambridge, 1848-50), 305.
[197] Cited in Jean Bodin's *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* (1566), trans. Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Octagon Books, 1966). Bodin comments, "I thoroughly approve the reply of Calvin, not less polished than sagacious, when he was asked his opinion about the book of the Apocalypse. He candidly answered that he was totally at a loss regarding the meaning of this obscure writer, whose identity was not yet agreed upon among the erudite. Similarly, I do not see how we are to relate the wild beasts and the image discussed by Daniel to those empires which flourish everywhere now-a-days and have flourished for so many centuries," 291.

books containing all vital knowledge: the book of grace, which contains the Old and New Testaments; the book of nature, "that great frame and engine of the worlde, always lying open to the view of naturall men, and never shut up, because it is . . . a long letter or a large epistle written, not to the faithfull onely, but to al mankind"; and "the third booke, which is called the booke of life, and the booke sealed up with seven seales [in Revelation], which is the secrete will of God. . . ."[198] Dove describes the lofty and mysterious contents of the third book:

> [I]t is not revealed to Angels, much lesse to men: in that book are written gods secret counsels, concerning the election of Jacob, and reprobation of Esau, the calling of the Gentiles, and rejecting of the Jewes, which go beyond the capacitie of men, and finallie of this last and dreadfull judgement, the time whereof the Apostles desired to know, but no director answere was given them than this: of the day and houre knoweth no man . . . [not even the angels].[199]

Nevertheless, there is no shortage of writings by those in the sixteenth century who have boldly gone where angels (and judicious Protestant fathers) fear to tread.

Besides the attempts to decipher prophetic diction in Revelation and other texts, another method of interpreting prophecy became popular during this time: focusing the apocalyptic lens upon historical events. John Carion's *The thre bokes of cronicles*, which became known as *Carion's Chronicles*, was one of the first of these sixteenth-century works conjoining prophecy and history.[200] In the Preface, "The Use of Reading Histories," the author states, "[T]o understande prophecyes arighte, it is greatlye

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[198] Dove. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 12, 2007).
[199] Ibid.
[200] Robert Stillman points out that this work actually contains pieces by several authors, one of whom was Philip Melanchthon, and that most sixteenth-century readers in England (including Sidney) attribute its entirety to Melanchthon. Private commentary, University of Tennessee, July 2007.

necessary to knowe the order of kingdoms, the nombre of the yeares, and many other thynges, whyche in readynge of heathen hystoryes do offer them selves the knowledge whereof is chefelye necessarye for Chrysten men, that they may the better understande the prophecies, and have the better judgment of them."[201] Written in 1532 and published in English in 1550, *Carion's Chronicles* became one of the sources for the content and methodology of John Foxe's *Actes and monuments*, the most comprehensive work of Protestant historiography in Spenser's day, which Foxe expanded and revised through four editions between 1563 and 1583.

Though *Actes and monuments* became known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Foxe's goal is clearly more than his efforts at voluminous recording of all who were ever martyred for the true Christian faith. He also attempts a periodization of all of history which will coincide exactly with Biblical prophecy. Foxe gleans much from his friend and fellow Protestant historiographer, John Bale, but Foxe has a propensity for date-setting and precise calculating that is much less frequent in Bale's work. In his 1583 *Actes and monuments*, for example, Foxe does some fancy historical number-crunching. In order to support his interpretation of the exact time of the thousand-year binding of Satan in Revelation 20, Foxe subjects history to mathematical calculations derived from the numbers in Daniel and Revelation:

> [W]ee reade that the beast afore mentioned, shall have power to worke his malice and mischiefe, the space of 42 moneths and no more, and then that Sathan should be locked up for a thousand yeares. The *computation* of which moneths being *counted* by Sabbates of yeares (after the example of the 69 weekes of Daniell cap

[201] John Carion, Preface entitled "The Use of Reading Histories," in *The thre bokes of cronicles,* trans. Gwalter Lynne (London: S. Mierdman for Gwalter Lynne, 1550).

> 11,) it doth bring us to the just yeare and time, when that terrible persecution in the Primitive Church should end, and so it did. For give to every moneth a Sabbat of yeares, that is *reckon* every moneth for seaven yeares, and that maketh 294 yeares, which was the full time betweene the 18 yeare of Tiberius, (under whom Christ suffered) and the death of Maxentius the last persecution of the Primitive Church in Europe, subdued by Constantius, as may appeare by *calculating* the yeares, moneths and dayes, betweene the said yeare of the reigne of Tiberius, and the latter end of Maxentius: and so have ye the *supputation* of the yeare and time, when Satan was first bound up, after he had raged in the Primitive Church 42 monethes. (italics mine)[202]

Here, Foxe, trained in the general Protestant technique of Bible reading, is collating several scriptures. He refers to the seven-headed, ten-horned beast in Revelation 13 who is given the power to work evil "two and fortie moneths" (Rev. 13:5), then to Revelation 20, which states that an angel from heaven chains Satan for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-2). Although Foxe equates the seven-headed, ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 and the bound one referred to in Revelation 20 as "the *dragon* that olde serpẽt, which is the devil and Satan" (italics mine), this is somewhat confusing because there is *also* a dragon in Revelation 13, *different from* the multi-headed beast. In his attention to date-setting, though, Foxe does not address this issue. (Like Britomart, he has obtained what he sought from the prophecy, and is fairly unconcerned about correlative issues.) Again using collation, he also borrows a commonly accepted technique of reading each month

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[202] Foxe, *Actes and monuments*, Vol. 2 (second half), (1583), 767-68. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 4, 2007).

in Daniel as 7 years.[203] Such manipulation of the numbers calls to mind Britomart's computations in her attempt to make the numbers fit Artegall's exact statement: "For houres but dayes; for weekes, that passed were, / She told but moneths, to make them seeme more few" (V.vi.5). Here, Foxe multiplies 42 months by 7 years to obtain his figure of 294 years. He pinpoints this particular 294 years, in which the beast of Revelation 13 rages, as the time between the year 18 (during the reign of Tiberius) and the year 312 (the death of Maxentius).

A bit further in this section of his book, Foxe states with absolute certainty that the loosing of Satan referred to in Revelation 20 "falleth upon the yeare of our Lorde 1324. At what time the kingdome of the Turkes first beganne under Ottomannus, wasting and destroying the Churches of Asia and afterward of Europa."[204] Therefore, readers must make a leap to see how Foxe's numbers fit: he claims that the beast's rampage lasted for exactly 294 years (42 x 7), and ended when subdued by Constantius at the end of the reign of Maxentius in the year 312. However, as stated, he later claims that the thousand-year binding of the beast ended in 1324. There is a twelve-year gap here that Foxe does not acknowledge, for he even emphasizes above that the text of Revelation says "forty two monthes *and no more*" (italics mine). Perhaps, though, he is counting the binding of Satan from 324, when Constantine was made Emperor of the whole Roman Empire, and Constantinople became the first Christian city in the world. It takes a touch

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[203] Foxe assigns the 69 weeks to Daniel Chapter 11, though it is actually in Chapter 9.

[204] Foxe, appendix, see note subsequent to page 794. Katherine Firth notes that the title of Foxe's 1563 edition of *A & M* contained "the date of the year 1000, which we are told in the text of the book was the year Satan was loosed from the pit," 82. However, as Firth points out, he later changed his calculation: "In the 1563 edition, Foxe had connected the binding of Satan to the thousand years following the birth of Christ; but by 1583 and in his *Eicasmi* he connected the binding of Satan with the cessation of persecution about the time of Constantine, and his loosing-out again with the persecutions of Wyclif and Huss after 1300," 92. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979).

of "subtle sophism," but by and large, the numbers are stretched closely enough to appear plausible. The desire for certain understanding can make a powerful, very manipulative, calculating tool.

Like Foxe, Sheltco à Geveren attempts to make the understanding of prophecy an exact mathematical science based on reading the numbers of history. Geveren states that it is improper to try to know the precise time of Christ's return, but then spends much of his text making calculations of when this event will likely occur. In the 1577 edition of his *Of the Ende of this world and second coming of Christ*, a work that went through six different printings between 1577 and 1589, Geveren claims:

> But now in the yeare of the Lord, a thousand five hundred nientie and three, after Christes byrth . . . that expiring of five hundred yeares draweth nygh, in which these Decrees of Popes gathered together by publike authoritie, to the great defacyng of Gods word, and the merites of Christ, shall have their ende. Wherfore a wonderful and undoubted hope of things to come, may be conceived of things past, that about that tyme shalbe that universal destruction of al the world, and glorious commyng of the Lord.[205]

Elsewhere in his book, Geveren explains that every 500 years and every 50 years, "there doo commonly happen some singular alterations in the Churche, and common Weales," so he views the five thousand, five hundred, and fiftieth year (5,550) of the world's age, which according to him would be 1588, to be "fully perfect" for a change on a grand scale.[206] He adds, though, that since the year 1593 would be the five thousand, five

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[205] Sheltco à Geveren, *Of the Ende of this world and second coming of Christ, a comfortable and necessary Discourse, for these miserable and daungerous dayes* (London: Thomas Gardyner and Thomas Dawson for Andrew Maunsel, 1577), 32. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 14, 2007).
[206] Ibid., 37.

hundred, and fifty-fifth year (5,555) of the world's age, that number being "proportionable, according to Arithmetical and Geometrical equalite," both of these years "doo seeme to presage unto us a golden world in deede, and everlasting to come, in which all the justice of God shalbe fulfilled, and have her full strength, and virtue."[207] In addition to looking to Plato and Quintillian for his numerology, Geveren cites Melanchthon and others who read the six days of creation in Genesis as symbolic of six thousand years, the world week, meaning that the world would last almost this long, with the seventh age being the world Sabbath of eternal rest and peace. Like many Reformers, Geveren held the almost-six-thousand-years concept, because of Christ's words in Matthew 24[208] that the time would be cut short, so again, Biblical collation is inherent to these readings of prophecy.

The zeal for supputations, to borrow Foxe's term, continued with increased fervor into the 1580s, with multiple predictions that the End is near. The 1581 work of Stephen Batman, *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment*, also reveals the desire to master all of human history by dividing it into precisely outlined periods. Batman is concerned with synthesis of various calculations that had been published in recent years. In his Preface, he explains, "I have thoughte good briefely from diverse Cronicles to set downe their computations, by the which may be perceived, what a harde thing it is to rehearse them aright in these latter dayes . . . notwithstanding by the rehearsal, the nearest

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[207] Ibid., 35.

[208] In a passage often interpreted as addressing the world's last days, Christ explains, "For then shalbe great tribulation, suche as was not frõ the beginning of the worlde to this time, nor shalbe. And except those dayes shulde be shortened, there shulde no flesh be saved: but for the electes sake those dayes shalbe shortened," (Matthew 24: 21-22).

conjecture may bee founde out, until this presente yere."[209] He adds that we must allow some differences in calculations, "for the elder writers contained the whole yeare in ten monethes."[210] Batman divides the world's past into seven ages of Judeo-Christian history, listing each age with an exact number of years of its duration. For example, he lists the first age from the "creation of Adam to the floud of Noe" as lasting exactly 1,659 years, the second age "from Noe to Abraham" as lasting exactly 292 years, and calculates that at the beginning of the seventh age, which started with the birth of Christ, the world was 3,962 years old. He therefore claims, "The age of the worlde thys presente yeare of oure Lorde, 1581, is 5543."[211] Therefore, Batman's estimation of the world's age would agree with that of Geveren as typical of these sorts of writings.

Because he is writing a commentary specifically on Revelation, James Brocarde's 1582 *Revelation of S. Jhon Reveled* focuses more directly on Apocalypse, though he does, like Batman, attempt to synthesize diverse sources. While Batman in the latter part of his work concentrates on cataloging the many strange events (signs) taking place in England and on the Continent, Brocarde gives attention to reading the contemporary political events of the Reformation through the lens of Revelation. For example, note the contemporary specificity in Brocarde's reading of Revelation 8:

> The thūder then was the preaching of . . . Ihon Baptist: the preaching of Luther, and of other, as it was of the Apostles both Paule and other after, as it was of Moses and the Prophets. The voices are the people believing: the lightnings are the disputations of the faithfull . . . . [T]he Earthquake is the commotion of the

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[209] Stephen Batman [Konrad Lykosthenes], *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment,* Preface (London: 1581), sig. [¶vii^{r}]. *Early English Books Online* (April 2007).
[210] Ibid., Preface, sig. [¶vii^{r}].
[211] Ibid., Preface, sig. [¶vii^{v}].

> Pope, of Kings, prelates, and adversaries that come toppling downe at the preaching of Chryst. These things have we sene, these things come to passe while the seven Angels blow the 7 trumpets.[212]

Of the three woes first mentioned in Revelation 8:13, Brocarde states without qualification, "The first is the French & Flemish troubles: elswhere the inquisition, elswhere many dangers and discommodities. The second woe is the universal murders began in Fraunce in the yeare 1572, the 24 of August. The thyrd wo is a great trouble whose lyke none hath ever bene, nor shall bee."[213] With absolute conviction, Brocarde reads specific historical and contemporary events as the direct fulfillment of Revelation's prophecies, building through intensification.

Such fixed readings of Revelation continued into the 1590s. For example, in 1592, in *Apocalypsis: A Briefe and Learned Commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, applied unto the history of the Catholicke and Christian Church*, Franciscus Junius provides, just prior to the text of his commentary, an outline of years in time (beginning with 1 A.D.) which consolidates historical and political events with the narrative of Revelation events. For example, the timeline shows that in 73 A.D., "The dragon is bound for 1000 yeares. chap.20," and shows that in precisely 1073 A.D., "The dragon is let loose after 1000 yeares, and Gregorie the vii being Pope, rageth against Henry the third, the Emperour. chap. 20."[214] The majority of historical entries on the timeline have a specific chapter reference from Revelation, as shown in the listing of "chap. 20" above. Though Junius does not include a specific date for the end of time, the

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[212] Brocardo [Brocarde], 94. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).
[213] Ibid., 97.
[214] Franciscus Junius, *Apocalypsis: A Briefe and Learned Commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, applied unto the history of the Catholicke and Christian Church* (London: Richard Field for Robert Dexter, 1592). *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

concluding events of Revelation, which are listed as following the year 1305 on his chart, are very few in comparison to what comes before, so the implication is clear.

The 1593 Revelation commentary of John Napier, with its very conclusive title of *A Plain Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John: Set down in two treatises: The one searching and proving the true interpretation thereof: The other applying the same paraphrastically and historically to the text*, is very much in the tradition of John Foxe. As Richard Bauckham points out, Foxe insists in his 1587 Latin Revelation commentary entitled *Eicasmi* that "each apocalyptic image must have a single specific fulfillment in history."[215] Napier clearly agrees with such a methodical, linear approach. For example, he states that "The star and locusts of the fifth trumpet, are not the greate Antichrist and his Cleargie, but the Dominator of the Turkes and his armie, who began their dominion, in anno Christi 1051."[216] In regard to the binding of Satan, Napier asserts that "[t]he thousand yeares that Sathan was bound (Revel 20) began in Anno Christi 300 or thereabout."[217] Of the end of the world, Napier claims:

> Seing by [my] third Proposition, the fift Trumpet or Viall began in Anno 1051. And by [my] fift proposition, everie Trumpet or Viall containeth 245. yeares: it must needs followe, that the seventh Trumpet or Viall began in Anno Christi 1541. and consequentlie it should end 245. years after: which is in Anno 1786. Not that I meane, that that age, or yet the world shall continew so long, because it is said, that for the Elects sake, the time shall be shortned: but I meane, that if the

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[215] Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth century apocalypticism, millenarianism and the English Reformation: from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), 85.
[216] John Napier, *A Plain Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John: Set down in two treatises: The one searching and proving the true interpretation thereof: The other applying the same paraphrastically and historically to the text* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, printer to the Kings Majestie, 1593), 3. *Early English Books Online* (accessed December 2005).
[217] Ibid., 62.

> world wer to indure, that seventh age should continew until the yeare of Christ 1786.[218]

Thus, although Napier's mention of the year 1786 seems much later than the predictions of previous exegetes, he is still emphasizing the possibility that the End is near, as well as giving a particular parameter within which the End will definitely come.

In addition to fueling the late sixteenth-century development of Protestant historiography, the reading of Revelation sparked determined efforts to recognize signs of the End, sometimes by the same commentators engaged in historiography. For example, in *Of the Ende of this World and second coming of Christ*, to comfort the true Church as she waits for Christ her "loving husband," Sheltco à Geveren presents "certain tokens" and "infallible tidings of thy husbandes returne," and places "before your eyes such undoubted signes of his coming" so "that easely you will believe and perswade your selfe that it will not be long before he come."[219] Among these signs, Geveren includes the following:

> [T]he preaching of the Gospell shineth, the Pope of Rome by the breath of the Lord perisheth, and we are in Religion colde, carelesse, and contemne his preachers, which the Lord God cannot suffer long to go unpunished. Also this fearful inclination of the Stars, the daily talke of wars, the direful civil contentions, the cruel dissention in religion, the great plagues, the miserable hunger, the straunge tempests, the woonderfull risings of the Sea, and other signes, which . . . dayly doo more increase [and] are out of doubt the evident signes of the worldes speedy overthrow, and hasty coming of our Lord Jesus

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[218] Ibid., 12.

[219] Geveren, sig. Ai[V]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

> Christ . . . to judge the quicke and the dead.[220]

In a 1580 sermon preached in Saint Peters Church in Exeter, John Chardon also declares that because signs in the sun, moon, stars, heavens, and earthquakes have come to pass, the world's end "will not be long" and warns, "the end of the world hangeth over our neckes."[221] In addition to these, Anthonie Marten, in his 1589 *A Second Sound, or Warning of the Trumpet unto Judgement, wherein is proved, that all the tokens of the Latter day, are not onelie come, but welneere finished*, adds the common claim that "the nature of man being ever more and more corrupted, since the fall of Adam" is a sign of the world's end.[222] Marten confidently declares:

> [I]f the judgement of God and finall destruction of the world do come sodainely upon man before he be aware, there is no ignoraunce to be pleaded . . . there is no darkenesse of the Scriptures to be alledged. For in al the holie Bible, there is not anie one thing that the mercie and goodnesse of our God hath set downe more amplie, taught more plainlie, and set foorth more expreslie, for the assurance of our faith, than the tokens of Christs coming.[223]

According to all these readers of Biblical prophecy, then, the signs of the world's end are evident, and the ability to recognize them is itself a sure sign of faith.

To the same effect, Stephen Batman's *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment*, surely one of the most bizarre books ever written, contains a voluminous

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[220] Ibid., 26.
[221] John Chardon, *A sermon preached in S. Peters Church in Exceter the 6. day of December last: wherin is intreated of the second coming of Christ unto judgement, and of the end of the world* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1580), 9-10. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).
[222] Anthonie Marten, *A Second Sound, or Warning of the Trumpet unto Judgement, wherein is proved, that all the tokens of the Latter day, are not onelie come, but welneere finished* (London: Thomas Orwin for Andrew Maunsell, 1589), 8. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[223] Ibid., 2.

record of "prodigies and strange sightes"[224] as well as strange occurrences, throughout Europe. For example, one account tells of a three-legged, three-armed baby born in Italy who "opened hys mouth, and sayde: You unbeleevers greate plagues shall fall on you all, O wo that you received life" and "he said moreover that in the yere one thousande five hundered eightie and eight the worlde shall stand in so extreame a state, that the people which live in those dayes shall tremble and quake for feare, and having ended these wordes he departed and spued forth flames of fyre."[225] The child died, and as they carried it "to burial, it suddenly vanished from them, no man knew which way."[226] Batman's rhetorical technique involves stacking up copious numbers of exempla, to demonstrate that such occurrences are numerous and widespread, and thus to argue that surely the End must be near. To that end, he includes a catalog of literal monsters popping up across Europe, one of which is a creature with human parts, animal parts, and scales, pulled from the Tiber River, and another "a toade with a tayle long and straunge to behold" found by a woman "[i]n a farme of Touring by Unster."[227] He also records instances of babies born with what are now known as birth defects, conjoined twins, eclipses of the sun and moon, famines, floods, storms, and earthquakes, all of which he views as loaded with portentous significance.

Fortunately, not all commentators on apocalyptic texts during Spenser's time take such extreme, rigid, or literal approaches to eschatological interpretation of prophecy as those in the sort of writings discussed thus far. Nevertheless, some scholars depict Spenser's hermeneutic caution regarding Apocalypse as a departure from virtually all

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[224] Batman [Lykosthenes], 380. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[225] Ibid., 406.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid., 363.

voices in contemporary mainstream discourse. In *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy*, for example, Kenneth Borris claims that because of "Spenser's interpretive reticence the poem radically differs from the Protestant historiographical discourse of its immediate cultural context, which strives to appropriate biblical apocalyptic in massive expository detail to control its reference absolutely."[228] However, in chorus with Spenser's work, there are, in fact, exegetes and thinkers within contemporary Protestant discourses who call for interpretive caution and tentativeness in regard to Revelation, particularly in regard to predictions about the End based on the apocalyptic reading of history or omens. While Borris points out that "Book V [of *The Faerie Queene*] withholds endorsement from projections of the imminent End, which had mounting urgency in England since the late 1570s,"[229] Books III and IV, as I have demonstrated, also withhold such endorsement, as well as encouraging readers to do likewise through the use of exempla showing distress caused by hasty, presumptuous hermeneutics. Furthermore, I have reason to believe that Spenser's caution points to the idea that apocalyptic symbolism is inherently indeterminate, and therefore that Spenser goes beyond what Borris refers to as "interpretive reticence" because he ultimately holds that in many regards prophetic symbols cannot *be* interpreted with one-to-one specificity.

The exchange of letters (published in 1580) between Spenser and his friend Gabriel Harvey illustrates this belief. Spenser begins the first letter, after conventional greetings and chatter, by inquiring of Harvey whether a recent earthquake had occurred at Harvey's locale: "(which I would gladly learne) as it was here with us: overthrowing divers old buildings, and pieces of Churches. Sure verye straunge to be hearde of in these

[228] Borris, 78.
[229] Ibid., 80.

Countries, and yet I heare some saye (I knowe not how truely) that they have knowne the like before in their dayes. Sed quid vobis videtur magnis Philosophis?"[230] Here, aware of different interpretive possibilities, Spenser seems torn between two schools of reading earthquakes: one, reading this earthquake as "verye straunge" and noting specifically that it shattered "pieces of Churches," the loci of religion; and two, reading the earthquake as just another recapitulation of similar events in days, years, even centuries past. Both possibilities seem to appeal to him, and his light-hearted challenge in Latin to Harvey indicates a joy in the openness and indeterminacy of the matter.

Spenser's first inclination is a tempered version of the sort of records kept by Stephen Batman, who writes with a tone of greater alarm and immediacy in *The Doome*:

> The 25 daye of Januarie about 9 of the clock in the afternoone, a greate and horrible Tempest arose, over the citie of Prage in Bohemia, fyrste a vyolente winde that blew the Tiles so fast from the houses, that few durst come forth of their dores: There was blowne downe three Steeples of Churches, Saint Barbara, Saint Peter and of our Lady, the falling whereof brake downe nineteene houses, and slue sixe persons; the ayre was verye darke, which once cleared, the people beganne to looke abrode. In the Evening aboute five of the clocke it thundered and hayled verye fiercelye, some of the hayle wayed three quarters of a pounde, the reste lesse, presently followed an earthquake of halfe an houre, after the whiche a cleare brightnesse, as if it had bene daye: At twelve of the clocke at nighte appeared a blacke cloude, forth of the whiche was seene two armes and handes, in the right hand as it had bene a sworde, and in the lefte hande a bowle of

[230] Edmund Spenser and Gabriel Harvey, *Three proper, and wittie, familiar letters: lately passed betweene two universitie men* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), 6. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).

> blood poured out, after this appeared a piece of corne grounde readye to be reaped, [and] a cicle lying by, from whence was hearde a voice, Wo, wo, to the earth, and to the inhabitants thereof, for he commeth that is to come, and all the people shall see him. [A]t the hearing of these words the people made a grievous crye, and manye women through feare, fell in travayle of children.[231]

The influence of Revelation is evident in Batman's selection (and, possibly, creation) of details.

Harvey's reply to Spenser reveals that he obviously believes in the notion of signs as related to the end of time, but also, more importantly, reveals a refusal to definitively interpret any physical event as a certain, indisputable fulfillment of prophecy or an unmistakable, intentional sign from God. First, he asserts, "I denie not, but Earthquakes (as well as many other fearefull Accidentes in the same number) are terrible signes, and, as it were certaine manacing forerunners, and forewarners of the great latter day; and therefore out of controversie the more reverently to be considered upon."[232] However, he also points out that "the auncient Romaines, long before the Nativitie of Christ, did most religiously or rather superstitiously observe" the same.[233] Furthermore, he contends:

> To make shorte, I cannot see, and would gladly learne, howe a man on Earth, should be of so great authoritie, and so familiar acquaintance with God in Heaven . . . as to be able in such specialties, without any justifiable certificate, or warrant . . . to reveale hys incomprehensible mysteries, and definitively to give sentence of his Majesties secret and inscrutable purposes. As if they had a key for all the lockes in Heaven, or as if it were as cleare and resolute a case, as the Eclipse of

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[231] Batman, 409. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[232] Spenser and Harvey, 18. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).
[233] Ibid., 19.

> the Sunne, that darkened all the Earth, or at the least all the Earth in those Countries, at Christes Passion.[234]

His final word is that "an Earthquake might as well be supposed a Naturall motion of the Earth, as a preternaturall, or supernaturall ominous worke of God," and he cites a fellow observer of the quake who "thought it hard, and almost impossible, for any man, either by Philosophie, or Divinite, evermore to determine flatly the very certaintie either way."[235] Thus, overall, Harvey speaks with caution, acknowledging the real possibility that an earthquake might be an eschatological sign, but at the same time arguing that it is not possible to state with certainty whether or not a specific natural event is a motivated sign from God. In such matters, he argues, there is room for interpretation, but because of these open possibilities, he holds that certain proclamations would be presumptuous, "definitively to give sentence of his Majesties secret and inscrutable purposes," or as the narrator of *The Faerie Queene* puts it, "T'approve the unknowen purpose of eternall fate." Therefore, in regard to the two possibilities presented in Spenser's initial inquiry of Harvey's opinion, both men simply, and wisely, decide not to decide.

Other Reformist writers read earthquakes with similar reserve, but lean toward Spenser's second point in his letter to Harvey, arguing thereby that the End is not necessarily imminent. The implication of Spenser's statement, "yet I heare some saye (I knowe not how truely) that they have knowne the like before in their dayes" is that the earthquake in question is not a new phenomenon and that it is not any more intense than

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[234] Ibid., 19-20.
[235] Ibid., 21. See also Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History*, 186-92. Van Es points out that Gabriel Harvey's efforts to demonstrate his prudence on matters of astrological prophecy were most likely a response to his two brothers' tainted reputation for overexuberance in prognostication. I came to Van Es's work after I had constructed my own discussion on the Spenser-Harvey correspondence regarding the reading of earthquakes, but Van Es's claims enrich my own.

prior quakes. This idea is significant because, as Chapter One explains, the events in Revelation work by intensification. For example, the storms and earthquakes intensify in degree from Revelation 8:5 to Revelation 11:19, and then to those of greatest magnitude at the pouring out of the seventh *vial*, at which John observes, "And there were voyces, and thundrings, and lightnings, & there was a great earthquake, suche as was not since men were upon the earth, even so mightie an earthquake . . . . And there fell a great haile . . . out of heaven upon the men, and men blasphemed God, because of the plague of the haile: for the plague thereof was exceding great" (Rev 16:18, 21). The idea that such events mark the greatest of their kind in all of history indicates that time is reaching a culmination. Therefore, when some writers point out that others "have knowne the like before," the natural inference would be clear: time is not necessarily drawing to a *rapid* close.

Countering the literalism of those such as Geveren, Brocarde, and Batman, Augustine Marlorate and William Fulke focus on the symbolic nature of Biblical earthquakes. In 1574, Marlorate, in his commentary on Revelation, discusses a number of earthquakes, each seeming equally violent:

> In the time that Boniface the eyght was Bishop, there was as horrible an Earthquake as ever was any since men coulde remember: the trembling whereof continued many dayes together, whereby many and great buildings were overthrowen every where . . . . A lyke Earthquake happened in Germanie about the yeare of our Lorde 1356 whereby almost al Basil was cast downe . . . . Besides this, in the yeare of our Lorde 1382 there was an Earthquake beyonde all measure monstrous: for the whole earth shooke all at once, which is a thing

> contrarie to nature, and above al the reasons of naturall Philosophie. Howbeit for as muche as Earthquakes do in the Scriptures oftentimes betoken the alterations of things that are to bee altered, whether it bee of kingdoms or of Religion, which can not bee doone without great turmoyles.[236]

William Fulke, mentor of Gabriel Harvey, in his commentary on Apocalypse, similarly interprets the earthquake in Revelation 11:13:

> [W]hen as the ripe and full time shall come in whiche God will take vengeance upon Antichrist and his followers, mens matters shalbe shaken with a mightie great motion, all thinges shalbe moved, with warres, with treasons, and with seditions . . . . We may suppose that this earthquake hath happened in our age, for we have partly before our eyes, & partly we beare in freshe memory, with what motions through the cause of religion, all Christendome is shaken. And the other thinges which follow in this verse, are plainly sene in this oure time.[237]

With their emphasis on the figurative nature of the earthquakes in Revelation, Marlorate and Fulke,[238] then, offer a corrective to the readings which look for a single, literal

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[236] Augustine Marlorate, *A catholicke exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John* (London: H. Binneman for L. Harison and G. Bishop, 1574), 99-100. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[237] William Fulke, *Praelections upon the sacred and holy Revelation of Saint John* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), 73. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).
[238] Harvey's view of Revelation's hyperbole in this section of the letter may have been discussed with or derived from his professor, William Fulke, at some point, for Harvey and Fulke share phrases in their readings of Revelation. Compare Harvey's wording with that in this passage in Fulke's *Praelections*: "And the amplication is hyperbolicall, of which sorte there are verie many found in the scriptures, to expresse the grievousnes of this punishment, wherewith god will afflicte the reprobate. Whole Europe almost is compassed about with sea, which when it is sayd to be tourned into bloud, signifieth that all should redound, and as it were overflow with warres, tumults, & bloudie battels. Here also histories do witnesse & dayly experience also doth teach, what great slaughters the pride of the Roman byshopes hath caused . . . . But howsoever he [the Pope] applieth his busines, god in the meane time turneth the calamitie upon his owne head & maketh the sea bloudie with the slayne carkases of the Papistes. That he sayeth everie livinge thinge dyed in the Sea, it is a conveniente hyperbole for the Allegorie, and also together therewith hee alludeth to the fishes of the Egiptians that were slayne, when the waters were tourned into bloud," 103-104.

fulfillment of each apocalyptic event and which map out time as a linear progression of signs come to pass.

In its uses of Apocalypse, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* joins the voices aiming to correct erroneous readings of Revelation and of eschatological prophecy in general. The notion that Error, though killed by Redcrosse early in Book One, continues to resurrect itself throughout the poem in various forms has been well-noted. However, the connection between error, apocalyptic eschatology, and the tendency of readers (and the figures in the poem) to anticipate imminent ending based on flawed hermeneutics deserves more attention. When Britomart, for example, attempts to calculate and recalculate the exact time that Artegall should return, the narrator specifically uses the word "error": "And then, her griefe *with errour* to beguile, / She fayn'd to count the time againe anew, / As if before she had not counted trew" (V.vi.5, italics mine). Time runs longer than Britomart expects, and her reaching after certainties only adds to her grief.

Fearing the same effect upon those who had placed their faith in the eschatological predictions regarding 1588 and 1593, exegetes such as Englishman William Perkins caution against such errors. In his dedication "To the Christian Reader" of *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world*, Perkins writes in 1587, "[Satan] . . . useth infinite sleights and conveyances, hee layeth innumerable gins and snares to entrap men, and to bring them into eternall bondage under him. Of this point, thou maiest have a plaine view in the people of this Land."[239] Perkins then catalogues those caught in Satan's snare, and at the top of his list, he places those who pinpoint the date of

[239] William Perkins, in prefatory section entitled "To the Christian Reader," *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world, betweene a Christian and a Worldling* (1587) in *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins, the third and last volume* (London: John Haviland for James Boler, 1631). *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

the end of the world as 1588: "Some of them neither regarding Gods providence, nor his judgements which he may send upon them for their sinnes, stand agast at the signes of Heaven, at the conjunctions which ordinarily befall: and at this present, their mindes are greatly occupied with foolish dreames of the yeare next ensuing."[240] In the work itself, Perkins presents a dialogue between Worldling, who has been convinced that the world will end in 1588, and Christian, who cautions him, "these may be the latter dayes still, and the last houre, and the world may for all that continue an hundred yeares, or two hundred yeares longer, for any thing we know."[241]

At this point in time, such a claim would have been unusual in England. As Richard Bauckham explains, "[T]he excitement and disillusionment of the 1580s produced for the first time theological voices which urged that, according to the scriptural evidence, the End was not to be expected *yet*. When William Perkins . . . deliberately played down the concept of apocalyptic imminence he was breaking new ground."[242] In France, however, Jean Bodin (whose work Gabriel Harvey commended to Spenser) had made such claims as early as 1566.[243] Heinrich Bullinger, whose *Hundred Sermons upon the Apocalypse* was widely popular in England, had argued such ideas in *Of the end of*

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[240] Ibid., 464.
[241] Ibid., 470.
[242] Bauckham, 71.
[243] In *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History,* Bodin comments upon various speculations regarding the End: "We have discussed these things about the system of universal time and the origin of the world. When its fall will take place, not even the angels know—certainly no one of the mortals, unless perchance we may agree to the conjectures of Rabbis Elia and Catina. In the books of the Talmud, under the title 'Sanhedrin,' chapter 'a share,' then also under the title 'Idolatry,' chapter 'before,' these rabbis limited the age of the world to six thousand years because of the fact that the world was made in six days. This conjecture many accept like an oracle, since they think that Elia was a prophet. Rabbi Isaac writing on chapter I of Genesis, along with Augustine, Book II of the *City of God*, embraced that prophecy as fallen from the sky. Leo the Hebrew thought, in addition, that in the perpetual agitation of six thousand years there will come a change of the elemental world and that in the seventh millennium there will be quiet, until, when 49,000 years have elapsed, a fiftieth millennium will bring the fall of the celestial spheres and the quiet of the Great Jubilee. But to investigate more subtly these matters, which cannot be grasped by human wit, or inferred from reason, or approved by the divine prophecy, seems not less stupid than impious" 333.

the world, published in England in 1580.[244] After Perkins's work, though, other Englishmen followed suit. John Dove, in a 1594 sermon preached at Paul's Cross, further disputes the literal reading of temporal terms in the Bible. He points out the flaws in the common argument that "A thousand years with God, are as one day" and that the world will not last more than 6000 years, for the Sabbath began before the end of the sixth day. Dove shows the folly of such reading:

> I John 2 also says "Babes it is the last hour": Fifteen hundred years are expired, & yet the houre is not ended, but 24 hours make one day, so that if 1500 years be reckoned but for one hour, sixe and thirtie thousand years are but one day before god, so that, if the world continue six dayes, it must indure, by that computation, two hundred and sixteene thousand yeares. This is as good a reason out of Saint John, to prove the continuance of the worlde two hundred and sixteen thousand yeares, as that out of S. Peter, to prove that it shall stand 6000 years.[245]

Thus, Dove uses collation to prove the fallacy of resolute claims that the End is near based on literal readings of prophetic statements.

Spenser's poem joins this more prudent side of the debate by arguing, through recapitulative exempla, that signs are indeterminate, first, because of the nature of prophetic signs themselves, and second, because of the flaws in human vision, capacity, and perspective. In addition to the problems with fixed readings of prophecy

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[244] Bullinger, *Of the end of the world.* The specific passage to which I refer is quoted on page 1 of this present chapter. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

[245] Dove. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007). In response to those who argue that the world will last only about 6000 years, William Perkins makes the same point as Dove, and in similar fashion: "This reason likewise hath no ground in Gods word: as for that place of Peter [a thousand years are as a day with God], the meaning is, that innumerable yeares are but as a short time with God: and we may as well say, two thousand or tenne thousand yeares are but as one day with God. For Peter meant not to speake any thing distinctly of a thousand yeares, but of a long time," Perkins, *An exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles according to the tenour of the Scriptures, and the consent of orthodoxe Fathers of the Church* (London: John Legatt, Printer to the University of Cambridge, 1595).

demonstrated by the cases of Britomart and Cymoent, there are other passages of the poem which point to the inherent indeterminacy of prophetic signs. For example, note the discrepancy between two descriptions of the Blatant Beast. In the final canto of Book Six, Calidore pursues and captures the Blatant Beast, who is described as having a mouth which contains

> *a thousand tongs* empight,
>
> Of sundry kindes, and sundry quality,
>
> Some were of dogs, that barked day and night,
>
> And some of cats, that wrawling still did cry:
>
> And some of Beares, that groynd continually,
>
> And some of Tygres, that did seeme to gren,
>
> And snar at all, that ever passed by:
>
> But most of them were tongues of mortall men,
>
> Which spake reprochfully, not caring where nor when. (VI.xii.27, italics mine)

Although in this passage the narrator states that the beast has a thousand tongues, just six stanzas later, the narrator explains, "Tho when the Beast saw, he mote naught availe, / By force, he gan his *hundred tongues* apply, / And sharpely at him to revile and raile" (xii.33, italics mine). Did Spenser forget how many tongues he intended for this beast to have?

Most likely, the discrepancy is intended to emphasize a point made by other Reformers about the nature of prophetic numbers and the hermeneutical fallacy of focusing on the letter rather than the spirit of the letter. In 1574, Augustine Marlorate had written in his *A Catholike exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John* of the ten-horned,

ten-crowned beast: "Ten kings (that is to say all kings and Princes) shall give their power unto the beast."[246] Marlorate disagrees with "many of the olde doctors" who claim that these ten horns and ten crowns represent the Roman Empire divided into ten parts toward the end of time, and that another king shall overcome the ten kings of the ten parts. Instead, Marlorate argues, "[T]hose fathers took their marke amisse. For it is manifest that the Empire is now divided into manie mo parcels. Therfore the playner way is, too leave the curious account of the number, and to take ten for many, after the custom of the scripture."[247] Here, Marlorate makes a significant observation in regard to prophetic numbers. Likewise, shortly after Spenser published the second half of his poem, a writer known as T.L. published in 1597 a commentary on the apocalyptic work of Esdras IV entitled *Babylon is Fallen*. He claims that the beast in Esdras IV, chapter II is the same one which Daniel "designeth under the forme of a ten-horned beast, signifying thereby, that it should be a power upheld by a succession of many kinges; for the hornes betoken kings, and the number of 10 comprehends all be they never so many, as al numbers are contained under 10 or made of their reduplication be they never so infinit."[248] Similarly, Spenser is making the point that the exact number of tongues in the mouth of his beast is irrelevant. As multiples of ten, one-hundred and one-thousand represent the same premise here: the number of tongues which have blasphemed Christ and true Christianity throughout time is too high to be numbered.

Additional instances in *The Faerie Queene* mimic the indeterminable meaning of prophetic symbolism itself. For example, when Merlin prophesies regarding Britomart

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[246] Marlorate, 184. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[247] Ibid.
[248] T.L., *Babylon is Fallen* (London: Edward Allde, 1597), 4-5. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).

and her nation, particular passages seem to satirize prophetic imagery itself, drawing attention to its sometimes inscrutable symbolism. After describing in stanza 45 the victories of specific heroes such as Rhodoricke the Great, Howell Dha, and Griffyth Conan in an elevated tone of glorious events to come, Merlin shifts to very general symbols which seem laughable in their juxtaposition with the great names and deeds in the previous stanza. In stanza 46, he adds:

> Ne shall the Saxons selves all peaceably
> Enjoy the crowne, which they from Britons wonne
> First ill, and after ruled wickedly:
> For ere two hundred yeares be full outronne,
> There shall a Raven far from rising Sunne,
> With his wide wings upon them fiercely fly,
> And bid his faithlesse chickens overronne
> The fruitfull plaines, and with fell cruelty,
> In their avenge, tread downe the victors surquedry. (III.iii)

Depicting the avenging vehicle that will trample the wicked as a troop of "faithlesse chickens" (which must be frightened into action by a raven) is startling and absurd. Chickens hardly seem the appropriate emblems for a mighty surge of military and political power. Furthermore, the phrase "bid *his* faithlesse chickens" expresses the idea of chickens being owned by or showing allegiance to a raven; because these creatures would realistically have no such relationship, the symbolism is random. Bart van Es has noted the satire of prophetic speech in the earlier sections of this canto:

> There is something comic in the transformation of Geoffrey's obscure prophecy

> (including such gems as "the feet of those that bark shall be cut off") into a neat chronological survey of England's monarchs. Merlin's reaction to Glauce's forewarning of Britomart's death (beginning "Now have three Moones with borrow'd brothers light, / Thrice shined faire, and thrice seem'd dim and wan" [iii.16.1-2]). likewise mocks the obscurity of Galfridian speech.[249]

Although Van Es adds that "The bulk of the prophecy that follows is clear-cut history, almost entirely free of Galfridian symbolism,"[250] the passage which I cite above, along with stanza 47, demonstrates one of the exceptions. In addition, while Van Es cites Geoffrey of Monmouth as the origin of the prophetic animal (Galfridian) symbolism, and the object of the satire in Spenser's work, the imagery can reasonably be argued as inspired ultimately by that in prophecies such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Esdras, and Revelation, with their often indeterminate symbols of multiple beasts and animals such as bears, lions and birds.

Other instances in the poem point to the incapacity of humans to recognize the fulfillment of events sought, even when fulfilled before their eyes. Note for example Britomart, who in Book Four, Canto Five still searches for the love from her vision, though, ironically, she has unknowingly already met him in combat:

> Upon her first adventure forth did ride,

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[249] Bart van Es, 193. Of the priest's interpretation of Britomart's vision in V.vii, which also uses animal symbolism, Van Es states that the priest glosses "the crocodile as Artegall and the Lion as the son Britomart shall bear. This is of course a perfectly satisfactory reading; had the episode been passed over to E.K. for editorial assistance, however, it is doubtful whether he would have provided a similarly innocuous clarification," 195. As Van Es explains, "[P]olitical prophecy (although often obscured by inscrutable symbolism) reads very much like history written in the future tense. It had originated . . . with the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but had soon developed into an instrument of analysis, persuasion, and sedition," 171. I would add that one of the earliest texts of political prophecy, prior to the English work of Geoffrey, of course, was Revelation. Van Es adds that the Galfridian form of prophetic composition makes use of animal symbolism to provide clues as to the subversive meaning, 171. Again, I would add that Revelation and other Biblical texts are a possible and likely origin for Geoffrey's use of such sometimes random animal symbolism.

[250] Ibid., 193.

To seeke her lov'd, making blind love her guide.

Unluckie Mayd to seeke her enemie,

Unluckie Mayd to seeke him farre and wide,

Whom, when he was unto her selfe most nie,

She through his late disguizement could him not descrie. (IV.v.29)

In the previous events of Canto Four, Artegall, disguised as the salvage knight, easily defeats many knights, but is then defeated by Britomart who makes quick work of unhorsing him (IV.iv.39-44). As the above passage explains, because of Artegall's disguise, Britomart "could him not descrie." At the time of Spenser's writing, one meaning of "descrie" was "to discover by observation; to find out, detect; to perceive, observe [or] see" (*OED*). Though the very embodiment of the vision she seeks is right in front of her, and she comes into literal contact with him, Britomart is unable to recognize him.

There are similar moments of the impediment of recognition regarding Timias, Arthur's squire. Arthur and Timias are separated as they intervene in the situation where Florimell is being chased by the lusty forester (III.i.15f; iv.45-47). Subsequently, Timias is stricken with love for Belphoebe, who favors him but later shuns him due to a misunderstanding. Heartbroken, Timias becomes a hermit:

this wretched man,

Spending his daies in dolour and despaire,

And through long fasting woxen pale and wan,

All overgrowen with rude and rugged haire. (IV.vii.43)

Thus, Arthur later does not recognize his own comrade: "albeit his owne deare Squire he were, / Yet he knew him not, ne aviz'd at all, / But like strange wight, whom he had seene no where" (vii.43). Timias has been so isolated that he has lost his ability to speak. Unable to get first-hand knowledge from Timias's mouth, Arthur attempts to read the signs of whom Timias used to be:

> Yet weend by *secret signes* of manlinesse,
>
> Which close appeard in that rude brutishnesse,
>
> That he whilome some gentle swaine had beene,
>
> Traind up in feats of armes and knightlinesse. (vii.45, italics mine)

Though Arthur does see a shadow of the former man, the Prince is unable to comprehend that this is the very one he seeks. The lapses in vision of Arthur and Britomart described here are explained by the earthly conditions of obscurity veiling the objects observed, as in Saint Paul's statement that on earth, he sees "through a glass darkely," but in the post-Apocalyptic world, he will see "face to face."[251]

In a subsequent passage of the poem, however, the impaired vision of Belphoebe concerning Timias is more a problem with her inability to make connections than with the conditions of observation. While still banished from Belphoebe, Timias meets a dove

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[251] I Corinthians 13:9-12: "For we knowe in parte, and we prophecie in parte. But when that which is perfite, is come, then that which is in parte, shalbe abolished. When I was a childe, I spake as a childe, I understode as a childe, I thoght as a childe: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we se through a glasse darkely: but then shal we se face to face. Now I knowe in parte: but then shal I knowe even as I am knowen." In *The Faerie Queene,* Arthur continues to seek Timais indefinitely: "But through the endlesse world did wander wide, / Him seeking evermore, yet no where him descride" (IV.viii.18). Finally, in Book Six, Arthur does find and recognize him, though Timais, ashamed of his captive state, attempts to be unseen: "Then turning backe unto that captive thrall, / Who all this while stood there beside them bound, / Unwilling to be knowne, or seene at all, / He from those bands weend him to have unwound. / But when approaching neare, he plainely found, / It was his owne true groome, the gentle Squire, / He thereat wext exceedingly astound, / And him did oft embrace, and oft admire, / Ne could with seeing satisfie his great desire" (VI.viii.27).

who has also lost her love, and who becomes his companion in mourning as well as his comfort. One day, Timias gives the bird a gift which Belphoebe had given to him:

> By chance he certaine miniments forth drew
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Amongst the rest a iewell rich he found,
>
> That was a Ruby of right perfect hew,
>
> Shap'd like a heart, yet bleeding of the wound,
>
> And with a litle golden chaine about it bound.
>
> The same he tooke, and with a riband new,
>
> In which his Ladies colours were, did bind
>
> About the turtles [dove's] necke. (IV.viii.6-7)

Suddenly, the bird flies away, straight to Belphoebe. Though Belphoebe beholds the bird "with attentive eye," it takes her some time to see the necklace: "*At length* [she] did marke about her purple breast / That precious iuell, which she formerly / Had knowne right well with colourd ribbands drest" (viii.10, italics mine). Belphoebe attempts to quickly seize the jewel : "Therewith she rose in hast, and her addrest / With ready hand it to have reft away" (10). However, the bird, with longsuffering effort, leads Belphoebe back to Timias:

> And ever when she *nigh approcht*, the Dove
>
> Would flit a litle forward, and then *stay*,
>
> Till she *drew neare*, and then againe remove;
>
> So tempting her still to pursue the pray,
>
> And still from her escaping soft away:

Till that *at length* into that forrest wide,

She drew her far, and led with *slow delay*.

In *th'end* she her unto that place did guide,

Whereas that wofull man in languor did abide. (11, italics mine)

Though Belphoebe attempts to hastily grasp the jewel, there is a greater and much slower process that leads to her recognition of Timias, a process figured in the movements of the bird drawing near, then flitting beyond her reach. The surprising problem with Belphoebe's vision becomes evident when she sees the bird fly into Timias's hand; witnesses Timias falling at her feet with kisses and tears; and like Arthur, discerns that Timias used to be "some man of place" (14), yet she fails to realize his identity. Despite these obvious sights, and the most obvious sign of her own jewel (which she had given to Timias) around the bird's neck, it takes a direct spoken explanation from the mouth of Timias, who breaks his silence, to bring Belphoebe to realization of what she is seeing.

Through all these figures who cannot recognize their expectations when fulfilled right before their eyes, or cannot draw timely connections between obvious events, the poem argues that humankind in general is incapable of seeing, recognizing, and reading with certainty the more mysterious signs of the End. Like Timias's dove, the end of time repeatedly seemed to draw near to those who sought its certain and quick arrival, but then to retreat with "slow delay" (viii.11). The same is true for the elusive endings of this poem, whose forestalled approaches to closure also figure the deferral of the End of time and the perfect reformation of all things. When the narrator, at the beginning of Book Four, Canto Twelve, laments, "O what an endlesse worke have I in hand, / To count the seas abundant progeny, / . . . . So fertile be the flouds in generation, / So huge their

numbers, and so numberlesse their nation," he is acknowledging that the haven (or heaven) is not necessarily "nigh at hand," as he had stated he believed in Book One. Looking across the comprehensive span of time, with all its stories of wrongs never made right and of unresolved suffering and separation, he is overwhelmed at the prospect that time, as well as his poem, may run on indefinitely,[252] adding to the "numberlesse" nation of those living in the fallen state. He claims in line two of this stanza that his goal is "To count the seas abundant progeny," but by the final line of the canto he acknowledges that no one can count the number.

Similarly, the promise of the heading at the beginning of Book Four's proem, that the book will contain "The legend of Cambel and Telamond, or of Friendship," and the subsequent failure of Telamond to appear in his own story causes readers themselves to question their own vision and abilities to read what they have seen. After the promise that Telamond will come into the narrative, readers wait for his arrival as they read through the cantos. When he is nowhere to be found, readers question whether they have read his name correctly, and whether they have truly understood the author's promise. *The Faerie Queene*, like Revelation, invites detailed one-to-one interpretations of its allegory but at the same time, resists them in the manner of what David Aune calls the "reveal/conceal dialectic."[253] Publishing his poem in 1590 and 1596, during times of continued efforts to definitively master Revelation by counting the uncountable, Spenser educates readers about the folly of rigid interpretation that can lead to disappointment when an expected end does not materialize. Regarding Telamond's vanishing before his story even begins, Jonathan Goldberg claims that

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[252] Significantly, the word "long" is one of the most frequently occurring terms in the poem.
[253] David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 84-85. Ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986).

> narrative structure in *The Faerie Queene* is not closed and complete, but instead describes a kind of loop, moving here from . . . closure ("tela" derives from *telos*, end) to openness, from the world ("-mond") to "another place." This is a structure of undoing or destructuring, a loop threading the void, moving from Telamond, the "perfect world" that is not present in the text, to the admission that perfection lies elsewhere, in "another place" that is also not in this text.[254]

However, with his focus on Spenser's narrative technique, Goldberg does not explore another implication of this word etymology: tela (end) + mond (world) gives us the idea of the end of the world–interesting when we realize that this figure, Telamond (the end of the world), does not appear, although we have been promised by the author that he would. In this example, in what Harry Berger calls "conspicuously irrelevant" episodes, and in what Patricia Parker calls "'signes' [prevalent in Books Three and Four] which do not have any immediately apparent meaning,"[255] Spenser demonstrates to his readers that the seeing and understanding of signs, contrary to popular belief of the day, is not a proper litmus test of faith.

Throughout the course of *The Faerie Queene*, signs outlined by many contemporary writers as sure portents of the imminent end are presented as fulfilled, but the subsequent continuance of the poem itself (and then the end of the poem without a conventionally expected ending) argue that time is running long, not short. For example, the narrator's observations upon the heavens in the Proem to Book Five are consonant

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[254] Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 6.

[255] See Harry Berger, Jr., *The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's* Faerie Queene (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Berger, "'Kidnapped Romance': Discourse in *The Faerie Queene*" in *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance,* eds. George M. Logan and Gordon Teskey (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 98.

with those who looked to the sky for certain signs that the End is near. The narrator remarks:

for the heavens revolution

Is wandred farre, from where it first was pight,

And so doe make contrarie constitution

Of all this lower world, toward his dissolution.

For who so list into the heavens looke,

And search the courses of the rowling spheares,

Shall find that from the point, where they first tooke

Their setting forth, in these few thousand yeares

They all are wandred much; that plaine appears. (V.Proem.4-5)

Again, the narrator's claim that these signs are "plaine" to see concurs with those such as Sheltco à Geveren or Stephen Batman who seek certain observable signs. Furthermore, the narrator elaborates more specifically on the alterations in the stars:

And eke the Bull hath with his bow-bent horne

So hardly butted those two twinnes of *Jove*,

That they have crusht the Crab, and quite him borne

Into the great *Nemaean* lions grove.

So now all range, and doe at random rove

Out of their proper places farre away,

And all this world with them amisse doe move,

And all his creatures from their course astray,

Till they arrive at their last ruinous decay. (V.Proem.6)

Compare the narrator's claims here to those of Geveren (1577):

> I am not only exceedingly troubled in mynd, but as it were compelled to believe, that that especial tyme of the end of thys world, is nigh at hand: because the Lord among other things also hath given us certayne tokens, these to wyt: that before his coming, there shalbe a darkening of the Sunne and Moone, and that the qualities of the heavens shalbe troubled. By which woordes no doubt he woulde signifie, that the whole Firmament of Starres should be altered, and as it were threaten a destruction.[256]

Similarly, though he disputes fixed numerical calculations, still, as late as 1594, John Dove preaches that the book of nature reveals that the end is

> very neare, for . . . the celestiall spheres bee almost wearie of their wonted motions and regular volubility, the prince of the lights of Heaven, which before came as a bridegroome trimmed out of his chamber dooth not looke uppon us with so chearefull an aspect, and that giant, which before did runne his unwearied race, dooth as it were by a languishing faintnesse beginne to stand and rest himselfe . . . so that there is a generall decay of nature and in everie leafe of that booke it is written, that the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads must very shortly lose & dissolve it selfe.[257]

As Dove here notes changes in the Sun, "the prince of the lights of Heaven," the narrator claims:

> Ne is that same great glorious lampe of light,
>
> That doth enlumine all these lesser fyres,

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[256] Geveren, 21. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).
[257] Dove, *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse, the 3 of November 1594*. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).

In better case, ne keepes his course more right,

But is miscarried with the other Spheres.

. . . . . .

That makes me feare in time he will us quite forsake. (V.Proem.7)

By extension, the implication is that the End of all worldly things is imminent.

Likewise, in the Proems to Books Five and Six, the narrator's claims that humankind is more wicked than ever before parallel those of exegetes who read this decline in virtue as a sign of the end of time. In the same section as his observations on the stars cited above, he states that "present dayes . . . are corrupted sore," and sums up the present state of things by claiming:

For that which all men then did vertue call,

Is now cald vice; and that which was vice was hight,

Is now hight virtue, 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.Proem.3)

As the poem progresses, the narrator more frequently mentions his own weariness, as in line one of Book Six: "The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde." He expresses a sense of belatedness in the latter half of the poem, a sense that the world has run past its date with an ending, which makes him look back nostalgically to the time when virtue, which now "does hidden ly, / From view of men, and wicked worlds disdaine," was first created and "forth to honour burst" (VI.Proem.3). Like his observation that temperance or chastity has become "rare / And hard to finde" (IV.viii.29), and that earthly Justice has diminished (V.Proem.3), he also claims that

true curtesie

Its now so farre from that, which then it was,

That it indeed is nought but forgerie,

Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas,

Which see not perfect things but in a glas. (VI.Proem.5)

Such beliefs about the current degenerated state of things parallel those of commentors like Geveren, who claims, "Now if we wil compare time present with that which is past, and set the manners of all men before our eyes, we shall perceive wickednes to have come to his ripenes, and to raygne almost without controlment."[258] Concurrently, in his Dedication to Marlorate's commentary on Revelation, Henry Binneman states, "[M]annes nature growing dayly more and more into decay with the perishing worlde nowe hasting too his ende, is more subjecte too corruption, and lesse given too Godlynesse and vertue than ever it was."[259] Likewise, in his statement that "the nature of man being ever more and more corrupted, since the fall of Adam,"[260] Anthonie Marten demonstrates a belief that human nature has intensified in its wickedness and diminished in virtue down through time, to the culminating point which Geveren expresses above in which wickedness has "come to his ripenes."

Readers who came to the poem trained to read history as well as current events for signs of the End would have been struck by the poem's engagement with signs fulfilled. The allusions to Revelation in *The Faerie Queene,* Book One have been well-documented. However, the ways these allusions work in concert with others throughout

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[258] Geveren, 13-14. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).
[259] H. Binneman, "The Epistle Dedicatorie" to Marlorate's *A catholicke exposition upon the Revelation of Saint John* (1574), sig. ¶iii[r]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[260] Marten, 8. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007); Geveren, 13-14. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

the poem to make an argument about sound hermeneutics for approaching prophecy have never been sufficiently explored. Many of the well-known signs depicted in Book One as being fulfilled are recapitulated (fulfilled again and again) in later books, with building intensity each time. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, Una's brief "how long" complaint (I.vi.5-6), which parallels the cries of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-11 at the opening of the fifth seal, is followed in subsequent books by an intensifying series of "how long" complaints growing out of intensifying despair of the martyrs. Martyrdom of true believers was frequently cited as a sign of the End. Geveren, for example, points to the destruction of those who have "cruelly martyred the learned Minsters and true professors of Christes Religion"[261] as a token of the close of time. Furthermore, John Chardon, in a sermon preached in Saint Peter's Church, comments that in the last days "people shalbee at theyr wittes end through dispaire."[262] Therefore, Una's complaint, when read as prelude to the increasingly despairing complaints which follow, would indicate a fulfillment of the expectation that toward the End the suffering of believers would intensify.

To cite another prominent example of the recapitulative pattern of signs fulfilled, the disrobing of Duessa in Book One is only the first of a series of similar handlings of wicked figures. Though Redcrosse has the power to kill Duessa and rid the world of her completely, on Una's recommendation he "spoile[s] her of her scarlot robe, and let[s] her fly" (I.viii.45). The scarlet robe, as well as the nature and actions of Duessa, clearly allude to the Whore of Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18, as has been well noted. However, the means of dealing with evil here also should be connected with subsequent

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[261] Geveren, 32. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).
[262] Chardon, sig. A4[r]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

episodes in the poem. The narrator's statement that Duessa flees "From living eyes her *open shame* to hide" (I.viii.50, italics mine) raises a concept significant to readings of Revelation.[263] In the dedication to his work, Geveren argues that the defeat of the Whore of Babylon has already come to pass by the preaching of the true gospel in the Reformation, and says of the Whore, "[T]hou seest, I say . . . whom they dyd reverence lyke a Goddesse, how they renounce as the greatest enemy to godliness: and whom they dyd by an ignorant zeale in rich with all things that myght cause her to be in the sight of all men glorious, how they worthily impoverish, and endeavour by all meanes to make her odious."[264] "Odious" can be read here as shamefully repugnant, and thus "worthily impoverish[ed]." The concept of bringing evildoers to open shame is present in the defeat of the Whore in Revelation 18, for her fall is announced by an angel who "cryed out mightely with a loude voyce" (Rev. 18:2) and her shameful reversal of status (and stripping of her riches) is witnessed by the vast population of humanity. Comparatively, Duessa's shame, however great, is witnessed only by a few.

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[263] The phrase "open shame" is also used in several Biblical passages: Daniel 9:8 and Hebrews 6:6. For Spenser, in addition to the depiction of the concept in Revelation 18, the most significant direct use of the phrase is in Colossians 2:15 which states that on the cross, Christ made a public spectacle of evil principalities and powers. In addition, Spenser might have encountered the phrase in a sermon by Jean Calvin published in 1583, in which he states that "God will put [those who disgrace him] to open shame: so as [they] shall needes bee a gazing stocke," and that even their descendents will be ashamed, 191, Sermon on Deuteronomy. My explanation of Spenser's use of open shame as allusion to the concept as seen in Revelation and in sixteenth-century readings of Apocalypse is an alternative to Teresa Krier's claim that "We may say that Spenser has gone some way toward resolving the problem of intentional display or intentional control of demeanor: it is reprehensible when its aim is to control, subdue, or humiliate others, when, in Nohrnberg's terms, it is grounded in contempt; it is a happier quality, even a virtue, when its aim is to elicit the *virtu* and grace of persons encountered," 237. Krier cites Nohrnberg's statement that Spenser's stories all insist that contempt is opposed to courtesy, as pride to holiness. The 'difficult' person is often a case of embittered self-love, and there are many difficult persons in the sixth book, though frequently what we see of them is their envy. Both arrogance and envy make one want to shame others. . . . The attempt to shame other persons in this legend is symbolized by various kinds of exposure." See Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 237. In contrast to this view, I hold that throughout the poem, and most intensely in Book Six, virtuous characters do in fact intentionally put their enemies to open shame, for the popular interpretation of scripture on the matter was that Christ did so upon the cross and, thus, true believers should follow his example.

[264] Geveren, sig. Ai[r]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

However, the poem does work through recapitulative episodes in which the enemies of true believers are openly shamed, with increasing degrees of and emphasis upon the openness or widely public nature of the shame. Like Duessa, many evildoers are allowed to live, but first to endure humiliation. For example, in the scene which culminates in Arthur's hanging Turpine by the heels in a tree, note the emphasis on public or open shame in the diction:

> as he lay upon the humbled gras,
> His foot he set on his vile necke, in signe
> Of servile yoke, that nobler harts repine.
> Then letting him arise like abject thrall,
> He gan to him object his haynous crime,
> And to revile, and rate, and recreant call,
> And lastly to despoyle of knightly bannerall.
>
> And after all, for greater infamie,
> He by the heeles him hung upon a tree,
> And baffuld so, that all which passed by,
> The picture of his punishment might see. (VI.vii.26-27)

Similarly, such a heightened degree of shame is present in the final canto of Book Six, where Calidore puts the Blatant Beast to open shame by fastening an iron muzzle on him (xii.34-35) and leading him about "like a fearfull dog" (xii.36). The shame of the beast is even more public than that of Turpine, for while Turpine is seen by all who may pass by that locale, the Blatant Beast is led "through all Faery land":

> As if he learned had obedience long,
> That all the people where so he did go,
> Out of their townes did round about him throng,
> To see him leade that Beast in bondage strong. (VI.xii.37)

Still, unlike the final defeat of the Whore of Babylon in Revelation, the Blatant Beast, as the very next stanza states, breaks his chain and runs loose to do more damage than before. Therefore, readers conditioned to look for fulfilled signs as assurance that the End is near, would be frustrated that evil continues in the poem. Such readers would need to exercise patience to continue reading, just as those who sought absolute certainty in signs would need to exercise a more mature faith. Repeatedly, the poem confronts readers with familiar apocalyptic signs fulfilled with greater intensity at each turn, but also with the lack of the highest possible culmination described by Fulke in his Revelation commentary as a time when:

> The effect of Gods wrath is expressed, that it tormenteth them most grieuouselye whome it shall burne for euer with fire and brimstone before the holy Aungels and before the lambe, that they maye be punished in the presence or beholding of them whose fellowship, and whole some admonitions they despised whiles they liued. Which parte of tormentes is not the lightest, that they are set as a gasing stocke for whome they mocked and derided whiles they flowed in there wanton pleasures and delightes.[265]

The frustration of readers, then, as I argue in Chapter Two, serves the apocalyptic affective function of creating a longing for completion and consummation – a longing

[265] Fulke, *Praelections*, 95. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 15, 2007).

necessary for true faith which is based on hope and expectation rather than observable signs.

Recently, I heard a Protestant minister declare, "If there is one book in the Bible for which I know the exact meaning, it is Revelation." He enjoys his absolute certitude. Somehow, though, he is missing a point highly emphasized by his more prudent predecessors. Among sixteenth-century Protestants, there is a notion that believers as well as unbelievers can live under too much security of mind. William Perkins counts "the general security of men,"[266] an unbeliever's attitude of non-concern toward spiritual integrity, among the signs of the end of time. Geveren also warns against the security of the wicked. In the Epistle Dedicatorie to Geveren's work, Thomas Rogers notes:

> As our Savior thought the doctrine agaynest securitie, most profitable for his Disciples, and all mankinde: So hath his faythfull servant the Author of this booke, suppose the same most necessary to be spoken of, in these miserable dayes. And this was the cause and ende wherefore this Treatise was first written, namely, that by reciting the signes and tokens of dangers imminente, and of the worldes destruction, he might draw the wicked from securitie, and drive them to a care of godlynesse and vertue.[267]

However, writers such as Bullinger, Spenser, Harvey, and Perkins argue that the godly can also be too secure, in the sense of claiming to know exactly how and when the end will unfold. Such a form of security, as these writers note, works counter to the watchfulness required by true faith. For example, in his commentary on the first three books of Revelation, Perkins claims this danger explains why John emphasizes how

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[266] Perkins, *A fruitfull Dialogue,* 470. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

[267] Thomas Rogers, "Epistle Dedicatorie," in Geveren, sig. [ii^{V}]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

quickly the apocalyptic events will come to pass: "first to awake the members of the Church out of the sleepe of security, and make them stand upon their watch continually: for though they cannot fall into the dead sleepe of sinne, yet the slumber of securitie may overtake them . . . . Secondly, to confirme and hearten the church, and all true members of Christ, against the afflictions to come."[268] Of course, to Perkins and many of the Reformed faith, "quickly" is understood as a term used relative to the cosmic span of eternity, but the major point of note is that the end of time, whenever it comes, will come suddenly.

Judicious as these writers may be in regard to eschatological predictions, they all agree with the less-cautious exegetes upon one thing: the End most certainly is coming. In contrast, however, to those who dedicate much of their time to, as Bullinger puts it, pointing with their fingers to "the day and the year of the finall judgement,"[269] the more prudent Reformers opt for a vigilance which one would be likely to lose if certain of the day of the End. For example, in light of the belief that the End could come suddenly and unpredictably, Thomas Bentley, a student of Gray's Inn, recommends praying the following prayer upon each strike of the clock: "[W]hatsoever I doo, or whatsoever I am, let the houre of thy sudden coming so runne in my mind, and keepe me watching, that I may ever thinke, I heare this voice sounding in mine eares: Arise yee dead, and come to judgement."[270] In Bentley's text, this prayer is immediately followed by scripture from

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[268] Perkins, *A godly and learned exposition or commentarie upon the three first chapters of the Revelation,* Preached in Cambridge in 1595 (London: Adam Islip for Cuthbert Burbie, 1606), 11. *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 30, 2007).

[269] Bullinger, *Of the end of the world* [*The first Sermon*], (1580), sig. D[r]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).

[270] Thomas Bentley, *The monument of matrons: conteining seven severall lamps of Virginitie, or distinct treatises*," "The fourth Lampe of Virginitie" (London: Thomas Dawson and Henry Denham, 1582), 365-66. *Early English Books Online* (accessed June 4, 2007). Bentley composes this prayer in response to the

Luke 12:35-40 for meditation. Verse 40 of this apocalyptic passage states: "Be ye also prepared therefore: for the Sonne of man wil come at an houre when ye thinke not."[271] These concepts are reiterated in Revelation 16:15, which warns, "Beholde, I come as a thefe. Blessed is he that watcheth & kepeth his garmẽts, lest he walke naked, and men se his filthines." Hence, because the culmination of history will come suddenly, a good Reformed believer would not want to be caught: like Redcrosse and another unnamed knight in *The Faerie Queene* One and Two, who lay aside their armor as they nap in sinful security at crucial moments (I.vii.2; II.xii.72,80); like Marinell, who, in the seemingly more godly "slumber of securitie," thinks himself invincible because of exact prophetic understanding, recklessly attacks Britomart, and finds himself "All *suddenly* with mortall stroke astownd" (III.iv.17, italics mine); like Britomart who, at one point, abandons attention to the godly fight in order to fret about the cycles of the moon as related to Artegall's absence (V.vi.3-8); or, most importantly, like Burbon who allows a pursuing crowd to batter his shield of faith and to force "him to throw it quite away" (V.xi.44-46).

The last episode, which figures the abandonment of Reformed faith by Henry IV of France to appease those loyal to the Church of Rome, recapitulates the earlier ones, but bears greater intensity. While the previous abandonments of armor affect the spiritual well-being of primarily individuals and those in their immediate circle, Burbon's (Henry's) action, when read through the lens of apocalyptic destiny in Revelation 20-22:5

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apocalyptic passage in Luke 12:35-40, in which Christ states, "Be ye also prepared therefore: for the Sonne of man wil come at an houre when ye thinke not," v. 40.

[271] Bentley, 366. Interestingly, years before publishing in 1581 *The Doome*, that strange work obsessed with recording specific strange events in England and on the continent, Stephen Batman also cites this verse in his 1569 *A christall glasse of Christian reformation wherein the godly maye beholde the coloured abuses used in this our present tyme,* "The description of wrath" (London: John Day, 1569), sig. [Civ^{r}].

(lake of fire versus New Jerusalem) affects the spiritual and eternal well-being of thousands. As the words of John Napier to James VI in 1593 indicate, political rulers of the time are viewed as bearing special responsibility, again because their role is being read through the apocalyptic battles in the closing chapters of Revelation: "[I]t is the dutie of Gods servants in this age, interpreters of Prophecies, as well as (according to examples of Prophets) to incourage and inanimate Princes, to be ready against that greate day of the Lords revenge."[272] Eudoxus, in Spenser's *A View of the State of Ireland*, demonstrates the same sense of a ruler's spiritual responsibility when he remarks, "Surely, it is great pitty . . . that there are none chosen out of the Ministers of *England*, good, sober, and discreet men, which might be sent over thither to teach and instruct [the Irish], and that there is not asmuch care had of their soules, as of their Bodies, for the care of both lyeth upon the Prince."[273] Similarly, the frustrations raised by and expressed in *The Faerie Queene* regarding the already-fulfilled signs and the deferral of history's end would have been compounded by the contemporary political frustrations regarding the Queen's deferral of action against her Romish enemies.

Increasingly in the England of the 1580s and 1590s, the Biblical notion that the faithful should vigilantly engage in spiritual warfare against the devil is becoming

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[272] Napier, *A Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John*, cited in Richard Mallette, "Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse," *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 11 (1994): 135. I would add that the spiritual shield of faith from Ephesians 6 has become the spiritual and literal battle shield of Revelation 17 and 19 in Book V, a shield which political rulers of the true faith are responsible to use against the end time machinations of Antichrist. This obligation may be viewed in the same sense as Melancthon views salvation: even though one is predestined as one of the elect, one is still obligated to act of free will to persevere in the fight of faith. Similarly, though the victory of Christ and His army in Revelation is predetermined, this is not viewed by Reformers as nullifying the responsibility of the faithful to fight for His side. Thus Burbon's dropping his shield is loaded with apocalyptic weight and his belief that he can drop it and pick it up at will is viewed as sorely misguided.

[273] Spenser, *A View Of The State Of Ireland, Written Dialogue-wise betweene Eudoxus* and *Irenaeus*, *By Edmund Spenser* Esq. *in the yeare 1596*; published with *Two Histories of Ireland: The one written by Edmund Campion, the other by Meredith Hanmer,* in *The Historie of Ireland,* ed. James Ware (Dublin: Society of Stationers, 1633), 111-14. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 5, 2007).

concurrent with the apocalyptic notion that as the end-time events of Revelation unfold, the True Church should literally fight Antichrist on the front of contemporary political and historical events. In 1580, Bullinger reminds believers that they must stay on their spiritual guard regardless of time's duration, as he interprets Daniel's words "They shalbe delivered into his hands, until a time and times, and half a time" in this manner: "In whiche dark kinde of speaking, he seemeth to signifie nothing else, but that the Saints must constantly abide in that fight, whether the time, that they must fight in, be long or short. For no certain determinate time is declared, and therefore none must be looked for."[274] Later arguing for a battle with a higher degree of literal and historical immediacy, in a 1595 sermon Perkins proclaims:

> [T]hat state of Gods church in this world, [is] namely, to be under the crosse: and the members thereof must not bee companions of peace and ease, but copartners in affliction and tribulation. And therefore Christ teacheth those which will bee his Disciples these lessons. First, to deny themselves, to take up his crosse daily and to follow him. And because of this estate, the church in this world is called *The Militant Church*, being in continuall fight against the divell and his instruments. The consideration whereof is of speciall use: For we in this land have had peace and quietnes for many yeares without persecution, which wee might acknowledge for a speciall blessing vouchsafed to us for this end, that now in the time of peace wee might prepare our selves against the day of triall, but yet that it will come we must resolve; because of the usuall estate of the church.[275]

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[274] Bullinger, *Of the end of the world* [*The first Sermon*], (1580). *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 2007).
[275] Perkins, *A godly and learned exposition*, 37. *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 2007).

Perkins's greater urgency can be explained by the very real threats to the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth from those loyal to the Church of Rome, both inside and outside the English borders. As Richard Mallette and others point out, after the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, aided by that seemingly providential storm that crippled the Spanish fleet, writers such as George Gifford and John Napier began to depict the fight of faith in terms of a more literal militancy.[276] Because Revelation itself depicts the culmination of history as a series of battles between kings loyal to Antichrist and those loyal to Christ, it is not surprising that those who read contemporary Reformation events through an apocalyptic lens would do likewise. Although the world had not ended in 1588 as some had predicted, the miraculous victory over the Romish enemy in that year fed the belief that the English and all those of Reformed faith were on the right side, and that they should be prepared to take part in the actual final battle against Antichrist, whenever that might come.[277]

Long before the turbulent political events of the final decades of the sixteenth century, readings of the Antichrist of Revelation such as that by John Bale had become the standard interpretation by Reformers. The title of one of Bale's 1550 publications needs no further explanation, in regard to the equating of Antichrist and the Church of Rome: *The apology of John Bale agaynste a ranke papist anuswering both hym and hys*

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[276] See Mallette, "Book V of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse," 134-35. Here, Mallette cites Gifford's *Sermons Upon the Whole Booke of Revelation* (1596) A3 and Napier's *A Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John* (1593) A3.

[277] Evidence that many of the time believed that these *were* those actual apocalyptic battles of Antichrist versus Christ is found not only in the treatises but in visual arts, as Borris points out: "In 1587 a medal was struck in the Low Countries, apparently for the five provinces resisting Spain, to commemorate the assistance of England. On one side, enthroned Elizabeth subdues the seven-headed beast, attended by Leicester and the supplications of five children representing those provinces and bearing their heraldic arms. The legend dedicates honour and praise to God. On the other, divine retribution hurls the pope and other Roman Catholic ecclesistics headlong from heaven. The inscription, 'whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth,' is biblical, and correlates their demise with Antichrist's, who was widely believed the subject of this prophecy (2 Thess. 2:3-12 . . .)," S*penser's Poetics of Prophecy,* 19.

doctours that neyther their vowes nor yet their priesthode areof the Gospell, but of Antichrist.[278] With the widespread acceptance of this interpretation among the Reformed, the topic of Antichrist continued to be a popular subject in publications in the latter half of the century, as demonstrated by a search for the term in *Early English Books Online* which recovers 4,780 hits in 357 records from English books published between 1550 and 1600. Among these records is Perkins's explanation that, according to Reformed hermeneutics, the term Antichrist represents more than one man:

> Now in Scripture the name of one person collectively, oftentimes signifieth the whole multitude as *Exod. 4.22 Israell is my sonne, even my first borne*, where the whole body of the people of Israel is called by the name of one man. And so though Antichrist bee not one particular man, but a state and company of men in the succession of Popes: yet is that whole estate noted by the speciall name of one man *as that Antichrist; that man of sinne: and sonne of perdition*.[279]

Collating and comparing similar passages of Scripture and interpreting one in the context of the meaning of the other, Perkins demonstrates one means by which the common perception of Antichrist had been derived.

Spenser's use of apocalyptic symbolism to represent current political events in *The Faerie Queene* Book Five has been well-established.[280] For example, Arthur's unveiling of his shield to supernaturally defeat the Souldan in V.viii.37-42 is generally accepted as primarily figuring the divine intervention that defeated the Spanish Armada of Philip II in 1588, and simultaneously figuring the divine aid of those who battle

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[278] Bale, *The apology of John Bale* (London: S. Mierdman for John Day, 1550). *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 30, 2007).
[279] Perkins, *A godly and learned exposition*, 71. *Early English Books Online* (accessed July 2007).
[280] See especially Kenneth Borris, *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy in* The Faerie Queen V, and Richard Mallette's "Book V of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse."

Antichrist in Revelation 17 and 19. Significantly, in Spenser's repeated depictions of Philip II, Mallette notes the sort of recapitulation and intensification for which I have been arguing:

> Besides his most obvious manifestation as the Souldan, he is reproduced in Geryoneo, Grantorto, perhaps even in Dolon and in the Samient episode . . . . His continuous re-appearance also reflects his apocalyptic function. The narrative principles of incremental repetition and overlapping work powerfully throughout apocalypse, not only from Daniel to Revelation and other Christian loci, but also within the confines of a single text. Antichrist enjoys numerous modes and faces in scripture; Philip and Spain have multiple modes and faces in post-Armada commentary . . . . [In *The Faerie Queene*] Philip is demonized [as Geryoneo] even more bitterly than in the Souldan episode. The allegory is becoming more belligerent with each incarnation of the Spanish monarch.[281]

As typical of the entire poem, however, the intensification breaks off prior to reaching its highest possible culmination.

In the case of Book Five, the trial and eventual punishment of Duessa in Mercilla's court and the incomplete reformation of Irena's kingdom at the close of the final canto are doubly figurative: one, of contemporary English political policy (which is inextricably linked with Reformed versus Romish religion) and, two, of the cosmic apocalyptic reformation still unfulfilled. Scholars have claimed that Irenius in Spenser's *A View of the State of Ireland* is the spokesman of Spenser himself, voicing his views that only violent action of the English government could maintain peace in Ireland.[282] As

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[281] Mallette, 144-47.
[282] See Eilean Ni Chuilleanain, "Ireland, the cultural context," in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, 403.

Nicholas Canny explains, in the early 1580s, as secretary to Lord Grey, Spenser had witnessed Grey's initial plans to "root out the [Irish] rebels in a comprehensive fashion" only to be sorely disappointed when Grey was recalled to England, leaving behind a small number of Englishmen, Spenser included, who "remained outspoken over the failure of the government to implement the scheme as originally conceived by the officials."[283] Canny adds, "As they perceived it, the existence of Irish proprietors in the midst of the planted land would always represent a threat to the colonists."[284]

The threat bears greater, cosmic weight, however, if viewed through an apocalyptic lens, such as that of Spenser and William Fulke. Revelation 18:6 declares, "Rewarde her, evẽ as she hathe rewarded you, and give her double according to her workes: [and] in the cup that she hathe filled to you, fil her the double." Fulke interprets this verse in light of the Prince's responsibility:

> The next thing which god requireth of his seruants, is, that after the abomination of the whore is disclosed, that they would show themselues ministers of the most Iust vengeance of God, in tormenting her in miserable maner, rewarde her, sayeth he, euen as she hath rewarded you. And the Psalm. 137 pronounceth them blessed, which shall render to Babylon the same thinges which she cruelly committed against the people of God. We must not therefore spare her, but rather her vengeaunce is to be dubled, according to the measure of her sinnes, and the crueltie, which she exercised vpon the holy martyres of God, she is to be punished with duble tormentes. Princes therefore and Magistrates shall see, which through *two much gentlenes* do not punish her wickednesse, what they will aunswere to

[283] Nicholas Canny, "Ireland, the historical context," in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, 406.
[284] Ibid.

> god, when they shalbe accused of the neclecte of this commaundement (italics mine).[285]

Fulke continues his commentary by interpreting verse 7, which states, "In asmuche as she glorified her self, and liued in pleasure, so muche give ye to her torment and sorowe":

> [John] teachethe that it is most equall and right, that by howe much greater pride, & presumption she hath extolled her self, with so much greater infamy she should be reproched, & loke how much more the abominable whore hath applied her selfe to riote and intemperaunce, by so muche more grieuouse tormentes and punishments, her wantonnesse should be restrayned. Therefore here is *no place of mercy*, but her sinnes are to be weighed in the equall balance of Iustice, with her torments, and loke whatsoeuer she hathe deserued, she oughte to suffer, *withoute any fauour shewed at all*. For it becommeth not vs to be liberall of that which is none of our owne. God the eternall Iudge, hath geuen this sentence vpon her, whose sharpenes no mortall creature can mittigate or aswage. Let vs therefore hate Babylon as we oughte, with the greatest hatred, and with vehement and earnest prayers let vs desire her extreme destruction, whiche so long as she remayneth safe the Churche of Christ whose felicitie wee oughte by all meanes to procure, can neuer florish (italics mine).[286]

Thus, while Fulke displays prudence in regard to the reading of signs and prediction of the specific time of the End, his use of the first person "us" here does demonstrate the belief that the Whore of Babylon is immediately before the eyes of the current population of Fulke's day. Furthermore, he reads the verses as directed, first, toward the Princes of

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[285] Fulke, *Praelections*, 119. *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 2007).
[286] Ibid.

his day, who should enforce justice upon the Whore (and by implication, her followers) without gentleness, mercy, or favor; and, second, toward the truly godly, who should pray "for her extreme destruction" so that the Church of Christ can flourish. Such a reading places a new slant upon the concerns of threats toward the English colonists in Ireland unresolved by Queen Elizabeth, as well as upon passages of *The Faerie Queene* describing Mercilla the "mayden Queen" who "even to her foes her mercies multiply" (V.viii.17) and whose "sword is rusted from long rest" (V.ix.30). It is only after weeping with compassion (ix.50) and giving in to "strong constraint" (x.4) that Mercilla enforces the death penalty upon Duessa, and even afterward, Mercilla is praised by other nations and her people (x.3) and by Arthur and Artegall for "her mercies" and "her clemencies" (x.5). This scene, of course, primarily figures Elizabeth's reluctant and long-delayed ordering of the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1585, but the implications that the Queen's much-venerated clemency is dangerous and scripturally erroneous clearly apply to the Irish situation, and to the apocalyptic view that the Romish church is the very embodiment of Antichrist.

In regard to such deferral of political force and responsibility, as well as deferral of apocalyptic completion, the role of Talus (who appears in eighteen episodes, beyond the narrator's initial introduction of him) has not received due attention from scholars. Few indexed articles focusing upon Talus have been written, and those in existence are relatively short.[287] Even Borris's well-respected work on Book Five, *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy*, comments surprisingly little upon the iron man, less than T. K. Dunseath's

[287] See Nathaniel Wallace, "Talus: Spenser's Iron Man," *Spenser Studies* 10 (1992): 277-79; John P. Daly, "'Talus' in Spenser's *Faerie Queen*," *Notes and Queries* 7 (1960): 49; John M. Steadman, "Spenser and the Virgilius Legend: Another Talus Parallel," *Modern Language Notes* 73.6 (1958 June): 412-13; and Geoffrey Wagner, "Talus," *ELH* 17.2 (1950 June): 79-86.

work published over two decades earlier. Furthermore, although there is a lengthy entry on Artegall in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, there is none on Talus, whose role is mentioned just briefly in entries upon "*The Faerie Queene*, Book V," "Ireland, the cultural context," and Lord Grey. In *Analogy of* The Faerie Queene, James Nohrnberg has one of the longer critical discussions of the classical and Biblical origins of Talus,[288] but mentions his apocalyptic significance only in passing. Because of the topical symbolism of Book Five, critics have understandably approached Talus with a caution that fosters reticence, as well as a justifiable measure of aversion. Borris is right to claim that "Unlike any other characters in *The Faerie Queene*, Artegall and especially Talus are often linked with 'slaughter,' not a value term in most personal lexicons, so that Spenser's diction in Book V promotes examination of power for abusive excess."[289] The sort of violent domination of peoples which Talus does symbolize on the topical level is, of course, reprehensible to modern mindsets, generally far removed from the barbarity of public burnings at the stake, beheadings, or slaughter in the name of religion bound up with politics, as that carried out in some instances by Lord Grey in Ireland.

Perhaps because of these topical associations with the reprehensible, critics have neglected exploration of the ways in which Talus, the most intensely violent figure on the side of good in the poem, also prefigures the apocalyptic brand of justice Reformers believe will be fulfilled according to the Book of Revelation, even in some regards, the violence to be enacted by Christ himself. In this regard, the unmerciful actions of Talus towards his foes would have been viewed as a foreshadowing of Christ's definitive crushing of all evil, a vision of wish-fulfillment, in fact, for readers such as Fulke. The

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[288] James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of* The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 409-25.
[289] Borris, 78.

post-ascension Christ of Revelation is terrifying yet appealing to those of the Reformed faith. Jan van der Noot, for example, chooses to compose the penultimate sonnet of his collection in *Theatre* upon just this version of Christ. The sonnet, drawn directly from the imagery of Revelation 19, depicts Christ "with flaming countenaunce," upon a white horse, with his heavenly army behind him. The "fierce hatefull beast and all hir traine" who attempt to slay Christ are "pitilesse throwne downe in pit of fire."[290] Revelation 19:15 itself describes Christ in this manner: "And out of his mouth went out a sharpe sworde, that with it he shulde smite the heathen: for he shal rule thẽ with a rodde of yron: for he it is that treadeth the wine presse of the fiercenes and wrath of almightie God." In his Commentary published with *Theatre*, Van der Noot interprets this verse: "[H]e shall poure forth his vengeaunce upon the proud and infidels, and shall punish them most grievously with his strong & mightie arme, stretched over their heads, striking them in his rage & furie, wherunder all things are set." Thus, the apocalyptic vision which depicts the highest intensity of violence in all of history appeals to Van der Noot and those of the Reformed faith because at the apocalyptic culmination of history, all evil will be set under the "rage & furie" of Christ, who will banish the unbelievers forever.

Because Spenser and others of Reformed faith view the general religious violence of his time as penultimate to that of Apocalypse, in a number of ways, the actions and temperament of Talus would be read as foreshadowing those of the Christ of Apocalypse. Even the first description of Talus in the poem contains images which bear striking similarities to Christ in Revelation. First, his resumé includes executing the "stedfast doome" (V.i.12) of Astraea (who, in another of the poem's disappearing acts, has gone to

[290] Jan Van der Noot, *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1569) in Facsimilie edition (New York: Scholars' Facsimilies & Reprints, n.d.).

heaven), just as Christ functions in Apocalypse to carry out the doom of judgment upon unbelievers. Most notably, the description of him as an "yron man" (V.i.12) evokes the image of Christ who is referred to several times in Revelation as ruling with a rod of iron (as in Rev. Chapters 2, 12 and 19).

Furthermore, the language used in the Reformers' readings of this apocalyptic Christ is quite comparable to that used by Spenser to introduce Talus. The narrator describes Talus as

made of *yron* mould,

Immoveable, *resistlesse*, without end.

Who in his hand an *yron* flale did hould,

With which he *thresht* out falsehood, and did truth unfould. (V.i.12, italics mine)

In *Image of Both Churches*, John Bale reads Revelation 12:5: "With the *yron wand* of his word *inuincible* shal he gouerne his méeke sprited flock, yet none other lawes shal they require, with the same also shal he *subdue all powers* which are not of hym, and *driue them downe* to the bottom of hell."[291] The image of Talus *threshing out* falsehood and unfolding truth is itself an eschatological trope from New Testament passages such as the apocalyptic preaching of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:12, in which he declares that Christ: "hathe his fanne in his hand, & wil make cleane his [threshing] floore, and gather his wheat into his garner, but wil burne up the chaffe with unquencheable fyre." This image is repeatedly used for Talus, for example, in V.vi.29: "And in his hand his thresher ready keight," in V.vii.35: "For all [of Radigund's supporters] that ever came within his reach, / He with his yron flale did thresh so thin, / That he no worke at all left for the leach,"and in V.xi.47, in which a crowd flees him: "From whose sterne presence they

[291] Bale, *Image of Both Churches*, 38. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 3, 2007).

diffused ran, / Like scattred chaffe, the which the wind away doth fan." The figure represents Christ's separating once and for all the true church from the false one at the end of time, which, of course, is an appealing prospect to those of the sixteenth-century Reformed faith. The trope also culminates in fire, in the burning of the chaff which has been threshed out, so the association with Christ's casting members of the false church into the lake of fire in Revelation is clear.

Thus, critics such as Dunseath and Nohrnberg do not go far enough to make such associations which those collating scripture by Reformed hermeneutics perceive. For example, Dunseath observes:

> Talus' remorseless destruction of Munera, the gold and the castle is of universal significance, as it is to be an exemplum of the fate of all who would blind the eyes of the judge with gifts. In physically obliterating this symbol of bribery, Talus "races" it from the memory of all men, an action reminiscent of a prophecy made by Eliphaz to Job: "For the congregation of the hypocrite shal be desolate, and fyre shal devoure the houses of bribes. (xv.34)[292]

Most certainly, this association is present in Spenser's image, but his poetics foreground the apocalyptic culmination of scripture. Thus, Dunseath's failure to read concordentially, as Spenser's readers would have, causes him to miss the chain of imagery carried to its highest intensity in Revelation. Likewise, although Nohrnberg very briefly recognizes the "apocalyptic overtones" of Talus's flail and associates it with "the prophets and the gospel, and . . . the hand of the Messiah who will separate the wheat

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[292] T.K. Dunseath, *Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book Five of* The Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 94. In addition, while Dunseath's observations about Herculean imagery associated with Talus are plausible, Dunseath also misses the association with Christ in the phrase from V.i.20, "strong as Lyon in his Lordly might," 67, 74.

from the chaff,"[293] Nohrnberg misses the connection of this image with a related one, equally apocalyptic: separating wheat from tares.

In Talus, Spenser, like John Calvin, highlights the apocalyptic relationship between the two images. For example, Calvin recalls related Biblical tropes:

> [The Church of Christ] is lyke vnto a corne fielde, whiche being sowen with good graine, is by the ennemies fraude scattered with tares, of whiche it is not cleansed vntyll the croppe bee broughte into the barne floore. Fynally let them heare that it is lyke vnto a floore, wherein the wheate is so gathered together, that it lyeth hydden vnder the chaffe, tyll beyng clensed with fanne it be at length laide vp in the grainer. If the Lorde pronounce that the Churche shall euen to the daye of Iudgement be troubled with this euyll, to be burdened with mynglyng of euyll men: they doo in vayne seeke for a Churche sprynkled with no spotte.[294]

Here, Calvin collates the passage from Matthew 3 in which Christ uses a winnowing fan to separate wheat (true Church) from the chaff (false one) with the passage from Matthew 13: 24-30 in which Christ describes the separating of wheat (again, true Church) from tares (those sown into the true Church by the enemy but found at the end-time harvest to be false). Nohrnberg discusses Talus's action of mowing down Grantorto's scouts, who "lay scattred over all the land, / As thicke as doth the seede after the sowers hand" (V.vii.7), as if it has no connection,[295] though Spenser and his readers, like Calvin, would have noted the associations with sowing, harvesting, and separating. Furthermore, even the opening stanza of Book Five, Canto One points to that apocalyptic theme:

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[293] Nohrnberg, 418-19.
[294] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London: Reinholde Wolfe and Richarde Harison, 1561), 7. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 3, 2007).
[295] Nohrnberg, 421-22.

Though vertue then were held in highest price,
In those old times, of which I doe intreat,
Yet then likewise the wicked seede of vice
Began to spring which shortly grew full great,
And with their boughs the gentle plants did beat.
But evermore some of the virtuous race
Rose up, inspired with heroicke heat,
That cropt the branches of the sient base,
And with strong hand their fruitfull rancknes did deface. (V.i.1)

Though stanza three of this canto explains that Artegall is of that "virtuous race" that crops the wicked plants from the good, in many cases, it is Talus who tends toward completing the task and Artegall whose mercy stops him.

Another prominent quality of Talus invites comparison with the Christ of Apocalypse: the uncanny ability to pursue, find, and punish his enemies into oblivion. In his first action, the pursuit of Sanglier, Talus's movements seem supernatural: "it seem'd above the ground he went: / For he was *swift* as swallow in her flight, / And strong as Lyon in his *Lordly might*" (V.i.20, italics mine). The swiftness with which Talus pursues and captures this evildoer parallels the Christ who, as previously noted, will come suddenly to judge all at the end of time. Revelation 6:15-17 depicts Christ as mighty above all men, who have no power to escape His wrath:

And the Kings of the earth, & the great men, and the riche men, and the chief captaines, and the mightie men, and everie bondman, and everie fre man, hid them selves in dennes, and among the rockes of the mountaines; And said to the

> moũtaines and rockes, Fall on us, and hide us from the presence of him that sitteth on the throne, & frό the wrath of the Lambe. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand?

People can run from the Christ of Revelation, but they cannot hide. Talus, with what Dunseath calls his "implacable pursuit,"[296] has the same effect. Though Talus does not have every man on earth fleeing him, as Christ does in this apocalyptic pinnacle of history, Talus has no problem apprehending all the objects of his pursuit. Even Malengin, who variously changes shapes in effort to hide, cannot escape. Like the men cited above, fleeing Christ, Malengin also runs from Talus "Both over rockes, and hilles, and every place" (V.ix.16), but runs in vain. Frequently, Talus's function is to chase away large groups of evildoers, though, as when he disperses the Amazon women and their supporters on several occasions (V.iv.24, 44; V.v.19), scatters Dolon's men into the darkness (vi.29-30), and disperses the crowd besieging Burbon (xi.47, 59, 65). Again, however, beyond dispersing, he often does carry the pursuit to violent culmination, finding and grievously punishing those who flee, as when he slays Malengin (ix.19), or scours Irena's land for scoundrels and traitors (xii.26-27).

Most significant in the context of late sixteenth-century debates on the nature of the fight of faith, Talus tends to act rather than speak. In fact, "the laconic Talus,"[297] as Dunseath calls him, rarely speaks at all. He utters most of his words to Britomart (one of the poem's virtuous figures) in two scenes in which he relates the state of Artegall held captive (vi.9-18). Besides this longest conversation, he very briefly speaks to give information to Britomart (vi.30) and to give brief warning to Artegall (ix.18). Beyond

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[296] Dunseath, 202.
[297] Dunseath, 144.

speaking to these two righteous figures, Talus's only other words are to Sanglier: "He bad him stay, and backe with him retire" (i.21). Sanglier, "full of scorne to be commaunded so" (21), attacks Talus with all his force, but is immediately knocked senseless. After this scene in Canto One, Talus says nothing to his many foes, but only wordlessly mows them down. Again, this quality parallels that of the Christ of Apocalypse (particularly in Revelation 14:16), the actions of whom William Fulke describes as follows: "There is no delaye, so soone as he vnderstandeth that the ripe & full time to exercise the seuerity of god is come, his sharpe sickle being thrust into the earth, he reapeth all the harueste of the earth, soner then one worde can be spoken."[298]

This often-overlooked change in Talus from verbal means of compulsion to violent force is important as it relates to the contemporary apocalyptic debates among the Reformed as to whether faith should be fought solely with the preached Word or fought with the literal sword as well. As Mallette demonstrates, the views of some late sixteenth-century Reformers were shifting from faith as solely a spiritual fight to faith as both a spiritual and a material fight. For example, John Jewel, prior to his death in 1579, focuses upon a spiritual interpretation of Christ's sword:

> The preaching of the Gospel . . . shall consume the kingdome of Antichrist . . . . Princes make their conquests by power and strength, by fyre and sworde, and engines of warre, but God shal beate downe his adversarie with the rod of his mouthe. By true preaching of his worde. His worde is mighty, it is his sworde, it is his mace: it is the rod of his mouth.[299]

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[298] Fulke, *Praelections*, 97. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 15, 2007).
[299] John Jewel,*Upon the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (London, 1583), 362-63. Cited in Malette, "Book V of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse," 133.

By 1596, however, George Gifford (who had translated Fulke's *Praelections* into English in 1573), in his *Sermons Upon the Whole Booke of Revelation*, preaches that Protestant princes "are the ministers of the true Gospell upon earth, and all the right valiant men of warre which fight with the material sworde against Antichrist."[300]

Talus's abandonment of verbal efforts reflects such a shift and its implications. Immediately after his failed attempt to coerce Sanglier by verbally asking him to submit, Talus is depicted in the next canto as being violently outraged at the Egalitarian Giant because the giant refused to listen to Artegall's homily that closed the religious debate between them:

> Whom when so lewdly minded *Talus* found,
> Approaching nigh unto [the Giant] cheeke by cheeke,
> He shouldered him from off the higher ground,
> And down the rock him throwing, in the sea him dround. (V.ii.49)

It is worthwhile to note the diction used to describe the fate of the Giant:

> Like as a ship, whom cruell tempest drives
> Upon a rocke with horrible dismay,
> Her *shattered* ribs in *thousand peeces* rives,
> And spoyling all her geares and goodly ray,
> Does make her selfe misfortunes piteous pray.
> So downe the cliffe the wretched Gyant tumbled;
> His *battred* balances in *peeces* lay,
> His timbered bones all *broken* rudely rumbled,
> So was the high aspiring with huge ruine humbled. (50, italics mine)

[300] Gifford, *Sermons,* 380. Cited in Malette, 134.

Fulke, in *Praelections*, points to the similar fate in Revelation 12 of those who refuse to listen to the preaching of Christ's Word: "And Christ doth *compell* all nations to his obedience although they *obstinately resist*, *breaking* them *with a rod of Iron*" (italics mine). Of Revelation 19, Fulke adds:

> According to the prophecie of Dauid reciting the ordinance of god Psalme 2. That he should smite the *rebelliouse* heathen; with a sword & should *breake the raging people in peaces with an Iron rod*, as it were the potters vessels. And Christ him selfe also is the ruine of the *reprobate*, which treadeth the wine presse of the wrath of almightie God, that is hee shall condemne all the reprobate, beinge ouercome by his power, to the eternall tormentes of hell. The emphasis of euerie worde is here to be noted, which is put to terrifie the wicked. And he alludeth to the prophecie of Esay in the 63. Chap. concerning the slaughter of the Edomites, as we sayed before, in which Chapter of Esaye, there are almost the same woordes concerning the treading of the wine presse. (italics mine)[301]

Likewise, in *An exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles according to the tenour of the Scriptures, and the consent of orthodoxe Fathers of the Church*, William Perkins states of those who refuse to hear the gospel:

> [O]therwise if they continue in their old *rebellions*, let them know whosoeuer they be, high or low, that *he hath a rod of iron in his hand to bruise them in pieces*; their soules shall smart for it: as both Pilate, Caiphas, & the rest of the Iewes were with a full cup rewarded, for crucifying the Lord of life. And if Christ *cannot*

[301] Fulke, *Praelections,* 129. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 15, 2007). Note that in Revelation 2:25-28, Christ declares, "But that which ye have all ready, holde fast til I come. For he that overcometh and kepeth my workes unto the end, to him wil I give power over nations, And he shal rule them with a rodde of iron: [and] as the vessels of a potter, shal thei be broken [Psalm 2:9]. Even as I received of my Father, so wil I give him the morning starre."

> *draw thee* in this life from thy crooked waies, be sure at the houre of death *he wil breake thee in pieces* like a potters vessel. (italics mine)[302]

Here, Fulke and Perkins describe those who insist on rebellion against Christ's Word, who "obstinately resist" spoken efforts to persuade them to come to the side of the true faith. The term "reprobate" used by Fulke is defined in *OED* as "Rejected by God; lost or hardened in sin." Thus, Perkins and Fulke view this willful refusal to respond as reason enough for Christ's breaking into pieces of these unbelievers, a scenario mirrored in the story of the Egalitarian Giant shattered in pieces by Talus.

In Spenser's *A View of the State of Ireland*, written in the late 1590s, Irenaeus's application of the spiritual concept of the reprobate to political policy on maintaining civil order also links it with contemporary debates on preaching versus the sword. In this work, Eudoxus asks, **"**How then doe you think is the reformation thereof to be begunne, if not by lawes and ordinances?" Irenius responds, **"**Even by the sword, for all these evills must first be cut away by a strong hand, before any good can bee planted, like as the corrupt braunches, and unwholesome boughes are first to bee pruned, and the foule mosse cleansed and scraped away, before the tree can bring forth any good fruite."[303] This response, like the aforementioned passage regarding the virtuous race who crop wicked branches away from good ones (*Faerie Queene* V.i.1), alludes to Christ's words in Matthew 7: 18-19: "A good tre can not bring forthe evil frute: nether can a corrupt tre bring forthe good frute. Everie tre [that] bringeth not forthe good frute, is hewen downe, and cast into the fyre." Like the images of pulling up tares and threshing wheat, the

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[302] Perkins, *An exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles according to the tenour of the Scriptures, and the consent of orthodoxe Fathers of the Church* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1595), 212. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 1, 2007).

[303] Spenser, *A View of The State Of Ireland* (1596) in ed. James Ware (Dublin: The Societie of Stationers, 1633), 65-66. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 5, 2007).

cutting off of "corrupt braunches" is also an apocalyptic image representing the consummate separation of evil from good. Irenaeus does support diplomatic tactics (which in the religious sense would take the form of Reformed preaching) as a first course of action, before resorting to violence:

> [W]here no other remedie may bee devised, nor hope of recovery had, there must needes this violent meanes bee used . . . . [B]y the sword which I named, I did not meane the cutting off all that nation with the sword, which farre bee it from mee, that I should ever thinke so desperately, or wish so uncharitably, but by the Sword I meane the royall power of the Prince, which ought to stretch it selfe forth in the chiefest strength to the redressing and cutting off those evills, which I before blamed, and not of the people which are evill. For evill people, by good ordinances and government, may be made good; but the evill that is of it selfe evill, will never become good.[304]

Thus, Irenaeus is not advocating indiscriminate violence without mercy. Furthermore, while Irenaeus claims that he has little to say of religious matters, and ostensibly speaks of what I would call a civil reprobate, a political rebel rather than a religious one, the two are, in this time, not actually mutually exclusive. Those who fall under the sting of Talus's flail represent both types, for Apocalypse itself conflates religious and political reprobates as one and the same.

Talus, of course, goes further beyond the possibility of mercy than Irenaeus and, in doing so, provides a glimpse into the time when, according to Revelation, the era of preaching will give way to the dispensation of absolute judgment by Christ, when the opportunity for surrender and reform is gone. There is a brief period in the early chapters

[304] Ibid., 66.

of Revelation in which Christ is still preaching: in Chapters 1-3, Christ directs John to write His word to seven churches, and at the end of each of the seven letters, Christ declares, "Let him that hathe an eare, heare, what the Spirit saith unto [the] Churches." Immediately following the close of the letters in Chapter Three, however, Christ is the mighty resurrected Lamb who opens the seals of judgment and sets the apocalyptic justice (which consumes the majority of the book) in motion.

The shift in Talus's actions from his brief efforts at verbal negotiation with Sanglier to his predominant mode of wordless punishment in the remainder of Book Five represents this progression in the Christ of Revelation, as well as the progression which Reformers believed would take place in the final era of history. Therefore, such readers of *The Faerie Queene* would view the following violently disturbing scenes as poetic representations of the apocalyptic era when the Christ of Revelation has moved past his salvific mission to one of absolute justice: Talus is "Unmov'd with praiers, or with piteous thought" (V.ii.23), mercilessly punishing Munera despite her "holding up her suppliant hands on hye, / And kneeling at his feete submissively" (26); the Egalitarian Giant, who refused to listen to Artegall, is shattered in pieces after being thrown from the rock by Talus (50); and Malengin under the merciless lash of Talus's iron flail, cries "in vaine for helpe, when helpe was past" (V.ix.19). With their focus on Apocalypse, Reformers would read such scenes as figuring a time when preaching and praying will end, a time when those who have willfully refused to submit to true faith will no longer have the opportunity.

This assertion must be qualified, however, because as violent as the scenes are, they do not reach the uninterrupted, unmitigated intensity of Christ's absolute vengeance

upon evil. Talus is associated at several points with thunder, as when he beats upon Munera's door with "thundred strokes . . . so hideouslie" (V.ii.21), and when "He with his yron flaile amongst [Radigund's troops] thondred" (v.19), which alludes to the thunder associated with each of the seventh judgments in the three series of sevens in Apocalypse (the seventh and final judgment in each series mentions thundering, lightning, and earthquakes: Rev. 4:5, 11:19, and 16:18). However, although Talus, at several points, leaves piles of carcasses in his path (V.v.19; V.vii.36; V.xii.7) as does the Christ of Revelation 19 (and the fowls even come in V.ix.19 to eat the flesh of Malengin's carcass, as they eat of many carcasses in Revelation 19), the temper of Talus is sometimes tempered by Britomart (V.vii.36) or Artegall (V.xii.8). Thus, Talus (who dismembers Munera and disentrails Malengin) is more brutal towards individuals than the Christ of Apocalypse, but to much less effect, in light of comprehensive justice. Christ's unmitigated violence serves the purpose of swiftly and eternally containing the collective power of evil; Talus's violence, stayed by others, punishes evil at a local place in time and history, but not universally and eternally.

Contrary to Kenneth Borris's claim that "Artegall's programme is . . .tainted by Talus's bloody impositions,"[305] some Reformers actually would have believed the reverse. Borris views Arthur's approach to reformation as "idealized, complete, and drawn from apocalyptic anticipations of a perfected Christian futurity" and Artegall's approach as "obviously unequal to Arthur's,"[306] but Talus (who is referred to in V.iv.3 as Artegall's "gard and government" and in V.viii.3 as "The true guide of [Artegall's] way and virtuous government") is drawn from and evokes apocalyptic anticipations as well.

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[305] Borris, 62.
[306] Ibid.

According to Revelation, history's endpoint of consummate peace for believers must be preceded by its point of consummate violence against unbelievers by which Christ will end time itself. Thus, *The Faerie Queene* manifests a belief that neither preaching nor the material sword will ever be wholly effective within the course of earthly time. Spenser's poem, despite its opposition to those who seek complete epistemological mastery of Revelation and apocalyptic prophecy, does manifest the belief that the end of all earthly things, spatial and temporal, is a certainty and that, however unpredictable the exact timing of Apocalypse-fulfilled, contemporary political events do have apocalyptic significance.

Observing the turbulent events surrounding the Reformation, many believed history to be building to its highest intensity, as in Apocalypse. Above and beyond the longings for Elizabeth to act with a more decisive force of justice against the foes of English endeavors, there is a tone of aching impatience in the poem for all things to be set right, a tone which parallels that of Fulke in his commentary on Revelation 14:10, a verse which states, "The same shal drinke of the wine of the wrath of God, yea, of [the] pure wine, which is powred into the cuppe of his wrath":

> It is to be noted with what vehement figures he expresseth the horrible vengeaunce of God. For firste hee callethe it the wine of Gods wrath, which if it seme to little, he addeth, that it is pure, bycause it is not mitigated with any clemencie or gentlenesse, lastlye hee saiethe that it is poured into the cup of God's wrath, so that by all meanes, he heapeth up and increaseth the qualitie and quantity of Gods vengeaunce, against Idolaters and the bondslaves of

Antichrist.[307]

Apocalyptic poetics, dealing with the cosmic scale of good versus evil, do promote absolute justice without mercy or leniency, subsequent to a period of preaching of the Word of grace. Often, in *The Faerie Queene*, which represents the course of history, it is clemency which allows evil to escape lasting punishment and to reappear at later points to trouble the virtuous. Just as Spenser's apocalyptic poem addresses the perpetual longing for transcendent love, as discussed in Chapter Two, it also speaks to the recurrent longing for transcendent justice: the absolute and final eradication of all evil. When that sudden, unpredictable moment of irreversible judgment comes, the wicked will remain wicked, and the holy will remain holy (according to Revelation 22:11), and the entire concept of reform will no longer be relevant.

[307] Fulke, *Praelections*, 95. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 15, 2007).

Conclusion - "Nigh Ravisht": *The Faerie Queene* on the Role of the Poet-Prophet and the Nature of Apocalyptic Vision

"Write the vision, and make it plaine upon tables, that he may runne that readeth it. For the visiõ is yet for an appointed time, but at [the] last it shal speake, & not lie: thogh it tary, waite: for it shal surely come, [and] shall not stay" – Habakkuk 2:2-3.

"For we knowe in parte, and we prophecie in parte. But when that which is perfite, is come, then that which is in parte, shalbe abolished" – I Corinthians 13: 9-10.

Albrecht Dürer, in "The Sea Monster and the Beast with the lamb's horns," the twelfth of his series of fifteen woodcuts entitled *The Revelation of S. John* published in 1498, depicts a scene that combines several images from Revelation.[308] The bottom of the engraving shows the seven-headed, ten-crowned beast from Chapter 13:1-8, with a crowd of people kneeling in worship of the beast. In addition, opposite that beast, the two-horned beast of 13:11-18 causes fire to fall from heaven in order to deceive the people (by such signs and wonders) into worshipping the other beast. At the top of the woodcut is the Christ of Revelation 14:14-20, sitting on the clouds, holding a sickle, and surrounded by angels at His side, some entreating Him to thrust his sickle of judgment into the harvest of the earth and some taking their own sickles and swords to enact His judgment.

Most notably, with the exception of the two-horned beast, the only figure in the scene gazing directly outward is Christ, the largest anthropomorphic figure in the work. The humans and even the angels depicted are too consumed with their present affairs to be concerned about or even aware of onlookers. Moreover, they apparently only see what is immediately before their eyes. The regal Christ at the top center is the only one inside the scene aware of the entire picture, including heavenly and earthly apocalyptic events, angelic and human. His central, highest position and His hand with its two

[308] Willi Kurth, ed. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1946), 117.

outstretched, pointing fingers further highlight the perception that He is aware of and engaged with all that is occurring.

However, given that Christ is not apparently looking directly at any figure within the scene, to whom is His gaze directed? By depicting Christ as looking outward, beyond the confines of the scenes shown, Dürer calls attention to the role of the object of that gaze, the prophet-seer. Initially, that seer would have been, according to Dürer's title, Saint John. Not only is Dürer depicting the written images of Revelation in plastic art form, then, but he is also commenting upon the nature of visionary, apocalyptic art itself. The gaze of Christ invites and implores the viewer to behold it all, to simultaneously behold the interrelated occurrences of earth and heaven. This gaze is first directed at John in Revelation Chapter 1, when he is "ravished in Spirit on [the] Lords day" (1:10), and is commanded to write what he sees in a book (1:10-11) for the encouragement, instruction, and, in some instances, correction of the churches. Through reading Revelation, Dürer comes under the inspirational gaze and creates his apocalyptic woodcuts. Later, discerning viewers of Dürer's art respond to Christ's gaze which looks from within the vision to outside the work. Therefore, by way of apocalyptic art, perceptive and faithful viewers are privileged to share the revelation and the perspective afforded to John and, by derivation, to Dürer.

Spenser, through his apocalyptic poetics, seeks the same effect. In *The Faerie Queene*, the role of the poet is, in fact, "divining of things to come," as Spenser states in his letter to Raleigh. Like John's words to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3, the poem's goals are concurrent with those of the prophet's Apocalypse: to provide transcendent (though incomplete) perspective; to encourage the true church in time of

trial and sometimes to admonish it in its errors; and to enact the longing for consummation, a longing that grows from experiencing dissonance and ultimately edifies the faith of true believers, giving them desire to continue the fight. As Bart van Es reminds us, "Both of Spenser's self-acknowledged models—Virgil and Chaucer—were widely believed to have been prophets."[309] Van Es adds that in the sixteenth century, "The persona of Colin Clout was very much related to popular, unofficial, and potentially seditious traditions of prognostication."[310] Like Saint John and even many of the Old Testament prophets such as Jonah, Habakkuk, and Amos, then, Colin (who generally represents Spenser) speaks transcendent truth in the voice of the common man called to share (sometimes reluctantly) visions given to him of the events to come—some enrapturing, some disconcerting.

In contrast to the Colin of "April" and "November" in *The Shepheardes Calender* who demonstrates an agency and authority to create and control his own visions, the Colin of Book Six of *The Faerie Queene* is more like that of "December" in *The Shepheardes Calender* and that of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe.* While Colin the poet-prophet in "November" is able to arrive at a transcendent vision of the heavenly resurrection of Dido, evident in his exclaiming, "I see thee blessed soule, I see, / Walke in Elisian fieldes so free" (lines 178-79), he states in "December," "My Muse is hoarse and wary of thys stounde" (140) and chooses to hang his pipe upon a tree.[311] In *Colin Clouts*, however, when Cuddy tells Colin,

> Shepheard it seemes that some celestiall rage

[309] Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 178.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender* in *Edmund Spenser's Poetry,* 2nd ed., ed. Hugh Maclean (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1982), 460-61, 466.

Of loue . . . is breath'd into thy brest,

That powreth forth these oracles so sage,

Of that high powre, wherewith thou art possest (823-26),

Colin willingly embraces the role of love's priest:

Of loues perfection perfectly to speake,

Or of his nature rightly to define,

Indeed . . . passeth reasons reach,

And needs his priest t'expresse his powre diuine. (835-38)[312]

Obviously, Colin has taken up his pipe efficaciously again, for Melissa also tells him, "*Colin*, thou now full deeply hast diuynd: / Of loue and beautie and with wondrous skill, / Hast *Cupid* selfe depainted in his kind" (896-98).[313] Still, in the poem's closing lines, Colin is resigned to the fact that he will never achieve earthly consummation of his love for Rosalind:

[H]er I may not loue:

Yet that I may her honour parauant,

And praise her worth, though far my wit aboue

Such grace shall be some guerdon for the griefe,

And long affliction which I haue endured:

Such grace sometimes shall giue me some reliefe,

And ease of paine which cannot be recurred. (940-46)[314]

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[312] Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (London: Printed for William Ponsonbie, 1595), sig. [D4^{v}] – E[^{r}]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 23, 2007).

[313] Ibid., sig. [E^{v}] - E2[^{r}].

[314] Ibid., sig. [E2^{v}].

As Richard Mallette observes, "Colin's privilege as a poet capable of penetrating the distant regions of the divine realm has blessed him with an awesome skill and cursed him with the realization that he will never fully see its fruition. The measure of his might lies in his effort."[315] Thus, the poet-prophet himself experiences the initial cognitive dissonance, then passes it through the figures in his work (in this project, *The Faerie Queene*) to his readers.

The prophetic voice in *The Faerie Queene* alternates from moments of confidence and elation at the prospects of transcendent vision to moments of weariness, frustration, and even horror at its interruption and slow progress toward fulfillment. Sometimes this voice is that of the narrator whose interpretation of his visions can be misguided, as when he thinks he sees the haven nigh at hand (I.xii.1), or thinks he sees the signs of the End immediately approaching (V.Proem.4). Sometimes the prophetic voice comes through Merlin, who abruptly cuts off his vision, "As overcomen of the spirites power, / Or other ghastly spectacle dismayd, / That secretly he saw, yet note discourse" (III.iii.50). This moment of withholding the vision is like that in Revelation 10, when John hears the voices of seven thunders and begins to write their message, but hears a voice from heaven saying, "Seale up those things which the seven thondres have spoken, & write thé not" (Revelation 10:4). The number seven, in Revelation and elsewhere in scripture, represents completion, so the fact that John is forbidden to record the message of the seven thunders implies that specific knowledge of the definitive end is off limits. As William Fulke explains in his Revelation commentary:

For God would not haue all thinges which he hath decreed to be knowne before

[315] Richard Mallette, "Spenser's Portrait of the Artist in *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*," *Studies in English Literature* 19:1 (1979 Winter): 41.

> they come to pas. So he commaunded Daniele to seale vp certayne thinges that they might not be spred among the people. Chap. 12. And Paule was taken vp into the third heauen and herd thinges whiche it was not lawfull to vtter. But some will say, wherefore then spake the seuen thunders the thinges which no man is graunted to hear? I Aunswere, that they spake when Ihon herd them, that both his faith by the knowledge of the same, and also our faith by his testimonie might be confirmed, when as wee know that God hathe prepared all his iudgementes, wherewith he will strike and punish the wicked, although it pertayne not to vs to knowe, what time, by what meanes, and by what minister he will execute the same.[316]

Merlin's cutting off his vision at the moment of Elizabeth's reign, with the words "And yet the end is not" (III.iii.50), points to the same principle: that Elizabeth's rule will not bring the immediate end(s) as expected, and that some knowledge of the future and the end of history is better left unknown. Sometimes, even Artegall takes on the prophetic voice, as when he tells Britomart he shall return in the course of three horned moons (IV.vi.43). Like the Biblical prophets, Artegall possibly does not know the full meaning of his words, as I have explained in Chapter Three. In the most Spenser-like persona, sometimes the prophet is Colin, whose vision is interrupted by Calidore (VI.x). In such representative instances, discerning readers see that the appearance of prophetic visions and their meaning (for prophets and poets) is fickle and, at best, occurs intermittently. To be a mediator of heavenly revelation is to be privy to awesome visions of the future, as

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[316] Fulke, *Praelections*, *upon the sacred and holy Revelation of Saint John* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), 64. *Early English Books Online* (accessed August 25, 2007).

well as to suffer awful knowledge of what jarring, even hellish, events must transpire before heaven is realized.

Spenser's work depicts the experience of the vision, but, more importantly, foregrounds the experience of the fading or interruption of the vision. In addition to the disappearing acts discussed in Chapter Two, one of the poem's final disappearing acts highlights this point. Calidore, at mount Acidale, hears the sound of music and dancing, and is drawn closer by curiosity:

> He nigher drew, to weete what mote it be;
> There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found
> Full merrily, and making gladfull glee,
> And in the midst a Shepheard piping he did see.
> He durst not enter into th'open greene,
> For dread of them unwares to be descryde,
> For breaking of their daunce, if he were seene. (VI.x.10-11)

Calidore fears that if he is seen, it will disrupt the dance of one-hundred naked maidens in a ring surrounding the three graces who, in turn, surround Colin the piper's love. The tone of this scene is very similar to that of the visions of Petrarch and Du Bellay in Van der Noot's *A Theatre for Worldlings* and those in Spenser's *Complaints*, explored in Chapter Two. The narrator proclaims:

> Pype jolly shepheard, pype thou now apace
> Unto thy love, that made thee low to lout;
> Thy love is present there with thee in place,
> Thy love is there advaunst to be another Grace. (x.16)

Here, Colin's earthly love is depicted as being in a state just prior to ethereal transcendence, upon which she will become, in effect, "another Grace." The description of Calidore's reaction to the scene also echoes that of the viewers of the visions discussed in Chapter Two:

> Much wondred Calidore at *this straunge sight*,
>
> Whose like before his eye had never seene,
>
> And standing long astonished in *spright*,
>
> And *rapt* with pleasaunce, wist not what to weene. (17, italics mine)

Soon, Calidore's fear comes true, for when he comes out of the wood and appears to the party of females, "They vanisht all away out of his sight, / And cleane were gone, which way he never knew" (18). Calidore attributes their disappearance to the fact that they have seen him, for he asks Colin, "But why when I them saw, fled they away from me?" (19).

The central issue, however, is not that Calidore has seen the vision, or even that the figures in the vision have seen him. The problem is that he sought absolute understanding of the nature of the vision and its elements, a comprehensive understanding not even achieved by Colin, the prophet-poet. Calidore's desire for certain understanding is what first motivates him to move closer: "Therefore resolving, what it was, to know, / Out of the wood he rose, and toward them did go" (17). Then, after the figures disappear, Calidore insists on precise explanation from Colin, to whom he "Drew neare, that he the truth of all by him mote learne" (18). In contrast to Calidore, Colin understands the capricious nature of the vision and those in it, and he understands the fact that it is beyond his control. Colin explains:

> [T]hem thence didst chace,
>
> Whom by no meanes thou canst recall againe,
>
> For being gone, none can them bring in place,
>
> But whom they of them selves list so to grace. (20)

Still, after a trite apology, Calidore persists in his lust for absolute knowledge: "But since things passed none may now restore, / Tell me, what were they all, whose lacke thee grieves so sore" (20). Again in stanza 29, after thus drawing more explanation from Colin, Calidore offers an apology that blames his blunder on bad luck. However, he does say of himself: "Who *rashly* sought that, which I mote not see" (29, italics mine). Once more, I cite Heinrich Bullinger's statement:

> I doo advise all men, heerin earnestly to take heed, lest in scanning and sifting out of the time or els the day or year of the last end, we be to bolde or rather to *rash*: as some lewd felowes there have been of late yeeres, who have (as it were) with their finger pointed out the day and the year of the finall judgement, therein shewing forth their folly worthy to be mocked of all men.[317]

Calidore's acknowledgement that his seeking absolute knowledge of the vision was rash indicates that he might be getting closer to seeing his folly, for since he did *see* the women with his eyes, he is obviously using "see" here in the sense of "understand." Nevertheless, the attitude of Calidore as he listens to Colin in stanza 30 represents contemporary fervor for conquering Apocalypse, for he continues to feed "with delight his greedy fancy" for details (30), rather than simply appreciating the transcendent vision as a whole.

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[317] Bullinger, *Of the end of the world and judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ to come, and of the moste perilous dangers of this our most corrupt age* [*The first Sermon*], trans. from Latin by Thomas Potter (London: John Allde, 1580), sig D[r]. *Early English Books Online* (accessed April 13, 2007).

Although Colin is most clearly gifted with the prophetic, visionary faculty, he does not have the command over this vision exhibited by the Colin of the "April" and "November" eclogues in *The Shepheardes Calender*. While some critics, such as Derek B. Alwes, argue that the lines "none can them bring in place, / But whom they of them selves list so to grace" (20) are "in fact citing an exception to a rule [that] only he who is granted the ability, who has the gift, 'can them bring in place'," [318] the question remains, then: why does Colin react so dramatically to the disappearance? When the vision vanishes, Colin breaks "his bag-pipe quight, / . . . [makes] great mone for that unhappy turne" (18), and visibly "mourne[s]" (18). If Colin has the ability to entice the vision to appear at will, why would he be so disturbed by its vanishing? Instead of breaking his bag-pipe, couldn't he merely recall the figures by piping again? Clearly, getting a revelation or transcendent vision is not as easy, even for the gifted, as Alwes would have it. In the Argument to the "October" eclogue, poetry is defined as "no arte, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to bee gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned with both: and poured into the witte by a certaine 'enthousiasmos' and celestial inspiration." [319] Again, the appearance of transcendent visions is fickle and fragile. Not everyone who is gifted at piping, poetry, or prayer (as John who was "ravished in Spirit on [the] Lords day" in Revelation 1:10) is granted such experience. Colin's understanding of this capriciousness is evidenced in his response to Calidore's questions:

> Tell me, what mote these dainty Damzels be,
>
> Which here with thee doe make their pleasant playes?
>
> Right happy thou, that mayst them freely see:

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[318] Derek B. Alwes, "'Who Knows Not Colin Clout?' Spenser's Self-Advertisement in 'The Faerie Queene,' Book 6," *Modern Philology* 18.1 (1990): 26-42.
[319] Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender,* ed. Maclean, 449.

But why when I them saw, fled they away from me? (19)

Colin answers, "Not I so happy . . . / As thou unhappy, which them thence canst chace, / Whom by no means thou canst recall againe" (20). Colin's happiness at the presence of the vision is tentative and temporary, for he knows that it is it not entirely in his control, but is ultimately "poured into the witte by . . . celestial inspiration."

Nevertheless, Colin's response does imply that the poet-prophet is gifted above the masses, for he points out that Calidore can "by no means . . . recall" the vision, and is thus more unhappy at the disappearance of the vision than Colin has been happy at its presence. The poem manifests the belief, then, that poet-prophets such as Colin (and Spenser), graced with "a divine gift and heavenly instinct" which they have adorned with "laboure and learning," are vitally important. Without divine revelation, the masses are like the people who are misled by the signs and wonders of the two-horned beast and bow before the seven-headed beast in Apocalypse and in Dürer's woodcut. In *Theatre for Worldlings*, Van der Noot emphasizes this point in his commentary upon his apocalyptic sonnets, particularly the twelfth sonnet on the seven-headed beast: "The foolish people, worldly and carnall minded, not understanding the wysedome of the holy ghost, imbracyng all those glorious and joysye sightes, as godly, meritorious, and spirituall matters, and wondryng at them, worshypped, exalted, and made muche of it, yea above the things ordeined and instituted of GOD."[320] Here, of course, Van der Noot speaks of the Romish church, but the principle of "imbracyng . . . glorious . . . sightes" applies to a broad spectrum of correlative issues in *The Faerie Queene*: romantic and Neoplatonic love, courtly and national politics, justice, even Biblical hermeneutics.

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[320] Van der Noot, *A Theatre for worldlings,* 1569 (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, n.d.), 28.

In *The Faerie Queene*, fancies, whether those of the worldly or the godly, are always a degenerate form of visions. For example, both the crowd's astonishment at the disappearance of the False Florimell and Calidore's persistent seeking of absolute understanding of Colin's evanescent vision are described in terms of fancies and the senses. Just as Redcrosse longs to stay in the vision of New Jerusalem, Calidore is so enthralled with understanding the sights he has seen that he longs to stay in Acidale forever:

> And with delight his greedy *fancy* fed,
> Both of [Colin's] words, which he with reason red;
> And also of the place, whose pleasures rare
> With such regard *his sences ravished,*
> That thence, he had no will away to fare,
> But wisht, that with that shepheard he mote dwelling share. (30, italics mine)

Similarly, the people have been so mesmerized by the illusory Florimell that they are horrified to have the object of their fancy thus ripped away:

> Which when as all that present were, beheld,
> They stricken were with great astonishment,
> And their faint harts with *senselesse* horrour queld,
> To see the thing, that seem'd so excellent,
> So stolen from their *fancies wonderment*;
> That what of it became, none understood. (V.iii.26, italics mine)

Therefore, although the nature of their errors differs in that Calidore wished to remain in a visionary world of absolute knowledge, and the crowd wished to remain in a world

where the vision precluded their knowledge of truth, the results would be the same: a uselessness that disqualifies them from being active soldiers in the fight of faith. While Calidore, had he remained in Acidale, would be so heavenly-minded as to be no earthly good, the crowd, had they remained under the spell of False Florimell, would be the opposite.

To emphasize Calidore's overreaching for knowledge of the vision is not to argue, however, that Colin should be implicated in the error, any more than Saint John should be blamed for those who formulated contrived readings of his Revelation. The poem manifests the belief that without the work of prophet-artists such as Dürer and Spenser, the godly would more easily fall into the same condition as that of the worldlings, who generally prefer illusion to truth. At the unveiling of the False Florimell, the crowd

> With great amazement . . . were stupefide;
> And said, that surely *Florimell* it was,
> Or if it were not *Florimell* so tride,
> That *Florimell* her selfe she then did pas.
> So feeble skill of perfect things the vulgar has. (V.iii.17)

It is also worth noting, however, that in the very next stanza, even Marinell, looking upon the False Florimell, "as he did the more avize, / The more to be true *Florimell* he did surmise" (18). The implication is clear: if even Marinell could be so deceived by illusion as to be unable to recognize his own bride, right before his eyes, many could be easily deceived into mistaking the false church for the true one (the bride of Christ).

Interestingly, Artegall plays the prophetic role in the situation regarding Braggadochio and False Florimell. In a passage figuring the apocalyptic exposing of the

false Romish (Babylonian) church and the affirmation of the true martyrs for the faith, Artegall reveals that Braggadochio is a fraud. Braggadochio has been holding forth Artegall's shield as if it were his own, thereby claiming to have won the tourney that day. However, when Artegall calls for proof, Braggadochio cannot respond. Artegall then clarifies how to recognize the true signs of true faith:

> But this the sword, which wrought those cruell stounds,
> And this the arme, the which that shield did beare,
> And these the signes, (so shewed forth his wounds)
> By which that glory gotten doth appeare. (V.iii.22)

Not only does this action reveal the notion that the true believers might bear in their bodies the marks of Christ, but the choice of the phrase "these the signes" highlights the idea that the wounds gained in the active fight of faith are more important than the endless and ineffectual obsession with the reading of "signs." Furthermore, Artegall plays the prophet's role of setting truth beside falsehood, by placing the true Florimell next to the false one, thus effecting another of the poem's disappearing acts: "Streightway so soone as both together met, / Th'enchaunted Damzell vanisht into nought" (V.iii.24).

Just as in Apocalypse itself and other scenes in *The Faerie Queene*, this vanishing act creates in readers a longing for ultimate apocalyptic fulfillment. Reading both scripture and Spenser's poem "concordentially,"[321] Spenser's Reformist readers would have recognized apocalyptic allusion in particular aspects of False Florimell's disappearance. When placed beside the real Florimell, the false one disappears in a manner common to Biblical passages of apocalyptic justice: "Her snowy substance

[321] Term borrowed from Carol Kaske's *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

melted as with great heat" (V.iii.24, italics mine). The diction here is a direct allusion to II Peter 3: 10-12:

> But the day of the Lord wil come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavés shal passe away with a noyce, and the elements shal *melt with heate*, and the earth with the workes, that are therein, shalbe burnt up. Seeing therefore that all these things must be dissolved, what maner persones ought ye to be in holie conversation and godlines, Loking for, and hasting unto the comming of the day of God, by the which the heavens being on fyre, shalbe dissolved, & the elements shal *melt with heat*? (italics mine)

In prophetic scripture, the phrase "the day of the Lord" represents judgment day, when perfect justice will be enacted, with all good rewarded and all evil punished. Furthermore, the image of melting is commonly used to figure this punishment, as in Psalm 112:10: "The wicked shal se it and be angrie: he shal gnash with his teeth, and consume awaie: the desire of the wicked shal perish," and in Jeremiah 9: 5-7: "And everie one wil deceive his friend, & wil not speake the trueth: for they have taught their tongues to speake lies, and take great paines to do wickedly. Thine habitation is in the middes of deceivers: because of their deceit they refuse to knowe me, saith the Lord. . . . Beholde, I wil melt them, & trye thẽ: for what shulde I els do for the daughter of my people?" Here, liars and deceivers will be melted away at the end of time, particularly applicable to False Florimell who embodies deceit, and particularly appealing to Reformers who believe the Romish Church does the same.

Again, such an image of the dissolution of evil would enact a longing in readers for Apocalypse-fulfilled and for the absolute, comprehensive justice which would come

with Christ's return. There *is* partial justice in this canto of Book Five: The True Florimell, truly chaste, gets back her golden belt (V.iii.27-28) that had been stolen and worn by the imposter; and Guyon finally gets back his horse (29-35) that had been taken by Braggadochio long ago (II.ii.11; II.iii.4). This righting of wrongs has been a long time coming, and is received with great joy by the people in stanzas 39 and 40. However, it is worth noting that these stanzas of merry laughter, "joyous dayes and gladfull nights" (V.iii.40), are immediately preceded by the narrator's wishful sentiment: So ought all faytours, that true knighthood shame,

> And armes dishonour with base villanie,
> From all brave knights be banisht with defame:
> For oft their lewdness blotteth good deserts with blame. (38)

Thus, the passage demonstrates a longing that the punishment of Braggadochio by Talus could be applied universally: a longing for Apocalypse-fulfilled.

Thus, as argued in Chapter Three, Spenser's Reformist readers would hold a different, more favorable view of Talus's violent and merciless brand of apocalyptic justice than modern readers generally distanced from the apocalyptic fervor of that day. Talus's actions evoke wishful thinking, not only that Elizabeth would take a more decisive, less clement approach toward her enemies, but also that Christ would come soon to enact the absolute judgment against evil that would preclude its recurrent ability to rise again. Such longing is also demonstrated in the image immediately following False Florimell's disappearance:

> As when the daughter of *Thaumantes* faire,
> Hath in a watry cloud displayed wide

Her goodly bow, which paints the liquid ayre;

That all men wonder at her colours pride;

All suddenly, ere one can looke aside,

The glorious picture vanisheth away,

Ne any token doth thereof abide:

So did this Ladies goodly forme decay,

And into nothing goe, ere one could it bewray. (V.iii.25, italics mine)

Here, False Florimell's vanishing is compared to that of a rainbow that suddenly fades from view, leaving no "token" or trace behind. This event recapitulates Talus's earlier razing of Munera's castle, "That there mote be no hope of reparation, / Nor memory thereof to any nation" (V.ii.28), and foreshadows his tendencies to come in the remainder of the book. Such eradication is approved of and longed for by those such as George Gifford, who claims in a sermon on Revelation published in 1596, that the tenth chapter provides "*great comfort*: for after that darke kingdome of Antichrist, & that cruel kingdome of the Turkes, the Lord commeth downe with brightnes from heaven, with the booke of Gods word open, to expel that smoake of Antichrist" (italics mine).[322] Gifford and his fellow Reformists find in the horrible apocalyptic judgment "great comfort," rather than disturbance.

The comparison of False Florimell's disappearance to that of a rainbow is significant in regard to notions of God's judgment because of its association with Genesis. In this book, after the great flood of judgment that destroyed every unrighteous

[322] George Gifford, *Sermons Upon the Whole Booke of the Revelation* (London: Printed for Thomas Man, and Toby Cooke, 1596). *Early English Books Online* (accessed June 12, 2007).

person upon the earth, God presents a rainbow before Noah as a promise to all generations:

> This is the *token* of the covenant which I make betwene me and you, & betwene everie living thing, that is with you unto perpetual generacions. I have set my bowe in the cloude, and it shalbe for a signe of a covenãt betwene me and the earth. . . . Then wil I remẽber my covenãt, which is betwene me and you, & betwene everie living thing in all flesh, & there shalbe no more waters of a flood to destroy all flesh. (Genesis 9: 12-15, italics mine)

In this scriptural passage, God refers to the rainbow as a "token" and a "signe," a reminder that he would forever withhold the universal judgment of evil by flood. Therefore, readers familiar with this passage would note that in *The Faerie Queene*, the lines comparing False Florimell's vanishing to that of a rainbow state that "*Ne any* token doth thereof abide" (V.iii.25). The disappearance of the rainbow, the token of God's withholding of judgment, would indicate that the time has come to pass for the apocalyptic form of universal judgment, not by flood, but by Christ's revealing of truth that will cause falsehood to "melt with great heat."

Once again, however, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, such vision and desire is repeatedly frustrated in the poem. As Chapter One demonstrates, Book One reveals the poem's pattern of recapitulative intensification which always builds to a highest point that falls short of the ultimate. Carried throughout the poem, this impediment of culmination is revealed in various occurrences and images: the interruption of marriage ceremonies (or prevention of marital consummations) figures the forestalling of the apocalyptic marriage of the lamb; the battle scenes which shift to and

fro figure the perpetual rise and fall of evil that impedes the progress of history towards Apocalypse-fulfilled; the waxing and waning of Artegall's horned moon figure the intermittent victories of true faith over false; even the approach and retreat of Timias's bird as it coaxes Belphoebe into coming to Timias figures the imminent end of time that seems repeatedly to come so near, yet seems to again retreat before realization. To the narrator's statement (discussed in Chapter Three) that

> So tickle be the termes of mortall state,
> And full of subtile sophisms, which do play
> With double senses, and with false debate,
> T'approve the unknowen purpose of eternall fate (III.iv.28),

is added the correlative statement by Aldus, the father of Aladine, a wounded knight in Book Six, that

> Such is the weakenesse of all mortall hope;
> So tickle is the state of earthly things,
> That ere they come unto their aymed scope,
> They fall too short of our fraile reckonings,
> And bring us bale and bitter sorrowings,
> In stead of comfort, which we should embrace:
> This is the state of keasars and of kings. (VI.iii.5)

Spenser's poem demonstrates that hopes for lasting political defeat of evil, like hopes for lasting love, inevitably become swallowed in the macrocosmic cycle of rise and fall.

Concurrently, *The Faerie Queene* manifests the beliefs that time is cyclical rather than linear, and that the fallen world of human society is in a constant state of flux.

Spenser's conception of his poem's universe is similar to Jean Bodin's view of history. As Bodin states, "Since for acquiring prudence nothing is more important or more essential than history, because episodes in human life sometimes recur as in a circle, repeating themselves, we judge that attention must be given to this subject, especially by those who do not lead a secluded life, but are in touch with assemblies and societies of human beings."[323] He adds, "[B]y some eternal law of nature the path of change seems to go in a circle."[324] In Spenser's work, this circle is gyratory, for it reflects the interrelated cycles of intensifying and lessening of good and evil. In his prose commentary in *Theatre for Worldlings*, Van der Noot remarks, "The generation of fleshe and bloude is suche, that when one is borne, an other dieth. One kingdome increaseth, an other decreaseth."[325] *The Faerie Queene* demonstrates the concept that such ongoing cycles of increase and decrease can be attributed to the plethora of impediments inherent to the state of the fallen world. Therefore, the narrative of the poem operates according to the conception that history moves, regarding the progress of good against evil, by a pattern of one step forward, two steps back. Thus, Colin offers to Calidore such an explanation of the position of the figures in his vision:

> And eeke them selves so in their daunce they bore,
> That two of them still forward seem'd to bee,
> But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore;
> That good should from us goe, then come in greater store. (VI.x.24)

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[323] Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* (1566), tr. Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 17.
[324] Ibid., 302.
[325] Van der Noot, 103.

Only those graced with the prophetic gift, like Colin and Spenser, are afforded such understanding of the workings of history, so that they might share the insight with the faithful. Therefore, in contrast to James Nohrnberg's recent claim that "The scope of [The Mutabilitie Cantos] reduces the former poem's [the first six books of *The Faerie Queene*] by two orders of magnitude, yet with the effect of expanding its myth to macrocosmic levels and its telos to an eschatological purview,"[326] I have argued in this project that such levels and such a purview have been present in the poem all along.

Because of their view of the universe as so impeded, sixteenth-century Reformers look with anticipation upon the time when Christ will return to finally put an end to the seemingly endless cycle of progress and regress. This hope is the reason that Talus's actions in Book Five would have enacted, in Reformers, longings for such events rather than repulsion. As discussed in Chapter Two, Reformers typically view the sea as an image of impediment that exiles believers and an image of flux that creates cognitive dissonance in them. In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Colin himself remarks:

> So to the sea we came; the sea? that is
>
> A world of waters heaped up on hie,
>
> Rolling like mountains in wide wildernesse,
>
> Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse crie. (196-99)[327]

Therefore, Reformers such as Gifford read Christ's stepping on the sea in Revelation 10 as a powerful statement on His ability to transcend earthly impediments. In a passage following his approval of apocalyptic violence in Revelation 10, Gifford observes that, in

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[326] James Nohrnberg, "Britomart's Gone Abroad to Brute-land, Colin Clout's Come Courting from the Salvage Ire-land: Exile and the Kingdom in Some of Spenser's Fictions for 'Crossing Over'," in *Edmund Spenser: New and Renewed Directions*, ed. J.B. Lethbridge (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2006), 281.

[327] Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe,* sig. B2[r].

Chapter 10, God "standeth upon the earth and the sea, he denounceth by seven thunders horrible judgments against his enemies he sweareth that the last day shall bee at the sounding of the next trumpet."[328] Significantly, when Talus (also associated with thunder at several points in Spenser's poem) finds the mission of Artegall impeded by "Great hostes of men in order martiall, / Which them forbad to land, and footing did forstall" (V.xii.4), Talus

> into the sea did forth issew,
> Though darts from shore & stones they at him threw;
> And wading through the waves with stedfast sway,
> . . . . . .
> Did win the shore, whence he them chast away,
> And made to fly, like doves, whom the Eagle doth affray. (5)

Like Christ, Talus, the only figure in *The Faerie Queene* to wade into the sea, is unhindered by this force that to Reformers represents obstruction. Then, in actions clearly figuring the type of "horrible judgments" mentioned by Gifford:

> Talus sternly did upon them set,
> And brusht, and battred them without remorse,
> That on the ground he left full many a corse;
> Ne any able was him to withstand,
> But he them overthrew both man and horse. (7)

According to Gifford, such events indicate that "the last day shall bee at the sounding of the next trumpet."

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[328] Gifford, *Sermons Upon the Whole Book of Revelation*. *Early English Books Online* (accessed June 12, 2007).

As happens repeatedly in the poem, however, though the End seems imminent, it is delayed. Talus, though unhampered by the sea, is stopped by the merciful intervention of Artegall. Reformist readers, again tantalized by the prospect of an apocalyptic ending carried to completion, would actually have experienced a degree of disappointment and frustration when Artegall "Willd him to stay" (V.xii.8). Like Apocalypse, *The Faerie Queene* serves the affective function of repeatedly evoking a pious form of cognitive dissonance in readers. Both works speak to the idea that believers left on earth in the interval between Christ's ascension and His second coming face the conflicting cognitions that Christ has already defeated evil by his crucifixion and resurrection, yet earthly evil persists. The best that poet-prophets can do is offer transcendent perspective on the strivings of the worldlings. While Plato claims the existence of daemons, beings partly human and partly divine who mediate between earth and the gods,[329] Spenser's prophetic mediators are very much bound by the human state, though they are privy to fleeting visions that take them to a state that could be described by the narrator's words, "nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight" (VI.Proem.1), a state of longing to stay in the heavenly realm but knowing their body obligates them to return to earth. The prophets themselves experience the efficacious dissonance before creating works that evoke it in readers or observers.

While many Reformers sought comfort in feeling that they had mastered the meaning of Biblical prophecies, William Perkins emphasizes the function of the confusion and cognitive suffering of believers. In Perkins's *A Fruitful Dialogue*, Christian explains God's dealings with his own:

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[329] *Symposium* 202E; *Republic* 540C. See also Apuleius, *Moralia* 360F, 361C, and 415-19, as cited in *Spenser Encyclopedia*, "demons," entry by Kitty Scoular Datta, 212.

> He taketh them as it were by the heeles, he slingeth them into a sea of melting glasse, there he lets them for a time to seeth & boile, and in great *perplexity* to shift for themselves: at length he draggeth them to the shore, and giveth them ease of their former miseries. And all this is for this end, to sanctifie and purifie them, and to cleanse them of the filthy drosse of sin, and to make them with joy of heart to praise and magnifie his name, for which end they came into this world. And experience teacheth, that as there is a perpetuall entercourse between day and night: so there is in the Church of God, not any perpetuall quietnesse, but trouble and quietnesse; affliction and ease doe continually succeed one another. So that it is versified of the Church: Though sorrow come in the evening, yet joy shall bee in the morning.[330] (italics mine)

Therefore, *The Faerie Queene* corresponds with the voices of writers such as Perkins, who also sought to correct false premises regarding faith, such as the erroneous belief that faith involves complete understanding.[331] As Colin's disturbance at the vanishing of his vision illustrates, not even the prophets have complete mastery over transcendent things.

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[330] Perkins, *A fruitfull Dialogue concerning the end of the world, betweene a Christian and a Worldling* (1587) in *The Workes of That Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins, the third and last volume* (London: John Haviland for James Boler, 1631), 475. *Early English Books Online* (accessed May 2007).

[331] Possibly, this premise is developed by John Keats into his concept of negative capability, which he defines as "when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." Keats then points to Coleridge as one often lacking the capability: "Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration." See Keats's Letter "To George and Thomas Keats," December 1817, in *John Keats: Selected Poems and Letters*, ed. Douglas Bush (Cambridge, Mass: Riverside Press, 1959), 261. Spenser, of course, is much more concerned with Truth as Father to Beauty than Keats, who reads Spenser through a Romantic lens and virtually venerates Beauty. However, the similarities in approaches to knowledge as outlined here by Keats and demonstrated in *The Faerie Queene* are striking.

Through its apocalyptic poetics, *The Faerie Queene* argues that cognitive dissonance is a necessary component of a mature faith that rests on hope, not on fulfillment, omniscience, or closure. The poem encourages its readers to remain vigilant in the face of the paradox of an unpredictable but certain future. Through the ultimately unsuccessful efforts of figures in the poem at absolute mastery of prophetic symbols, signs, and visions, and through the allusions to prophecies being fulfilled in the poem but without the expected end, *The Faerie Queene* argues that the point of knowing Revelation is to realize the extent of what one does not know or understand, particularly regarding last things. The state of being "nigh ravisht" is important. More important, however, is to continue the fight of faith while waiting for what John Dove describes as the time when "the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads must very shortly lose & dissolve it selfe."[332] This dissolution will be one of the ultimate disappearing acts, the disappearance of earthly impediment and dissonance, which will make "the Sabbath's sight" all the more beautiful.

[332] John Dove, *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse, the 3 of November 1594* (London: V.S. for William Jaggard, n.d.). *Early English Books Online* (accessed March 12, 2007).

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fourth time agayne published and recommended to the studious reader, by the author (through the helpe of Christ our Lord) John Foxe, which desireth thee good reader to helpe him with thy prayer. Vol. 2, first half. London: John Daye, 1583. *Early English Books Online*.

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