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EDMUND SPENSER AND THE POPULAR PRESS

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D.Phil

University of Sussex

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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This is for my parents, Mary and Michael Shinn.

Summary

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Edmund Spenser and the Popular Press

This thesis examines the relationship between the work of the sixteenth century English poet Edmund Spenser and the popular press. Previous critical debate has focused upon Spenser's debt to the classical traditions of epic, pastoral and georgic, and the work of Italian poets such as Ariosto, rather than considering the role played by more ephemeral and cheap English publications; my research helps to readdress this imbalance.

By combining a close reading of Spenser's work with an analysis of widely available publications such as almanacs, books of husbandry, calendars, Elizabethan storybooks, the *book of Raynarde the Foxe* and the *Golden Legend*, I have endeavoured to open out Spenser's literary environment to include the popular. This has involved an analysis of popular publications in relation to theories of *copia* and encyclopaedic reading practices and demonstrates that Spenser was fascinated by the process of publication as well as the mental and physiological effects of reading.

My research includes an analysis of the continuities between medieval and early modern texts, the body as text and the text as relic, the eye as a conduit for lust and iconographic creation, the problems of defining readership and reader response, the blurring of religious iconography across the boundaries of Protestant and Catholic expression, the mutability of time systems and the ramifications of counsel and censorship.

This work contributes to studies concerned with the history of the book and the rise of print culture, while also adding to the critical body of Spenser studies. This thesis has an interdisciplinary focus and draws upon the work of historians such as Peter Burke, Tessa Watt and Elizabeth Eisenstein alongside works of literary criticism.

Edmund Spenser and the Popular Press

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Introduction: ‘to garnish our Tongue’

This thesis sets out to re-examine the work of Edmund Spenser by considering his debt to the early modern popular press. Critical work in Spenser studies has all too often cited the influence of classical sources and conventions upon his output, a far from surprising emphasis considering Spenser’s own acknowledgement in the *Shepheardes Calender* that he is ‘following the example of the best and most Auncient Poetes’¹ with his first independent publication. This was however, an often repeated statement on the part of Elizabethan writers and warrants far greater scrutiny than it has hitherto been afforded in the case of Spenser. By resting solely on the literary precedents forged by Virgil, Marot and Petrarch there would be no room for him to truly inhabit the claim that he will be England’s ‘new Poete’ (p. 25) nor banish the Italian, French and Latin borrowings which had rendered the English language a ‘gallimaufrey or hodgepodge of al other speches’ (Epistle, 90-91). If the Epistle to the *Shepheardes Calender* is acknowledged as a statement of intent despite it being authored by the shadowy E. K, (an argument which I present in Chapter 1), then this work and others by Spenser need to be read in a new light – one which accords importance to native and popular literary traditions.

In *Three Proper and wittie, familiar Letters: lately passed betwene two Vniuersitie men: touching the Earthquake in Aprill last, and our English reformed Versifying*, Spenser in the guise of Immerito re-iterates the argument for a renewed interest in English verse espoused by E. K. While this indicates that Spenser’s desire to preserve ‘oure Mother tongue’² is consistent with that of his unnamed glosser and adds

¹ ‘The Shepheardes Calender’ in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 29, ll. 144-145. All further quotations are from this edition.

² *Three proper wittie familiar Letters, lately passed betwene two Vniuersitie men: touching the Earthquake in Aprill last, and our English reformed Versifying* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), p. 6. All further quotations are from this edition.

greater weight to the suspicion that E. K is Spenser himself, the *Three Proper and wittie, familiar Letters* also asks ‘why a Gods name may not we as else the Graekes, haue the kingdome of oure owne Language’ (p. 6). This lament affords the English language the same prestige as ancient Greek, which Spenser and Harvey as well as other scholars believed to be an even more eminent ancient tongue than Latin.³ In the preface to the *Letters* a ‘welwiller’ (another constructed glosser), says that the correspondence will ‘helpe to garnish our Tongue’ (p. 4), a re-iteration of the phrase ‘furnish our tongue’ (143) employed by E. K in the epistle to the *Calender*. Spenser and Harvey’s epistemological relationship is subsequently set up as an exercise which adds to the vocabulary and stylistic forms of English, rather than imitating the ancients or merely demonstrating a skill with the language, they will allow it to grow, to reach out towards new boundaries. This is particularly evident when Immerito describes experimenting with English hexameters, arguing that the problems with ‘Accente’ and ‘sillable’ are ‘to be wonne with Custome, and rough wordes must be subdued with Use’ (p. 6). The charge is that through neglect and dis-use English has failed to realise its potential as a poetic language but Immerito argues that English can be shaped and moulded to fit unfamiliar forms, wrestled by the poet into new and innovative patterns. The *Letters* are charged on the title page with touching upon *the earthquake in Aprill last, and our reformed versifying*, consciously or otherwise associating reformed verse with the tumult of an earthquake which succeeded in ‘ouerthrowing diuers old buildings, and pieces of Churches’ (p. 5), raising the spectre of the religious Reformation which had begun a generation before. The use of the word ‘garnish’ alongside ‘tongue’ also conjures up the variety of flavours and sensations afforded to the tongue by food, while reminding the reader of E.K’s depiction of the ‘Mother tongue’ (82) as ‘bare and

³ Caroline Brown Bourland discusses Harvey’s interest in languages as well as his dismay at the fashion for teaching French and Italian over Latin and Greek in ‘Gabriel Harvey and the Modern Languages’, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 4 (1940), pp. 85-106.

barrein' (84) in the *Calender*. The idea of tasting a variety of literary sensations within the boundaries of English is one which I will argue carries through to Spenser's interest in the English popular press. Rather than being confined to the parameters of a classical poetic tradition he harnesses the rich creativity of popular forms in order to raise an earthquake and 'garnish our Tongue' (p. 4).

Spenser was writing during the period in which the printing press gained pre-eminence in England as an agent of cultural and religious change – and at times as the codifier of past practice and tradition. Type became fixed, (at least more so than manuscript), and St Paul's churchyard bustled with a host of transactions in which coin changed hands for bound paper. The backbone of the early publishing industry, and arguably the industry today, was provided by popular publications. The ephemeral, didactic, entertaining and salvational texts, handbooks, pamphlets, almanacs and storybooks which were cheap to produce, cheap to purchase and went through multiple re-prints were what most publishers kept alongside those riskier and expensive texts for which a large audience could not be guaranteed.⁴ Publishing which reached a wide audience was often disposable and therefore more prone to damage or destruction and yet a huge number of popular texts still survive, indicating that they must have been ubiquitous in their own time - the almanac in the hand of the husbandman, the calendar nailed to a wall or pasted into a bible, the storybook consulted by the playwright or brought out to be read from aloud, the images from beast fables painted onto plaster and the characters which returned in different textual guises again and again. The popular constituted a huge contribution to the body of printed material during the early modern

⁴ See James Raven, 'The Economic Context', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume IV 1557-1695*, ed. by John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with the assistance of Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 568-582, (p. 571), for Raven's analysis of the varied retail strategies adopted by printers and booksellers, such as lending services, the sale of second hand books and the selling of other, non-literary goods. Raven argues that 'much of the retailing centred on the sales of smaller productions, notably the thousands of almanacs, pamphlets and chapbooks peddled by chapmen and general traders.'

period, although the term itself should be considered suspect and much academic debate has been concerned with the difficulty of defining what we mean by ‘popular’, particularly in relation to popular culture. Although arguably tropes and repetitions associated with the popular press would have entered into cultural discourse in a far more insidious manner than many of the texts which we now consider to be canonical.⁵

Much work has been undertaken to examine popular culture during the early modern period with Peter Burke’s *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* arguing for an interaction of ‘great’ and ‘little’ traditions which allowed for a transformative effect as the culture of the elite filtered towards the popular culture of the masses and vice versa. Burke argues for a two way traffic between the high and the low but qualifies this by arguing that: ‘if there is no difference in kind between the forms of learned and popular culture, there may still be differences of degree, arising especially from the fact that so much popular culture was, and is, oral culture’.⁶ The impossibility of capturing a true likeness of oral culture has important ramifications for this project as popular publications were by their very nature confined to those who could read or who were in a position to hear such texts read out loud, although Adam Fox rightly points out that even those who could not read or write, ‘traded in forms which were derived from such sources.’⁷ As such the term ‘popular’ has to be defined within certain perimeters for this thesis, ones which inevitably differ from those ascribed to popular culture as this is a

⁵ Alexandra Halasz uses the example of the press founded by Guttenberg and later run by Peter Schoeffer where at least half of the texts published were single-sheet productions, in order to argue that ‘pamphlets and other short, ephemeral texts occupied a particular and necessary position in the economy of print’, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 15.

⁶ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 147. See also William H. Beik, ‘Searching for Popular Culture in Early Modern France’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 49 (1977), pp. 266-281, for Beik’s analysis of the difficulties of defining and interpreting popular culture.

⁷ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 6. See David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), for an in depth study into literacy rates in early modern England. See also Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), for Spufford’s examination of the importance of reading within village communities, pp. 206-218.

reading culture which inevitably excludes a body of people who cannot decipher text. This popular reading culture is also one which is not necessarily defined by the cost of publication so much as the scope for dissemination. The popular ‘value’ of certain texts increases if their longevity is high, defined by multiple re-prints or the recycling of aspects of their style and content, and if they adopt a standardised and recognisable format which becomes synonymous with their wares. Ultimately all the texts which are looked at in this thesis would have traded upon a level of familiarity afforded to books and pamphlets which were widely read and also appropriated by their readership. In the chapters that follow I will examine a series of popular texts and assess their importance to the development of Spenser’s literary output: the English almanac tradition, two Elizabethan storybooks, the *Book of Raynarde the fox* and the *Golden Legend*. These texts come from very different areas of what can be termed the popular press, but all perpetuate particular narratives or stylistic tropes beyond their bindings and demonstrate the breadth of popular publishing. The almanac was arguably one of the most ubiquitous publishing phenomena of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were small, affordable and widely disseminated and incorporated visual sources which made them accessible to those with poor literacy skills. It is the almanac’s recognisable publishing tropes and its inclusion of prognostications which make its tradition so attractive to a writer setting himself up as a new poet for a new age. The tale of *Raynarde the Foxe* which provides Spenser with his wily Sir Reynold in *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* was a long beast fable which was frequently reprinted but its popularity can be most keenly felt when acknowledging people’s widespread familiarity with its story of a badly behaved fox who was employed as a poster boy for clerical hypocrisy and wily scheming. The popular storybooks by William Painter and George Pettie, the *Palace of Pleasure* and *A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure*, were both large

compilations of novella, often translated out of French and Italian. While Pettie's book was clearly more 'petite' than Painter's which came in two hefty volumes printed in 1566 and 1567, both were far from cheap. However, the stories contained within both texts were plundered by authors and playwrights alike and the palaces of pleasure would become synonymous with bawdy literature – providing an important textual link to Spenser's ambiguous use of pleasure in the *Faerie Queene*. The *Golden Legend* was the most famous of the Catholic collections of saints' lives and Spenser's clear debt to its formation of the life of St George speaks of the power of the text as it becomes relic.

What all these texts have in common is their ability to transcend the boundaries of Burke's 'little' and 'great' cultures and enter into a transformative dialogue with one of the sixteenth century's greatest poets. They are also all texts which ascribe to some kind of didactic purpose, whether it be the illumination of particular forms of husbandry, explanations of the movement of the stars, warnings to beware the subtle dissembling of those who change habits, morality tales which hide a hidden purpose or examples of pious lives to be mimicked. The explosion of 'how to' publishing which sought to de-mystify particular processes, from the internal workings of the body to the ways in which distances were measured and tables laid at court, ensured that didactic texts were often charged with offering knowledge to the unworthy, as Wendy Wall notes: 'printing shifted the boundaries of reading, exploding an intimate, private activity into a more democratized circulation.'⁸ The breadth of readership aimed for by popular didactic texts collapses many of the traditional margins ascribed to high and low cultures, providing instead a glimpse of a shared reading culture.

⁸ Wendy Wall, 'Disclosures in Print: The "Violent Enlargement" of the Renaissance Voyeuristic Text', *Studies in English Literature*, 29 (1989), pp. 35-59, (p. 55). See also Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 64, for Eisenstein's argument that there is 'no equivalent in scribal culture for the "avalanche" of "how-to" books which poured off the new presses'.

It is however, important to remember that Spenser spent most of his literary career in Ireland, a fact which has inescapable ramifications for how we view his relationship with the popular press. During the period in which Spenser was resident Ireland had no home-grown printing industry to speak of. The first book to be printed in Ireland with movable type was the *Book of Common Prayer* produced by Humphrey Powell in Dublin in 1551, although there was a healthy trade in imported books and as Raymond Gillespie notes, London printers may have been producing texts specifically for an Irish market.⁹ The only press in Dublin produced mainly proclamations and liturgical material so that well into the seventeenth century the Irish book market was defined by external trade.¹⁰ It seems probable that amongst those texts which made their way from London to Dublin there were items from the popular press. Intriguingly the writings of Barnaby Rich which were composed in Dublin in the late sixteenth century suggest that he had access to copies of William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and George Pettie's *Petite palace of Pettie his pleasure*, two texts which I believe had an important role to play in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.¹¹ Gillespie points out that much of the trade in books beyond Dublin was in cheap and ephemeral publications such as almanacs and chapbooks, probably because of the ease of transportation (they would have been small and light) as well as the relatively large size of the potential market for such material amongst a population with limited literacy.¹² It is not unfeasible therefore to assume that Spenser would have had access to popular publications while he was in

⁹ Raymond Gillespie, 'Print Culture, 1550-1700' in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book Volume III: The Irish Book in English 1550-1800*, ed. by Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 17-33, (p. 18). See also Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print, Reading and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 55-58.

¹⁰ Colm Lennon argues that the printing trade's 'languid rate of development' in Ireland may have been due to there being few areas with large concentrated populations and a lack of 'hubs of patronage', see 'The Print Trade, 1550-1700', in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book Volume III: The Irish Book in English 1550-1800*, ed. by Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 61-73, (p. 61).

¹¹ See Gillespie, 'Print Culture, 1550-1700', p. 19.

¹² Gillespie, 'Print Culture, 1550-1700', pp. 19-20.

Ireland and it may even be possible to argue that because he was within a publishing environment servicing a far smaller market he was more likely, (or at least as likely as he would have been had he stayed in London), to be exposed to cheap productions as they were a more profitable export for English printers. The risks were less significant as the losses incurred during transportation were not as great for inexpensive texts, the literate population was small and therefore short, easy to read, didactic publications were more appropriate for widespread sale and also those texts which sold well in England could be transferred to an English population in Ireland in the belief that they would also be popular on the plantations. It is clear that Spenser's literary environment in Ireland was informed by the coterie of likeminded men he met at Munster who found themselves far from the shores and printing presses of England and Europe, including the Italian Ludovic Bryskett, but his exile did not negate the potential influence of a popular literary culture upon his work.¹³ This becomes apparent when considering that Geoffrey Fenton the Irish Secretary of State and father in law of Richard Boyle, later Earl of Cork, produced a translation of Matteo Bandello's popular tales of love and tragedy before he left for Ireland, called *Certaine Tragicall Discourses written oute of French and Latin, by Geffraie Fenton, no lesse profitable then pleasaunt, and of like necessitye to al degrees that take pleasure in antiquities or forreine reaportes*. It is highly likely that Spenser knew Fenton's work and knew the man himself through the Boyles.¹⁴ Fenton's compilation was published by Thomas Marshe in London, at 'flete street nere to Saint Dunstons Churche' in 1567. Marshe was a well known publisher of almanacs and produced the work of John Securis, Lewes Vaughn and Leonard and

¹³ For a brief description of Spenser's literary circle see Andrew Carpenter, 'Literature in Print, 1550-1800', in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book Volume III: The Irish Book in English 1550-1800*, ed. by Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 301-318, (p. 303-305).

¹⁴ Many thanks to Raymond Gillespie for drawing my attention to this text and to Fenton's links to Spenser.

Thomas Digges. The *Tragicall Discourses* are very similar in form and layout to William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, the first volume of which had been printed the previous year and in the argument to his work Fenton claims:

I haue in presente intente to discouer unto you the merueilous effects of loue, which excedinge the opinion of common thynges, seames more straunge, then the curious construction and frame of any Pallais for necessitie or pleasure, theatrie or place of solace buylded by art or industrie of man...¹⁵

It may be that Fenton is setting his translation up against Painter's 'Pallais' while simultaneously trading upon its popularity. While not enough time had elapsed for Painter's work to have been the inspiration behind the *Tragicall Discourses* it is possible that Fenton recognised their similarity, indicating that this particular storybook was known to the author. Spenser's later affiliation with Fenton indicates that his compatriots in Ireland may well have had a relationship with the popular press, subsequently being at a considerable distance from the publishing hub of London did not necessarily seriously undermine the prevalence of the popular press, or its influence upon Spenser's work.

Wide access to certain forms of print culture brought with it a possible litany of anxieties, most of which were centred on the problem of ensuring that readers read properly, without error or moral laziness. These anxieties were epitomised by popular print whose readership included the lower orders as well as the elite, (Tessa Watt points out that the word 'popular' does not mean that a form of published text was 'exclusive to a specific social group'),¹⁶ as the emphasis was on catering for the needs and wants of as broad a readership as possible and often those needs would not accord with the parameters for godly or citizen-like behaviour outlined by the church and the

¹⁵ Geoffrey Fenton, *Certaine Tragicall Discourses written oute of French and Latin, by Geffraie Fenton, no lesse profitable then pleasaunt, and of like necessitye to al degrees that take pleasure in antiquities or forreine reaportes* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1567), Fol. 1. r.

¹⁶ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 1.

monarchical authorities. In this thesis I argue that the unpredictable nature of reader response is what ultimately prompts Spenser's fascination with the popular press, particularly when it is considered alongside a desire to consume literature from a variety of sources and achieve a level of *copia* which would allow him to stand apart from his contemporaries. This encyclopaedic reaction to the varied nature of print culture also ensures that his work succeeds in piecing together a body of disparate remains in order to make a whole, what Margaret Spufford describes in relation to popular culture as a 'mosaic made up of changing and contradictory fragments.'¹⁷ Spenser's fascination with literary remains is epitomised by his interest in ruins, monuments, the dichotomy between salvage/savage and the piecemeal dissection of the female body, all of which demonstrate a desire to harness and control a fragmentary narrative through copious reading. Desiderius Erasmus in his *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style* (*De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo*) written for the students of John Colet, Dean of St Paul's, defines *copia* as 'being able to express one's meaning in a variety of ways.'¹⁸ For Erasmus this is primarily a device of oratory and one which is difficult to harness for fear of piling up 'a meaningless heap of words and expressions without any discrimination' (p. 295). Erasmus cites several ancient sources which revel in *copia*, including Virgil and Aesop, and stresses the importance of developing *copia* for the 'acquisition of style' (p. 302) and the avoidance of repetition. Proposing a theme which would be later developed by Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy* in relation to pleasure, (see chapter 2 of this thesis), Erasmus argues:

¹⁷ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p. 3.

¹⁸ Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings 2 De Copia / De Ratione Studii*, ed. by Craig R. Thompson, trans. and annotated by Betty I. Knott (London: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 279-660, (p. 297).

Nature above all delights in variety; in all this huge concourse of things, she has left nothing anywhere unpainted by her wonderful technique of variety. Just as the eyes fasten themselves on some new spectacle, so the mind is always looking round for some fresh object of interest. If it is offered a monotonous succession of similarities, it very soon wearies and turns its attention elsewhere, and so everything gained by the speech is lost all at once. (p. 302)

Copia for Erasmus is a tool which engages and captures the mind of an audience and ensures that an argument is delivered to its intended source. By conquering this aspect of oratory – which can of course be transferred to a written form – Colet's students will be able to avoid being 'tongue-tied' (p. 302). This is what lays at the heart of early modern ideas of *copia*, the desire to free or even 'garnish' the tongue in order that it may better serve its master.

Terrance Cave points out that 'in many of its senses *copia* implies the notion of mastery, whether social or linguistic',¹⁹ Cave follows *copia* as its meaning shifts to include 'to copy', a linguistic process which accelerates with the advent of printing. *Copia* is thus closely allied to Renaissance theories of imitation and variety and the continuing debate over the relationship between art and nature, as well as the repetitive mimicry and relative fixity of typeface produced by the press. Mary E. Hazard notes that copiousness was also closely associated with the synonyms 'ornament' and 'amplification', producing a synthesis between ideas of variety and the aesthetic values of gilding, bejewelling and painting.²⁰ As it was not uncommon for early modern readers to copy out excerpts from favourite texts or to bind small publications together, copious reading could also allude to an autonomy on the part of the reader who was able to dictate the ways in which whole or pieces of printed texts related to one another.²¹

¹⁹ Terrance Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 3.

²⁰ Mary E. Hazard, 'An Essay to Amplify "Ornament": Some Renaissance Theory and Practice', *Studies in English Literature*, 16 (1976), pp. 15-32, (p. 18).

²¹ See Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Exhibiting Class and Displaying the Body in Sidney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*', *Studies in English Literature*, 37 (1997), pp. 55-72, (p.66) for Lamb's examination of the 'erotic connotations of reading/copying'. See also Alexandra Gillespie, 'Poets, Printers, and Early English

Copious reading also ties in with the development of the encyclopaedia, printed commonplace books and other texts such as almanacs which endeavoured to distil the world and human experience down into the binding of a little book.²²

The ways in which a readership responded to popular texts could in itself result in a multiplicity of readings, a veritable *copia* of reactions which could not be circumscribed, particularly as their readership was broad and included the lower orders whose ability to contain negative bodily or psychological responses was looked upon with suspicion. As reading was associated with the potential for physiological or psychological effect during the early modern period the ways in which people read and what they read were of great importance not only to the reader but to the author as well.²³ By associating his own work with a variety of popular printed sources Spenser succeeds in conjuring up the phantom of unstable or subversive reading and in doing so brings to the fore the impossibility of the poet ever being able to control or contain their

“Sammelbande”, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), pp. 189-214, for Gillespie’s analysis of sammelbande and how these composite texts impact upon the reader.

²² See Anne Lake Prescott, ‘Pierre de La Primaudaye’s French Academy: Growing Encyclopaedic’, in *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print*, ed. by Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 157-169, for Lake Prescott’s examination of the *Academie Françoise* as an ‘encyclopaedia of morals’ (p. 158) one aspect of which may have influenced Spenser’s House of Alma in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* – the image of the body as a house (p. 159). Adam Smyth considers the almanac in relation to the effort to contain the macrocosm within the microcosm in, “‘The Whole Globe of the Earth’: Almanacs and their Readers’, in *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed. by Jyotsna G. Singh (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 294-304. Jonathan Sheehan defines the encyclopedia as: ‘one of the key early modern solutions to abundance’ when examining the rise of the biblical encyclopedia in ‘From Philology to Fossils: The Biblical Encyclopedia in Early Modern Europe’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (2003), pp. 41-60, (p. 43). D. T. Starnes looks at the literary nature of dictionaries and their relationship to encyclopedias in ‘Literary Features of Renaissance Dictionaries’, *Studies in Philology*, 37 (1940), pp. 26-50. Ann Moss’s study of printed and manuscript commonplace books explicitly links the rise of these compilations with a re-newed interest in *copia* as defined by Erasmus, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 186-187. Moss argues that the use of commonplace books was indicative of ‘the mind-set of educated Western Europeans from the early years of the sixteenth century up until the last decade or so of the seventeenth’ (p. vi).

²³ Adrian Johns examines the various effects on both mind and body ascribed to reading in *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 380-443.

own work. The tongue which is liberally ‘garnished’ can also become that ‘unruly member’ – subject to the multiple interpretations of a disorderly readership.²⁴

It has been argued that the religious changes which took place during the Reformation had important ramifications for reading processes, not least with the advent of the vernacular bible. The ‘displacement of pulpit by press’²⁵ which occurred when people began to read proclamations and news stories rather than gather together at church to listen to them, resulted in certain kinds of reading becoming private processes rather than dictated by the public space of the congregation. The replacement of visual signs such as icons by textual ones, and the emphasis placed upon reading the Bible rather than hearing it spoken out loud also saw shifts occur between the primacy of aural or visual culture, although this movement was never conclusive or wholesale in its dependency upon one or the other, it appears that the eye of the reader became a site of religious interest and anxiety in ways in which it never had before. This anxiety manifested itself in a fear of disordered or ‘bad’ reading in which readers were led astray by error and unable to correctly interpret religious texts. The possibility that texts could have a mutable and ill defined reader response meant that writers had to be careful that they did not leave themselves open to charges of blasphemy, but they would also have had a heightened awareness of the power of the printed word and the breadth of their readership. As Jesse M. Lander notes: ‘though the relationship between print and the Reformation cannot be reduced to a one way causality, together they created a culture that formed not homogeneously but continually in debate, a culture that can itself be seen as polemical.’²⁶ The dialogue and debate fostered by religious polemic in

²⁴ Jesse M. Lander in *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print, and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), discusses the disorder of books in relation to the shifting importance of polemic in early modern literary culture, p. 1-55.

²⁵ Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution*, p. 95.

²⁶ Lander, *Inventing Polemic*, pp. 10-11. See also John N. Wall, Jr., ‘The Reformation in England and the Typographical Revolution: “By this printing...the doctrine of the Gospel soundeth to all nations”’, in

particular meant that print was closely associated with argument and oppositional reading. Print itself became a battleground in which opposing factions hurled words and texts at each other across the barricades. The potential for texts to have encoded within them the conscious or unconscious relics of the past, whether in form or content, also ensured that the fixity of print could become monument to religious sensibilities which were being rapidly erased (successfully or otherwise) by the whitewash of the reformers. While Spenser is often defined as a Protestant poet, in this thesis I will argue that his interest in the popular textual remains of the Catholic past complicates this reading and results in his work being littered with the ruins and monuments of the previous age. This may in some measure succeed in de-mystifying the aura of religious reliquaries, rendering them mundane by revealing their workings and this nod to the subversive qualities of imitation perhaps legitimises any inclusion of Catholic tropes within Spenser's work, but it nevertheless also demonstrates the strength of traditional narrative devices.

The staying power of particular styles and characters within popular literature also speaks of the continuities between early modern and medieval discourse within Spenser's own work. The *Book of Raynarde the foxe* and the *Golden Legend* were both texts translated and printed by William Caxton in the fifteenth century. While I have consulted more contemporaneous versions of these two books their relationship to Spenser's work indicates that he may have felt that he was part of a continuous thread of author and reader relationships which stretched back to the dawn of the printing press and beyond. This is unsurprising considering his interest in the works of Chaucer and Skelton but this thread was also defined by Spenser's position as a reader himself – as a

Print and Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe, ed. by Gerald P. Tyson and Sylvia S. Wagonheim (London: Associated University Presses, 1986), pp. 208-221 (p. 209), for Wall's argument that reformers viewed the press as an agent of transformative change which would lead to a new religious unity rather than promoting a fragmentary diversity of interpretation.

poet he was unafraid of frequently citing classical sources for his work but the more oblique references to popular and ephemeral material indicate that his personal library was a more varied affair. In Gabriel Harvey's copy of Murner's *Howleglas* Harvey records how Spenser lent him some 'foolish Bookes':

This Howleglasse, with Skoggin, Skelton, & Lazarillo, given me at London, of Mr Spensar xx. Decembris, 1578, on condition [I] shoold bestowe the reading of themover, before the first of January immediatly ensuing; otherwise to forfeit unto him my Lucian in fower volumes. Whereupon I was the rather induced to trifle away so many howers, as were idely overpassed in running thorowgh the foresaid foolish Bookes: wherein methowgh[t] not all fower together seemed comparable for subtle & crafty feates with Jon Miller whose witty shiftes, & practises ar reportid amongst Skelton's Tales.²⁷

This rare glimpse of Spenser's reading habits affords us the knowledge that he liked to pass entertaining texts to his close friend, perhaps as a way of teasing the serious scholar, and also insinuates that unlike Harvey he was quite happy to 'trifle away' 'many howers' on popular books. *Howleglas* was a popular jest book which went through several re-prints and 'Skoggin' refers to the *Geystes of Skoggon* by Andrew Boorde. A strange trade for Harvey's 'Lucian in fower volumes' but one which emphasises Spenser's interest in a range of printed material: from the verse of Skelton to the jests of Skoggin. As Spenser and Harvey's relationship was in many respects a literary one, this marginal note not only provides evidence that their book exchanges included popular texts, but feasibly undoes any assumption that they adhered to a strict classical model for their intellectual trading.

This thesis will argue that Spenser's interest in popular print stems from a desire to 'garnish the Tongue' in order to elevate the English language and with it England's 'new Poet'. Ultimately the processes by which Spenser transforms popular narratives and structures result in a fascination with the unpredictable and ill defined nature of

²⁷ Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia and Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 49.

authorial intention and reader response. Spenser's work is often seen as defined by the desire to 'fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline' (p. 737) as is stated in the letter to Raleigh appended to the *Faerie Queene*, a reading of Spenser which includes the popular however, raises the spectre of an imprecise and unconstrained readership: one which cannot be truly 'fashioned' but remains mutable. Whether it be the reader whose eyes can become an unstable conduit for lust and icon building, whose body and speech is revealed as beast-like, or who can respond to a laying out of relics which remind them of a past not long buried and recall the ways of punishing the body for the sins of the tongue or the pen, Spenser's interest in the early modern reader and the mutable self is defined by a belief that the popular has a place within poetry and will indeed serve to 'garnish the Tongue'(p. 4).

**‘Extraordinary discourses of vnnecessarie matter’¹: Spenser’s
Shepheardes Calender and the Almanac Tradition**

Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calender* opens with a short poem ‘To his Book’ written by Immerito (Spenser’s pseudonym) which charges the work to hide its name and ‘Say thou wert base begot with blame’ (14). Spenser’s anonymity at this moment is blamed upon the humble nature of the work, this ‘little booke’ (1) does not deserve advertisement or the weight of an authorial mark. Immerito does however, insist that the *Calender* test the water: ‘Come tell me, what was sayd of mee: / And I will send more after thee’ (17-18). Given the importance of appended and glossed material to the interpretation of the *Shepheardes Calender* this short piece of verse, entirely comprised of rhyming couplets, will stand as the gatekeeper to the poem and to the poet’s future literary career. As Spenser’s first independent publication the *Calender* will dictate what other works will follow and measure the reactions of the reading public to his boast that he will be England’s ‘new Poete’ (p. 25). Burdened with such an important task it is perhaps surprising that Immerito refers to the poem as a ‘little book’ and while the guise of the humble poet is frequently adopted by writers during the sixteenth century I will argue that this example at the opening of the poem actually highlights an important and often overlooked context for the production of the *Shepheardes Calender*. Those ‘base’ born ‘little books’ which came off the printing press were normally cheap and ephemeral publications, one of the most ubiquitous being the almanac, and by associating his work with the popular sphere at the outset, Spenser draws the reader’s eye towards the many points of confluence between his pastoral poem and the traditional almanac form.

¹ ‘The Shepheardes Calender’, in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 32. All further quotations are from this edition.

The almanac, a printing phenomena which can be traced to the early Guttenberg press, and in the form of ‘clog almanacs’ made of bone and wood, far back into the medieval era, combined natural astrology (the belief that the planets and stars effected the natural world) and judicial astrology (the attempt to interpret planetary influences and make predictions) in order to inform its readers of the effects of celestial events on crops, livestock, the body and the weather.² Almanacs were the precursor to the modern diary and often incorporated blank leaves for the owner to fill in (situating the reader directly into the text), along with lists of holy days, fairs, tide tables and distances between different communities.³ This usually culminated in a prognostication for the forthcoming year in which predictions were made concerning the weather, crop yields, wars, births, disease and death. This aspect of the almanac was most open to ridicule from those quick to point out if an expected occurrence failed to materialise. Accordingly, the astrological almanac was often portrayed on the stages of the Elizabethan playhouses as a prop for a foolish or gullible character who is too busy looking at the stars above his own head to see the gaping chasm looming beneath his

² Bernard Capp’s, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (Plymouth: Latimer Trend & Company Ltd, 1979), provides a comprehensive overview of the history of almanac writing during the early modern period. A bibliographical history of the almanac form can be found in Eustace F. Bosanquet, *English Printed Almanacs: A Bibliographical History to the year 1600* (London: Chiswick Press, 1917). See also Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 335-458, for Thomas’s examination of astrology and popular belief. R. C. Simmons in ‘ABCs, Almanacs, Ballads, Chapbooks, Popular Piety and Textbooks’, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume IV 1557-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ed. by John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with the assistance of Maureen Bell, pp. 504-13, includes a brief discussion of the history of the almanac in Britain. Adam Smyth in “‘The Whole Globe of the Earth’: Almanacs and Their Readers’ in *A Companion to The Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed. by Jyotsna G. Singh (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 294-304, argues that almanacs render the whole world into a little book and in doing so mediate between the global and the local, the national and the international. Smyth argues that the almanacs’ breadth and specificity meant that they were perfectly suited to the marginal recordings which have become associated with early life-writing.

³ See Neil Rhodes, ‘Articulate Networks: The Self, The Book and the World’, in *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print*, ed. by Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 184-196, (p. 186), for an examination of the ways in which almanacs bring the reader into the text. See also Adam Smyth, ‘Almanacs, Annotators, and Life-Writing in Early Modern England’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 38 (2008), pp. 200-244, for Smyth’s examination of annotated almanacs and their relationship to life-writing. Smyth argues that the use of the word ‘blank’ would have had a direct lineage from the almanac form (p. 205).

feet. It is to an almanac that the rude mechanicals turn in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to determine whether there is a full moon on the night of their intended performance. 'A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac - find out moonshine, find out moonshine!'⁴ cries Bottom. The moon in question is indeed ascertained to be full on the given date and will now play a part in the interlude by shining through a casement and lighting the tryst between the hapless Pyramus and Thisbe, robbing us of the sight of one of the players representing moonshine with a 'bush of thorns and a lantern' (III, i, 46-47).

Ben Jonson's depiction of those who read almanacs was also far from flattering. In *The Magnetic Lady* the character Practice only chooses his mistresses and agrees to fornicate on the days listed as favourable by the almanac writers and in *Every Man in his Humour* Oliver Cob complains that almanacs list the fasting days and are thus charged with robbing him of his dinner. Despite their derision on the stage astrological almanacs were a valuable source of income for printers in the sixteenth century and would become even more ubiquitous in the coming years, public demand increasing as the English printing industry grew, reaching a peak between 1640 and 1700, a time Bernard Capp refers to as 'the golden age of English almanacs.'⁵ Their readership included nobility and common husbandmen, with a variety of different designs produced to satisfy the purse of different customers, from small octavo and duodecimo editions to quartos and folios. Lord Burghley owned a series of almanacs and the cleric Anthony Askham, brother to Elizabeth's tutor Roger, was an almanac writer, as was Gabriel Harvey's brother Richard, and yet many almanacs consciously identified their readership as being closely associated with agriculture rather than necessarily coming from the higher orders of society. John Securis insisted in his almanac for 1576 that it

⁴ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), III, i, 40-41. All further quotations are from this edition.

⁵ Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press*, p. 24.

would cost ‘onely twoo poore pence, or three pence at the most. And such a small somme I beleue no man will waygh.’⁶ While this may be a necessary fiction it also speaks of an aspiration to capture a broad readership, perhaps corresponding to the idea of ‘communities of interpretation’⁷ proposed by Ian Green, as an alternative to a narrow focus on specified readerships from the higher and lower orders. Understandably, as a ‘popular’ publication the almanac comes with all the attendant difficulties that arise when trying to define the nature of a popular press, but it was unquestionably a publication which was sold on a large scale - to which the high number of surviving copies attests - this is despite out of date almanacs, like all waste paper, doubtless being used for everything from toilet paper to fire lighters.⁸

The almanac was an instantly recognisable print formula which adhered to an unmistakable series of publishing tropes.⁹ Almanacs commonly incorporated a calendar, zodiacal man (often alongside a list of favourable times for bloodletting and a list of the most appropriate limbs from which to take blood), various moon and tide tables, a prognostication and a weather forecast; these would occasionally be accompanied by a series of woodcuts depicting appropriate scenes for each of the twelve months, or more generic scenes of labour. The almanac clearly advertised its purpose by adhering to this standardized format, often resulting in particular almanac writers adopting the same publication style over several years. William Cunningham for instance employs the

⁶ John Securis, *A prognostication for the yeare of our Lorde God M.D.LXXVI made and written in Salisburie by Iohn Securis ...* (London: Richarde Watkins and Iames Roberts, 1576), Bij. r.

⁷ Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 26.

⁸ See Adam Smyth, ‘Almanacs, Annotators, and Life-Writing in Early Modern England’, p. 203, for a brief discussion of the ephemeral nature of almanacs and how they became ‘synonymous with transience’.

⁹ Paul F. Grendler in ‘Form and Function in Italian Renaissance Popular Books’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46 (1993), pp. 452-485, examines four popular Italian texts in order to discern the physical characteristics of popular books, he concludes that ‘a definite form existed’ and that ‘traditional form’ (p. 483) always overrode the preferences of author or publisher so that a publisher who did not normally publish popular texts nevertheless conformed to the recognizable style adopted by their peers, (small in size, printed in gothic rotunda or early roman letter, short in length and with numerous small illustrations).

same woodcuts at the head of a prognostication for each month of the year in both 1564 and 1566, this is despite having changed printers (in 1564 his almanac is printed by Rouland Hall and in 1566 by Richard Serl for William Johnes). Leonard Digges' *Prognostication Euerlastyng*, a perpetual almanac which went through several reprints, had first been produced in 1555 as *a Prognostication of Right Good Effect*, this was itself a reworking of a 1553 almanac and was added to and augmented by his son Thomas Digges after Leonard died in 1559. The formula did not shift markedly however, and while the woodcuts depicting astrological figures became more elaborate, advice concerning the cause of comets and rainbows, remained the same, as did the layout and the preface to the reader. Thomas even chose to dedicate the almanac to the same patron in 1576 that his father had addressed in 1555: Sir Edward Fines.¹⁰

Continuity of design was clearly a way of ensuring that your readership could identify your wares from that of the competition, but adherence to a loosely standardised formula also meant that the almanac was itself a publication distinct and separate from other booksellers' merchandise. Peter Burke notes that this stability of form may have helped to 'preserve and even diffuse traditional popular culture.'¹¹ It is this continuity which makes the link between Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* and the almanac tradition so marked, as it is clear when looking at the 1579 edition of the *Shepheardes Calender* that Spenser has adopted a style reminiscent of the standard almanac format. The 'twelue Aeglogues proportionable to the twelue monethes' (p. 23), mimic the almanac maker's month by month prognostications which were designed to provide the reader with a calendrical reference for the forthcoming agricultural year. Many almanacs would head each month with a short rhyme which aided the memory,

¹⁰ Simmons in 'ABCs, Almanacs, Ballads, Chapbooks, Popular Piety and Textbooks', provides some further examples of the staying power of particular titles, pp. 507-8.

¹¹ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 257.

associating the form with English versifying – however rudimentary. For example George Gosson's advice for September 1571 is headed by the following rhyme:

Now looke to gathering other fruites,
as time and season doth require,
This done, you may possesse the gaine,
according to your hartes desire.¹²

The continuity between this simple poetic heading and Spenser's 'To his Booke' is clear – 'Goe little booke: thy selfe present, / As child whose parent is vnkent' (1-2) – and made all the more stark given that Immerito's verse occupies the same literary space as Gosson's rhyme, both serving as an introduction to what will follow. The inclusion of newly commissioned wood cuts depicting pastoral scenes and scenes of labour in Spenser's poem, which head each Aeglogue, also imitates the woodcuts included in many almanacs.¹³ It is also of interest that the verse in the *Calender* was printed by Hugh Singleton in the same Gothic 'black type' as most almanacs while the glosses were produced in Roman type, providing a distinction between verse and prose which seems to echo the divide between popular and learned publications.¹⁴ Most striking however, is Spenser's decision to name his publication the *Shepherd's Calender*, directly associating his work with the frequently reprinted French almanac the *Kalender of Sheparden*, a large perpetual almanac first translated into English in 1503. The *Kalender* was both 'didactic and salvational'¹⁵ and incorporated elaborate wood cuts depicting the torments of hell and purgatory. The *Kalender* was designed for

¹² George Gosson, *A newe almanacke and prognostication, seruing for the yere of our Lord God M. D. LXXI* (London: H. Bynneman, 1571), n.p.

¹³ See Stephen Orgel, 'Textual Icons: Reading Early Modern Illustrations', in *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print*, ed. by Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 59-94, (p. 68), for Orgel's argument that the *Shepherd's Calender* is illustrated: 'not because pastorals are illustrated – for the most part they aren't – but because calendars are; and the very fact of illustration thus connects the book with the newest continental poetry and with the most traditional of native forms.'

¹⁴ See Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 9-39.

¹⁵ Martha W. Driver, 'When is a Miscellany Not Miscellaneous? Making Sense of the *Kalender of Shepherds*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), pp. 199-214, (p. 211).

a wealthy audience but claimed to dispense the wisdom of shepherds in matters of spirituality and husbandry.

The similarities between the title of Spenser's poem and the popular *Kalender*, (the 1570 edition would be named the *shepardes kalender* at the head of each page while the title page reads *Here beginneth the kalendar of shepardes*), indicate that Spenser was aware of the power of mimicry as a form of self-promotion, as E.K. notes in the Epistle: 'applying an olde name to a new worke' (168). Almanac writers often used their publications to advertise their skill as physicians and astrologers for hire so the format was no stranger to such devices and by choosing to name his poem the *Shepherd's Kalender* Spenser immediately associates his work with an established popular format and renders his work familiar.¹⁶ While the *Kalender of Shepards* is a French almanac, in the 1570 edition its translator Robert Copland is at pains to point out that: 'THys boke (gentle reader) was first corruptly printed in Fraunce and after that at the cost and charges of Rycharde Pynson, newly translated and reprinted.'¹⁷ The act of translation and reprinting is accorded the status of metamorphosis, the result being a more accurate and incorrupt text. This sentiment can be seen reflected in Spenser's poem, itself comprised of a series of transformations or translations, both of the almanac form itself, and of traditional Eclogue and pastoral motifs. The superiority asserted by Copland, of the English vernacular over the corrupt French, also mirrors E.K.'s praise of 'naturall English words' (80) in the *Shepherd's Kalender*. The *Kalender of Shepards* uses the Shepherd as the voice of the astrologer as they dispense advice and explanations, Spenser's shepherds serve much the same purpose as they 'sing' fables and laments of lost love and debate the relative merits of old age while keeping one eye on the ever revolving firmament; conflating the classically poetic shepherd with the

¹⁶ See Lynn Staley Johnson, *The Shepherd's Kalender: An Introduction* (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), chapter 1.

¹⁷ Robert Copland, *The shepardes kalender* (London, 1570), Aii. r.

shepherd/astrologer. The role of the shepherd in the *Kalender of Shepardes* is clearly defined at the beginning of the almanac with an explanation of the stars that pulls the firmament solidly down to earth:

The Shepardes in a mornynge afore thee daye beyng in the fyeldes, behelde the fyrmament that was fyxed full of sterres, one among the other sayde to his felowe. I demaunde of thee howe many sterres be on the twelue parties of the zodyake, that is vnder one sygne onely. The other Shepharde answered and sayde. Let be founde a piece of lande in a playne countrey, as vpon the playne of Salysbury, & that the sayde piece of lande be xl. myle longe and xxiiii. myle brode. After that let take great long nayles with great brode heades, as the nayles byn that be made for carte wheles, as many as shal suf[...]fyse for the sayde piece of lande. And let the sayde nayles be strycken vnto the heades in the sayde piece at lande, foure fyngers brode one from the other, tyll that the piece of lande be couered ouer from one syde to the other. I saye that there be as many sterres conteyned onder one sygne onely, as there shulde b[...] nayles stycke in the forsayde piece of lande, and there is as many vnder ech[...] of the other, & to the equypolent by the other places of the firmament. Th[...] fyrst Sheparde demaunded how wilt thou profe it. The seconde aunswe[...]red and sayd that no man is bounden ne holden to proue thinges vnpossible[...] & that it ought to suffice for Shepardes and touchinge this matter to beleu[...] simply without to enquire ouer much, of that their predicessours Shepardes haue sayde afore. (Aiiii. r)

A ‘map’ of the heavens is produced in nails struck into the ground, although it is a map designed to produce a sense of awe at the scope and incomprehensible nature of the stars rather than a genuine attempt at astronomy and ‘ought to suffice for Shepardes’. The shepherd tries to follow the dictates of the heavens but ultimately acknowledges that ‘no man is bounden ne holden to proue thinges vnpossible’. An open field dotted with a pincushion of nails is the closest one can get to a sense of the breadth of the heavens. The shepherd is the purveyor of advice based upon a belief in a divine macrocosm and has no claim to superior knowledge, they only read the signs, they cannot explain them. The shepherd is an everyman figure designed to facilitate learning, as Copland asserts: ‘this boke was made for them that be no clerkes to bring them to great vnderstandinge’ (Avi. r). The acknowledgement of a common readership is central to many almanacs, with the focus on good husbandry comes the assumption that the

reader works the land - or at least has a passing interest in what it produces - and that they are intimately acquainted with the rhythms of the agricultural year. Spenser may be endeavouring to tap into this broader readership by transforming a familiar and popular printed format, but it is also clear that he has a fascination with the English almanac's national focus, a focus which provides the impetus for a wider exploration of the limits and possibilities of the vernacular printed word. As Richard Helgerson notes when examining Spenser's desire for 'the kingdom of our own language': 'to men born in the 1550s and 1560s, things English came to matter with a special intensity both because England itself mattered more than it had and because other sources of identity and cultural authority mattered less.'¹⁸ In the epistle to the *Shepheardes Calender* the unidentified E. K. praises the poet's use of 'naturall English words, as haue ben long time out of vse and almost cleare disherited' (81) and places him within a literary tradition headed by Chaucer.¹⁹ E. K. may be the voice of Spenser himself, a possible identification as Spenser's name is not printed in the 1579 edition, although Gabriel Harvey is mentioned repeatedly as a friend of both E. K. and the 'new Poete' (p. 25).²⁰

¹⁸ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) p. 3. Spenser's position within the debates surrounding literature, national identity and the vernacular, particularly with reference to Ireland, is explored in Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 137-15, and Willy Maley, *Nation, State and Empire in English Renaissance Literature*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 63-92.

¹⁹ While this claim has often been seen as indicative of Spenser's desire to promote himself as an English laureate poet Peter C. Herman in 'The *Shepheardes Calender* and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment', *Studies in English Literature*, 32 (1992), pp. 15-33, argues that the poem reflects Spenser's 'self doubt' (p. 17) in the face of Protestant antipoetic sentiment. For Herman this reading of Spenser's poetics is defined by Colin Clout's decision to break his pipes at the beginning of the January eclogue.

²⁰ See Richard Rambuss, 'The Secretary's Study: The Secret Designs of *The Shepheardes Calender*', *English Literary History*, 59 (1992), pp. 310-335, for Rambuss's discussion of E.K.'s function as a voice which 'encode[s] the text as full of secrets' (p. 325). Rambuss argues that E.K.'s shadowy persona as well as his frequently opaque glosses ensures that the secrecy of the text is heightened rather than dispelled by the marginalia appended to the poem. Marcy North in 'Ignoto in the Age of Print: The Manipulation of Anonymity in Early Modern England', *Studies in Philology*, 91 (1994), pp. 390-416, discusses the function of literary anonymity and the use of conventions which 'allow the author to perform the seemingly paradoxical task of announcing himself and his anonymity in a single gesture.' (p. 405). See Gerald Snare 'The Practice of Glossing in Late Antiquity and the Renaissance', *Studies in Philology*, 92 (1995), pp. 439-459, for Snare's examination of E.K.'s glosses to the *Shepheardes Calender*. Snare notes that E.K.'s explanation of archaic terms is not contrary to the poem's fixation on the 'new Poet' but rather indicative of an ancient formula employed by Virgil (p. 441).

The epistle outlines the poetic intent of the *Shepheardes Calender*, identifying it as an English work that resurrects old words and embraces the ‘rusticall rudenesse’ (38) of the ‘auncient Poetes’ (34-35). This clear positioning of the poem within a national literary framework underscores Spenser’s use of the almanac model, as during the sixteenth century the English almanac was becoming more geographically specific. During the Elizabethan period English almanacs began to diverge from their Continental counterparts and the work of native astrologers began to outsell the French translations that had dominated the market in the earlier part of the century. The English almanacs were relatively inexpensive and designed for a popular audience, sold by peddlers and booksellers in both town and village while French quarto almanacs remained the preserve of the court and wealthy merchants; they also combined the almanac with the prognostication, whereas in France they remained distinct publications.²¹ English translations of European almanacs preserved this format with editions of Nostradamus’ popular almanac for 1559 consisting solely of a prognostication for the forthcoming year. Bernard Capp notes that the English almanac used the standard components of its format, such as the calendar, list of saint’s and holy days, chronology and prognostication as vehicles for political and social comment:

In England the almanac was characterized by political, religious and social speculation, and by an awareness of change and progress. Thus the chronology often developed into a partisan history or a list of inventions and discoveries, while in France it became merely a recital of the triumphs of the reigning king and his predecessors.²²

The annual publication of almanacs meant that they were a unique format able to chronicle changes in the political, economic and social climate as well as providing meteorological predictions. By marking time in such a manner they also engaged with

²¹ See Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 28. Also Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press*, pp. 270-274.

²² Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press*, p. 271.

the fundamental shift in time keeping which would occur during the sixteenth century, an important connection to which I will return later. English almanacs included conjecture, guesswork, rumour and theory and they were printed regularly and disseminated widely, becoming an early newssheet that informed its readers of the new developments in science and agriculture as well as proffering opinions. The popular readership of English almanacs also dictated their format, with Elizabethan versions including large woodcuts and diagrams in an effort to engage those who could not read. Thus English almanacs during the sixteenth century were designed for a specifically English audience, unsurprising considering that the stars produced different alignments depending on the geography of the stargazer, but they also tried to be accessible to the popular sphere. The format of the English almanac therefore evolved differently to European versions and became a publishing phenomena closely associated with the rise of English print and the rise of the common reader.

This anglicised view of the almanac tradition dovetails neatly with E. K.'s insistence in the epistle to the *Shepheardes Calender* that 'our Mother tongue, [is] truly of it self...both ful enough for prose and stately enough for verse' (82-3). The desire to banish French and Italian words from the English vocabulary because they have rendered the 'English tongue, a gallimaufrey or hodgepodge of al other speches' (90-1) mimics the national focus of Leonard Digges assertion in the preface to his almanac for 1555 that his meridian is centred on London in order to discern 'the exact truthe of thinges.'²³

...here note (Reder) wher as the eleuate Pole & Meridian should be considered: in this work it is performed for London: bycause I wisshe this Meridian, Situation, or Clime the exact truthe of thinges. If any yearly practises in lyke maters, agre not with my calculations: be assured, they are false, or at the least for other Eleuations, or Meridians supputated, and therefor little seruing thy purpose... (*iii.v)

²³ Leonard Digges, *a Prognostication of Right Good effect* (London: Thomas Gemini, 1555), *iii. v.

Earlier in the century the continental almanacs that arrived in England rarely mentioned the island, or if they did they calculated its astrological forecast based upon a European meridian. Digges' claim for an English astrological separatism was mirrored by other almanac writers who also made regional claims for their calculations so that predictions were made for towns such as Salisbury and even the small village of Walsingham. Lewes Vaughn in his *A Newe Almanacke and Prognostication* for 1559 begins his prognostication with a description of his meridian:

...declaringe also what dyseases, warres, petilence, and derth of vitailles, shall happen to them that dwell in the viii. Climate under the eliation of the Poole Articke. 51.52.53. degrees, as the inhabitauntes of the most parte of Englande do dwell. Made for the meridiene of Gloucestre and north poole there mounted, LIII degrees, seruinge for all Englande.²⁴

English astrologers were local and specific in their prognostications, promoting their wares as more accurate and truthful than the works of continental astrologers. E. K.'s concept of the 'Mother tonge' (82), when stripped of its foreign vocabulary, also aspires to a similar form of truthfulness as it endeavours to reverse the linguistic trend that has resulted in men becoming 'straungers to be counted and alienes' (97). William Cunningham's almanac for 1566 contains a diatribe against inaccurate prognostications produced by 'buffardly blockheads',²⁵ who cloak astrology in 'ignomynie and shame' and in order to distance his own work from that of 'ignorant Artistes' he asserts that his almanac for this year will be printed in English for the sake of clarity: '...perseiuing the like Errours to follow in the workes of divers, of these Ignorant, and raishe Prognosticatours, this yeere 1566 I bothe haue published myne in Englishe, to serue the unlerned multitude; and also in Latin...' (Cii.r). Cunningham clearly believes that the vernacular will not only secure him a wider readership, but also ensure that his work is identified as a true scholarly endeavour based upon 'deuine Science'. The use of the

²⁴ Lewes Vaughn, *A Newe Almanacke and Prognostication* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1559), Ai. r.

²⁵ William Cunningham, *A new Almanach* (London: Richard Serl for William Johnes, 1566), Cii r.

English tongue, as well as an English meridian in almanacs is therefore associated with astrological accuracy and clarity.

The English almanac tradition afforded Spenser a useful template that would consolidate his interrogation of the value attributed to English poetry. The Epistle to the *Calender* begins with E. K. referencing Chaucer, Lydgate and Skelton (through his persona Colin Clout); the classical and Italian and French poets are mentioned much later as providing the inspiration for the authors choice of the eclogue form ‘to proue theyr tender wyngs’ (148). It is English poets who are foregrounded by the Epistle and it is Chaucer who is afforded the title of Tityrus, ‘the god of shepherds’ (5-6), comparable to the great Virgil, rather than Virgil himself. This immediately signals the poem’s concentration on the national literary sphere and also adds weight to the hypothesis that Spenser fixated on an almanac format in order to associate his work with a publishing style which was becoming more geographically and culturally specific.

While the design of the *Shepheardes Calender* clearly mimics that of an astrological calendar, the monthly Aeglogues also contain frequent references to astrological phenomena. As J. Michael Richardson points out: ‘Spenser’s mature astrologically based composition is incipient in more than just the calendar framework alone.’²⁶ This was not uncommon as poets and playwrights often spoke of stars and comets, but Spenser’s poem is unusual in that both the format and content mimic and yet transform the almanac tradition. Every Aeglogue refers to the monthly seasonal changes and the effect they have on the shepherds, with the use of pathetic fallacy ensuring that meteorological and emotional concerns become entwined. In Januarye Colin Cloute ‘compareth his carefull case to the sadde season of the yeare, to the frostie

²⁶ J. Michael Richardson, *Astrological Symbolism in Spenser’s Shepheardes Calender: The Cultural Background of a Literary Text* (Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1989), p. 4.

ground, to the frozen trees, and to his owne winterbeaten flocke' (p. 35), while common seasonal variations were too predictable to be of any great interest to the astrologer, the universal link between microcosm and macrocosm was the foundation of both natural and judicial astrology. The link between the weather and Colin's state of mind can therefore be seen not only as a poetic device, but also as a result of a shared astrological compulsion, as man and his environment both incline towards the path plotted for them by the stars. A similar link is made in Februarie, the end of the agricultural year, (the traditional calendar started the year with March), when Cvddie and Thenot stage a debate between youth and old age. With the year 'drawing to his last age' (p. 40), their dialogue 'very well accordeth with the season of the moneth' (p. 40). The tale of the Oak and the Bryer, which revolves around the destruction of the old through the naïve impetuosity of the young, is specifically tied to the linear progression of the year. The last stages of the Earth's cycle were traditionally associated with the ravages of old age as plants and crops withered and died and people looked forward to the new bounty promised by the coming spring. The specific link made between Februarie and old age secures the positioning of Thenot's tale and ensures that none of the Aeglogues can be divorced from their seasonal placing as the choice of subject matter is closely attuned to the monthly seasonal variations.

Beyond the use of pathetic fallacy and the relationship between poetic content and the monthly variations, Spenser also alludes to common astrological suppositions within the *Shepherd's Calendar*.²⁷ In Julye Thomalin refuses to scale the bank on which Morrel sits because there is no shade from the sun. The scorching heat is associated with the dangerous dog days of the summer months when men were warned

²⁷ Alastair Fowler in *Time's Purpled Masquers: Stars and the Afterlife in Renaissance England* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996), pp. 48-9, briefly examines Spenser's knowledge of astrology. Using Gabriel Harvey as a source he states that Spenser read astrological texts but was 'ashamed of his lack of expertise with astronomical tables and instruments, through he knew something (Harvey had to admit) about the astrolabe and sphere.'

against bloodletting, sex or bathing, lest they incur sickness. As Francis Cox notes in his almanac for 1566 ‘Spring tyme’²⁸ is a far better season to purge oneself of an excess of blood, to ignore such advice was seen as foolhardy and dangerous, a common belief that informs Thomalin’s diatribe against Morrel for ignoring the portent of the heavens:

...the Sonne hath reared vp
his fyriefooted teme,
Making his way between the Cuppe,
and golden Diademe:
The rampant Lyon hunts he fast,
with Dogge of noisome breath,
Whose balefull barking bringes in hast
pyne, plagues, and dreery death.
Agaynst his cruell scorching heate
where hast thou couerture? (17-26)

Thomalin’s speech refers to the constellation Crater (‘Cuppe’), the Corona Borealis (‘Diademe’), the star sign Leo (‘Lyon’) and the cruel consequences of Dog days (‘pyne, plagues, and dreary death’). Morrel’s lofty position is not only a symbol of the pride and ambition of ineffectual pastors hinted at in the Aeglogue’s ‘Argvment’, but indicative of those who fail to heed the warnings offered by the stars. Thomalin’s words could easily be attributed to a harassed almanac maker who watches people wilfully ignoring his advice. The glosse to the Julye Aeglogue includes an explanation of this passage which clearly acknowledges its astrological premise: ‘The meaning whereof is, that in Iuly the sonne is in Leo. At which tyme the Dogge starre, which is called Syrius or Canicula reigneth, with immoderate heate causing Pestilence, droughth, and many diseases’ (p. 313). Morrel is therefore at risk of getting more than just a little sunburnt sitting atop his slope. His exposure shows a lack of foresight and judgement that is indicative of those who do not heed the divine warnings proffered by the heavens. Proximity to the celestial sphere in no way guarantees protection and as

²⁸ *A Prognostication made for ye yeere of our Lorde God 1566* (London: John Alde, 1566), np.

Thomalin notes: ‘...he that striues to touch the starres, / oft stumbles at a strawe’ (99-100). Thomalin is advocating clerical humility by highlighting the folly of those who ignore the divine macrocosm.

The more practical elements of the astrological almanac, such as the lists of festivals, holidays and fairs are also alluded to in the *Shepherdess Calender*. In the Maye Aeglogue the debate between Piers and Palinode, who represent ‘two formes of pastoures or Ministers, or the protestant and the Catholique’ (p. 72), centres on raucous May Day festivities. The August Aeglogue, with Willye and Perigot’s singing competition, makes reference to love found on holy days or holidays, a common time for courtship:

Perigot. It fell vpon a holly eue,
Willye. Hey ho hollidaye,
Per. When holly fathers wont to shrieue:
Will. Now gynneth this roundelay. (53-56)

The tale of the oak and the briar related by Thenot in the Februarie Aeglogue also alludes to common beliefs often articulated in almanacs. While the husbandman in the tale fells the oak with little difficulty, (with disastrous results for the briar), it was commonly thought that on certain days trees would be impervious to the axe. In an anonymous almanac for 1550 the author asserts that: ‘all maner of trees that shalbe cut downe in the two last holy dayes in the March shall neuer fall.’²⁹ This superstition infers that plants can be intrinsically affected by the astrological calendar. Plants could also be used as instruments of prophecy with the same almanac advocating the use of ‘doke’ apples in September to predict the fortunes of the forthcoming year:

...vy the Appels of y Doke trees when they be cut and be within full of spiders,
 than followeth a naughtye yeare, yf the Appels haue within them flyes, that
 betokeneth ametely good yeare. If they haue maggattes in them, then followeth a
 good yere. If ther be nothing in them than followeth greate death. (Biii. r)

²⁹ Anon, *The husbandmans practise, or prognostication* (London, 1550), Bii. v.

Spenser hints at the prophetic role played by nature in the fable of the oak and the briar. The oak may represent the old church and the briar the new, when the new church is left alone and exposed after the felling of the old it is unable to withstand the force of the elements: 'For naked left and disconsolate, / The byting frost nipt his stalke dead' (230-231). This allegorical reading warns that by stripping away the old oak of England the briar of the new faith may be left exposed. It is the world of beast and plant which can point towards the moral dilemmas of the future and being able to read the future from signs in the natural world was an important aspect of almanac compilation. I will return to the role played by prophecy and prognostications in almanacs and its relation to the *Shepheardes Calender* at a later point in this chapter.

It is the December Aeglogue which most clearly solidifies the relationship between the *Shepheardes Calender* and the English almanac tradition. It is here that Colin Cloute 'proportioneth his life to the foure seasons of the yeare' (p. 148). His manhood corresponds to the season of summer when he was 'consumed with greate heate and excessiue drouth caused throughe a Comet or blasinge starre, by which he meaneth loue, which passion is comenly compared to such flames and immoderate heate' (p. 148). The Argvment asserts that the comet is a metaphor for Colin's desire for Rosalind, but comets were commonly thought of as an astrological phenomenon that forewarned disaster. Leonard Digges in his perpetual almanac for 1555 includes a brief description of 'The Signification of Cometes' which is repeated in every subsequent edition of his *Prognostication euerlastinge*: 'cometes signify corruption of the ayre. They are signes of Earthquakes, of Warres, chaunginge of kingdoms, great dearth of Corne, yea a common dearthe of Man and beast' (Bii. r). Colin blames a comet for stirring up 'that vnkindly heate, / That reigned (as men sayd) in *Venus* seate' (59-60). John Securis notes in his almanac for 1571 that when Venus is 'euill placed' men 'will

giue themseues to incontineney and lecherous actes, whereof shall ryse and growe manye trouble and haynous deeds.’³⁰ The wanton abandon and anarchy associated with Venus is mirrored in Colin’s description of his plight: ‘Forth was I ledde, not as I wont afore, / When choise I had to choose my wandring waye’ (61-62). Colin’s infatuation with Rosalind and the effect that it has on his ability to produce poetry underpins the *Shepheardes Calender*, by attributing his emotional turbulence to an astrological cause Spenser places the language of judicial astrology at the heart of his poem.

This reading of the *Shepheardes Calender* signals a move away from the more common focus of classical pastoral accorded to the poem, but nonetheless there is a classical link to be made with the Elizabethan almanac tradition. This link is found in Virgil’s *Georgics*; often overlooked in reference to Spenser in favour of the more prominent *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* undoubtedly influenced Spenser and potentially led him towards a more contemporary and popular understanding of pastoral which corresponds with the agricultural impetus of the astrological almanac. In Leonard Digges’ *A Prognostication of Right Good effect* for 1555, under the heading of *Now ensuyth extraordinarie tokens for the knowledge of weather*, Digges recommends that his readers look to the *Georgics*:

The swalowe flyeng and beating the water: the chirpinge of the sparowe in the morning, signifie rayne. Rayne sodaynly dried vp: woody coueringes strayer than custome: bells hearde further then comonli: the wallowynge of dogges: the alteration of the cock crowing: all declare rainy weather. I leaue these, wanting the good ground of the rest. If the lernid be desirfull of the too forsayd, let them reade graue Virgil *primo Georgicorum*. (Biii. v)

Virgil’s *Georgics*, while didactic in tone, culminates in the rebirth of Aristaeus’ bees via the enchanted corpse of a bull, progressing seamlessly from the routines of the agricultural year to the miracle of asexual self-generation. The poem is full of

³⁰ John Securis, *A newe almanacke and prognostication for the yeare of our Lord God. M. D. LXXI* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1571), Av. v.

extraordinary happenings; the pastoral landscape becomes crowded with myth and contemporary allusion and the didactic lessons of good husbandry become dwarfed by poetic sensibility. It is Book I of the *Georgics* which can be explicitly linked to the almanac tradition, as it is here that Virgil espouses the merits of judicial astrology: ‘by what star / to steer the plough’.³¹ Addressing the stars as ‘sirs of sky, / grand marshals of the firmament’ (6-7) he links the agricultural calendar to the machinations of the planets and their respective deities, but the seasons are not only propelled onwards by the stars, the labourer and shepherd can predict the weather and the fecundity of the forthcoming year through astrological signs:

...we have the power to anticipate uncertain weather -
 the day to reap, the day to sow -
 and when the time is right to plunge our oars into
 untrustworthy seas, when to launch an armed armada,
 when’s best, even, to fell a pine tree in the forest.
 It’s not for nothing we keep an eye on sky for signs
 that come and go, or on the year’s four equal parts.
 (252-258)

Generation, harvest, weather and war can be anticipated and timed according to the ‘signs’ (257) proffered by the sky. Virgil’s emphasis on there being an opportune moment to undertake labour and war is mirrored in the doggerel verse that heads the monthly phases of the moon in George Gossenne’s almanac for 1571:

January
 your timber fell, gardens dig vp,
 doong your ground and fallow your land,
 for wheate and Rie, riffe lay for Otes,
 in God’s name let these thinges in hande. (n.p)

Much of Gossenne’s advice appears to be common sense, but its conjunction with the table of moon phases and a later description of the ‘good’ and ‘evil’ stars and their properties, indicates that good timing is predicated on an intimate knowledge of

³¹ Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. by Peter Fallon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 5, ll. 1-2. All further quotations are from this edition.

the heavens. The almanac's preoccupation with the routine of the agricultural calendar and its assertion that good husbandry is explicitly linked to an awareness of the astrological signs, means that the language of the common almanac is uncannily similar to the poetic tone and content of Book I of the *Georgics*. It is possible that Spenser, who undoubtedly read Virgil closely, made this link and sought to carve out a popular and again specifically English conception of the pastoral in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, while retaining a link to the classical model. Patrick Cullen, Nancy Lindheim and Nancy Jo Hoffman have explored the pastoral setting of the *Shepherd's Calendar* and its classical antecedents, but the potential for a more popular pastoral landscape in the poem has been largely overlooked.³² Spenser's debt to the classical poets is undisputed, but the focus on classical interpretation has overshadowed the possibility of a broader range of literary influences.

As Alison Chapman points out, all too often the calendrical format of the *Shepherd's Calendar* has been seamlessly incorporated into the pastoral landscape: '...by subsuming the calendar within the conventions of pastoral, critics...disregard the fact that the calendrical format constitutes Spenser's *break* with the conventions of pastoral, since no precedent exists in pastoral poetry for his text's monthly arrangement.'³³ The calendar form was far from being uncontroversial during this period as Protestant and Catholic countries divided over the Gregorian calendar and reformers sought to purge the calendar of its saints' days and other popish feast days.³⁴

³² Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 29-33. Nancy Jo Hoffman, *Spenser's Pastoral: The Shepherd's Calendar and Colin Clout*, (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1977). Nancy Lindheim, 'The Virgilian Design of *The Shepherd's Calendar*', in *Spenser Studies*, 13 (1999), pp. 1-23.

³³ Alison Chapman, 'The Politics of Time in Edmund Spenser's English Calendar', *Studies in English Literature*, 42 (2002), pp. 1-42, (p. 2).

³⁴ The Gregorian reforms would be proposed in 1582 but debates surrounding calendar time had begun far earlier as theologians wrestled with the problem of Easter, which had become a veritable moveable feast by the late sixteenth century, see Robert Poole *Time's Alteration: Calendar Reform in Early Modern England* (London: UCL Press Ltd, 1998), pp. 32-37. David Cressy in *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: George Wiedenfield

Subsequently, Spenser's choice of design for this, his first independent publication, self-consciously marks itself apart from the classical eclogue and the pastoral mode and aligns itself to contemporary debates surrounding calendrical reforms, debates which were frequently played out in almanacs, the most common source for a yearly calendar.³⁵ This was not a publishing form without political or social connotations: on the contrary it was rich in association and frequently allied to fractious debates surrounding the marking of time and the ability to prophesy future events.³⁶ The calendar was also indicative of the discontinuity between different states, for instance the French Catholic duke of Alençon would adopt the Gregorian calendar on behalf of his Protestant Dutch subjects in the Netherlands, while the Privy Council in England would champion the Gregorian reforms only to be waylaid by bishops angry at its Catholic flavour.³⁷ The English calendar had already differentiated itself from European models before the Gregorian controversy with its inclusion of national holidays to celebrate the accession of the monarch and the battles fought and won by the Protestant

and Nicolson Ltd, 1989), p. 9, argues that: 'for puritans the calendar was more than a notation for the passage of the year; it was a highly charged symbol of the unresolved business of the Reformation'. Robert Poole in *Time's Alteration*, pp. 37-56, examines the Gregorian reforms in relation to Protestant conceptions of time. Poole argues that the rise of the Gregorian calendar cannot be equated with the rise of Copernican astronomy, but that the Council of Trent's decision to fix a single agreed date for Easter had at its heart 'a long term vision of a reunited Christendom' (p. 38). Arthur E. Kennely examines the history of calendar reform including the shift to the Gregorian calendar in 'Proposed Reforms of the Gregorian Calendar', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 75 (1935), pp. 71-110, (p. 81). Mary Parmenter includes an examination of the Gregorian reforms in 'Spenser's *Twelve Aeglogues* Proportionable to the Twelve Monethes', *English Literary History*, 3 (1936), pp. 190-217, (pp. 194-196). See also Johnson, *The Shepheardes Calender: An Introduction*, chapter 5.

³⁵ The diet of Regensburg in 1699 would decree that an explanation for the universal adherence to the Gregorian calendar throughout the German empire be inserted into almanacs, Poole, *Time's Alteration*, p. 41.

³⁶ Almanacs and calendars were often considered to be synonymous with one another, ensuring that both carried with them the 'the idea of prophecy or prognostication', Parmenter, 'Spenser's *Twelve Aeglogues*..', p. 195. Gerard Dohrn-van Rossum in *History of the Hour: Clocks and Modern Temporal Orders*, trans. by Thomas Dunlap (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 4, points out that: 'to a certain extent, expectations of imminent religious events, prophecy and utopias imparted a temporal pattern to the future' - the future time mapped out by the calendar helped to temporize that which had not yet come to pass. Francois Laroque in *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), also associates festivals with an ability to visualise future events, 'festivals are a means both of marking repetitions and also of anticipating time' (p. 75). Laroque also includes a survey of the Elizabethan calendar and studies the relationship between the ritual year and theatrical performance, (pp. 74-154).

³⁷ Poole, *Time's Alteration*, pp. 46-56.

church, as David Cressy has noted: ‘no other nation employed the calendar as the English did to express and represent their identity.’³⁸ In England, time was discernibly English in character, the choice of retained holy days alongside Elizabeth’s accession day ensured that the calendar form itself, alongside one of its most popular advertisers, the almanac, had a distinctly national bent. Almanacs and books of husbandry began the year in January rather than the more traditional March, this is mimicked by Spenser who begins his poem in Januarye, E. K. provides the justification for this choice in ‘*The generall argument of the whole book*’ which is worth quoting at length:

...it is wel known, and stoutely mainteyned with stronge reasons of the learned, that the yeare beginneth in March. for then the sonne reneweth his finished course, and the seasonable spring refresheth the earth, and the plesaunce thereof being buried in the sadnesse of the dead winter now worne away, reliueth. This opinion mayntaine the olde Astrologers and Philosophers...But sauing the leaue of such learned heads, we mayntaine a custome of coumpting the seasons from the month Ianuary, vpon a more speciall cause, then the heathen Philosophers euer coulde concieue, that is, for the incarnation of our mighty Sauior and eternall redeemer the L. Christ, who as then renewing the state of the decayed world, and returning the compasse of expired yeres to theyr former date and first commencement, left to vs his heires a memoriall of his birth in the ende of the last yeere and beginning of the next...our Author...thinketh it fittest according to the simplicitie of commen vnderstanding, to begin with Ianuarie, wening it perhaps no decorum, that Shepheard should be seene in matter of so deepe insight, or canuase a case of so doubtful iudgement. (42-103)

E. K. directly associates the year beginning in Januarye with Christ’s ‘incarnation’, claiming a religious precedent for the calendar form used by almanac writers and the compilers of books of husbandry, which distances the calendar from its association with pagan festivals and Roman generals. The calendar form seems to be being wrestled from the ‘olde Astrologers and Philosophers’ and re-formulated for a godly age.³⁹ Perhaps it is even being taken from the almanac writer - who could be

³⁸ David Cressy, ‘The Protestant Calendar and the Vocabulary of Celebration in Early Modern England’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 29 (1990), pp. 31-52, (p. 31).

³⁹ See Robert Allen Durr, ‘Spenser’s Calendar of Christian Time’, *English Literary History*, 24 (1957), pp. 269-295, (p. 290), for Durr’s argument that Spenser’s decision to start the *Shepheardes Calender* in Januarye indicates that it ‘signifies *Christian*, not natural or heathen time’. Debates surrounding the

closely associated with, if not synonymous to the 'Astrologer' - and offered up to Spenser's readers as an instrument of the reformed faith? The calendar changes hands in Spenser's pastoral poem, from almanac writer to poet, indicating a shift in power from the didactic to the artistic. During the 1580's Europe would become a fractured time-scape with different nations adopting different calendars; time itself had become a religious commodity which could be bent to serve the varying aims of the opposing churches. One of the more common laments was that with the reform of the calendar came a separation of natural, agricultural time and the human calendar, 'birds no longer knew when to sing or when to fly.'⁴⁰ The result was that time became identified with shifting religious alliances, a construct which was far removed from nature, it had become 'art' and as such was well within the realms of the poet.⁴¹ It may be that Spenser was attuned to the debates surrounding calendar time before they came to a head in the 1580's and in a sense predicted the further development of a flexible system of codified time by transforming the calendar form in his first publication. Reformers had been petitioning for a purge of 'red letter' days with popish significance since the early days of the Reformation and set in motion a chain of events which would succeed in lifting the human calendar away from the 'natural' rhythms of the agricultural year.⁴² Spenser's adoption of a pastoral setting for his alternative calendar in verse, may not

Copernican heresy also meant that astrologers often mixed Christian piety with seemingly contrary scientific theory concerning the nature of the heavens, one notable example of this is to be found in Thomas Digge's *Prognostication Euerlastinge* (1576), see Paul H. Kocher, 'Use of the Bible in English Astrological Treatises during the Renaissance', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 9 (1946), pp. 109-120, (pp. 111-113).

⁴⁰ Poole, *Time's Alteration*, p. 40.

⁴¹ David Wiles in *Shakespeare's Almanac: A Midsummer Night's Dream, Marriage and the Elizabethan Calendar* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), explores the importance of differing time schemes familiar to an early modern audience in relation to readings of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Wiles argues that an accommodation of Tudor concepts of time allows the play to be read as specific to a particular time and place and gives greater weight to the theory that it was a wedding play (pp.xiv-xvii).

⁴² David S. Landes argues that it was the divide between country and city forms of time, one being based on the rhythms of the sun and the seasons, the other without a reliance on these traditional markers but a focus on the division of time into quantifiable units, which led to a need for mechanical timekeepers and the rise of the clock, as Landes notes: 'it is one thing to receive or perceive the time; another thing to track and use it', *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 72.

simply be indicative of a writer advertising his poetic intent in the style of Virgil, it also alludes to the destabilising shift occurring in systems of time as Protestant and Catholic began to ascribe to differing timelines and festivals and ‘natural’, or indeed ‘pastoral’ time was forced to bend to the whims of man.⁴³

Calendars were found in a range of different publications, many of them religious. The *Book of Common Prayer* incorporated ‘a table and kalender for psalmes and Lessons, with necessary rules pertainyng to the same...’⁴⁴ in an effort to standardise forms of worship. Setting out which psalms and lessons should be read at Matins and Evensong for every month of the year in much the same fashion as the calendars in almanacs indicated the phases of the moon or the signs of the zodiac. Incidentally here also the year begins in January and the liturgical calendar was printed in the traditional red and black gothic type which was standard for almanac calendars. Whether the *Book of Common Prayer* mimicked this standard calendrical format or indeed helped to establish the design as orthodox, it is hard to tell. John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* would self-consciously mimic Catholic martyrologies and incorporate an alternative calendar of saints’ days which replaced the traditional Catholic saints with Protestant martyrs.⁴⁵ Foxe’s tome would be found in many large churches and cathedrals alongside the authorized version of the bible, ensuring that it also offered up another form of standardized worship. The production of Protestant calendars which mimicked and transformed their Catholic forebears ensured that the measurement of time within the liturgical year was highly sensitive to the ongoing debates surrounding

⁴³ For an examination of the relationship between the ways in which people tell the time - ‘modes of temporal notation’ (p. 1) and prose structures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁴⁴ *The booke of the common praier...* (London: Richard Grafton, 1549), A.i.r.

⁴⁵ For a further discussion of the transformation of the Catholic martyrological tradition by Foxe see chapter 4 of this thesis. John N. King in *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), explores the development of Foxe’s tome as a text which re-worked a traditional formula for the memorial of Protestant martyrs.

the Reformation and differing methods for marking time would interpenetrate and coexist with one another during this period.⁴⁶ This sensitivity potentially results in a nuanced approach to Spenser's adoption of the calendrical form on the part of the reader. It is subsequently a bold statement by Spenser when he chooses to finish the *Calender* with the following emblem:

Loe I haue made a Calender for euey yeare,
That steele in strength, and time in durance shall outweare:
And if I marked well the starres reuolution,
It shall continewe till the worlds dissolution.
To teach the ruder shepheard how to feede his sheepe,
And from the falsers fraud his folded flocke to keepe.
Goe lyttle Calender, thou hast a free passeporte,
Goe but a lowly gate emongste the meaner sorte.
Dare not to match thy pype with Tityrus hys style,
Nor with the Pilgrim that the Ploughman played a whyle:
But followe them farre off, and their high steppes adore,
The better please, the worse despise, I aske nomore. (1-12)

Spenser claims that his calendar will be perpetual, 'for euey yeare' (1) and will 'continewe till the worlds dissolution' (4). Given the far from fixed status of calendars during the Reformation, (while the form remained static, the content, as we have seen, shifted with the demands of the day), this is quite a boast; although, several almanac writers produced perpetual almanacs, many of which remained in print long after their deaths, the most famous being Leonard Digges' *Prognostication euerlastynge*. The calendar form was closely associated with religious debate and reform as well as with popular publications such as the almanac. By choosing to base his poem on the traditional almanac Spenser is therefore engaging with contemporary debates surrounding the measurement of time and the establishment of a standard calendar, all

⁴⁶ Gerard T. Moran explores the coexistence of 'secular' and 'traditional' (religious) time in the account books of Montpellier cathedral's city chapter in 'Conceptions of Time in Early Modern France: An Approach to the History of Collective Mentalities', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 12 (1981), pp. 3-19. Jacques le Goff in *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 29-42, examines the differences between mercantile time and ecclesiastical time, interestingly Goff notes that merchants were criticized because their 'profit implied a mortgage on time, which was supposed to belong to God alone', (p. 29).

of which would have resonated with his audience. This not only indicates how far Spenser's work deviates from the classical eclogue and pastoral motifs, but reinforces the poem's association with national and contemporaneous concerns, situating the *Shepherd's Calendar* very much within Spenser's here and now. Spenser's references to his fellow scholar Gabriel Harvey and the recently ousted Archbishop Grindal would appear to bear this hypothesis out, indicating that recent history plays an important role in the poem's structure and content. There is room however to argue that this focus on the present and recent past may by extension demand a question about what will happen in the future. Bart van Es has made a very convincing association between historical analogy and prophecy in Spenser's work, which has included analysing the 'striking physical resemblance'⁴⁷ between the *Calendar* and popular almanacs. Van Es argues that by drawing upon prophecies and prognostications Spenser ensures that the *Calendar*:

...plays quite brilliantly on the tensions surrounding prophecy in the year of its publication – its allusive presentation calls up a wide range of prophetic texts and draws upon their qualities...As well as their secretive and political nature, however, the *Calendar* also illustrates the dangerous unpredictability of prophecies – texts that can recoil on the prophet, just as they impact on society.⁴⁸

Van Es is alluding to the Privy Council's crackdown on political prophecy in 1571, when it became dangerous to prophecy the fate of the monarch or the state, resulting in ambiguous or banal projections on the part of almanac writers, a state of affairs which would not change until the civil war years.⁴⁹ Political prophecy in particular was a dangerous game to play. The Nun of Kent lost her life for prophesying against Henry VIII and trying to incite political change, while false prophets would seek

⁴⁷ Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 180. See also Jonathan K. van Patten, 'Magic, Prophecy, and the Law of Treason in Reformation England', *The American Journal of Legal History*, 27 (1983), pp. 1-32, for van Patten's analysis of prophecy as a treasonable offence during the Reformation.

⁴⁸ Van Es, *Forms of History*, p. 186.

⁴⁹ Capp, *Astrology*, p. 29.

to damage the national church during Elizabeth's reign.⁵⁰ John Dee in his *General and rare memorials pertayning to the arte of nauigation* would also charge those who 'hide corn, or other vittayle, from Publick Ayde, and Reliefe' with 'misconstruing, or light Credit geuing to Coniecture, found in some new Three halfpenny Prognostication'.⁵¹ It is perhaps the prognostication, the most contentious aspect of the almanac, which points towards Spenser's motivation for using a popular publication as a template for his poem. Astrologers risked their reputations and suffered the vagaries of fate and fortune when they produced a prognostication for the forthcoming year, a fact that Spenser would have been all too aware of as both of Gabriel Harvey's brothers were ridiculed for their inaccurate prognostications.⁵² Astrological prophecy was a potential heresy diluted by the oft repeated statement that the 'stars incline rather than compel', nonetheless great dearth and a plague of unruly servants were repeatedly prophesied, along with such sage wisdom as 'secret counsailes shalbe discouered by courtiers', 'children shal conspire, and make insurrection against their parentes', 'treasures shalbe exhausted and spent'.⁵³ These vague and often comic assertions do however point towards a potentially prophetic tone to Spenser's poem. Perhaps the *Shepheardes Calender* is a prognostication of sorts – a statement of present and future intent.

⁵⁰ Alexandra Walsham in 'Frantick Hacket': Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement', *The Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), pp. 27-66, examines the career of the puritan false prophet William Hacket who was executed in 1591 for treason. Walsham argues that Hacket's case illustrates the 'eclecticism of early modern belief' (p. 27). Madeleine Hope Dodds in 'Political Prophecies in the Reign of Henry VIII', *The Modern Language Review*, 11 (1916), pp. 276-284, examines the different kinds of prophecies which were used for political purposes including Galfridian (people represented by animals or mythical beasts), Sibyllic (more common on the continent, individuals identified through word-play or letters and numbers), and astrological. Dodd also stresses the enduring nature of some prophetic tales which would be recycled over and over again.

⁵¹ John Dee, *General and rare memorials pertayning to the arte of nauigation* (London: Iohn Daye, 1577), p. 32.

⁵² Van Es, *Forms of History*, p. 189-191.

⁵³ Phillip Moore, *A fourtie yeres almanacke, with a prognosticaion... Gathered and sette for the by Philip Moore* (London: Iohn Kingston, for Henry Saunderson, 1567), Cvii. r. See Warren D. Smith, 'The Rejection of Judicial Astrology and Shakespeare's Practice', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 9 (1958), pp. 159-176, for Smith's analysis of the hostility of the Church and the state to judicial astrology and its classification as both a heresy and a felony. Smith also argues that Shakespeare's work mirrors this, evincing both 'hostility' and 'indifference' to prognostications based upon the stars. (p. 160).

Almanacs often predicted the downfall of great and noble men, particularly those who hoarded grain in times of famine, and were not afraid to indicate that there may be change afoot. Leonard Digges predicted in 1555 that if the new year began on a Monday then the world would be robbed of those who traditionally lead the social order: ‘on *Mondaye*, a winter somewhat vncomfortable: Sommer temperate: no pleny workestye of fructe: many fansies and fables opened: a gues shall reynge: Kynges and many others shal dye: mariages shalbe in most places: and a common fall of gentlemen’.⁵⁴ By associating the *Calender* with prophetic language of this ilk Spenser may be predicting the death of a different kind of traditional hierarchy, that of E. K.’s ‘gallimaufrey’ and ‘hodgepodge’ of language, and paradoxically proposing another intermingling of a more subversive kind, the blending of the popular vernacular and the classical. Given the promotional tone set by E.K. in the Epistle it is not too much of a leap to infer that Spenser is looking forwards to a time in which the English vernacular dominates the literary field and he is able to acquire the laurels of England’s ‘new Poete’ (p. 25). This is particularly important when considering that this is Spenser’s first independent publication and while it is not directly attributed to him as his name is not included in the work, it is nevertheless a clear statement of future intent. In the dedicatory epistle E.K. endeavours to separate Spenser’s work from that of his inferiors and also indicates that it is a work designed for the learned intellects of the dedicatees Gabriel Harvey and Phillip Sidney:

I scorne and spue out the rakehellye route of our ragged rymers...which without learning boste, without iudgement iangle, without reason rage and fome, as if some instinct of Poeticall spirite had newly rauished them aboue the meanenesse of commen capacitie...As for Colin, vnder whose person the Author selfe is shadowed, how furre he is from such vaunted titles and glorious showes... (119-135)

⁵⁴ Leonard Digges, *a Prognostication of Right Good effect* (London: Thomas Gemini, 1555), Ciiii. v.

E.K. makes the claim that the author of the *Calender* is a poet outside of the field of the ‘ragged rhymers’ and whose work is distinct and laudable. Such a self-conscious positioning of the writer as aloof from the common herd is not dissimilar from the carefully produced elements of self-promotion and advertising adopted by almanac writers. Lewes Vaughn in his almanac for 1559 makes a concerted effort to define his readership as among the ‘ingenious’.⁵⁵

I have not disposed these, for wylle wether watchers, for inuerters, scoffers and scorners: But for the ingenious whiche desire knowledge, hauynge a dexteritie in naturall thynges, thirstinge after infallible pleasaunt conclusions, louynge wysedome, hating the contrary. To these I say, bye, take, read, perceiue, and then practise: so ye shalbe herein moche delited, and more profited. (ii. v)

Spenser’s *Calender* serves as an advertisement of his prowess as an English poet and an indication of great things to come. In the same way almanac writers had to ensure that their work was not lumped together with that of Cunningham’s ‘Buffardly blockheads’⁵⁶ and that it would be deemed suitable reading material for the gentleman scholar as well as the common husbandman. Part of this grandstanding can be directly attributable to a desire to reassure the reader that their predictions for the forthcoming year were accurate and trustworthy, a similar process is perhaps being put into place by E. K. when they focus on distinguishing Spenser from his unworthy peers. When E. K. outlines his hope that Spenser will follow the *Calender* with more published material a self serving prophecy is enacted – a prophecy made all the more potent if we assume that Spenser had some hand in the production of the Epistle. Spenser may in fact be directing himself to publish and in doing so providing the impetus for an atmosphere of further expectation before the reader has even read this, his first published text:

⁵⁵ Lewes Vaughn, *A Newe Almanacke and Prognostication* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1559), ii. v.

⁵⁶ Cunningham, *Almanach*, Cii.r.

...albeit I know he nothing so much hateth, as to promulgate, yet thus much haue I aduentured vpon his friendship, him selfe being for long time furre estraunged, hoping that this will the rather occasion him, to put forth diuers other excellent works of his, which slepe in silence, as his Dreames, his Legendes, his Court of Cupide, and sondry others.... (179-185)

As a marketing tool this is highly sophisticated; Spenser's future poetic output is praised by an apparent third party who claims to be trying to persuade a reluctant genius to share his work with the world, while this is far from being a new device, (writers frequently claimed extreme modesty and a desire to remain out of the public sphere, doubtless in an effort to peak interest), it succeeds in heaping praise on a writer in the 'margins' to his work while ensuring that they are suitably distanced from the epistle and gloss which engineer the poetic prophecy. The association between gloss and prophecy in prophetic texts has been closely examined by van Es who argues that the distinction between the interpreter who provides the gloss and the writer, performs an important function which ultimately helps to dictate the perceived efficacy of the prophecy:

The interpreter and prophet are (or must appear to be) separate persons: commentary and prophecy may well be written in the same hand, but ultimately the prophecy must be rooted in a more ancient and distant source. It was this fundamental distinction that allowed the same prophecies to survive for generation after generation – the repeated failure of such prognostication was the failure of the gloss, not the prophecy.⁵⁷

It may be that Spenser was aware of the need for his poem to have just such a separate interpreter in order for him to set out his position as a worthy future poet laureate without it sounding like mere arrogant hyperbole. This accords with Spenser's decision to begin his published career with a pastoral before tackling epic, in this way he advertises his future work merely by abiding by the form of poetic progression set out by the ancients. The *Shepherd's Calendar* thus becomes a form of prognostication

⁵⁷ Van Es, *Forms of History*, p. 182.

in its own right. The verse content of the *Shepheardes Calender* is itself no stranger to the devices of prognostication, in the fable of the oak and the briar included in the Februarie eclogue there is a clear prophetic tone – as was discussed previously in relation to the common use of plants as indicators of future events in almanacs. Here the prognostication seems to be one which comes very close to the rub of contentious debates about the reform of the English church. The briar addresses itself to the husbandman as if he were the monarch of the natural world:

Ah my souereigne, Lord of creatures all,
 Thou placer of plants both humble and tall,
 Was not I planted of thine own hand,
 To be the primrose of all thy land,
 With flowering blossomes, to furnish the prime,
 And scarlot berries in Sommer time? (163-168)

The parallels to the Tudor royal supremacy are immediately apparent and indicate that Spenser's fable may be seeking to deal directly with the issues arising from religious reform. While the fable could be read as merely commenting on the current state of the Elizabethan settlement it is also clear that there is an element of prophecy, particularly as the fable is related by Thenot to the ungrateful Cvddie who fails to heed its warning:

Here is a long tale, and little worth.
 So longe haue I listened to thy speche,
 That grafted to the ground is my breche
 (240-242)

It is clear that no lessons have been learnt by Cvddie from the tale and that youth continues to scorn old age, insinuating that if the briar of the new religion has not already been felled by its exposure to the elements, it will be shortly. Although cloaked in allegory the fable could easily be read as a political prophecy and as such strays into a dangerous realm.

There is perhaps an interesting etymological link to be found within the *Calender* which results in a correlation between prognostication and Protestant prophesying – the training of clergy through the group discussion of scripture. Prophesying did not involve predicting the future and meant merely to promote the illumination of God’s word and enable the church to provide educated clergy for the parishes, but Elizabeth was uneasy about her ministers being able to interpret the scriptures independently, particularly en masse, as this could give rise to dissent. Archbishop Grindal would lose his job and be placed under house arrest for refusing to put an end to the prophesying at Elizabeth’s request. In the Julye eclogue Thomalin recounts to Morrel the tale of ‘old Algrind’ (126), a far from subtle anagram for Grindal.⁵⁸

He is a shepheard great in gree,
 but hath bene long ypent.
 One daye he sat vpon a hyll,
 (as now thou wouldest me:
 But I am taught by *Algrins* ill,
 to loue the lowe degree.)
 For sitting so with bared scalpe,
 An Eagle sored hys,
 That weening hys whyte head was chalke,
 a shell fish downe let flye:
 She weend the shell fishe to haue broake,
 but therewith bruzd his brayne,
 So now astonied with the stroke,
 he lys in lingring payne.
 (215-228)

This is the same fate suffered by the Greek poet Aeschylus who was told by an oracle that something thrown from the sky would kill him. He climbed up a mountain in the hope that he could avoid such an outcome only for an eagle to mistake his bald head for a rock and drop a shell fish on him. By making Algrind/Grindal suffer the same fate Spenser associates inaccurate or half-baked prognosticating with the act of Protestant

⁵⁸ Richardson, *Astrological Symbolism*, p. 454.

prophesying.⁵⁹ Grindal had aimed too high with his support for communal Bible interpretation, he had sat too close to the sun and he had been burned for his pains.⁶⁰ His example has now taught Thomalin ‘to loue the lowe degree’ (220) and to avoid climbing mountains. If prophesying can be linked to prognosticating it is perhaps through the mediation of hill and dale – the Protestant prophesyers and Grindal chose to climb a hill, providing the precedent for Morrel’s lofty vista; in doing so they angered the Queen and slowed the reformatory process. It would have been of more value to have stayed in the dale and avoided ‘fleshly follyes’ (155). Astrologer’s who endeavoured to tell the future were not only frustrated by those who failed to heed their warnings, just as Morrel does not listen to Thomalin, but they too are at risk of climbing too high because they have wrongly interpreted the stars - only to be brained by a shellfish. It is perhaps by associating the telling of Grindal’s fall from grace with the almanac writer’s recourse to prognosticating which illuminates Spenser’s position. The prognosticator and the prophesying clergy risk inciting religious and political change through rhetoric, their lofty position, analogous to the pulpit, means that their flock (congregation/readers) can differentiate them from the crowd, but it also leaves them dangerously exposed. All those who seek to sit in the sun with a bare head risk being burned by the source of all political illumination, the Queen herself, or mistaken for a rock by a short sighted bird. Both Grindal and the humble almanac writer are endeavoring to lead a flock, both wish to play the shepherd and drive their sheep towards a particular pasture. Grindal believed that prophesyings were a necessary training ground for the clergy, ensuring that their preaching was of the highest quality in

⁵⁹ Van Es, *Forms of History*, p. 182-4. See also Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal, 1519-1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979).

⁶⁰ For a further discussion of Algrind/Grindal’s punishment for refusing to suppress prophesying in relation to *The Shepheardes Calender* see Gregory Kneidel, “Mightie Simplesse”: Protestant Pastoral Rhetoric and Spenser’s “*Shepheardes Calender*”, *Studies in Philology*, 96 (1999), pp. 275-312, (pp. 302-304). Kneidel argues that Spenser’s ambiguous representation of the pastor feeds into contemporary debates about the extent to which preachers should determine the ecclesiastical policies of the English church.

order to solidify the efforts of reformers - the prophesyings were a training school for shepherds. Almanac writers also thought that their interpretations of the starry firmament were for the greater good, theirs was always an altruistic pursuit prompted by pity for their fellow man – like the shepherds in the *Kalender of Shepherdes* they have the ability to read the stars in order to help to lead the bewildered flock of early modern readers. With the pastures of England so crowded it is perhaps not surprising that Elizabeth saw fit to assert her position as the ultimate shepherdess.

The almanac tradition also further illuminates the role of religious debate in the *Shepherd's Kalender* as prognosticating had an unusual bedfellow in the form of Protestant ideas of providence. The relationship between prophecy and providence was one that greatly concerned Protestant reformers who saw the hand of divine providence behind the process of Reformation. Alexandra Walsham has pointed out that ‘...providentialism played a pivotal role in forging a collective Protestant consciousness’⁶¹ and that importantly:

print...presented providentialist ideas in a way which at once intensified and subtly transfigured them: it gave them fixity and a familiarity which both contributed to their potency and prevalence and began to sow tiny seeds of suspicion and scepticism in at least some hearers and readers.⁶²

A similar process can be seen happening when people encountered astrological prognostications in almanacs, by fixing ideas about divine providence and more mundane predictions concerning weather and politics, writers were at risk of a sceptical backlash - as previously noted if prophecies failed to come to pass then people had easy recourse to printed evidence if they claimed that a fraud had been perpetuated. Whether or not Spenser would have been sensitive to these dangers when he penned his own version of poetic prophecy (all hail England’s ‘New Poet’) it is hard to tell, although it

⁶¹ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 5.

⁶² Walsham, *Providence*, p. 6.

is perhaps important that he failed to append his name to the *Shepheardes Calender*, thus escaping (initially at least) any charges that he had failed to live up to his own publicity.

In order to quell charges of innovation and novelty, revisionist history and prophecy were frequently employed by reformers. The interpretation of the Book of Revelation as a prophecy in which the whore of Babylon represented the Catholic Church was central to the Protestant focus on providence. John Bale would codify the reformist interpretation of Revelations in the *Image of bothe Churches* and the English church would claim to be correcting years of corruption by Rome in order to reveal the true faith unencumbered by Popish superstition; this would be achieved by looking back to the early church and also reinterpreting early prophetic texts.⁶³ Spenser's use of a variety of prophetic tropes which reference the traditional prognostication contained in almanacs, may be tapping into wider concerns about the reformist focus on re-fashioning history and projecting into the future. The almanac form would also be a veritable storehouse of numerological endeavour during the reign of Elizabeth as writers set out to calculate the 'golden number' and the relative sizes of the earth, the sun and the planets, as well as producing tide tables and distances between various urban and rural centres. Indeed at the heart of almanac writing during this period is the desire to quantify and measure scale and patterns within phenomena, whether they were meteorological, bodily or celestial. Almanacs would routinely employ Arabic numerals as well as Roman numerals and almanac writers such as Leonard and Thomas Digges were considered to rank among the mathematicians of their day. Leonard Digges would

⁶³ Richard Bauckham traces the theory of two churches - Babylon and the new Jerusalem - back to Augustine and notes that the association of Rome with Babylon and therefore with the whore from Revelations and the impending apocalypse, only became apparent during the reign of Elizabeth I. Bauckham argues that John Bale in *The Image of bothe Churches* 'popularised' 'the apocalyptic rationale on which so many of the exiles and martyrs of early English Protestantism grounded the need for separation from the church of Rome', *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation: from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Abingdon, Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), p. 60.

publish a popular mathematical treatise titled *A boke named Tectonicon* which claimed to show ‘the exacte measuryng, and steady reckenynge all maner lande, squared tymber, stone, steaples, pyllers, globes...Further, declarynge the perfecte makynge and large vse of the carpenters ruler, conteynyng a quadrant geometricall...’⁶⁴ This would go through several reprints and clearly capitalised on and further augmented, his popularity as an almanac writer. Digges’ perpetual almanac would also include images of scientific instruments such as a quadrant and a compass (Aiii. v and Aiiii. v). Given Spenser’s clear fascination with numerology as evidenced by the embedding of number schemes and codes in his later poetic output, it seems possible that he may have been an interested reader of almanacs and other astrological material for their use of mathematics. Kent Hieatt’s work on Spenser’s *Epithalamion* in particular identifies a number system intimately tied to the rhythms of the seasons and the ritual year, epitomised by Spenser’s inclusion in his poem of the Hours, the Horae of classical antiquity and deities of the seasons.⁶⁵ Those who were not involved in trade or keeping household accounts would most commonly encounter numbers in calenders, and numerology was intimately associated with systems of marking time as well as measuring and weighing. If Hieatt’s reading of the *Epithalamion* is correct then Spenser also made this link and exploited it in order to add a further layer of meaning to his marriage poem. As ideas surrounding time keeping, prophecy and seasonal change were

⁶⁴ Leonard Digges, *A boke named Tectonicon* (London: Iohn Daye, for Thomas Gemini, 1556), title page.

⁶⁵ See A. Kent Hieatt, *Short Time’s Endless Monument: The Symbolism of the Numbers in Edmund Spenser’s Epithalamion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), for an in depth analysis of Spenser’s use of numbers in his marriage poem. Hieatt identifies a system of number codes which includes the correspondence of the twenty four stanzas and 365 long lines of the poem to the measurement of the day in hours and the year in days. Hieatt derives his measurement for the number of hours in the day and night in Ireland on Spenser’s wedding day (the summer solstice) from the *Kalender of Sheperds*, ‘with which Spenser was surely familiar’ (p. 11). See also Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1964), for Fowler’s examination of the ‘astonishingly complex web of interlocking numerical patterns of many different kinds’ in the *Faerie Queene* (p. 4). John MacQueen in *Numerology: Theory and Outline History of a Literary Mode* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), pp. 110-113, examines Hieatt and Fowler’s work but stresses the ‘circular form’ of the *Epithalamion* and Spenser’s debt to Platonism. MacQueen also argues that the *Four Hymnes* include ‘tantalising hints of numerological structure’ (p. 108).

all bound together by numerology in the almanac form, it is not too much of a leap to suggest that Spenser was fascinated by this popular purveyor of number law.

Arithmetic was a skill usually associated with the mechanical and merchant classes and not of great value for a man of high birth whose education would focus on the literary skills developed by the study of rhetoric, although many people would realise that being at the mercy of someone low born when it came to their accounts was far from desirable and as the seventeenth century began more and more gentlemen would take to their multiplication tables.⁶⁶ Despite the derogatory associations laden upon number learning Spenser clearly had an interest in number patterns within poetry and would probably have had a passing knowledge of arithmetic as part of his job as a secretary.⁶⁷ The need for a poet to be able to count lines, stanzas and beats on a line meant that poetry was a literary form closely allied to number theories. Numerology was also harnessed by those who sought to predict the End of Days, a popular pastime for scholars and quacks since the Middle Ages, but one which gained further impetus with the Protestant focus on the prophetic books of the Bible: Revelation and Daniel.⁶⁸ Apocalyptic and millenarian thinking revolved around situating the processes of reform

⁶⁶ See Keith Thomas, 'Numeracy in Early Modern England: The Prothero Lecture', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37 (1987), pp. 103-132, (pp. 110-113).

⁶⁷ Richard Rambuss in *Spenser's Secret Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), while examining Spenser's career as a secretary in depth, does not address the issue of Spenser's numerological skills and further work would need to be undertaken to ascertain the extent of his use and knowledge of arithmetic.

⁶⁸ See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 167-8. Christopher Butler points out that Renaissance numerology inevitably combined classical and biblical sources resulting in a 'a totally ahistorical conflation of doctrines', for example Plato was thought to be indebted to Moses and Hermes Trismegistus whose texts were afforded a false level of antiquity (they were written in the second and third centuries A. D.), *Number Symbolism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1970), p. 49. MacQueen argues in a similar vein but affords the greater influence to Biblical techniques and theories, *Numerology*, p. 100. See Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), for an in depth analysis of the root of Medieval number theories and the symbolism of particular astrological numbers. Hopper also analyses the *Kalendar of Shepherds*, arguing that the information contained in this medieval publication is 'thoroughly numerical' (p. 93).

within a time scale which would ultimately coalesce in the final Judgement.⁶⁹ Sheltco a Geveren in his apocalyptic treatise of 1577, *Of the ende of this world, the second commying of Christ a comfortable and necessary discourse, for these miserable and dangerous dayes*, would allude to the power of astrological prophecy when predicting the end of the world:

...that expiring of fyue hundred yeares draweth nygh, in which these decrees of Popes gathered together by publicke authoritie to the great defacing of Gods word, and the merites of Christ, shall haue theyr ende. Wherefore a woonderfull and vndoubted hope of things to come may be conceyued of things past, that about that tyme shalbe that vniuersall destruction of all the worlde, and glorious coming of the Lorde. by which all these Popishe decrees shall come to naught, and by the iust iudgement of God, as erroneous, and blasphemous, be cast into eternall fire, because they haue wickedly burned all true interpretations of the Propheticall, and Apostolicall scriptures, and cruelly martyred the learned ministers, and true professors of Christes Religion. Vndoubtedly that number of fyue hundred yeeres in lyke manner as the others spoken of before, doo presage the same lyke thing: the Prognostications of the starres...take their effect about the same tyme...⁷⁰

Biblical and astrological prophecy are here seen to be bound to one another, the Catholic church damned by their efforts to suppress prophetic texts and the punishment of those ‘learned ministers’ who had the ability to interpret them. The conjunction of biblical and astrological prognostications is what Geberen feels gives weight to his prediction that once five hundred years have passed then the ‘vniversall destruction of all the worlde’ shall begin. While the *Shepheardes Calender* does not include within it a discernable number scheme of the sort found in the *Epithalamion*, nor does it accord with any apocalyptic rhetoric, Spenser’s decision to echo the almanac form in its composition does seem to allude to a desire to situate the work within debates surrounding the marking of time and the use of numbers in astrological and prophetic

⁶⁹ Le Goff in *Time, Work, and Culture*, points out that Christ’s incarnation as codified in the New Testament gave ‘time a historic dimension or, better still, a center’ (p. 31). Subsequently the Second Coming had already begun and time had a telos - an end.

⁷⁰ Sheltco a Geveren, *Of the ende of this world* (London: T. Gardyner and T. Dawson for Andrew Maunsel, 1577), H.ii. v.

discourses. Spenser's poem is not easy to define simply within the conventional terms of pastoral or georgic, nor does it necessarily conform wholesale to the demands of the poetic progress set out by Virgil. By reading this first publication alongside the popular almanac form it becomes possible to discern a multitude of concerns and allusions which not only place the work within its contemporary environs, but within a wider discourse about the prophetic abilities of the poet. The almanac was a format ripe for transformation and makes a compelling case for reassessing how we compartmentalise different forms of literary influence. Spenser incorporates the popular English almanac tradition into a rich and various seam of literary and non-literary precedent in order to advertise his role as England's 'new Poete' (p. 25).

‘easie is the way, and passage plaine / To pleasures pallace’:

Building Palaces of Pleasure in Books II and III of the *Faerie Queene*

Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* is ostensibly a book of moral instruction. In ‘A Letter of the Authors’ Spenser claims: ‘I labour to pourtriact in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall virtues, as Aristotle hath deuised...’¹ There is however, a remarkable ambiguity in the poem surrounding the role played by pleasure in moral instruction, and at times Spenser appears to house the respective virtues in a veritable pleasure palace of vice; a palace which has been constructed along the lines of the pleasurable reading promoted by William Painter and George Pettie’s popular storybooks, the *Palace of Pleasure* (1566 and 1567) and *A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure* (1576).

Spenser’s faeryland is populated with beautiful women, nymphs and goddesses, images of corrupted beauty and glorious indolence. The prevailing aesthetic is one of luxury and splendour, around the margins of which creeps a keen malevolence. Spenser’s knights have to navigate their way through these pleasurable scenes in order to complete their quests and retain their moral imperative. They are tested by what they see, but by extension the reader is also forced to interrogate their responses to these different pleasure palaces. Pleasurable or pleased reading opens out a minefield of potentially erotic or masturbatory responses and leaves the reader open to the co-related charges of idolatry and lewdness. In the *Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes makes a distinction between ‘pleasure’ and ‘bliss’ (‘jouissance’), one is ‘linked to a *comfortable*

¹ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1977), p. 737. All further quotations are from this edition. For a discussion of Spenser’s use of virtues and Arthur’s virtue of magnificence see Rosamund Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 57-143.

practice of reading' the other 'imposes a state of loss' and 'discomforts'² the reader. Jouissance is sometimes used to mean 'orgasm' in French and Barthes argues that between pleasure and jouissance there is 'an *incommunication*' from which the text of bliss always 'rises...like a scandal'.³ Painter and Pettie's storybooks are both open to the charge of inducing orgasm and discomforting the reader and may not so much be pleasurable books as blissful ones. The point at which these texts converge with the *Faerie Queene* may be defined as the moment of discomfort, the point of loss.

Spenser's motivation for including pleasurable or titillating images within his poem and unsettling the position held by his readership, may stem from what Francis Barker terms the 'discourse of the clerk', a form of informational reading which provides an 'a-libi-dinous justification'⁴ for the pleasurable. Reading in order to inform in the manner of the clerk has particular resonance for Spenser as he spent most of his literary career working as a private secretary.⁵ He would doubtless have been accustomed to transcribing, storing and disseminating information on behalf of his employers which had to be kept away from the gaze of certain parties. In order to accomplish this the secretary or the clerk had to be as well informed, if not more so, than their client. In much the same way it can be argued that one needs to be aware of the potentially lewd and transgressive in order to be better armed against its provocations and allurements, subsequently the pleasure associated with certain kinds of informational reading need not always spill over into the erotic and produce a bodily

² Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 14.

³ Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 20.

⁴ Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 6. Barker employs this argument in relation to Samuel Pepys' insistence in his diary entry for 9th February 1668 that he read a pornographic pamphlet for 'information sake'.

⁵ See Richard Rambuss, *Spenser's Secret Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Rambuss makes a compelling argument for the overlap between Spenser's role as a secretary and his literary output, particularly in relation to the keeping and revealing of secrets.

response.⁶ The idea that pleasure could aid learning rather than lead the reader astray was advocated by Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy*. Sidney claimed that the poet was ‘monarch’.⁷

For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it. Nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the very first to give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste you may long to pass farther’. (601-605)

The poet’s role was to ‘teach and delight’ (222), ‘for who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught?’ (579-580). The teaching of rhetoric laid stress upon the moral virtue of a good orator and for Sidney pleasure is the poet’s key, which when handed to the reader compels them to open a door to moral learning. Sidney argues that even the untamed savage can have their ‘hard dull wits softened and sharpened with the sweet delight of poetry’ (99-100) and until then ‘great promises of much knowledge will little persuade them that know not the fruits of knowledge’ (100-102). These ‘fruits’ (102) however, have their origin in the apple that Eve plucked from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, thus ensuring that the pursuit of pleasure was indelibly marked with the stain of sin. Sidney sees the delight fostered by poetry as a conduit for virtue, but there is always the lingering danger that a pleased reader may find a form of self-gratification far removed from moral instruction.⁸ Claiming to read in order to inform or for a disclosed moral purpose may be a cloak for a furtive gaze which lingers a little too long.

⁶ See Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 92- 117, for Benedict’s examination of the curious eye and the development of information as a commodity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She argues that this period saw the rise of a readership ‘flattered into defining themselves by their thirst for encyclopaedic knowledge’ (p. 92).

⁷ ‘The Defence of Poesy’ in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 226, l. 601. All further quotations are from this edition.

⁸ Jenny C. Mann argues in relation to medical texts dealing with hermaphrodites, that ocular curiosity is harnessed by writers in order to ‘train the reader to want to look at the body of the hermaphrodite’, thus undermining the sense that an instructive text is in any way free from the dangers associated with an aroused, curious reader, ‘How to Look at a Hermaphrodite in Early Modern England’, *Studies in English Literature*, 46, (2006), pp. 67-91, (p. 68).

This danger was explored and indeed revelled in by the translators and compilers of popular Elizabethan storybooks such as William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and George Pettie's *A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure*. Both of these books went through several reprints and their tales were widely disseminated, many of them finding their way onto the stages of the playhouses and into the scribblings of poets. The storybooks included the tales of the rape of Lucrece, Titus Andronicus, Pygmalion, the Duchess of Malfi and Minos and Pasiphae; stories which would be reworked both in print and on the stage by a variety of different writers including Shakespeare and Webster.⁹ Stephen Gosson indicates just how widely the storybooks were used in theatrical productions in *Playes Confuted in fiue Actions* (1582):

I may boldely say it, because I haue seene it, that the Palace of pleasure, the Golden Asse, the Aethiopian historie, Amadis of Fraunce, the Rounde table, baudie Comedies in Latine, French, Italian, and Spanish, haue been thoroughly ransackt, to furnish the Playe houses in London.¹⁰

The fact that Painter's storybook, and perhaps also Pettie's (the two compilations were often jointly referred to as the *Palace of Pleasure*) are associated by Gosson with famous legends and romances such as Amadis of Gaul, the story of Arthur and his knights of Camelot and the 'Aethiopian historie', a romantic epic by the Greek writer Heliodorus translated by Thomas Underdown, indicates not only that the storybooks were widely read and popular, but that they had also entered the literary storehouse or library which was pillaged by those who sought to make a living by their pen. The heady mix of rape, adultery, seduction and suicide in the *Palaces of Pleasure* alongside their carefully placed moral arguments, proved irresistible to those who sought to enthrall an audience or a reader alike with titliating material.

⁹ For an in depth discussion of the role of novella, such as those translated by Painter and Pettie, in Elizabethan revenge tragedies, see Ernst de Chickera, 'The Theme of Revenge in Elizabethan Translations of Novelle', *The Review of English Studies*, 11, (1960), pp. 1-7.

¹⁰ Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in fiue Actions* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), D5. v.

Like his contemporaries Spenser draws upon the popular storybook form, but rather than re-imagining the narratives he focuses upon the ambiguous use of pleasure in these texts. In doing so he creates pleasure palaces of his own in the *Faerie Queene* and thereby explores the nature of the reader's gaze as it falls upon these 'speaking picture[s]' (*Defence*, 221). Is the eye aroused or repelled? The reader a student of virtue or a voyeur of vice? Is it possible that Sidney's view of the poet as a 'popular philosopher' (467) who harnesses pleasure in order to teach becomes compromised in the face of an unstable and potentially disobedient eye?

Walter Ong, contesting the frequently made assumption that the Reformation produced a greater focus on the aural over the visual because of the rise of iconoclasm,¹¹ has noted that the ascent of print saw a clear shift in the other direction, from the auditory to the visual:

Printing made the location of words on a page the same in every copy of a particular edition, giving a text a fixed home in space impossible to imagine effectively in a pretypographical culture. Printing thus heightened the value of the visual imagination and the visual memory over the auditory imagination and the auditory memory...¹²

The printed word demanded that the eye was king and the rise in the number of privately owned books meant that people were in a position to read text rather than hear

¹¹ For a detailed refutation of this argument and the assertion that in relation to aural and visual culture 'the Reformation...did not so much provide a radical break as an intensification of trends that were already evident' see William A. Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 28-31, (p. 13). Margaret Aston discusses how Catholic treatises on images often privileged sight over the other senses, pointing out that as reading was associated with hearing it was deemed to be a less effective way of conveying information to the laity, in *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 116-120. Marshall McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 24, notes that: 'if a technology is introduced either from within or from without a culture, and if it gives a new stress or ascendancy to one or another of our senses, the ratio among all of our senses is altered'. D. R Woolf examines the way in which sight and sound 'structure the perception and study of the past' during the early modern period in 'Speech, Text and Time: The Sense of Hearing and the Sense of the Past in Renaissance England', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 18 (1986), pp. 159-193, (p. 160).

¹² Walter Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (London: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 167.

it being spoken out loud. It is however, important to note that Ong's analysis does not address the centrality of images to pre-Reformation beliefs, many of which would have had a clear set of visual signs to aid memory, such as the various icons of the saints, or the fact that seeing the host was often analogous to having received communion.¹³ The eye's role as an interpretative device for print and the privileged site for the consumption of text was clearly brought to the forefront during the Reformation period and it is subsequently the printed word, and its close alliance with the Protestant focus on *sola scriptura* and the Bible in the vernacular, which ensures the central role afforded to the eye as the negotiator between body and text.

While Catholic and Protestant worshippers may not have had diametrically opposed sensory experiences, the fact that reading seems to shift from being an aural to a visual process during the Reformation indicates that the relationship between reader and text was becoming a more private two way process, rather than just a communal or group exercise, although reading out loud would still retain an important place in Protestant worship as the Bible was read out loud in church services and in the home. This potentially shifts some kinds of reading into a closeted space, bringing forth the fear of secrecy, deceit and carnality associated with closed rooms and claustrophobia. The physical closet found in an early modern home would have been designed principally for reading and writing, conducting business, storing papers and items of value; it may have been equipped with a lock to keep unwelcome visitors away and to protect the books and other objects within it from prying eyes. It was also a space which excited intense curiosity, as the occupant could not be seen in the act of reading or writing, begging questions as to what books were being perused by the hidden eyes of

¹³ Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, p. 29.

the closeted reader.¹⁴ Private spaces naturally afforded readers a form of autonomy as they could not be interrupted or distracted, but they were also far removed from the agents of shame or indignation who may have tried to get them to cover their eyes if they believed that the open books contained sinful, lewd or dangerous material. The closet could also become a home for conjured idols and exhumed relics, a space in which the visual imagination could be indulged.

The eye was often closely associated with the first commandment's condemnation of idolatry: 'thou shalt not have any god's before me'. John Bossy argues that the early modern period saw a gradual but marked shift from the seven deadly sins to the Ten Commandments as a barometer for moral behaviour, this shift was cemented by the commandments' scriptural foundation which made them far more amenable to reformers.¹⁵ The first commandment was deemed to be the most important of all of God's laws as without it all other behaviour was sinful; if God was not worshiped alone before all other idols then the acolyte was beyond salvation. Idolatry was often keenly felt as a form of witchcraft, an affront to the one true God inspired by Satan, this produced a useful correlation between the reformer's dismissal of the mass as trickery and magic and the first commandment's injunction to worship only one God.¹⁶ Worshipping was intrinsically linked to seeing in Catholic practice as images were thought to help prepare the soul and inspire religious devotion. By gazing upon an icon of a saint or an image of the crucifixion one aspired to the virtues the image represented

¹⁴ See Alan Stewart, 'The Early Modern Closet Discovered', *Representations*, 50 (1995), pp. 76-100, for Stewart's discussion of the closet as a secret space, a 'site of sexual anxiety' (p. 87) from which women were often barred and a place in which master and secretary shared information. See also Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (London: Duke University Press, 1998), for Rambuss's evaluation of the relationship between devotion and desire and the role of the private prayer closet, pp.103-135.

¹⁵ John Bossy, 'Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments', in *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Edmund Leites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 214-234.

¹⁶ See Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 505, for Clark's argument that the preeminent nature of the first commandment 'provides the theological key for the reformer's view of witchcraft'.

in paint and wood and craved assistance, the danger was that the gaze could manifest itself as a form of idolatry, replacing one God with a pantheon of images.¹⁷ St Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* argues that ‘all doctrine concerns things or signs, but things are learned by signs.’¹⁸ For Augustine it is the sign which allows the worshipper access to biblical allegory, ‘so that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual.’ (I, iv, p. 10). Augustine is however, aware of the charge of idolatry to which signs were suspect, although he insists that the greater danger lies in the misinterpretation of signs rather than an ignorance of their meaning:

he is a slave to a sign who uses or worships a significant thing without knowing what it signifies...However, he who does not know what a sign means, but does know that it is a sign, is not in servitude. Thus it is better to be burdened by unknown but useful signs than to interpret signs in a useless way so that one is led from the yoke of servitude only to thrust his neck into the snares of error. (III, ix, pp. 86-87)¹⁹

Augustine’s position would hold sway over the medieval church and bolster the belief that without a language of signs believers would be left floundering for meaning in an unknowable religious landscape. One had to take the risk that these signs may become divorced from the thing they represented and be mistaken for the thing itself, the alternative would be isolation for many from the glory of God’s work. Reformers would reinterpret Augustine, laying stress upon the recognition of signs as representative rather than efficacious. Drawing upon the saint’s writings Calvin would make a ‘firm distinction between ‘reality’ and ‘sign’’²⁰ and Foxe would dismiss the

¹⁷ See Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, pp. 16-48, for an analysis of the ambiguous nature of sight during the medieval period. Dyrness notes that ‘the use of images represents a concession to those who cannot come to the truth in other ways’, (p. 21).

¹⁸ Augustine, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1958), I, ii, p. 8. All further quotations are from this edition.

¹⁹ See Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, pp. 18-20, for a discussion of Augustine’s ‘sign theory’ in relation to medieval views on sight.

²⁰ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 250.

daily sacrifice of Christ's body during the Catholic Eucharist, achieved with 'such store of bloud, as is pitifull to see' as 'a phantasie, for as the presence of the body here ceaseth, so ceaseth the offeryng thereof also'.²¹

The ambiguous space occupied by the eye in relation to charges of idolatry during the medieval period would be transferred to the early modern era when the eye would become a legitimate target for reformers who sought to end the idolatry of the popish church during the Edwardian and Elizabethan Reformations.²² The worry was that lay parishioners could not discern the difference between image and reality, or sign and thing, and thereby imbued idols with supernatural powers. The iconoclasm which followed was part of a desire to proscribe the actions of the eye, but as Stuart Clarke has noted this did not succeed in doing away with the eye wholesale as the mind produced images as a part of essential thought processes and '...if the mind had its own eyes, it might also have its own idols.'²³ Accordingly those struck down with blindness were often revered for having escaped the lure of earthly pleasures as this enabled them to have a clarity of spirit unattainable for those who suffered from ocular temptations; but even they could not escape from the inner eye of imagination. William A. Dyrness argues '...the particular developments of late medieval devotional practice, and the preaching of reformers, fundamentally challenged the imaginative world in which believers lived and stimulated some to actively dismantle that world and to reconstruct

²¹ John Foxe, *A Sermon of Christ crucified, preached at Paules Crosse the Friday before Easter, commonly called Goodfryday* (London: Iohn Daye, 1570), 17, r.

²² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided*, 'Fighting Antichrist: Idols', pp. 558-562. See also Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship From Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 276-311, for a detailed survey of the role played by image and icon during the Reformation and the political shape of the battle against idolatry. The power of the image in political discourse and its effect upon one German city during the Reformation is explored by Kristin Eldyss Sorensen Zapalac in *"In His Image and Likeness": Political Iconography and Religious Change in Regensburg, 1500-1600* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

²³ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 167-8.

it with different materials'.²⁴ It cannot be taken for granted that reformed theology managed to circumscribe the actions of the eye by engaging in widespread iconoclasm, dismembering and scattering the images held in the mind was an impossible task. The idols of the mind are perhaps what Painter and Pettie's storybooks draw our attention towards, for if pleasurable constructs are used to incite moral reflection then the residual imagery may be hard to erase. Francis Bacon in the *Novum Organum* (1620) identifies four different classes of idol, those of the 'Tribe', the 'Cave', the 'Marketplace' and the 'Theatre'. The idols of the Marketplace are provoked by the 'vulgar' discourse of men whose 'words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies.'²⁵ Words could be slippery and opaque, obscuring meaning and conjuring idols through the agency of a 'vulgar' tongue. Considering the unpredictable and volatile nature of the imagination and the effect that it could have on the bodies and minds of the weak, the spectre of semantic idols provoked widespread alarm. The imagination was thought to wreak havoc on the physical stability of women and the young, leading to monstrous births and humoral imbalance.²⁶ Michel de Montaigne writes of the danger of the imagination in his essay *On the Power of the Imagination*:

When imaginary thoughts trouble us we break into sweats, start trembling, go pale or flush crimson; we lie struck supine on our feather beds and feel our bodies agitated by such emotion; some even die from them. And boiling youth grows so hot in its armour-plate that it consummates its sexual desires while fast asleep in a dream.²⁷

²⁴ Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture*, p. 18.

²⁵ Francis Bacon, *The New Organon and Related Writings*, ed. by Fulton H. Anderson (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960), p. 49.

²⁶ See Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 41, for a discussion of the effect of the imagination on the uterus.

²⁷ Michel de Montaigne: *The Complete Essays*, trans. by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 110.

The eye of the mind has a direct and often disastrous effect on the body, resulting in death or the degenerative impulse of the wet dream and ‘le petite mort’. These effects could be produced through pleasured reading, as word could all too easily become image in the mind’s eye. Erotic representation and pleasured reading were at the mercy of the eye which could be aroused or disgusted – or perversely, both. The link between the eye and the imagination is made explicitly clear by Clark:

The imagination had nothing but sensible forms as its objects, and amongst these, visual forms predominated. It was indeed the ‘eye’ of the mind, in the sense that, in an ocularcentric psychology, the rational powers were deemed to ‘see’ the external world only via its agency.²⁸

The arousal of the imagination and the construction of sexual fantasy was therefore made possible due to the capacity of the eye to provide a visual vocabulary, a storehouse of images which could be deconstructed and rebuilt in whatever form desired. This visual vocabulary could be prompted or supplemented by reading, to the point where, as Ian Moulton argues ‘...it might make more sense to see pornography as a way of reading rather than as a mode of representation.’²⁹ It is perhaps to this image of a subjective readership which Painter and Pettie’s storybooks incline. They cannot predict the response of their readers to their tales of sexual vice, but it is impossible to negate entirely the possibility for arousal – only a blind man would be safe from the temptations that they offer up to their readers, although they would of course have to avoid hearing the stories read aloud.

This was an anxiety clearly articulated by Roger Ascham, tutor to Queen Elizabeth. In the *Scholemaster* he talks directly about the danger of reading Italian tales in translation (both Painter and Pettie employed stories which were originally produced

²⁸ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p. 46.

²⁹ Ian Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 11.

in Italian, including translations from Ovid, Matteo Bandello, Boccaccio, Giovanni Fiorentino and Straparole):

...ten Morte Arthures do not the tenth part so much harme, as one of these bookes, made in Italie, and translated in England. They open, not fond and common wayes to vice, but such sutle, cunningg, new, and diuerse shiftes, to cary yong willes to vanitie, and yong wittes to mischief, to teach old bawdes new schole poyntes, as the simple head of an English man is not hable to inuent, nor neuer was hard of in England before, yea when Papistrie ouerflowed all.³⁰

Ascham associates Italianate writing with ‘sutle’ vices and ultimately with ‘Papistrie’. The popularity of stories which originated on the continent meant that there was the implied risk that they may be disseminating popish ideas to the English populace. The eye of the reader was thus politically and religiously loaded, a conduit for a variety of anxiety-inducing possibilities that were impossible to predict or contain. There was acute anxiety over women reading romances, such as Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*, in private closeted spaces (often associated with devotional practice and female chastity), to the point where books begin to take on the same *frisson* as the adulterous liason, as Sasha Roberts notes ‘men are shown to seduce *with* books, women are frequently represented as being seduced *by* books.’³¹ The act of reading was a dangerous undertaking, and overindulging could lead to terrible consequences, as Adrian Johns notes: ‘as much as it could facilitate learning and the communication of knowledge, reading had the power to determine one’s future fate. It could blind, derange, and even kill.’³² Few texts could be safely identified as benign and one doubts

³⁰ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster Or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong...* (London: John Daye, 1570), 28. v.

³¹ Sasha Roberts, ‘Shakespeare ‘creepes into the womens closets about bedtime’: Women Reading in a Room of Their Own’, in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices/Bodies/Spaces, 1580-1690*, ed. by Gordon McMullan (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), pp. 30-63, (p. 42).

³² Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 383. Johns describes several cases from the early modern period where people have blamed excessive reading, or reading the wrong kind of text, for dramatic changes in their health or even their personality, pp. 380-383. Katherine A. Craik in *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 11-34, uses a close reading of the *Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1601) by Thomas Wright, to analyse the relationship between reading and the

if the productions which came off the popular press would be counted in their number. If multiple lines of sight were produced by the popular storybook they would prove to be difficult to contain – a phenomenon which Spenser sought to exploit.

Spenser appears to allude directly to Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and potentially Pettie's later storybook *A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure*, in Book II of the *Faerie Queene*. During the episode when Belphoebe stumbles upon a bewildered Braggadoccio mid-hunt, Belphoebe throws scorn upon Braggadoccio's assertion that she would be better suited to life at court 'where thou maist loue, and dearely loued bee, / And swim in pleasure (II, iii, 39, 6-7) rather than ranging in 'this wilde forrest, where no pleasure is' (39, 2). Belphoebe responds that such behaviour leads to 'darke obscuritee' (40, 3) and 'obliuion' (40, 4), only he 'Who seekes with painfull toile, shall honor soonest find' (40, 9). Belphoebe closes this exchange with the following moral:

But easie is the way, and passage plaine
To pleasures palace; it may soon be spide,
And day and night her dores to all stand open wide.
(41, 7-9)

It is unlikely that Spenser would have been insensible to the previous publications that had also joined the alliterative 'p' of pleasure and palace. Belphoebe starkly contrasts the 'ease' (40, 5) of 'pleasures palace' (41, 8) with the 'honor' (40, 9) inherent in 'painfull toile' (40, 9), it is clear however, that Spenser does not see fit to disassociate the pain of moral instruction completely from the potential pleasure derived from depicting and viewing vice. The *Faerie Queene* is full of moments where the reader and his or her knightly guide are left bemused as to whether they should avert their gaze, boldly stare down the wanton image before them or succumb to temptation and enjoy. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Bower of Bliss episode in Book II.

passions. Craik argues that the feelings prompted by reading were not only private but 'performative activities' (p. 13) which enabled men to judge one another's health and status.

Guyon, the knight of Temperance, reaches the object of his quest - Acrasia's Bower, only to find himself vulnerable to the allurements of its inhabitants. Again and again he has to be drawn back from the brink by the steady Palmer. The sight of 'Two naked Damzelles' (II, xii, 63, 6) bathing in Acrasia's golden fountain provokes 'The secret signes of kindled lust' (68, 6) and 'His stubborne brest gan secret pleasaunce to embrace' (65, 9).

It is only through a thoroughly intemperate act of destruction that Guyon is able to gain control of his baser nature - all too easily he could have become one of Acrasia's 'wild-beasts' (84, 5). While the moral of the destruction of the Bower of Bliss is close to the surface of the poem - intemperate love or lust leads to moral degeneration - it remains glazed with the highly eroticised imagery of the Bower. Stephen Greenblatt suggests that the unregenerate nature of the pleasure offered by Acrasia - pleasure for pleasures sake - is what necessitates its destruction.³³ This denouncement of essentially masturbatory imagery (the ultimate death without generation) does allow a space for the pleasure that is deemed necessary for conception (a woman was thought unable to conceive if she did not orgasm).³⁴ This view of pleasure with instrument and purpose dovetails with Sidney's 'cluster of grapes' (*Defence*, 604): pleasure is healthy and indeed necessary if it is used to produce a desired and moral end. What Greenblatt's analysis fails to address adequately however, is the position of the reader and their motivation for approaching the images proffered by the text. If Spenser does indeed worship the 'power' of generative pleasure why does he persist in tempting the eye of the reader with 'immoderate' pleasures? The destruction of the Bower is a necessary

³³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 176-7.

³⁴ See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 2-3.

climax to the episode, but its imagery remains indelibly marked upon the page to be returned to again and again by the curious reader.

Rather than Guyon destroying Acrasia she is tied up in 'chaines of adamant' (82, 6) and shipped off to the faery court as evidence of his success. Acrasia's pleasure garden has been razed, but she has been sent into the heart of power in the land – a surprising decision given that the court of the faery queene has parallels to Elizabeth's court, although this could be a judgement on the unsteady morals of courtly life. Spenser does not have Acrasia sacrificed on the altar of morality precisely because she cannot be banished from the eyes of men - they will always seek her out. As C. S Lewis notes, Spenser reminds us '...not of our sudden surrenders to temptation but of our habitual vices...' ³⁵ It is the 'habitual vices' of the reader that dictate Spenser's view of pleasure as much as its necessity for regeneration. Fallen man is forever susceptible to the vagaries of his 'inner weather' ³⁶ and his responses to pleasure can be both unpredictable and transgressive. At this point it is important to note that I am assuming that the intended readers of both Spenser's poem and Pettie and Painter's storybooks are male, although Pettie interestingly addresses his work specifically to a female readership, a paradox to which I shall return later.

If we revisit our naked damsels in Acrasia's Bower, it is clear that the scene that almost undoes Guyon can evidently titillate the male reader:

³⁵ C. S Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 391.

³⁶ Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 391.

The wanton Maidens him espying, stood
 Gazing a while at his unwonted guise;
 Then th'one her selfe low ducked in the flood,
 Abasht, that her a straunger did a vise:
 But th' other rather higher did arise,
 And her two lily paps aloft displayd,
 And all, that might his melting heart entise
 To her delights, she vnto him bewrayed:
 The rest hid vnderneath, him more desirous made.
 (xii, 66)

That which is exposed, and contrarily, that which is left covered, beguiles the eye (albeit the inner eye of imagination). The moral imperative behind both Guyon's quest and the drive of the narrative are swiftly forgotten. Even when faced with the wanton Acrasia, the knight's intemperate nemesis, the eye wanders over her revealed body: 'Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle / Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild' (78, 1-2).

In Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* it is often sexual violence which provides the impetus for a voyeuristic display of flesh. In the tale of Aristotimus the Tyrant, Micca is punished for her refusal to acquiesce to the demands of Lucius:

Lucius seeing her refusall full of furie and proud disdaine, began furiously to hale hir by the garments upon whose struggling he tare hir kirtle and furnitures off hir head and shoulders, that hir alablaster necke and bosome appeared naked, and without compassion tare and whipt hir flesh on euery side, as the bloud ranne downe, beating that tendre flesh of hers with manifold and greuous blowes.³⁷

Micca's flesh is unwillingly exposed and is blemished with the blood of violence, but it is displayed nonetheless, thus retaining a line of sight anchored in the erotic. Spenser's damsel willingly offers herself up to the gaze of Guyon and the reader and yet both displays are the product of a very similar moral argument. Both argue that intemperance - particularly of a sexual nature - has far reaching ramifications. For Aristotimus his pardoning of Lucius brings about rebellion and eventual assassination,

³⁷ William Painter, *The second tome of the Palace of pleasure* (London: Henry Bynneman for Nicholas England, 1567), 34. v.

along with the enforced suicide of his daughters. The men who fall for the charms of Acrasia and her attendants are transformed into beasts, although many seem unhappy to be returned to the form of men upon Acrasia's capture, indicating that however high the price many will choose pleasure over a more enlightened path. Their transformation perhaps also allies them to Actaeon's metamorphosis into a stag after stumbling upon Diana while she was bathing, but their seeming acquiescence again paints them as complicit with their fate.

The cause and effect dynamic of the moral narrative remains intact in both stories, although much is given up to the unregulated eye. Spenser's use of eroticism in the *Faerie Queene* has been closely linked to the likes of Ariosto and Aretine, but it is also clear that he was mining a more popular site for the erotic. Painter and Pettie's palaces of pleasure expose the instability of the eye, even when it is ostensibly being drawn towards a moral end. Spenser seems to revel in this ambiguity allowing the reader's gaze to trip over image after image, daring the eye to linger too long. The risk of falling into temptation provides a 'testing' impetus to Spenser's work, asking the reader to assess exactly how one can be a good or accurate reader. In many respects the *Faerie Queene's* ambiguous use of pleasure demands that the reader in fact learn how to read 'properly', the worry is that many untutored or wilful readers will fall short of the mark. Linda Gregerson argues that the religious reformer's focus on scriptural authority meant that they were '...keenly aware that they were not eliminating but readdressing the unreliability at the heart of rhetoric' and that '...the broader and more enduring Reformation answer to enslavement to the sign was to teach good Christians to read.'³⁸ The Bible became a resource for the development of literacy and private interpretative reading practices, but the individual's communion with the sacred text was always

³⁸ Linda Gregerson, 'Protestant Erotics: Idolatry and Interpretation in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', *English Literary History*, 58 (1991), pp. 1-34, (pp. 12-13).

circumscribed by a fear of mis-interpretation, an anxiety which gave rise to marginal annotation and glossing. This is the didactic formula to which Spenser ascribes in the *Faerie Queene*, indicated most memorably by his proposal to ‘fashion a gentleman’ (p. 737) in the preface. In asserting this didactic aim Spenser ‘combats the idolatrous potential of words not by seeking to divest himself of figurative resources but by delineating a dialectical function for his readership, a function otherwise known as interpretation.’³⁹ The reader becomes an interpretative force able to inscribe meaning onto a text, given the power to construct and deconstruct idols at will. The idolater and the iconoclast are thus able to stand side by side, perhaps both contained in the mind’s eye of a single reader. While, as Gregerson intimates, Spenser taps into the prevailing Protestant desire to teach reading skills to the laity, he is also acutely aware of how this process could fail catastrophically, for how does anyone know what is contained in the picture house of another’s mind? It is all too clear that Spenser’s temptations and allurements may weaken rather than strengthen the reader’s eye and render even more permeable the barrier between the eye and the mind and between the mind and bodily response.

Both Spenser and Painter reveal the female body piecemeal, through an act of female wantonness or male aggression. Nancy J. Vickers has described this process in relation to the story of Diana and Actaeon, arguing that the act of revealing female flesh results in a ‘composite of details’⁴⁰ most clearly epitomized by the blazon. This ultimately results in the reader becoming the voyeur, and Spenser is far from being averse to putting his characters unwittingly into such an unenviable position. When Paridell abducts the willing Hellenore, ravishes her and then unceremoniously leaves her to the mercy of the satyrs, the jealous Malbecco is confronted with his lascivious

³⁹ Gregerson, ‘Protestant Erotics’, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁰ Nancy J. Vickers, ‘Diana Described: Scattered Women and Scattered Rhyme’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1981), pp. 265-279, (p. 267).

wife 'embraced of a Satyre rough and rude, / Who all the night did minde his joyous play' (III, x, 48, 3). He is forced to play the voyeur as he waits for his wife and the satyr to fall asleep, unable to close his eyes or ears to the wanton display: 'nine times he heard him come aloft ere day' (48, 5). This exhibition of insatiable sexual appetite alludes to Malbecco's inability to satisfy his young wife; he is emasculated and impotent in the face of her bestial 'loosenesse' (50, 4). It is the unwitting eye that provokes Malbecco's eventual transformation into 'Gealosie' (60, 9), he becomes 'consum'd to nought' (57, 3) as 'painefull pleasure turnes to pleasing paine' (60, 4).

The satyrs do not suffer from the fixation on sexual transgression that drives Malbecco's jealousy, but their display of promiscuity does not do away entirely with the 'ethical question'⁴¹ of sexual pleasure. Their flock of goats and their own half-goat bodies are potent symbols for man's bestial and insatiable lust and their repeated ravishment of Hellenore, while gay and direct, only reinforces Malbecco's inadequacy and perhaps horrifyingly arouses him into the bargain. The satyrs are repositories for mans' own desires and they provide a clear line of sight back to the voyeur. It is Malbecco's destructive sexual obsession which is mirrored in the behaviour of the 'jolly satyrs' as they wilfully enact his worst nightmare – or perhaps his most earnest fantasy.

Gregerson points out that Malbecco's lust for his younger bride and the way in which he covets gold and riches indicates that his greatest sin is that of the 'idolater': 'by adoring the image coined in gold and in a woman's flesh, Malbecco annihilates use. He confuses likeness with identity, he cannot tell the sign from the thing, and he serves the one as though it were the other.'⁴² Malbecco is a voyeur who transforms that which he sees into an idol through his inability to read visual signs. His failure to 'use' Hellenore has rendered her static, constructed to the point where there is little difference

⁴¹ Paul Alpers, *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 388.

⁴² Gregerson, 'Protestant Erotics...', p. 7.

between her and the false Florimell. The male gaze is unable to truly recognise the viewed female body without elevating it to the realm of a Neoplatonic ideal beauty on the one hand, or blazon-like mechanisation on the other. The result of such an atomising gaze is a downfall on a par with Malbecco's tumble into 'Gealousie' (60, 9) which leaves him existing on a diet of 'toades and frogs' (59, 2).

In Painter's story of Candaules and Gyges, voyeurism produces another sort of downfall. King Candaules wants to convince Gyges of the beauty of his wife and insists that as 'eyes be better witnesses of thynges than eares',⁴³ Gyges must watch her undress in her chamber. Gyges remonstrates with the king: 'for a woman seene naked, doth with her clothes, put of also her chastity' (21. v). Nonetheless he is forced into playing peeping Tom and when the Queen finds out she arranges for her husband to be killed and then she promptly marries Gyges. Thus Gyges' voyeurism results in his assumption of the Lydian throne while Candaules' 'immoderate loue' (20. v) ends in his death.

Much like Gyges Malbecco is an unwilling peeping Tom, having sought to hide Hellenore away from prying eyes in his castle he is finally confronted with her repeated sexual liaisons with the satyr. Candaules willingly exposes his naked wife to the gaze of another and suffers the consequences. Guyon is almost undone by the sight of the naked damsels frolicking in Acrasia's rather phallic gold fountain. All are made well aware of the power of the eye to foster jealousy and provoke lust. It subsequently becomes impossible to ignore the fact that the readers' eye is also a potential site for transgression.

Hellenore's initial seduction at the hands of Paridell is also instigated by a series of lingering and pregnant looks:

⁴³ William Painter, *The palace of pleasure beautified, adorned and well furnished, with pleasaunt histories and excellent nouvelles, selected out of diuers good and commendable authors* (London: John Kingston and Henry Denham for Richard Tottel and William Iones, 1566), 20. r.

With speaking lookes, that close embassage bore,
 He rou'd at her, and told his secret care:
 For all that art he learned had of yore.
 Ne was she ignoraunt of that lewd lore,
 But in his eye his meaning wisely red,
 And with the like him answerd euermore:
 She sent at him one firie dart, whose hed
 Empoisoned was with priuy lust, and gealous dred.
 (III, ix, 28, 2-9)

Their compact is sealed without a word being uttered by either of them and Malbecco's worst fears are realised. In a symbolic undoing of chastity Hellenore spills her 'idle draught' (31, 3) into her lap, an act of unashamed desire provoked by a roving eye. In Pettie's tale of Minos and Pasiphae the eye is also identified as a conduit for love/lust. The scheming Pasiphae tries to undermine one of her husband's favourites by encouraging him to fall in love with her. The unlucky Verecundus is bewitched and upon being finally rejected by Pasiphae sends her an imploring letter:

...for as the frettinge Fistula past all cure, runneth in the fleshe from place to place, and maketh the sound flesh as rotten as the rest, so ye deadly poyson of ioue first entred in at my eies, and after spred into euery part of me, hath now dangerously infected my whole body unto death.⁴⁴

Verecundus's description of love as an infection that enters through the eye, is not dissimilar from Spenser's use of the act of seeing as a catalyst for intemperance and wantonness in the *Faerie Queene*. It is the episode in Book II when Atin finds Cymochles in Acrasia's Bower which best typifies Spenser's view of the potentially unstable gaze of the reader. Cymochles pretends to sleep while secretly watching the 'wanton follies' (v, 32, 6) of a 'flocke of Damzels' (32, 4):

⁴⁴ George Pettie, *A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure: Contaynyng many pretie Hystories by him set foorth in comely colours, and most delightfully discoursed* (London: R. Watkins, 1576), p.182.

He, like an Adder, lurking in the weeds,
 His wandring thought in deepe desire does steepe,
 And his fraile eye with spoyle of beautie feedes;
 Sometimes he falsely faines himselfe to sleepe,
 Whiles through their lids his wanton eies do peepe,
 To steale a snatch of amorous conceipt,
 Whereby close fire into his heart does creepe:
 So, them deceiues, deceiu'd in his deceit,
 Made drunk with drugs of deare voluptuous receipt.
 (v, 34)

Cymochles is another version of the peeping Tom and this episode produces a re-enactment of the Diana and Actaeon myth; although his victims are clearly complicit in his voyeurism as they know he is watching and he is thus 'deceiu'd in his deceit' (34, 8). There is a danger that his unrestrained gaze could result in a metamorphosis similar to Actaeon's transformation into a stag. When Atin approaches he describes Cymochles as a 'shade' (35, 4), 'In which that manly person late did fade' (35,5). Cymochles' 'delightfull dreame' (37, 1) is in danger of erasing him into nothingness, leaving only an echo of his former self 'in Ladies lap entombed' (36, 3). It is Cymochles' 'fraile' (34, 3) and 'wanton' (34, 5) eyes that make him 'drunk' (34, 9) as he fails to resist the siren call of exposed flesh. He who is swayed by the greed of his eyes receives 'close fire into his heart' (34, 7). What this stanza indicates is that the reader, like Cymochles, can faine 'himself to sleepe' (34, 4) in order to divert attention away from their potential arousal. The hypocrisy that this entails is what Spenser would have us draw our attention towards, for the ambiguous responses produced by titillating images cannot be confined or constrained by the writer, or by the censor, without doing away with them altogether.

The ultimate danger is that arousal may lead to action: will the moral imperative remain intact or will the reader seek to mimic the vices depicted on the page? Pettie and Painter's storybooks are full of sensational stories of rape, including the ravishing of

both Lucrece and Philomela and it is often as a precursor to rape that female flesh is exposed to the gaze of the attacker and the reader. The voyeur can become a despoiler of female chastity or an aroused object can give way to desire despite their better judgement. This happens for instance, to Bianca in Middleton's *Women Beware Women* when Guardiano is able to weaken her marriage bonds and make her amenable to the Duke by exposing her to paintings of naked flesh: '...to prepare her stomach by degrees / To cupid's feast, because I saw 'twas queasy, / I show'd her naked pictures by the way: / A bit to stay the appetite...' ⁴⁵

As Jocelyn Catty has noted, despite the presence of rape associated with foundation myths, (Cymoent and Crysogonee) there is no 'successful' rape in the main narrative of the *Faerie Queene*, merely many attempts at rape. ⁴⁶ There is however, a vivid description of a false rape proffered by Archimago when trying to goad Guyon into attacking the Redcrosse knight:

O rather would, O would it had so chaunst,
That you most noble Sir, had present beene,
When that lewd ribauld with vile lust aduauunst
Layd first his filthy hands on virgin cleene,
To spoile her daintie corse so faire and sheene
(II, i, 10, 1-5)

Her looser golden lockes he rudely rent,
And drew her on the ground, and his sharpe sword,
Against her snowy brest he fiercely bent
(i, 11, 5-7)

Archimago's conjured description of ravishment reads much like the rapes which occur in the *Pallace of Pleasure* and the *petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure*. Images such as the revealed 'snowy brest' (11, 7), 'rent' (11, 5), 'golden lockes' (11, 5) and the use of words such as 'filthy' (10, 4), 'spoile' (10, 5) and 'lewd' (10, 3) resonate

⁴⁵ 'Women Beware Women' in *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*, ed. by Bryan Loughrey and Neil Taylor (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 380, ll. 404-6.

⁴⁶ Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p. 77.

with these two popular texts. Spenser is employing a recognisable vocabulary which draws our attention towards the power of the imagined rape and the iconography associated with the violation of female chastity. Spenser puts Archimago into the position of the storyteller who paints images of women ravished and scorned – perhaps mimicking the role played by Painter and Pettie in their narratives. In Pettie's storybook Tereus 'filthyly deflowred' (32) Philomela and 'fel to fleshly daliance with her' (31), in Painter's first compilation Sextus Tarquinnus threatens Lucrece and 'his fleshly and licencious enterprise, ouercame the puritie of her chast harte' (6.v). Rape can be conjured in the mind through the use of standard tropes and the eye can be guilty of another kind of violation more serious than that of mere voyeurism.

The *Faerie Queene* also includes an episode in which the seemingly virtuous intentions of Guyon and Prince Arthur come into question. When Florimell is spied fleeing from the Foster who is trying to rape her, Guyon and Arthur join the pursuit, but it is far from clear whether they intend to save her or join the chase:

Ful of great enuie and fell gealosity,
 They stayd not to auise, who first should bee,
 But all spurd after fast, as they mote bee,
 To reskew her from shamefull villany.
 (III, i, 18, 2-5)

Spenser's use of the words 'enuie' (2) and 'gealosity' (2) to explain the two knights' motivation for rescuing Florimell is curious as this insinuates that they wish to take the place of the Foster and try and ravish the hapless Florimell rather than delivering her from her pursuer. A woman in flight is shown to be a desirable object – even for those who are ostensibly virtuous and charged with protecting the weak. Florimell in the mode of the traditional damsel in distress requires a knight in shining armour, but like many a fair maiden she is not only the object of chivalrous pursuit but also an object of desire. The implicit paradox which this raises is conveyed by Spenser's

choice of wording in relation to Arthur and Guyon's pursuit, but it also articulates the ambiguous responses open to the reader when viewing images of rape.⁴⁷ When stories of rape are put into a moralising context they are afforded a kind of legitimacy which endeavours to distance them from accusations of pornographic content. This does not however, mean that the male spectator is unable to gain pleasure from representations of rape, whether they are artistic or textual, for as Barbara Baines notes: '...do they not accomplish the same "work" as the rape they depict?'⁴⁸

Spenser's use of the threat of rape and the description of fictional rape produces a sense of the ease with which images of rape can be conjured up in the mind's eye – by failing to incorporate a 'successful' rape into the narrative he leaves a space for the imagining of such an act on the part of his reader. Where Painter and Pettie describe acts of rape with voyeuristic detail and blazon-like dissection, Spenser revels in the spaces afforded by the suggestion of rape. This is most clearly shown in the episode in Book II where Belpheobe is looked up and down by Braggadoccio:

⁴⁷ Harry Berger argues that Florimell's flight itself 'unwittingly encourages the pursuit, arouses the desire she fears, and thus increases her fear; her beauty exposing itself to view, ambiguates even the noblest of intentions', "'Kidnapped Romance": Discourse in the *Faerie Queene*', in *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance*, ed. by George M. Logan and Gordon Teskey (London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 212. Patrick Cheney in ' "And Doubted Her to Deeme an Earthly Wight": Male Neoplatonic "Magic" and the Problem of Female Identity in Spenser's Allegory of the Two Florimells', *Studies in Philology*, 86 (1989), pp. 310-340, argues that Arthur's pursuit of Florimell is indicative of the dangers of a Neoplatonic desire to distil a beautiful woman down to abstractions. Florimell rightly flees as 'the line between Neoplatonic love and Ovidian lust is often shadowy, (p. 317). See Sheila T. Cavanagh, *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in The Faerie Queene* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 22-26, for a further discussion of Arthur's pursuit of Florimell and the erotic nature of the chase.

⁴⁸ Barbara Baines, *Representing Rape in the English Early Modern Period* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2003), p. 235. See also Katherine Eggert 'Spenser's ravishment: Rape and Rapture in *The Faerie Queene*', *Representations*, (2000), pp. 1-26, for Eggert's contention that the recurring nature of sexual assault in the poem puts into question 'rape's viability as signifying system' (p. 4) particularly when it is juxtaposed with the forms of poetic rapture she argues it replaces.

So faire, and thousand thousand times more faire
 She seemd, when she presented was to sight,
 And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
 All in a silken Camus lylylly whight,
 Purfled vpon with many a folded plight,
 Which all aboue besprinckled was throughout,
 With golden aygulets, that glistred bright,
 Like twinckling stares, and all the skirt about
 Was hemd with golden fringe
 (II, iii, 26)

Below her ham her weed did somewhat traine,
 And her straight legs most brauely were embayld
 In gilden buskins of costly Cordwaine...
 (II, iii, 27, 1-3)

The gap that follows the line ‘Was hemd with golden fringe’ (26, 9) has been interpreted by Louis Montrose as an allusion to the ‘nothing’ of female genitalia.⁴⁹ Spenser’s break in the rhyme scheme along with the distinct lack of punctuation at the end of the line draws the reader’s eye towards this discrepancy and possibly dares them to fill in the gap with a description of their own. The depiction of Belpheobe with its pointed absence at the centre proceeds while she is being observed by Braggadoccio from the bush in which he is hiding: he thus becomes ‘...a debased, voyeuristic surrogate for the male reader’.⁵⁰ Braggadoccio and the reader become one and the same, although Braggadoccio is afforded a ring side seat while the reader must conjure the image for themselves, which begs the question: which is more transgressive? A similar question is raised when reading about the mount which provides the central feature of the Garden of Adonis in Book III, canto vi. Here Spenser conjures up another central absence which corresponds to female genitalia:

⁴⁹ Louis Montrose, ‘The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text’ in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. by Patricia Parker and David Quint (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 303-340, (p. 327).

⁵⁰ Montrose, ‘The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text’, p. 327.

Right in the midst of that Paradise,
 There stood a stately Mount, on whose round top
 A gloomy groue of mirtle trees did rise,
 Whose shadie boughs sharpe steel did neuer lop,
 Nor wicked beasts their tender buds did crop,
 But like a girlond compassed the hight,
 And from their fruitfull sides sweet gum did drop,
 That all the ground with precious deaw bedight,
 Threw forth most dainty odours, and most sweet delight.
 (III, vi, 43)

Landscape takes bodily form and the reader is given the opportunity to create flesh from this ‘stately Mount’ (43, 2); Spenser also strategically places this passage at the exact mid point of Book III in the 1590 edition allowing it to serve the same function as Belpheobe’s ‘gap’: a space which draws the reader’s eye and demands to be given substance by the imagination. Spenser’s exacerbation of the gap between text and imagination so revelled in by Painter and Pettie serves to demonstrate how volatile and capricious the nature of the reader’s gaze could be. The self-created image seems more unpredictable, harder to proscribe, than the image given corporeal reality. This was a dilemma wrestled with by Protestant reformers in relation to images and used by Catholics and Protestants alike as an argument for why the book was potentially more dangerous than the icon – you could not legislate for the eye of the mind.⁵¹

The centrality of the eye in discourses which incorporate pleasure for a moral purpose is perhaps alluded to by Spenser in his description of the House of Temperance. Alma takes Guyon and Arthur up a turret which is reminiscent of a pair of eyes:

⁵¹ See Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts: Vol I, Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), ‘Idols of the Mind’, pp. 452-466, for an examination of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ idols. See also p. 187, for Aston’s reading of Thomas More’s argument ‘that if we honour *books* in physical ways, why may we not do the same for *images*?’ Also pp. 458-460 for an exploration of internal idolatry and iconoclasm.

The rooffe hereof was arched ouer head,
 And deckt with flowers and herbars daintily;
 Two goodly Beacons, set in watches stead,
 Therein gaue light, and flam'd continually:
 For they of liuing fire most subtilly
 Were made, and set in siluer sockets bright,
 Couer'd with lids deuiz'd of substance sly,
 That readily they shut and open might.
 O who can tell the praises of that makers might!
 (II, ix, 46)

This is not unsurprising as the House of Temperance is formed along the lines of a well regulated and balanced body, although it is interesting that the turret's eye sockets are covered by lids 'deuiz'd of substance sly' (46, 7) – indicating that the construction carries the ambiguity associated with living sight. Inside the turret are housed the three sages of the past, present and future.⁵² It is the sage who records the past who is of most interest to the knights and Guyon peruses his book of 'Briton moniments' (ix, 59, 6) resulting in a lengthy description of the kings and queens of the realm – importantly Britain's past as a land of giants and wolves is seen to have been bought about by Dioclesian's 'fiftie daughters' (x, 8, 5):

Where companing with feends and filthy Sprights,
 Through vaine illusion of their lust vnclene,
 They brought forth Giants and such dreadfull wights,
 As farre exceeded men in their immeasured might.
 (II, x, 8, 6-9)

The constructed eye houses a narrative which has at its core a foundation myth based upon a sexually untamed and feminized view of Britain polluted by 'filthinesse' (9, 1).⁵³ It is this nation which is subdued by Brute and which will eventually be reigned over by Elizabeth; subsequently sixteenth century England as Spenser's readers know it,

⁵² See Harry Berger, *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (London: California University Press, 1988), pp. 38-41, for further discussion of the three sages and memory.

⁵³ See John M. Steadman, 'Spenser's Icon of the Past: Fiction as History, a Reexamination', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 55 (1992), pp. 535-558, for Steadman's exploration of the interaction between Spenser's 'moral vision' in the poem and his 'essentially fictive antiquity for which he claims historical truth' (p. 537).

has only been made possible by the purging of intemperate female sexual appetites. Even this monarchical foundation myth cannot escape from the image of female monstrosity so often typified by Pasiphae's lust for a bull, a tale which is recounted by Pettie in his storybook. The turret 'eyes' are the depository for all human record, whether it be past, present or future, alluding to the fact that all things which enter in through the eyes are then stored in the mind and hard, if not impossible, to erase. The inclusion of the story of Dioclesian's daughters in the book of 'Briton moniments' (ix, 59, 6) serves as a reminder that past vices cannot be expunged from the record, but remain indelibly printed on the psyche.

The notion of the eye as a conduit for historical record is further complicated when the eye is explicitly identified as a site for consumption. The eye consumes that which it sees, storing perhaps even digesting, whatever falls under its gaze. During the episode when Serena is captured by the cannibals in Book VI, the 'saluage nation' (VI, viii, 35, 2) feast their eyes on their victim:

Soone as they spide her, Lord what gladfull glee
They made amongst them selues; but when her face
Like the faire yuory shining they did see,
Each gan his fellow solace and embrace,
(viii, 37, 1-4)

Serena's fair face excites the cannibals even further, indicating that they prefer their meals to be attractive to the eye. Much as metaphors of consumption are employed when extolling female beauty, here the literal cannibal indulges in a similar act of blazon/dismemberment and consumption. In Pettie's storybook a comparable juxtaposition occurs when Sinorix feasts his eyes on the unwitting Camma at a banquet:

...he caused the company to sit downe to the banquet, and so disposed the matter, that Camma sat right ouer at the table against him, whereby he freely fed his eyes on that meat which conuerted rather to nourishment of sicknesse, then to wholesome humours of health. (4)

Literal and metaphorical consumption sit at the same table as mouths and eyes are shown to share the same feast. The eye ravishes the female body in an act of cannibalistic frenzy and it is this act of consumption which leads to the 'nourishment of sickness' and sexual excess. When Camma rejects Sinorix's advances she admonishes him: 'I promise you, I had rather be fed at home with bread and water then pay so derely for dainty dishes' (6). Even Sinorix's intended victim is well aware of the consuming power of the eye as Pettie chooses to align Camma's consumption of the banquet with Sinorix's sexual appetite.⁵⁴

When Serena is stripped naked her revealed body is shown to incite thoughts of rape in the cannibals:

Those daintie parts, the dearlings of delight,
Which mote not be prophan'd of common eyes,
Those villeins vew'd with loose lasciuious sight,
And closely tempted with their craftie spies;
And some of them gan mongst themselues deuize,
Thereof by force to take their beastly pleasure.
(viii, 43, 1-6)

This entire episode revolves around the process of seeing as consuming – the cannibals eat Serena up with their eyes and contemplate ravishing her body before they literally eat her up in much the same way as Sinorix 'fed his eyes' (4) upon Camma's body in Pettie's tale. As Andrew Hadfield notes this produces an explicit link between cannibal and reader as both dismember and digest the female body, the eye and the knife become one and the same:

⁵⁴ For an analysis of the correspondence between appetite and sex see Robert Applebaum, *Aguecheek's Beef, Belch's Hiccup, and Other Gastronomic Interjections: Literature, Culture, and Food Among the Early Moderns* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 225-235.

Spenser makes us see Serena's body as a construction of conceits which is dismembered and sacrificed as much by the civilised reader's gaze as the cannibal's knives. What should separate the reader from these cannibals, the ability to represent using language, in fact draws the two closer together.⁵⁵

The blazon form employed by Spenser when describing Serena displayed to the gaze of the cannibals, associates literal consumption with literary feeding – the body is consumed by the eye as a precursor to its absorption by the body. Thus the word becomes flesh in the mind's eye of the reader:

Her yvorie necke, her alabaster brest,
 Her paps, which like white silken pillows were,
 For love in soft delight thereon to rest;
 Her tender sides, her bellie white and clere,
 Which like an Altar did it selfe upre,
 To offer sacrifice divine thereon;
 Her goodly thighes, whose glorie did appeare
 Like a triumphal Arch, and thereupon
 The spoiles of Princes hang'd, which were in battle won.
 (viii, 42)

This episode can be read as part of a cumulative process in which Spenser reappraises and escalates the moral and sexual dilemma first posited when Una is worshipped by the Satyrs in Book I. The first reappraisal occurs when Hellenore copulates with the satyrs under the nose of the hapless Malbecco. Within this schema Serena represents the moment when the woman/savage dynamic is pushed to its outermost limits. Unlike Una and Hellenore she is revealed entirely to the eye of the savage and the eye of the reader simultaneously; the savage and reader subsequently become one and the same. Even if Serena escapes being literally eaten by the cannibals an entirely different kind of consumption has already taken place – perhaps one of a literary rather than a literal nature; it is an awareness of this which so disturbs Serena's sense of modesty and delays her revealing her identity to her rescuer Calepine.

⁵⁵ Andrew Hadfield, 'The 'sacred hunger of ambitious minds': Spenser's Savage Religion' in *Edmund Spenser* (Harlow, Essex: Longman Ltd, 1996), ed. by Andrew Hadfield, pp. 177-195, (pp.186-7).

The pleased eye can also try to manipulate that which it gazes upon, even giving life to the inanimate as happens in Pettie's tale of Pygmalion and Spenser's story of the false Florimell, created at the hands of the Witch for her lustful son:

In stead of eyes two burning lampes she set
 In siluer sockets, shyning like the skyes,
 And a quicke mouing Spirit did arret
 To stiree and roll them, like a womans eyes;
 In stead of yellow lockes she did deuise,
 With golden wyre to weaue her curled head;
 Yet golden wyre was not so yellow thrise
 As *Florimells* faire haire: and in the stead
 Of life, she put a Spright to rule the carkasse dead.
 (III, viii, 7)

In a reversal of the traditional blazon form the witch constructs her false Florimell out of 'golden wyre' (6) and 'burning lampes' (1).⁵⁶ Her son is taken in by her trickery, trusting too easily the evidence of his eyes he rejoices in the return of the object of his desire. Even when the original prompt for lust is removed from sight it can be conjured forth anew. This conjuring up of a woman comprising of parts, of bits and pieces, is reminiscent of the traditional Petrarchan sonnet form and also indicates that to build and worship an unnatural or idealised female body is akin to witchcraft.

In Pettie's storybook Pygmalion, disgusted by the fickle nature of women carves his ideal woman out of stone, only to find that he has fallen in love with his inanimate creation:

...as love first entereth in at the eyes, and from thence descendeth to the hart, so hee looked so longe thereon, that at length hee fel in loue with it, yea he was so wonderfully bewitched with it, that hee fell to imbrasing, kissinge, and dallyinge with it. (201)

⁵⁶ Cheney, "'And Doubted Her to Deeme'...", Cheney notes that this process traces 'the idolatrous Male's Petrarchan substitution of the real woman for an imaginative "conceit"' (p. 325) and indicates the extent to which Neoplatonic love subverts the institution of marriage.

The vision of Pygmalion ‘dallyinge’ with his statue in a futile attempt at copulation is as uncanny an image as that of the witch’s son being held in ‘vaine delight’ (viii, 10, 7) by the false Florimell. Both have created the objects of their desire through a breaking down of their component parts as dictated by the capricious nature of the eye, a process which Calvin R. Edwards associates with the ‘self-searching’ love of Narcissus.⁵⁷ This piecemeal construction of the female body leaves it at the mercy of a flickering gaze and renders it image rather than flesh. Therefore the deconstructed female body becomes fetishized, iconic, part of an image system associated with the intemperate and excessive Catholic church.⁵⁸ Pettie alludes to this confluence when discussing Pygmalion’s behaviour:

...whether his religion were to loue images, I know not: neither is it any more to be meruayled at in him, then in an infinite number y live at this day, which loue images right well, and verely perswade themselues y images haue power to pray for them, and help them to heauen. (202)

The unstable eye is not only at risk of taking pleasure from the depiction of vice, but it can also undo the work of the iconoclast by forming images in the mind’s eye, images which have the potential to morph and shift to form a variety of different transgressions.⁵⁹ The reader can play at being Pygmalion, although it is possible that by producing self-consciously constructed images one can navigate around their idolatrous potential.⁶⁰ Yet, while it is clear that the imagery that Spenser harnesses is often constructed of ‘painted colors’ (II, v, 29, 9) the triumph of art over nature that this

⁵⁷ Calvin R. Edwards, ‘The Narcissus Myth in Spenser’s Poetry’, *Studies in Philology*, 74 (1977), pp. 63–88, (p. 65).

⁵⁸ See Vickers, ‘Diana Described’, p. 275, for a discussion of how blazon-like ‘scattered words’ demonstrate the iconographic potential of the female body. Barbara Roche Rico points out that by the Elizabethan period Pygmalion’s statue had become ‘an emblem for a whore’ (p. 285), perhaps affording a further allusion to the Catholic church as the Whore of Babylon, ‘From “Speechless Dialect” to “Prosperous Art”’: Shakespeare’s Recasting of the Pygmalion Image’, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 48 (1985), pp. 285–295.

⁵⁹ See Kenneth Gross, *Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, and Magic* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), for a discussion of the role of idolatry in Spenser’s work.

⁶⁰ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, p. 190.

indicates does not do away with the potential for idolatry. What were the images of the saints but pictures of ‘painted colors’? This was clearly how the puritan annotator of a 1611 edition of the *Faerie Queene* felt when in the margins of the text he identified faeries with devils and charged the poem with belonging with the heretical texts vomited up by Error in Book I. The note in the margin reads: ‘a part of this book was there’.⁶¹ When the eye is acknowledged as the ultimate mediator between image and imagination one has to admit that, regardless of its constructed nature, the original image will be rebuilt in the mind time and time again through the act of memory. The pleasure, unwitting or otherwise, that an image produces upon its first viewing cannot be undone by acknowledging that it is comprised of building blocks; just as Pygmalion’s statue and the false Florimell serve to satisfy their respective ‘owners’ the constructed image can serve much the same purpose, and produce the same pleasure, as the real thing.

How the individual reader responds to these assaults on the ‘inner eye’ is impossible to determine, but Spenser, Painter and Pettie all go to some pains to construct a vision of their readership. Spenser’s many dedicatory sonnets, his frequent allusions to Queen Elizabeth, and the opening ‘Letter to Raleigh’ in the *Faerie Queene* appear to form an appeal to an aristocratic, courtly reader, although the presence of a wider circle of friends and partners in print indicates that Spenser’s constructed readership was multi-layered and often contradictory. Without precluding any influence from a popular or coterie readership it is clear that Spenser, in common with his contemporaries, is ostensibly directing his epic poem towards the higher echelons of Elizabethan society.

⁶¹ Stephen Orgel, ‘Margins of Truth’ in *The Renaissance Text: Theory, Editing, Textuality*, ed. by Andrew Murphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 103.

As I noted earlier Pettie's preface self-consciously directs his work 'To the gentle Gentlewoman Readers' (Aii. r). While this preface is apparently penned by the unnamed R. B, the frequent allusions to the gentlewoman reader throughout the text indicate that Pettie himself had a hand in its composition. R. B claims that his motivation for seeing Pettie's tales printed was little more than an act of altruism: '...I thought I could not any way do better pleasure or better service to your noble sexe, then to publish them in print, to your common profit and pleasure'(Aii. r). The fact that Pettie distances himself from the publication of his work by using R.B in the mode of the 'concerned friend' also acts as a form of disclaimer. Wendy Wall notes that prefaces such as these, '...cast the reader in the role of voyeur, one who partakes of forbidden and private discourse and is complicitous in stealing a glance at clandestine words.'⁶² If Pettie's preface is read in this manner it is particularly interesting that the 'clandestine' glance is imagined as belonging to a female reader. Most of the protagonists in Pettie's storybook are female, although many of them behave in a far from gentlewomanly manner, and the tales of their respective downfalls serve as examples of what not to do when confronted with lust in either male or female form. Such a conscious desire to mould a specifically female readership does however, appear to deflect any unwanted criticism as to the implied subjectivity of a male reader. If a woman achieves moral instruction from displays of vice, (disregarding entirely the potential for female sexual stimulation), what is gained by the male reader who is served up repeated images of bared female flesh, descriptions of lascivious sexual appetites and tales of violent rape and revenge? To insinuate that a male reader also receives a lesson in sexual morality from a parade of successive fallen women would be rather difficult. By negating the possibility for a male readership Pettie neatly sidesteps the issue of male arousal, a

⁶² Wendy Wall, 'Disclosures in Print: The "Violent Enlargement" of the Renaissance Voyeuristic Text', *Studies in English Literature*, 29 (1989), pp. 35-59, (p. 38).

slightly ridiculous exercise in deflection as the vast majority of the literate book buying public, and doubtless Pettie's own readership, was male.⁶³

Spenser directs his work to an explicitly female readership at one point during his poem when describing Malecasta's infatuation with Britomart:

Faire Ladies that to loue captiued arre,
And chaste desires do nourish in your mind,
Let not her fault your sweet affections marre,
Ne blot the bounty of all womankind;
'Mongst thousands good one wanton dame to find;
Emongst the Roses grow some wicked weeds:
For this was not to loue, but lust inclind;
(III, i, 49, 1-6)

Women are directed to preserve their own 'chaste desires' (2) and not worry that their feelings are comparable to the dangerous lust of Malecasta, who besides falling for a woman in drag insists that all her male attendants are not betrothed, a likely side swipe at Elizabeth's known displeasure whenever one of her entourage married without her permission. Raleigh is clearly represented in the poem as the squire Timias and in Book IV, canto vii, Belpheobe has him banished for a time for kissing an unconscious Amoret, a parallel to Raleigh's imprisonment for marrying Elizabeth Throckmorton

⁶³ See Jean-Francois Gilmont, 'Protestant Reformations and Reading' in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Blackwell publishing Ltd, 1999), pp. 213-237, (p. 221), for a discussion of Henry VIII's restrictions on women reading the Bible in the vernacular. The likelihood that women were amongst the least literate members of society in seventeenth century England and the difficulty of assessing female literacy is examined by Margaret Spufford in *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981), pp. 34-36. David Cressy in *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 119, argues that 'Women were mostly illiterate...' Cressy's methodology has been criticized in some quarters for its reliance upon signatures as the primary signal of literacy as there is compelling evidence that many people had reading skills but could not write, a significant number of this group may well have been women. Adam Fox argues that 'many more people could read than could write' and provides examples of people, including women, with a range of reading abilities, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 46-49, (p. 47). Margaret W. Ferguson argues for a 'skeptical analysis of literacy as a shifting and plural phenomenon', *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 3.

without the queen's consent.⁶⁴ Spenser reassures his female readership that they are not of Malecasta's ilk because they love rather than lust, a juxtaposition alluded to throughout Book III, this means that they are ranked amongst the chaste and cannot be mistaken for erotic or unduly pleased readers; although by pulling the erotic reader into the mind's eye Spenser insinuates that this is always a possible reader response.

Pettie's preface with its focus on educating and pleasing women also seems at first to distance the text from the figure of the female eroticised reader; this is despite the fact that as Sasha Roberts notes, women were often thought to '...read with their bodies not their minds.'⁶⁵ The female response to the eroticised nature of the stories contained in his compilation is deemed by Pettie to be only for the good of their moral education. Rather than chastising a female readership which could be aroused or unduly titillated by the content, the preface declares: 'I woulde haue onely Gentlewomen, and therefore to you I direct my woords' (Aii. r). It is made explicit however, that the pleasure of the female reader is paramount: 'I care not to displease twentie men, to please one woman: for the friendship amongst men, is to be counted but colde kindnesse, in respect of the feruent affection beeteene men and women: and our nature, is rather to doate of women, then to loue men' (Aii. r).

The 'feruent affection' in which men hold women alludes to an eroticisation of reading practice. While the female reader is constructed as a site for moral instruction perhaps the male reader is able to find gratification through imagining an eroticised female gaze? As Helen Hackett has observed in her work on early modern romance: '...the narrative foregrounding of a female audience...may be not so much about women reading, as about male readers deriving pleasure from imagining that they are

⁶⁴ See James P. Bednarz, 'Raleigh in Spenser's Allegory', *Spenser Studies*, 4, 1983, pp. 49-70, (pp. 59-60).

⁶⁵ See Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 22. Adrian Johns in *The Nature of the Book*, p. 413, describes the role of the passions in female reading.

watching women reading.’⁶⁶ Again, the reader adopts the pose of Actaeon, as Pettie’s relegated male readership is invited to watch the ‘gentle Gentlewomen Readers’ (Aii r) as their eyes wander over the stories of adultery, rape and unbridled lust. The initial act of deflection may in fact be an invitation of an entirely different nature.

According to early modern medical discourse women were the leakier, moister gender, and subsequently more prone to metamorphoses, therefore the female ‘inner eye’ and imagination can be more unpredictable and transgressive than the male as it is harder to restrain and more permeable.⁶⁷ This means that Pettie’s constructed female reader can be considered to be far more vulnerable to the lascivious content of his storybook than the male reader he relegates to the periphery of his work. The aroused female reader appears to be at the mercy of the voyeuristic gaze of both the writer and a male readership; she too could easily succumb to the temptations that result in the downfall of so many of Pettie’s female protagonists and the male reader is invited to visualise her doing so, as R.B. insists: ‘...you shall make me shew my will and [Pettie] his skill another time to pleasure you: you shall binde both of vs to remaine ready at your commaundements’ (Aii. r). This could be an innocent allusion to the reader desiring another book from R.B. and Pettie once they have read the *Petite Pallace*, but it also sounds like an enticement – a provocation to reveal male ‘will’ and ‘skill’ in the search for pleasure.

Spenser’s allusion to a gentrified readership in his ‘Letter to Raleigh’ and the commendatory verses may also serve to ward off criticism (as well as helping to secure patronage) as those from the higher classes were deemed to be more self-contained and less permeable than their lower counterparts and therefore less likely to succumb to

⁶⁶ Helen Hackett, ‘“Yet tell me some such fiction”: Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and the ‘Femininity of Romance’, in *Women, Texts and Histories 1575-1760*, ed. by Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 39-68, (p. 40).

⁶⁷ Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women*, p. 42.

vice. The aristocratic eye should hold fast to the moral imperative behind any depiction of intemperate, unchaste pleasure. This constructed readership, indeed this neatly constructed eye, is as patently unrealistic as Pettie's gentlewoman reader.⁶⁸ This is particularly clear when one remembers that Spenser's knights of virtue (noble men who seek honour and are charged with important quests by the faery queen) repeatedly have to be pulled back from the brink of succumbing to their counterpart vices.

Painter, much like Pettie, goes to some pains to emphasise the moral purpose behind his compilation. He claims in the preface that all his tales will 'be both profitable and pleasant, and will be liked of the indifferent Reader' (np):

Profitable I say in yt they doe reueale ye miseries of rapes and fleshly actions, the ouerthrow of noble men and Princes by disordered gouernement, the tragicall endes of them that vnhappily doe attempt practises vicious and horrible. Wilt thou learne how to behaue thy selfe with modestie after thou hast achieved any victorious conquest, and not to forget thy prosperous fortune in the glorious triumphe of the same...
(np)

By revealing the sins of the flesh to the eye of the reader Painter argues that he is fostering temperance in those with power. Many an intemperate ruler gets his comeuppance in the *Palace of Pleasure* and Painter clearly positions his readership, as does Spenser, within the realms of the elite. Painter claims that he is offering instruction to his betters by mining stories of bad governance provoked by lust, but perversely he could also be provoking licentious behaviour in his readers by placing temptation within their line of sight, as his examples time and again prove that those in power are far from self-contained and are in fact weak and prone to the vagaries of lust.

Exactly which aspect of Painter's storybook will be 'pleasant' (np) is not alluded to in this epistle; moral profit is deemed the more important outcome, although an

⁶⁸ For an examination of how William Caxton used the prologues and epilogues of his romance publications to portray an ideal readership see Yu-Chiao Wang, 'Caxton's Romances and Their Early Tudor Readers', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), pp. 173-188.

uncertain and dark pleasure lurks behind the injunction ‘wilt thou vnderstand what dishonor and infamie, desire of libidinous lust doth bring, read the rape of Lucrece?’ (np). The invitation is to view ‘libidinous lust’, even if it is at the behest of a moral return. Both Painter and Pettie’s compilations were deemed to be salacious and preachers such as John Stockwood certainly did not believe that readers were buying them for their morality tales. This is an excerpt from a sermon he preached at St Paul’s Cross on St Bartholomew’s Day 1578 – two years after Pettie had published his storybook, and twelve since the initial publication of the first volume of Painter’s work in 1566:

...the Lord...will neuer forsake vs, but appoint vs one godly meane or other, by which we shal grow to knowledge and vnderstanding in his heauenly truth: whereas, if we shal be rather delighted in reding of filthie books, as ye Baudies de Gall, the Amaudis, I trow it be, the great Pallace and the little Pallace of pleasure, with a number moe of suche filthy bookes, wherwyth this Churchyard swarmeth...so far off shal we be...from hauing the Angell or Peter to directe us, that the Deuil of hell wil associate himselfe vnto vs.⁶⁹

Despite the best efforts of their authors the ‘great Pallace and the little Pallace of pleasure’ were clearly deemed to be ‘filthy books’ and subject to the inescapable smear of licentiousness. Judging by the amount of time which had elapsed since the first appearance of Painter’s storybook and the performance of this sermon, moralisers such as Stockwood clearly had long memories, but due to their popularity the *Palaces of Pleasure* went through several reprints, leaving a constant reminder of the wide audience for such texts present amongst bookseller’s wares. Despite their reputation as loose texts there was a strong market for such material, so much to Stockwood’s consternation St Paul’s churchyard ‘swarmeth’ with them and their kind.

It is the many contradictions concerning the motivations of their readers in Painter and Pettie’s storybooks that appear to inform Spenser’s ambiguous response to

⁶⁹ John Stockwood, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse on Barthelomew day...* (London: Henry Bynneman for George Byshop, 1578), p. 147.

the role of pleasure in moral instruction in the *Faery Queene*; the instability of both writers' constructed readerships betokens the same insecurity revealed in the so-called knights of virtue that prick across the plain of Spenser's epic. By trying to define the social and gendered perimeters of the eye both Painter and Pettie have endeavoured to stabilise the initial site of transgression so feared by the Reformation iconoclasts, in doing so they have in fact reinforced the subjective nature of reading and alluded to the potentially titillating effect of exposing vice to the unconstrained gaze.

During the early modern period the rise of print culture resulted in the eye becoming a privileged site for the transfer of meaning, particularly in relation to ideas which had previously been accessible to only a small or coterie audience. The output of the printing press included the production of handbooks and manuals which endeavoured to explain the secrets of everything from the movement of the stars to the internal workings of the human body. That which had previously been hidden away was now opened out and displayed to all those who could read. Wendy Webb argues that this process of revelation and exposure led to an association between the printed text and the female body to the point where: 'publication mimics Actaeon's transgression',⁷⁰ and the process of reading is explicitly allied to a form of (male) voyeurism. If the rise of print is allied to the voyeuristic gaze typified by the myth of Diana and Actaeon then this could be pushed further to infer that widely disseminated material can be viewed as promiscuous, part of a dichotomy which figures the poet as pimp and the book as a whore.⁷¹ The practice of copying out particularly arousing sections of texts into miscellanies also meant that readers could identify and store writings which excited

⁷⁰ Webb, 'Disclosures in Print...', p. 52. Webb pays particular attention to the role of prefaces in relation to the female body/text dialectic and discusses the reading of published sonnet sequences as a way of spying on the 'act of courtship' (p. 48).

⁷¹ Alexandra Gillespie in *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate and their Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 108, points out that it was not uncommon for books to be construed as the bastard children of ladies 'well pressed'.

their imaginations, allowing them to return to them at leisure, producing individual compilations perfectly attuned to their tastes.⁷² The voyeur was subsequently able to dismember the body of a text - here figured as female - to produce a tailor-made blazon comprising of choice disparate parts.

Katherine Eggert notes that '*The Faerie Queene* displays an unwillingness to give up the tactile and visual pleasures of surfaces and the sensual *frisson* they give.'⁷³ In this way Spenser's epic is an apt bedfellow for Painter and Pettie's compilations, surface and texture provide a visual warmth and depth to the word made image in the mind's eye and all three texts employ this device whether the tactile is evoked by the conjuring forth of bare skin, flowing and rent locks, dainty limbs or golden bowers. If the reader accepts that on some level they adopt the pose of a voyeur and that the process is a pleasurable one, then the author must accommodate a place for this readership, particularly as this was a good way to ensure that your text was popular.

As the position of the voyeur is so central to the point of convergence at which Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, Pettie's *Petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* meet, it is possible to infer that Spenser shows a singular preoccupation with the processes of reading regardless of whether the eye peruses classical literature, poetic endeavour or a popular page turner. No matter what is printed upon the page the very act of printing itself demands that the reader take up a position on the margins of the text and perform an action akin to lifting a veil or peering through a keyhole. This feeling of standing on a voyeuristic edge must have been acute for those who read Painter and Pettie's work as it had been denounced as lewd and bawdy by the moralisers of the day. This would have heightened the awareness of the potential transgression

⁷² See Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Exhibiting Class and Displaying the Body in Sidney's Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*', *Studies in English Literature*, 37 (1997), pp. 55-72, (pp. 65-66), for Lamb's description of the popular copying out of Philisides' blazon of his mistress from the *Arcadia*, and a discussion of the 'erotic connotations' of reading and then copying.

⁷³ Eggert, 'Spenser's Ravishment...', p. 8.

inherent in the reading of printed material, a feeling tapped into by Spenser as he went about constructing a sense of how one should read print and the danger of reading incorrectly, as Lauren Silberman notes: ‘misreading can result in deforming what one reads or being deformed by it.’⁷⁴

Sidney saw pleasure as a route to moral instruction, a way to draw the reader into a text, what he failed to address adequately was the subjective nature of the eye and its counterpart, the imagination. Pleasure could facilitate learning, but there was always an inherent risk that it could also titillate and incite intemperance and unchaste thoughts. Painter and Pettie throw into stark relief the inconsistencies surrounding pleasurable reading for a moral purpose and endeavour to hide the potential for arousal behind a constructed readership. Spenser was acutely aware of these contradictions and exploited them to their outermost limits, leaving the *Faerie Queene* littered with palaces of pleasure as he exposed the multiple lines of sight proffered to the reader. His template for such an exploration was the popular Elizabethan storybook as well as more classical models for moral instruction, for it was the storybook with its broad variety of readers that most clearly demonstrated the unpredictable and transgressive nature of the eye.

⁷⁴ Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of The Faerie Queene* (London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 121. Silberman also discusses how Book III of the *Faerie Queene* evaluates reading morally and posits Britomart as a role model for the reader while Book IV provides a critique of this mirroring process by using the figure of Lust to make ‘a face of male genitalia’ and call attention to the ‘gendered quality of the gaze’ (p. 121).

‘eare marked beasts abroad be bruted’: *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* and the Early Modern Beast Fable

Mother Hubbard’s Tale has had a curious critical tradition; the contemporary allusions to be found in Spenser’s depiction of the exploits of an amoral Fox and his Ape companion have ensured that the poem has been dissected thoroughly in relation to Elizabethan politics and courtly intrigue. These allegorical readings have raised interesting questions as to Spenser’s allegiances at court as *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* may have been written at the expense of the Duc d’Alençon and Lord Burghley in order to ingratiate Spenser with the Earl of Leicester; this is dependent upon Spenser having written a version of the poem well before its publication as part of the *Complaints* in 1591.¹ A letter written by Sir Thomas Tresham shortly after the poem’s publication suggested that it was ‘called in’ which also potentially impacts upon our understanding

¹ Edwin Greenlaw, *Studies in Spenser’s Historical Allegory* (New York: Octagon Books Inc, 1967), p. 112. See also Greenlaw, ‘Spenser and the Earl of Leicester’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 25 (1910), pp. 535-561, for an analysis of Spenser’s association with Leicester and Greenlaw’s argument that a first draft of *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* was responsible for Spenser being ‘shipped to Ireland’ (p. 550). Richard Rambuss in *Spenser’s Secret Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), considers what it means for the poem and *The Complaints* as a whole if, (contrary to Greenlaw’s theory), it was produced after Spenser had published the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*, arguing that the volume stages ‘an ostensible public deflection away from Spenser’s epic itinerary’ (p. 86) and thus challenges the classical trajectory of the ‘*rota Virgilii*’ (p. 87). Katherine A. Craik ascribes the diversionary nature of the *Complaints* to Spenser’s fascination with Chaucer’s use of the complaint form, thus placing the Medieval English poet at the heart of his literary endeavours, ‘Spenser’s “*Complaints*” and the New Poet’, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 64 (2001), pp. 63-79. Roger A. Geimer refutes the evidence that Spenser bore a grudge against Burghley for withholding his pension provided by a verse taken from John Manningham’s diary and ascribes the poem recorded by Manningham, (‘It pleased your Grace vpon a tyme/ To graunt me reason for my ryme,/ But from that tyme vntill this season/ I heard of neither ryme nor reason’), to Thomas Churchyard, ‘Spenser’s Rhyme or Churchyard’s Reason: Evidence of Churchyard’s First Pension’, *The Review of English Studies*, 20 (1969), pp. 306-309. Jonathan Crewe argues that even if an earlier version of *MHT* had circulated, the 1591 version would have accommodated ‘other codings or contextual investments’ including an allusion to Leicester and Spenser’s journey from Ireland to the English court in 1590, *Hidden Designs: The Critical Profession and Renaissance Literature* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 56. Thomas Herron in ‘Reforming the Fox: Spenser’s “Mother Hubbard’s Tale,” the Beast Fables of Barnarbe Riche, and Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Durham’, *Studies in Philology*, 105 (2008), pp. 336-388, argues that *MHT* was designed to promote military intervention in Ireland and that Sir Reynold satirizes the Archbishop of Dublin and Armagh and Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Adam Loftus, rather than Burghley.

of Spenser's later poetry and his subsequent career in Ireland.² Josephine Waters Bennet has produced evidence that *Mother Hubberd's Tale* was bound separately, as were other parts of the *Complaints*. She argues that the publisher: '...may have foreseen trouble about *Mother Hubberd's Tale* and prepared to be in a position to withdraw it without losing his whole investment.'³ In this chapter however, I will endeavour to open out Spenser's poem to accommodate a reading of the work as an exploration of the English beast fable's role in popular satire and subversion. In doing so *Mother Hubberd's Tale* becomes a critique of the role of counsel in Elizabethan politics, exploring the ambiguous motivations behind proffering advice to rulers and the punishment meted out to those who did so without appropriate caution, as well as questioning the monarch's role as head counsellor.⁴ The beast who can speak epitomises the unfixed and potentially beastly nature of language when spoken or committed to print, and unravels the layers of dissimulation and flattery which make up the art of counsel. Elizabeth was fond of giving her courtiers and intimates animal like nicknames, most famously Alençon's Master of the Wardrobe and his principal messenger to the Queen, Simier, was called her 'ape',⁵ as such her court resembled that of the lion king from the famous beast fable *Raynarde the Foxe*; by using this as a cipher through which to read Spenser's poem it becomes possible to challenge rather than cement the fixed allegorical purpose of the fox and apes' roles in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*.⁶ The beast fable loosens the ties that bind Spenser's poem solely to contemporary court intrigue

² Richard S. Peterson, 'Laurel Crown and Ape's Tail: New Light on Spenser's Career from Thomas Tresham', *Spenser Studies* 12 (1998), pp. 1-35.

³ Josephine Waters Bennet, 'A Bibliographical Note on Mother Hubberd's Tale', *English Literary History*, 4 (1937), pp. 60-61, (p. 61).

⁴ Mary Thomas Crane in "'Video et Taco": Elizabeth I and the Rhetoric of Council', *Studies in English Literature*, 28 (1988), pp. 1-15, (p. 2), argues that Elizabeth herself used the role of counsellor to 'assume in her own person an authority usually associated with men'.

⁵ See Greenlaw, 'Spenser and the Earl of Leicester', pp. 543-545.

⁶ For a discussion of Spenser's use of animals in *The Faerie Queene* see Madeline Pelner Cosman, 'Spenser's Ark of Animals: Animal Imagery in the *Faerie Queene*', *Studies in English Literature*, 3 (1963), pp. 85-107. None of the animals identified by Cosman however, take on fabulist roles akin to those of the Ape and the Fox in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*.

and allows for a satirical examination of the role of poet courtier and the relationship between censorship, mutilation and the danger of print.

The beast fable's relationship with satire can be linked to Aesop's traditional exploration of unequal power relations; Aesop was thought to have been a black slave and was frequently depicted as being monstrously deformed even though he had the power to advise kings.⁷ In Aesop's fables the weak are pitted against the strong in a dichotomy epitomised by the story of the wolf and the lamb. In an edition of Aesop's fables translated by Caxton and printed by Richard Pynson in 1500 the wolf admonishes the lamb for drinking from the same stream and polluting the water – this is despite the fact that as the lamb points out, the flow of the water is directed from the wolf. The wolf is unimpressed by this declaration of innocence and promptly 'toke the lambe and ete hym': 'This fable sheweth that the euyll man retcheth nat by what maner he may rob and destroy the good and innocent man'.⁸ In a Scottish version of the same tale printed in 1570: 'The...Lamb culd do na thing bot blait',⁹ emphasising the helplessness of the lamb in the face of the wolf's cruelty and bloodlust. The moral being that the weak are often powerless and indeed can do nothing but 'blait' when set upon by wolves. Matthew Senior has pointed out that the wolf's superior position upstream from the lamb in this tale is indicative of the 'tactical encounters'¹⁰ that take place in the fabulist animal world. These encounters definitively position man and therefore the poet, as the

⁷ Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (London: Duke University Press, 1991), pp.13-43. See also B. E. Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop* (Haverford, Pennsylvania: The American Philological Association, 1936), for an exploration of the textual transmission of the fables, including a close analysis of early manuscript versions.

⁸ Aesop, *In tyme whene beestes coude speke the wolues made warre against the sheepe...* (London: Richard Pynson, 1500), D iv. v.

⁹ Aesop, *The morall fabillis of Esope the Phrygian...* (Edinburgh: Robert Lekpreuik at the expense of Henrie Charteris, 1570), np.

¹⁰ Matthew Senior, "'When the Beasts Spoke': Animal Speech and Classical Reason in Descartes and La Fontaine", in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*, ed. by Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 78.

ultimate ‘tactician of heights’.¹¹ This is reminiscent of the traditional position adopted by the satirical persona who surveys the seething corruption of the world below him from a lofty height. In medieval bestiaries and fables a variety of different animals were used to indicate this difference in ‘height’ or status, it was up to the reader to figure out exactly where they fitted into the traditional framework of high and low, as the forms of animalistic representation were far from static. Arnold Clayton Henderson notes that in beast fables: ‘building similitudes in new ways can lead an author to discard one animal for another or to jam a new meaning up against an old one, yet without abandoning the basic method of reasoning.’¹² Fables and bestiaries were subject to innovation and change as animal forms took on contemporary resonances and were subject to stylistic innovation, but the dichotomy of high and low remained at the centre of the fabulist world.

During the early modern period the beast fable was far from confined to the works of Aesop and medieval bestiaries. A variety of different publications used tropes associated with beast fables, such as talking animals, and gave thinly disguised individuals beastly characteristics or used certain animals to indicate a particular virtue or vice.¹³ Books of husbandry and housekeeping would use animals as representations of industriousness (worker bees) or sloth (pigs). The beast is often burdened with the weight of human fallibility, thus rendering human actions monstrous. The aim of these tales was frequently didactic – a lesson or piece of advice was produced by the author in the guise of a childish school room exercise or popular entertainment (many readers would have encountered Aesop for the first time in the classroom and the traditional

¹¹ Senior, “‘When the Beasts Spoke’”, p. 78.

¹² Arnold Clayton Henderson, ‘Medieval Beasts and Modern Cages: The Making of Meaning in Fables and Bestiaries’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 97 (1982), p. 45.

¹³ Thomas Nashe’s *Pierce Penniless* (1592) employs a fable illustrating the sin of hypocrisy whose main character is a Bear who is aided in his machinations by an Ape and a Fox. Nashe, like Spenser is clearly using the form of *Raynarde the Foxe*. For a detailed exploration of the contemporary allegory of Nashe’s work see Donald J. McGinn, ‘The Allegory of the ‘Beare’ and the ‘Foxe’ in Nashe’s *Pierce Penillesse*’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 61 (1946), pp. 431-453.

storyteller would have surely have had a beast fable or two as part of their repertoire). The animal kingdom was variously and frequently employed as a repository for narrative possibilities – a way of shoring up character traits and moral positions by aligning people, professions and forms of behaviour with corresponding animals. This was best accomplished by endowing animals with the ability to speak and thereby making their humanity and conversely the beastly nature of the humans they represented, explicitly clear. Mary Fissell has examined a variety of cheap publications concerned with animals classified as vermin, a category which included a variety of four-legged beasts who steal and eat man's food, most notably the fox, and argues that a prerequisite for being named vermin was a mastery of language: 'vermin use language, a system of signs, to deceive and trick. In many fables vermin are also expert readers of signs, interpreting the material world in order to avoid being tricked themselves.'¹⁴ The speaking animal is crafty and wily but also frequently identified as a competitor for food in beast fables; by consuming the same repast as men and demonstrating a keen ability to talk their way out of sticky situations (Raynarde and Sir Reynold's defining characteristic) they are identified as players on a surprisingly human stage. Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy* would sing the praises of the humble animal fable as a vehicle for instruction and moral learning: '...the poet is the food for the tenderest stomachs, the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher, whereof Aesop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sounds of virtue from these dumb speakers'.¹⁵ The beast fable sugars the pill of learning by cloaking virtue in an animal

¹⁴ Mary Fissell, 'Imagining Vermin in Early Modern England', *History Workshop Journal*, 47 (1999), pp. 1-29, (p. 16). Fissell also undertakes an analysis of reading practices (specifically publications dealing with hunting, cooking and carving as well as beast fables) in relation to vermin in order to posit a historically specific picture of attitudes towards animals in the early modern period.

¹⁵ 'The Defence of Poesy' in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 223, ll. 465-470. All further quotations are from this edition.

hide and using ‘pretty allegories’ to tempt a reader who may in fact be more beastly than Aesop’s creations. Sidney insinuates that it is the reader themselves who may be most closely associated with beast-like behaviour and in need of the morality tales offered by beast fables. This immediately calls into question the position held by the reader in relation to the fabulist animal world and blurs the boundaries between these speaking beasts and a beast-like reader.

Erica Fudge argues that the beast fable strives for a specifically humanist reading: ‘the beast fable is not merely a literary convention, it actually enacts the aim of humanism itself. To look beneath the surface of the fable, to read the moral and not the animal, is where the human can be found...To misread a fable is to be an animal.’¹⁶ It is the reader who dictates whether or not the fable is successful, a beast-like reader will fail to comprehend the moral at the heart of the tale. With such weight placed upon the reader’s ability to decipher fables properly it becomes clear that Spenser’s harnessing of the genre is indicative of his interest in the gap between reader and text, and the problem of ensuring that a readership has the necessary skill to unpick meaning from printed material. If the reader can be beastly, lacking the cognitive insight with which to interpret meaning in a correct manner, then there is a risk that meaning can be subverted and the author charged with leading them astray. The beast fable burdens the animal world with human failings – principally expressed through the endowment of speech – and demands that the reader be able to separate the two. This ‘double’ reading is what drives Spenser’s poem and what also makes it potentially subversive. The reader’s ability to read between the lines is privileged to such an extent that no particular reading can be fixed or stabilised, the only constant is an ambiguity surrounding authorial intention. The displacement of current events to the world of beasts provides a buffer

¹⁶ Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), p. 65.

against cries of slander, but if the moral/lesson was unpopular with those in power then the author took a huge risk. As Richard Dutton has noted, when comparing Jonson's use of beast fables in *Volpone* to Spenser's in *Mother Hubbard's Tale*: 'Spenser...made his critical intentions all too aggressively apparent, thereby breaching the deniability that beast fables normally conferred.'¹⁷ Spenser's poem diverged too far from the beast fable's cloak of ambiguity, making a specified reading all too easy.

This specified reading is perhaps what led to the poem being 'called in' as Spenser deviated from what Annabel Patterson terms the 'hermeneutics of censorship',¹⁸ a system of communication in which ambiguity is paramount; this system is based upon:

...the equivocal and fragile relationship between writers...and the holders of power, a relationship whose maintenance was crucial to all writers who aspired to some influence, either on the shape of national culture or more directly on the course of events. At any moment that delicate balance between independence and involvement could be broken by impudence or intransigence on either side...¹⁹

Patterson's theory that self-censorship and a kind of 'functional ambiguity'²⁰ played an important role in the production of writing during the early modern period is predicated on a belief that writers had access to a structural code of conduct. Cyndia Clegg argues for a less codified form of censorship where 'press censorship appears less as a product of prescriptive (and proscriptive) Tudor *policy* than a pragmatic situational response to an extraordinary variety of particular events.'²¹ Patterson makes it clear

¹⁷ Richard Dutton, "'Volpone' and Beast Fable: Early Modern Analogic Reading', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), pp. 347-370, (p. 368).

¹⁸ Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England, with a new introduction* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 18.

¹⁹ Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p. 8.

²⁰ Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p. 18.

²¹ Cyndia Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 5. See also Janet Clare, 'Art made tongue-tied by authority': *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), for a analysis of the censorship of the early modern stage. Clare argues that the Master of the Revels was able to 'wield his authority selectively according to his perceptions of the Crown's interests' resulting in there being 'no consistent

however, that punishment was inevitably arbitrary in fashion, indicating that it was very difficult, if not impossible for a writer to judge just how close they were to the edge even as they participated in a delicate system of power brokering. As is made clear by the wary reception of *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, even a standard ambiguous structural form such as the beast fable, could be at risk of inspiring the wrath of the powerful. If it is accepted that Spenser's poem, regardless of when it was originally written, touches upon matters at the heart of Elizabeth's court, including systems of patronage and counsel, then it is clear that Spenser was himself engaged with the systems and responses of censorship. The role of censorship in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* and *Raynarde the foxe* in relation to the punishment meted out to those who transgressed Patterson's 'hermeneutics of censorship' and paid the price with their flesh, will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

By putting words into the mouths of animals the beast fable also provides Spenser with a template for the exploration of man's devolutionary tendency in *Mother Hubbard's Tale*; the idea that post-lapsarian man has the potential to slip backwards, to become beast-like. This is what Bruce Boehrer identifies as an anthropomorphic reading of man's relationship to beast, the biblical source for which is the story of Noah's son Ham who is banished for gazing upon his father's nakedness and whose progeny are subsequently described as being like wild beasts.²² This is a trope that is found in Homer's depiction of Circe's transformation of the Greek warriors into pigs in *The Odyssey* and in the Bower of Bliss episode in the *Faerie Queene*, where Acrasia's suitors are all monstrously deformed by their subservience to lust. The degeneration of man into beast is dictated by a loss of reason and a desire for excess but, while Circe's

political, moral or cultural criteria to be discerned' as each play was judged based on 'historical moment', (p. 211).

²² Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), p. 27.

pigs and Acrasia's beasts lose their ability to speak along with their animalesque transformation, Spenser's ape and fox are defined by their ability to dissemble and lie through false speech and counsel. It is these traits that arguably render them most human-like, alluding to the inherently beastly nature of fallen man's capacity for sin and the danger of trusting the spoken word. It would be through persuasive speech that the serpent tempted Eve and Eve in turn tempted Adam; man's fall from grace was intimately entwined with a twisted and forked tongue whose words of enticement would echo through the ages. The most important metamorphosis undertaken by man would come at the behest of a speaking animal, a transformation that would ultimately render man more beast-like and sever the intimate relationship man shared with God.

Employing animals that speak in order to cloak moral learning or contemporary allusion would forever carry the mark of man's fall and would also beg the question - what happened to the reader when they entered the world of speaking beasts? If they too could be beast-like in nature could they be further transformed by their exposure to the fabulist world? As Adrian Johns has noted, readers during the early modern period thought of themselves as permeable, corresponding to a humoural model of the body, and easily at risk of being adversely affected by the texts they consumed.²³ The potential for a reader of an animal fable to become animal-like was not out of the question.

Few writers chose, as Spenser did, to take the risk of making close allusions in their work, fewer still aimed them towards the higher echelons of the political establishment however, when the worlds of beasts and men were allowed to converge allusion and innuendo were not only implied by the literary form but given free reign. This convergence is most keenly felt with the introduction of speech into the animal

²³ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp.380-443.

world – a metamorphosis which is at the heart of the beast fable’s satiric role. In Spenser’s poem and in the wider print culture of the day it is the talking beast which epitomises the monstrous and deformed nature of man’s counsel and dissimulation. The spoken word is revealed as truly beast-like when it is proffered by an animal tongue.²⁴

The clearest precedent for Spenser’s fable is the *booke of Raynarde the Foxe* reprinted by Thomas Gaultier in 1550 (apparently a translation made by Caxton in 1481 from a Dutch version, Caxton also produced the first English version of Aesop’s fables²⁵) which features a litany of complaints made to the ‘lyon kynge of all beastes’²⁶ about Raynarde the fox’s immoral behaviour. Raynarde is charged with slander, rape and murder by the other beasts at court, his crimes made more savage by his dissembling – he claims to have repented and takes on the habit of a ‘heremitage...and doth greate penaunce for his sinnes’ (b. i. r) – it is in this disguise that he tricks Chaunteclere the ‘cokke’ (b. ii. v) and kills his daughter. The fable is littered with references to clerical hypocrisy, at one point a parson declares to the town’s people that if they pull his wife from a river: ‘I giue to them pardon of theyr penaunce and relief of all their synnes’ (c. iii. r), and when Raynarde sees Bruyne the beare after he has been mutilated for stealing honey (part of a trap laid by Raynarde) Raynarde gloatingly compares him to a monk: ‘Were ye a monke or an abbot, he that shore your crowne hath clypped of your eres, ye haue loste your top and done of your gloues, I trowe verelye that ye wyll go synge complyn’ (c. v. v). The insinuation is that under any friar’s habit there may hide a Raynarde and pardons and indulgences are handed out to serve the purposes of priests while monks carry the marks of punishment rather than salvation.

²⁴ Carla Mazzio in ‘Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England’, *Modern Language Studies*, 28 (1998), pp. 95-124, examines the tongue as man’s most ‘vulnerable member’ (p. 95).

²⁵ N. F. Blake, *Caxton and his World* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), p. 50.

²⁶ *the booke of raynarde the foxe...* (London: Thomas Gaultier, 1550), a. ii. v. All further quotations are taken from this edition.

The *Reynard* stories were well known throughout Europe and the character found his way into both ballads and polemic: Reynard provided a useful model for satire and to call someone by the name of the mischievous and wily fox was a clear insult.²⁷ Thomas More in his *second parte of the Confutation of Tyndales answere* would refer to Tyndale as ‘Raynarde’, clearly in an effort to associate the reformer with the dissembling nature of clerical abuses: ‘...so playeth Tyndale now, beyng fayne to graunte all that he hath denyed / he flyeth lyke rede Raynarde the foxe for hys saufegarde into his malepardus of his felyng fayth / in whyche though he haue nothyng to proue it, yet the Raynarde trusteth to lye saufe, bycause he thynketh no man can fynde hym out.’²⁸ More here attaches the label ‘Raynarde’ to Tyndale in order to argue that the reformer is hiding from criticism, foolishly thinking that he can lie low in the ‘malepardus of his felyng fayth’ (malepardus is the name of Raynarde the fox’s castle) rather than be charged with hypocrisy. Raynarde was certainly accustomed to being adopted to a variety of causes on both sides of the religious divide and was used with great effectiveness to conjure forth a particularly potent image of beastly duplicity.

The preface to *Reynarde the foxe* claims that the parables contained in this tale of a devious and sly fox will allow men: ‘to come unto the subtyll knowledge of suche thinges as daily ben vsed and had in ye counseyles of Lordes and Prelates both ghostely and wordely, and also among marchautes and other comen people’ (a. iiii. r). This ‘subtyll knowledge’ may allude to discontent over clerical abuses, indicated by Raynarde’s choice of dress and his affectation of repentance, but also to the dissembling nature of lordly ‘counseyles’. The fable claims to be didactic and may also be billing

²⁷ When examining how songs and ballads borrowed from earlier productions, musical or otherwise, Adam Fox references a song produced in Gloucestershire in 1608 which mentions Reynard the Fox alongside Pasquil, ‘Popular verses and their Readership in the Early Seventeenth Century’, in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 125-137, (p. 135).

²⁸ Thomas More, *The second parte of the confutation of Tyndales answere* (London: Wyllyam Rastell, 1533), cccxlv.

itself as a way of learning the ‘ghostely’ and ‘wordely’ vocabulary of ‘Lordes’ and ‘Prelates’ so it is hard to discern whether dissembling counsel and false speech is explicitly criticised – particularly as the wily Raynarde escapes without punishment.

The preface to the fable also states:

...this boke is made for nede and profyte of all good folks, as farre as they in reding and hering of it shall understande and fele the forsayde subtyll deceytes dayly ben used in the worlde, not to the intent that men shulde use them, but euery man shoulde eschewe and kepe him frome the subtyll false shrews, so they be not deceiued... (a. iiii. r)

The story of Reynard’s exploits should act as a warning to those on the wrong end of a subtle tongue, but by acknowledging that men could ‘use them’ - that is the instances of dissembling - the preface also alludes to the risk that the reader may take away a lesson of an entirely different kind. The fable’s didactic uses are dictated by the reader and it may serve as a handbook for those wishing to learn how to subvert the law and avoid punishment. The complaint–defence dynamic played out in front of the king in *Raynarde the Foxe* has the effect of mimicking/satirising the processes of monarchical justice and the use of false counsel and lies to achieve a particular end is shown as part of the accepted machinations of power. The courtroom style of the proceedings, whereby Raynarde is accused *in absentia* of a variety of crimes by his peers, who direct their complaints to the lion-king, is reminiscent of the pleas for justice or preferment brought to Queen Elizabeth. The plaintiffs at the animal court frequently call on their ‘linage and frendes’ (a. v. r) when airing their grievances, as would be common practice in a human court, in order to substantiate their claims of mistreatment.²⁹ Individuals also rely on these ‘frendes’ for counsel when deciding how

²⁹ David Cressy examines the role of kinship bonds in the proceedings of the law courts in ‘Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), pp. 38-69, (pp. 52-53). Michael J. Braddick places emphasis on the importance of local opinion on the outcome of court trials, as there was considerable scope for a flexible interpretation of crime and punishment on the part of jurors who may have known the defendant and/or plaintiff, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550-1700*

best to proceed, just as Raynarde himself receives counsel from a variety of associates when trying to escape the accusations of his enemies. Counsel played a strategic role in political discourse during the early modern period provoking extensive debate over whether it should be proffered by right or duty.³⁰ Counsel was seen as a way of circumscribing the excesses of the monarch but counsellors often left themselves open to the charge that they had led their regent astray – this was an accusation levelled at Cromwell during the Pilgrimage of Grace and at Charles I's associates during the personal rule. Popular revolts would frequently look to the monarch as 'an idealised arbiter'³¹ rather than as the source of disaffection. By placing blame at the feet of those who had advised the king or queen interest groups could avoid the charge of treason and potentially escape the punitive measures unleashed by a displeased Crown. Raphael Hythloday in Thomas More's *Utopia* clearly articulates the danger of trying to advise a monarch when he equates going into courtly service with becoming a king's slave, he argues that his friends should 'not insist, or even expect, that for their sake I should

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 138-39. For an examination of the role of lawyers in early modern culture and the monarch's position as the ultimate dispenser of justice (and employer of lawyers) see William J. Bouwsma, 'Lawyers and Early Modern Culture', *The American Historical Review*, 78 (1972), pp. 303-327. The fox was often thought to be perfect for the role of a lawyer because of their ability to use language to manoeuvre themselves or others out of difficult situations, Mary Fissell, 'Imaging Vermin...', p. 16. Esther Cohen has examined a variety of cases from early modern Europe in which animals were brought to trial and often executed for committing crimes such as murder and the destruction of property, 'Law, Folklore and Animal Lore', *Past and Present*, 110 (1986), pp. 6-37.

³⁰ See Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 1988), pp. 70-89, for Haigh's analysis of Elizabeth's privy council and his argument that towards the end of her reign the council had become a small body of men who consolidated their power by marrying one another's kin. He also points out that councillors felt that it was their duty to give the Queen advice that she may not have wanted to hear and to a certain extent advisors such as Burghly were in a position to 'manage' the Queen's affairs, dictating what came to her attention. Simon Adams in 'Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics', *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Christopher Haigh (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1984), pp. 55-78, (p. 65), examines the relationship between the court and council during Elizabeth's reign, arguing that both bodies were bound to the queen by close 'personal ties'. A. N. McLaren argues that there were two competing readings of sovereignty as stemming from 'mixed monarchy' or from the crown itself, systems of counsel were bound to this dichotomy and 'the relationship of counsel to sovereignty' was subsequently a 'contested proposition', *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth 1558-1585* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 158.

³¹ Michael Mullet, *Popular Culture and Popular Protest in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1987), p. 3.

enslave myself to any king whatever'³² as there is 'no place for philosophy in the councils of kings' (p.95).

Counsel was often a dangerous business and not only for those who undertook to advise princes, people in power often displayed a singular weakness when they relied too heavily on counsel from an untested source and risked being led astray or even betrayed by their intimates. In *Raynarde the foxe* it is made clear that the king of beasts cannot rely upon his most trusted advisors as they are all too easily corrupted by Raynarde. Upon hearing several complaints against the misbehaving fox the king sends a messenger to fetch him to court, the task is appointed to Bruyne the bear and when they meet one another Raynarde tempts him with honey and succeeds in trapping him in the middle of a split oak. The bear's greed is his undoing - he is promised favours by Raynarde only to find himself unwittingly ensnared and at the mercy of the town's people wielding 'rake', 'brome', 'stake' and 'flayle' (c. ii. v). Despite being warned by the king that Raynarde: '...is a wyly shrewe, and knoweth so many wyles, that he wyl lye and flater, and shall thinke how he may begyle and deceyue you and bring you to some mockery' (b. v. v), Bruyne succumbs to his love of honey and quickly forgets his petition from the king, he is corrupted by a false promise to slake his gluttony and agrees to be a 'faithful frend' and help Raynarde against his 'enemys in the kinges courte' (b. viii. v). The implication is that all courtiers have a price, they can be easily won through counterfeited speech and they will then go on to perpetuate counterfeits of their own. Everyone is acting a part and for personal gain they may swiftly change allegiances and pledge friendship to those they are in fact directed to punish. The shifting and mutable nature of alliances meant that it was very difficult for anyone to rely wholly upon their friends for support, perhaps indicating why so many courtly or

³² Thomas More, *Utopia: Latin Text and English Translation*, ed. by George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams and Clarence H. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 51. All further quotations are from this edition.

political associations were based on kinship as well as shared purpose. Raynarde, when he confesses to Grimberde of his sins not only admits to having ‘sclaundred’ the king and queen ‘oftymes’ but to have ‘begyled Flegrym ofter than I can well tell. I called hym eme, but that was to deceiue him, he is nothyng of my kynne’ (d. vii. v-r). One of Raynarde’s most Machiavellian traits was his ability to pledge friendship and then manipulate or hurt his so-called ‘eme’, in poor Flegrym’s case he ends up strung up to a bell rope and then beaten by the frightened town’s folk.

Raynarde’s wily scheming is ever-present in *Mother Hubberd’s Tale* as the fox and the ape go to court and manage to disguise themselves as a gentleman and his groom and succeed ‘with mumming and with masking all around’.³³ The fox ‘beguile[d] / Poore suters’ (877-878) and ‘thousands cleanly coosined’ (862), using his master’s name as currency. It is clear that Spenser’s Sir Reynold is much indebted to the medieval Raynarde, in that both foxes endeavour to deceive through dissembling and false flattery in a courtly environment. Spenser however, allows his fox to advocate the usurpation of the throne and self-serving theft turns to more serious matters as the ape adopts the skin of the lion and rules while he sleeps. In the *Shepheardes Calender* Spenser includes a reference to Aesop’s fable of the ape and the lion in the glosse to the emblem for the Februarie aeglogue. This brief episode indicates that he may have been thinking about the ape who becoming ‘acquainted’ with the lions ‘lookes’ ‘was so furre from fearing him, that he would familiarly gybe and iest with him’,³⁴ sometime before the production of *Mother Hubberd’s Tale*. By placing these two readings together it is possible to see an association between skinning and familiarity as both succeed in rendering the powerful weak by doing away with the outward show of authority. One requires a pointed and lingering gaze, the other a knife.

³³ ‘Mother Hubberd’s Tale’ in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), l. 802. All further quotations are from this edition.

³⁴ ‘The Shepheardes Calender’ in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, p. 51.

Spenser's ape and fox are punished for their transgression against the king whereas Raynarde's wily counsel ensures that he not only escapes punishment, but is elevated to become one of the great and the good at court. Both Caxton's version of the *Raynarde* story and Spenser's poem use the beast fable to highlight the ambiguous nature of counsel and the danger of persuasive rhetoric. Raynarde the fox succeeds in persuading those who endeavour to bring him to court to delay by offering them temptations of the flesh, honey for the bear, mice for the cat, and later succeeds in persuading the king not to send him to the gallows, Sir Reynold convinces the ape to join him on his 'adventures straunge' (91) and then influences him to adopt the skin and crown of the lion. Initially the fox makes much of the ape's privileged position as his 'Gossip' (53), immediately indicating that their prior relationship is based upon an action of speech most commonly associated with the dissemination of intimate knowledge and the potential for slander.³⁵

Yet ere that anie way I doo betake,
 I meane my Gossip priuie first to make.
 Ah my deare Gossip (answer'd then the Ape,)
 Deeply doo your sad words my wits awape,
 (69-72)

These two gossips will provide one another with counsel, although the fox is clearly the more persuasive of the two, and will privilege their relationship over any bond they may forge with another. This is contrary to Raynarde's wilful individualism although in another instance of continuity between the two texts he does adhere to the advice proffered by Dame Rukenawe the ape before he duels Flegrym. As indicated by the use of 'gossip' Spenser's ape and fox will share information that they can turn to

³⁵ Adam Fox in 'Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 597-620, provides an overview of 'verbal intelligence' (p. 598) and its relation to political opinion while also considering the penalties for slander. Gossip can also be construed favourably as a form of unrestrained talking or writing, for a historical examination of gossip in this sense see John Beresford, *Gossip of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Richard Cobden-Sanderson, 1923).

their advantage. Importantly in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* no action or disguise is undertaken without there being an element of counsel involved; it is a priest who counsels the fox and the ape to obtain a benefice and 'read Homilies vpon holidayes' (393); while 'this good Sir did follow the plaine word' (390) the prelate cannot read: 'Ne tell a written word, ne write a letter' (383), indicating his ignorance of 'deep learning' (385). He does not have command over the inscribed word but yet proffers a 'ghostly sermon' (479) to the ape and the fox which they deem 'holesome counsell' (553). After they have plundered their benefice and are forced to flee the wrath of their parishioners they come across a mule who advises them on how to gain favour at court:

...with a good bold face,
 And with big words, and with a stately pace,
 That men may thinke of you in generall,
 That to be in you, which is not at all.
 (645-648)

It is false counsel, or more specifically, counsel which promotes dissembling, which legitimates the disguises adopted by the two beasts; they are told that it is in their best interest to pretend that they are not what they are. It is 'big words' (346) which will enable them to pass as courtiers, the ape 'vpon his tiptoes' (664) is 'cloathed like a Gentleman' (660) and feigns to be like a man, while Sir Reynold 'with fine counterfesaunce / Supports his credite and his countenaunce' (667-668). Outward bluff and show is privileged over substance, highlighting the performative nature of speech within clerical and courtly spheres. It is Sir Reynold's counsel at the beginning of the poem which persuades the ape to 'turne the next leafe of the booke' (68) and follow him abroad into the world in 'disguize' (83): 'Therefore to me, my trustie friend, aread / Thy counsell: two is better than one head' (81-82).

The fox is also aware that bad advice could be their undoing: ‘things miscounselled must needs miswend’ (128). They must plot their path depending on whatever opportunities are proffered to them while they are on the road; their strength is their ability to change at will into whatever form serves them best, whether it be shepherd, cleric or courtier, as with the help of opportunism and disguise they are able to adopt multiple characters based on their ‘big words’ (646) and costume changes. A mutable beast that is able to change his colours is more likely to survive and even thrive in a hostile environment, as any courtier who had made it through the changing political and religious climate during the reigns of the Tudors could attest. The fox and the ape become a two headed beast as ‘two is better than one’ (82), an image easily equated with the many headed, multiple tongued rumour. They purvey disguise and false attire, but also carry with them the danger of false speech inciting transgressive behaviour in others – all this counterfeiting is liable to be catching. Counsel becomes little more than self-serving dissemblance as false words beget yet more false words in a dangerous cycle of counterfeit and disguise.

The foregrounding of counsel as the motivation behind the progress of the ape and the fox as they approach the court mimics the central role of counsel in *Raynarde the foxe*. When Chauntecler the cock accuses Raynarde of having slain his daughter the lion king orders that the unfortunate hen be buried with full rites and then seeks counsel: ‘we wyl speke with these lordes and take counscyll how we may do right and iustyce of this greate murther, and bring this false thefe to the law’ (b. iiii. r). In *Raynarde the Foxe* the satiric impulse is strengthened by the various courtiers’ inability to stay true to the king’s request and bring Raynard back to the court. Tybert the cat even professes to love Raynarde better than his own kin if he will show him where he can find a ‘good fatte mous’ (c. viii. r): ‘I loue mice better than any thing that men gyue me...lede me

thyder where the myce be, and than shal ye wyne my loue, ye and if ye had slayne my father, my mother and al my kynne' (c. viii. r). The implication is that the courtiers trusted by the king are in fact no better than Raynarde; he is using his ability to manipulate his peers with speech to achieve the same ends as the bear and the cat – to fill his belly and avoid capture. Every beast is playing a part in order to satisfy their needs and wants, the only corrective voice in the satire is that of the lion-king and he is made to look like a foolish leader swayed by false counsel. No animal is immune to the vagaries of the tongue and all are somehow rendered monstrous and deformed by its power.

The central role afforded to counsel in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* may be indicative of a shift in the meaning of counsel and what it meant to be a counsellor during Elizabeth's reign. Simon Adams argues that the rise of Protestantism created a 'new kind of social allegiance'³⁶ and with it a corresponding shift in the motivation behind counsel:

The court, council and parliament took on a new importance, for they now became the means through which a godly policy could be formulated. Who would define God's cause in a given situation was a moot point, but there emerged a novel pressure group of Protestant divines and evangelical lay men more than willing to give kings and magistrates advice. A new type of client – the ideologically committed – was created, and the danger of the nobleman being led by his followers took on new significance.³⁷

Counsel is ideologically loaded, while leaders had often deflected criticism by blaming bad counsel, or critics had avoided directly censuring the monarch by doing the same, the process of religious reformation during the late sixteenth century dictated that

³⁶ Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 15. See also Louis Montrose, 'Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary', *English Literary History*, 69 (2002), pp. 907-946, (p. 911), for Montrose's argument that the reigns of two childless female monarchs (Mary and Elizabeth), 'the humanist concept of counsel and the office of counsellor assumed unprecedented importance in Tudor political culture'. For an analysis of court factionalism during the early modern period see Robert Shephard, 'Court Faction in Early Modern England', *The Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), pp. 721-745.

³⁷ Adams, *Leicester and the Court*, p. 15.

counsel gained religious impetus and provided the justification counsellors needed when speaking for their cause. In the light of Spenser's affiliation with the Earl of Leicester it is possible to read *Mother Hubbard's Tale* as an act of counsel in itself, which nonetheless perversely insists on highlighting the fallible nature of the counsellor. If the ape and fox are read as Burghley and Alençon then potentially it is only Catholic or self-serving counsel which is unreliable and manipulative, but by criticising the process of giving advice and particularly its motivations, Spenser appears to undermine his own role as a counsellor poet, a role which as Louis Montrose notes, can be discerned throughout Spenser's literary output and is closely allied to his fascination with the 'Elizabethan political imaginary',³⁸ a concept which was shaped by the changing nature of counsel during the period. Richard Helgerson argues that Spenser's idea of himself as a poet was in part dictated by a desire to 'foster virtuous action'³⁹ through his work, daring not only to 'fashion a gentleman'⁴⁰ despite his own lowly origins, but perhaps to advise kings by adopting the position of the hunchbacked Aesop, humble in manner but nevertheless seeking to influence those in power. Helgerson has argued elsewhere that Elizabeth's reign saw a drive on the part of English poets to reappraise the role of the laureate and elevate English poesy to the heights of Virgilian and Petrarchan civil service: 'they...enclosed and rejected the self-as-poet in order to reveal the dutiful and employable self-as-civil-servant. They publicly anatomized their own wit to show themselves in a glass of government.'⁴¹ The service that could be rendered by the poet is intimately related to the elevation of the craft of poetry itself, in Spenser's case his agency as a counsellor is dictated by what Clark

³⁸ Montrose, 'Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary', p. 907.

³⁹ Richard Helgerson, 'The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 93 (1978), pp. 893-911, (p. 896).

⁴⁰ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977), p. 737. All further quotations are from this edition.

⁴¹ Richard Helgerson, 'The Elizabethan Laureate: Self-Presentation and the Literary System', *English Literary History*, 46 (1979), pp. 193-220, (p. 200).

Hulse has termed his desire to ‘speak across the gaps’⁴² between poetic myth and Machiavellian politics, in order to re-establish the position of the poet-counsellor. In *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* however, the act of offering advice or counsel is so closely affiliated with the wily machinations of greedy and hypocritical beasts that it becomes almost impossible to discern exactly what form of civil-service the virtuous poet counsellor aspires to. It is the poem’s close affiliation with *Raynarde the fox* which further complicates the role of counsel as it magnifies the episodes involving false speech and provides a continuity of error and misjudgement on the part of leaders swayed by false counsel. It is subsequently difficult to read Spenser’s poem as an explicit act of proffering counsel to his betters, rather it seems that the poem is ambiguous about the process of counsel itself and fails to explicitly take sides in the Burghley/Leicester squabble over the Queen’s marriage – if it is trying to do this at all. Despite aspiring to the elevated role of the poet laureate it is possible that Spenser understood his own complicity in the purveyance of potentially ill informed or inaccurate advice for advancement. Spenser seems to be well aware that all counsel comes laden with the desire for profit, whether it is for power, money or ideology – this is demonstrated clearly when the ape and fox are at court and the fox counsels unwitting suitors to petition the ape:

So would he worke the silly man by treason
 To buy his Masters friuolous good will,
 That had not power to doo him good or ill.
 So pitifull a thing is Suters state.
 (888-891)

What follows is a bitter aside on the misfortunes suffered by those who petition people in power only to be left waiting ‘for shadowes vaine to seeke’ (912). Those who play suit in the hope of reward or advancement are often at risk of being given false

⁴² Clark Hulse, ‘Spenser and the Myth of Power’, *Studies in Philology*, 85 (1988), pp. 378-389, (p. 381).

counsel by those in their object's entourage and this is precisely the role played by the fox on their first sojourn to court. It has been considered that this episode with its palpable feeling of frustration and anger may be Spenser alluding to his own misfortunes at court, where he failed to gain favour, and it is possible that he witnessed the dissimulation and subterfuge employed by purveyors of counsel first hand.⁴³ Counsel was not only employed in order to advise rulers, it could be adopted as a way of advising or manipulating social inferiors as well. Counsel itself was subject to multiple refashionings in order to make it applicable to a variety of social 'heights' – which perhaps corresponds to the Aesopian fixation on high and low. As John Guy notes: 'an assumption that the vice and passion of rulers could be mitigated by the advice of counsellors energized the process whereby the metaphor [of counsel] was refashioned and reinterpreted for rhetorical and political ends.'⁴⁴ Counsel is used to serve the particular ends desired by the counsellor and is not necessarily aligned to a larger cause or the greater good. Even those who employ counsel for religious reasons should be looked at askance and their motivations interrogated – both Raynard and Spenser's Sir Reynold adopt the habiliments of a man of the cloth in order to live off the fat of the land and the cleric who counsels the fox and ape on how to obtain a benefice seems intent on living a life of idleness. Throughout all of this could Spenser be potentially satirising his own position as a counsellor poet? Can a poet adopt the role of counsellor successfully or is he also subject to the vagaries of beastly vices?⁴⁵

⁴³ A. C Judson, 'Mother Hubbard's Ape', *Modern Language Notes*, 63 (1948), pp. 145-149, (p. 146). David L. Miller ascribes the Ape's role in this episode to that of the 'sorcerer-poet' who is pitched against the true reader in the form of the 'ideal courtier', 'Spenser's Vocation, Spenser's Career', *English Literary History*, 50 (1983), pp. 197-231, (p. 204).

⁴⁴ John Guy, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England' in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. by Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 292-310, (pp. 292-3).

⁴⁵ Jacqueline T. Miller discusses Spenser's interest in the conflation of courtly poet and courtier and the use of allegory as a form of courtly, counsel-like dialogue specifically in relation to Book VI of the *Faerie Queene* in 'The Courtly Figure: Spenser's Anatomy of Allegory', *Studies in English Literature*, 31 (1991), pp. 51-68.

It was not uncommon for poets and writers to try to incorporate an element of counsel into their work. Thomas More's *Utopia* can be read in this light although its intentions are far from clear – as ever, the counsellor has to be wary of how explicit he makes his advice in case it is not received favourably. Skelton famously sought to advise Henry VIII by lampooning his most famous counsellor Cardinal Wolsey in *Speke Parrot*. Skelton was unafraid of billing himself as a poet laureate with the ability to advise and counsel his betters, in *A Replycacion against Certayne Yong Scolers Abjured of Late* this is made explicitly clear:

That of divyne myseracion
 God maketh his habytacion
 In poetes whiche excelles,
 And sojourns with them and dwelles.

By whose inflammacion
 Of spyrituall instygacion
 And divine inspyracion
 We are kyndled in suche facyon
 With hete of the Holy Gost,
 Which is God of myghtes most,
 That he our penne dothe lede,
 And maketh in us suche spede
 That forthwith we must nede
 With penne and ynke procede,...⁴⁶

The poet is here seen to be served with divine 'inspyracion' (380) which compels him to write and as Andrew Hadfield notes: '...it is obvious that Skelton is demanding a licence for the true poet to intervene in the public sphere'.⁴⁷ Skelton's poem directly contrasts the foolishness of the 'new' learning which merely cloaks truth in 'dregges of Diuinite' (6) with the clarity afforded to the poets who have a personal relationship with God who 'sojourns with them and dwelles' (378). Spenser alludes to

⁴⁶ 'A Replycacion against Certayne Yong Scolers Abjured of Late' in *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, ed. by John Scattergood (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Penguin Books Ltd, 1983), pp. 384-5, ll. 375-387.

⁴⁷ Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 39.

Skelton and his work by adopting the persona of Colin Clout in the *Shepheardes Calender* to which the glosse for Januarye appends: ‘Vnder which name this Poete secretly shadoweth himself...’⁴⁸ Spenser may in fact have viewed himself as the Skelton for a new age, a poet who deigned to advise princes, aspiring to the Petrarchan ideal of the poet who is crowned with laurel. As Jane Griffiths has noted Skelton demonstrates a singular obsession with his role as a laureate, with the title ‘*laureate*’ occurring on ‘almost every page’⁴⁹ of the standard edition of his works. We do not know whether Spenser was aware of Skelton’s frustrated attempts to curry favour but he may have seen the medieval poet, who like Chaucer foreshadowed his own endeavours to elevate English poetry, as a suitable example to follow. The role of advisor was also adopted by the writers of the *Mirroure for Magistrates*, principally penned by William Baldwin, the Protestant writer who also produced *Beware the Cat* – another instance of a beast fable serving to cloak criticism of the reigning powers. In the *Mirroure* the tale of ‘Howe Collingbourne was cruelly executed for making a foolishe rime’ demonstrates the precarious position of the poet counsellor:

Beware, take heede, take heede, beware, beware
 You Poetes you, that purpose to rehearce
 By any arte what Tyrantes doynges are,
 Errinnis rage is growen so fell and fearce
 That vicious actes may not be toucht in verse:
 The Muses freedome, graunted the of elde,
 Is barde, slye reasons treasons hye are held.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ ‘The Shepheardes Calender’ in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, p. 38.

⁴⁹ Jane Griffiths, ‘What’s in a Name? The Transmission of “John Skelton, Laureate” in Manuscript and Print’, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), pp. 215-235, (p. 215). Griffiths points out that this ‘self-titling’ may not always be attributable to the hand of Skelton himself as it’s feasible that both printer and scribe may have affixed the term, this would have been done to enhance Skelton’s status as a poet and provide a ‘readily identifiable author-figure’ (p. 220).

⁵⁰ William Baldwin, *The Mirror for Magistrates: Edited from Original Texts in the Huntington Library*, ed. by Lily B. Campbell (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1938), p. 347, ll. 1-7. See Paul Budra, ‘The Mirror for Magistrates and the Politics of Readership’, *Studies in English Literature*, 32 (1992), pp. 1-13, for Budra’s analysis of the waning popularity of later editions of the *Mirror for Magistrates* and its function as a ‘didactic poem’ (p. 2).

The ghostly voice of Collingbourne warns men of letters against being too free with their criticism of tyrants lest they suffer the same fate as him; although conversely Collingbourne also claims that Baldwin's intentions are just: 'thy entent I knowe is godly, playne, and good, / To warne the wyse, to fraye the fond fro yll' (57-58). This insinuates that: 'counsel, such as that provided by the *Mirror* is vital for good government',⁵¹ although nonetheless the poet clearly had to watch his back. Counsel could also be proffered from the pulpit; at the Lent celebrations in 1579 during the controversy over the Alençon match, an unnamed preacher spoke of the danger of monarchs marrying foreigners, invoking the memory of Mary Tudor's marriage to Philip of Spain, in what was clearly an allusion to Elizabeth's negotiations with the Duc. According to the Spanish ambassador Elizabeth stormed out before the sermon was finished.⁵² Clearly preachers did not necessarily shy away from controversial material even if they were preaching to the monarch herself. Adopting a confrontational stance was not however, liable to persuade Elizabeth – as her turning her back on the Lent preacher clearly signifies. Elizabeth was famously ambivalent about preaching as her suppression of prophesyings, (gatherings which acted as training camps for novice preachers), indicated, this meant that preachers, like courtiers and counsellors, had to adopt an approach which suited the queen's temperament. Peter McCullough in his book on sermons notes: 'Elizabeth could be schooled, but she was much more likely to listen to those...who acknowledged their role as counsellors subordinate to the prince's authority.'⁵³ Due deference had to be shown before Elizabeth would be prepared to listen, subsequently sermons had to employ flattery in the same manner as courtly poetry in order to gain the ear of the monarch: '...praise and compliment not only often

⁵¹ Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity*, p. 107.

⁵² Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 67.

⁵³ McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p. 91.

cloaked otherwise offensive advice, but also articulated truths that the flatterer, as well as the flattered, believed, or at least thought it necessary to believe.⁵⁴ During Elizabeth's reign sermonising often had to contend with the monarch's uneasiness about public preaching alongside the central role afforded to preaching in reformist doctrine. The preacher was unable to counsel the monarch directly but rather had to rely on elaborate rhetorical and stylistic devices in order to sugar the pill.⁵⁵

Preacher, poet, courtier and counsellor were all reliant on the manoeuvring and shadowing made possible by linguistic subterfuge in order to find a way of influencing the process of politics for a desired end. The act of giving advice or counsel had developed by the late sixteenth century into an elaborate dance of shadowing, parrying, cloaking and flattery which perhaps indicates just how difficult it was to walk the line between preferment and punishment. One should not forget that throughout their turn on the dance floor the counsellor would be watched by an audience who naturally looked for their incentive to action with circumspection, if not downright incredulity. The rise of the court as the central site for political and social advancement among the higher echelons of society during the Tudor period meant that counsel was often directly associated with the factional politics of various interest groups. As Robert Shephard has noted these groups would combine self interest with political ideology to the point where it was hard to discern the motivation behind any form of counsel. Shephard identifies three tiers within factional groups, "friends", "followers" and "servants"⁵⁶ who would endeavour to attract patronage and advancement for themselves and secure the dominance of the group as a whole. The fox and ape may actually constitute a

⁵⁴ McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, p. 84.

⁵⁵ While undertaking a survey of the study of early modern sermons Mary Morrissey argues that sermons are a vital source for both early modern historians and literary scholars and that they ought to be studied as both '*texts and events*', 'Interdisciplinarity and the Study of Early Modern Sermons', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 1111-1123, (p. 1111).

⁵⁶ Shephard, 'Court Factions in Early Modern England', p. 725.

faction of two in their efforts to ensure initially that they are well fed and later in a position to control court politics. The search for individual promotion and profit at the heart of factional politics muddies the waters of counsel, ensuring that advice was often motivated by the hope of reward.

If counsel is indeed dissected in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* to such an extent that the process of proffering advice becomes fraught with anxiety over the true motivation of the counsellor, then this may go some way to explaining another convergence between Spenser's poem and the fable of *Raynarde the Foxe*. A direct link is made in both *Mother Hubbard's Tale* and *Raynarde the Foxe* between counterfeit speech/counsel and physical mutilation; those who deal in false words are left bearing the scars of their misdeeds on their bodies. The beast magnifies the unnatural and deformed nature of human behaviour and then the animal body is used as a scarring post which deepens this association still further. This mutilation exacerbates the already unstable view of the human body and human behaviour as contained and natural. Words are imbued with the power to flay living flesh and this risk may not be solely confined to the use of consciously false words for a self-serving purpose, but also to words which are deemed to be false by the hearer/audience. An unruly tongue could also reveal secrets to an audience ordinarily kept in the dark, with dangerous ramifications for the political authorities and the informer if caught. Unregulated words were flexible and mutable and could incite rebellion.⁵⁷

The counsellor was often at risk of sacrificing life and limb when they proffered words of advice to their superiors and the writer or poet who sought to adopt the mantle of counsellor risked the very same fate, as the fictional Collingbourne from the *Mirror*

⁵⁷ Spenser would have been no stranger to the weight of secrets as Richard Rambuss notes in relation to his work on Spenser's career as a private secretary, *Spenser's Secret Career*. See Paul Griffiths, 'Secrecy and Authority in Late Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century London', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 925-951, for a broad analysis of how secrecy 'gives rise to vocabularies of 'public' and 'private'', (p. 925) and influenced ideas of authority.

for *Magistrates* demonstrated. The penalty meted out to the writer John Stubbes demonstrates the severity of Elizabethan punishment for failing to abide by Patterson's 'hermeneutics of censorship'.⁵⁸ Stubbes, along with his books distributor William Page, lost his right hand for writing the *Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*, printed in 1579, which criticised the Alençon match on the grounds that it was against God's law for a Protestant to marry a Catholic. Stubbes's printer was Hugh Singleton who also printed the first edition of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* in the same year. Singleton was tried alongside Stubbes and Page but escaped with a pardon.⁵⁹ Even if Spenser did not know Stubbes personally then he would doubtless have heard of his fate.⁶⁰ Picking up a pen in order to advise princes came with the attendant risk of physical mutilation or even death; the French ambassador reported that Elizabeth had hoped to have Stubbes executed but the jury at his trial refused to mete out this extreme punishment.⁶¹ Much like *Mother Hubbard's Tale* the *Gaping Gulf* was rumoured to have been produced at the behest of the Earl of Leicester. In the light of Stubbes' fate for questioning the validity of Elizabeth's negotiations with Alençon it is perhaps not all that surprising that Spenser may have delayed publishing *Mother Hubbard's Tale* until 1591 if it was judged to sit on the same shelf as Stubbes' production. The nature of the tongue which dared to offer advice to the monarch on this matter, did however dictate the nature of the authority's response, as Philip Sidney would escape with only a temporary

⁵⁸ Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p. 18.

⁵⁹ See Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 123-137, for Clegg's discussion of Stubbes' political support amongst Elizabeth's counsellors and how the suppression of the *Gaping Gulf* was necessary despite its reflection of widely held views in England as it had been widely disseminated in Europe and '... not to do so would have jeopardized Elizabeth's foreign policy' (p. 133). Kenneth Barnes unravels the connections between William Page and various members of parliament, highlighting his role as gentleman servant to the 2nd Earl of Bedford in 'John Stubbe, 1579: the French Ambassador's Account', *Historical Research*, 64 (1991), pp. 421-426.

⁶⁰ Andrew Hadfield explores the polemical intent of *The Shepheardes Calender* in relation to Spenser's choice of printer in *Literature, Politics and National Identity*, p. 177.

⁶¹ See Barnes, 'John Stubbe, 1579...', p. 424. In *Press Censorship...*, Clegg points out that this was probably an act of showmanship on Elizabeth's part to reassure the French as the law against seditious libel did not 'provide for the death penalty', p. 136.

banishment from court for penning a letter critical of the match. Sidney was undoubtedly saved from any further punishment by his noble status and the coterie nature of his letter's audience, which only circulated in manuscript.⁶² It was not only the publication of books which meddled with royal policy which displeased the crown, the ownership of texts which were deemed 'repugnaunt to trueth',⁶³ religious truth or otherwise, could carry a heavy penalty. Elizabeth and her counsellors often endeavoured to proscribe people's access to subversive printed material, demanding that those who owned copies of 'seditious bookes' hand them in or face punishment, as this proclamation from 1569 demonstrates:

...lyke as of late tyme some mylde example hath ben made in the starre chaumber at Westminster, in correction of certayne persons founde faultie in the secrete dispearsing, buying, and allowing of sundry of the sayde seditious bookes: So her Maiestie...wylleth and earnestlye chargeth all maner of persons, to forbear utterly from the use or dealing with any such seditious bookes, made or translated by any person, containing matter derogatorie to the soueraigne estate of her Maiestie.⁶⁴

The onus is on the owners and readers of seditious material to report themselves to the authorities and henceforth avoid such publications at all costs. Quite how many people would have been willing to risk the chance of being made a 'mylde example' of in the 'starre chaumber' is hard to tell, although one suspects not all that many. In the *Faerie Queene* Spenser would demonstrate just how keenly he felt the threat of corporal punishment, in Book V Arthur and Artegall enter Mercillae's palace to be greeted by a grizzly sight which would turn the heart of any poet cold:

⁶² Montrose, 'Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary', p. 913.

⁶³ *By the Queene. A Proclamation for bringing into the Realme of vnlawfull and seditious bookes* (London: Richarde Jugge and John Cawood, printers to the Queenes Maiestie, 1569).

⁶⁴ *By the Queene. A Proclamation for bringing into the Realme of vnlawfull and seditious bookes.*

There as they entred at the Scriene, they saw
 Some one, whose tongue was for his trespasse vyle
 Nayled to a post, adiudged so by the law:
 For that therewith he falsely did reuyle,
 And foule blaspheme that Queene for forged guyle,
 Both with bold speaches, which he blazed had,
 And with lewd poems, which he did compyle;
 For the bold title of a Poet bad
 He on himselfe had ta'en, and rayling rymes had sprad.
 (V, ix, 25)

The poet is identified as one Bonfont, newly re-named Malfont, the Bon 'raced out' (ix, 26, 5) and replaced with Mal on a sign that hangs over his prone body. The writer is publicly humiliated and the instrument of his downfall, his tongue, horribly mutilated. The body is thus shown to suffer for the 'bold speaches' (25, 6) made by a poet playing at counsellor, publically punished as 'adiudged so by the law' (25, 3). The naming of Bon/Malfont also alludes to the danger of publishing as 'font', then as now, corresponds to typeface, associating his blasphemies with the indelible ink of the printing press, 'euill words, and wicked sclaunders' (26, 9) are all the more dangerous for being set in print. While little sympathy is shown for Malfont and Arthur and Artegall pass him by without comment, it is clear that Spenser acknowledges the risk involved in aspiring to the 'bold title' (25, 8) of the poet. The law did not look kindly on those who sought to 'blaspheme that Queene' and if Mercillae can be exchanged for Elizabeth, then Stubbes' loss of his hand may be recalled by Malfont's mutilation because of his 'trespasse vyle' (25, 2).

The common theme of the breaking and mutilating of animal flesh in *Mother Hubberd's Tale* and *Raynarde the Fox* may be indicative of Spenser's proximity to the process of state censorship and its ramifications as well as the ominous threat of the

torturer.⁶⁵ It seems clear that Spenser's poem speaks to the beast fable in this respect, using its gratuitous scenes of malicious wounding as a recognisable source for the sanctioned corporeal punishment found in *Mother Hubbard's Tale*. In Bruyne's desperation to escape from the split oak in *Raynarde the Foxe* he 'lefte behinde all the skyn and bothe his eares' and 'his clawes or nayles and his rough handes' (c. ii, r), thus he is rendered more monstrous by his 'human' gluttony. A similar sentence is meted out to Spenser's ape who loses both his tail and ears at the end of the poem as punishment for having pretended to be the monarch, although the fox escapes with only a tongue lashing:

...th'Apes long taile (which then he had) he quight
Cut off, and both eares pared of their hight;
Since which, all Apes but halfe their eares haue left,
And of their tailles are vtterlie bereft.
(1381-1384)

The ape's mutilation is seen as being passed down the animal line as a permanent reminder of his crime, although by robbing him of his tail Spenser renders him yet more human-like, thus linking animal deformity to human failing. In *Raynarde the Foxe* when Tybert the cat is caught in a snare while looking for the mice Raynarde has promised him, he is not only strangled and beaten by the priest who 'smote out one of the cattes eyen' (d. ii. r), but he succeeds in severely mutilating the naked priest who is meting out his punishment: '...whan Tybert saw that he must dye, he lepte between the priestes legges with hys clawes and tethe, that he bote and rent away his right colion or balocke stone' (d. ii. r). The priest's wife Dame Jullock is dismayed: '...for thoughe he be healed thereof, yet he is but a loste man to me, and also shall not con do that swete playe and game' (d. iii. v). Raynarde upon seeing the mutilated priest comforts his wife

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Hanson notes that torture was 'conceptually allied to the epistemology of discovery' indicating that the breaking of flesh was in many ways allied to a sense of efficacy or 'truth', 'Torture and Truth in Renaissance England', *Representations*, 34 (1991), pp. 53-84, (p. 54).

by saying: ‘...he shall do with you well ynough, there is in ye worlde many a chapel in which is rong but one bell’ (d. iii. r). The injured prelate has suffered just as ignoble a fate as the bear and the cat, which implies that his ecclesiastical counsel may be just as circumspect as the counsel of the false courtiers. The maiming of animal bodies is a sign of a dissembling nature – a potentially subversive link considering that Spenser’s lion-king is left skinned and vulnerable when the ape steals his fur. Perhaps the king is not only lethargic and inattentive but also guilty of the same crimes of misrepresentation as the ape and fox?

In the early modern period human bodies are scarred by torture and as evidence of criminal behaviour. It was common for thieves to be branded or to be forced to forfeit a hand; thus the body serves as an advertisement, it carries the signs of previous misdemeanours and subsequently acts as a deterrent. In the beast fable such signs are imprinted upon animal flesh and skin because of a very human trait - that of false speech - this is a punishment but also an indication that such behaviour is beastly in nature. When Raynarde confesses his crimes to his cousin Grimberde, Grimberde suggests that he pay a physical penance by flagellating himself: ‘Grimberde was subtyll and wyse, and anone brake a rodde of a tree and said: Eme now shall ye smyt your selfe thryes with this rodde on your bodye...and so may ye come to mercy’ (e. ii. r). This episode is indicative of the story’s roots in pre-Reformation Europe but it also shows how physical mutilation becomes an outward sign of repentance as well as a form of punishment wielded by those in power. In *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* the ape and the fox do not repent of their actions and in *Raynarde the Foxe* our protagonist fails to take his cousin’s advice, subsequently the animal body bears the scars of a very human transgression, but they are not produced by a desire to repent but by the need to punish.

In the *Fantasy of the passyon of the fox* (1530), an anonymous poem printed by Wynken de Worde, the narrator has a dream in which Morpheus, the God of Dreams, tells him that his fox whelp has been set upon and killed by the townspeople:

O good god nowe haue I lost my best
 In his pastime/Whan he was let
 Famlyerly obeyenge most and lest
 His countenance full well dyd counterfeit
 Dyssemblers all/and his meet for to get
 Full hyghe wolde he lepe his belles ryngyng
 On a playne wall/where his meet was lit
 Twelue tore and more/so lustily was the sprynge⁶⁶

The pet fox is missed for his ability to ‘counterfeit / Dyssemblers all’ and perform for his meat. Again we have a story in which a fox is seen as a clever performer able to do many a trick for his own benefit and that of his master. At the end of the poem the fox is given a ‘testament’ in which he bequeaths his dead body parts to different beasts and men:

The fleshe of my carcas bycause it is fayre
 I byquethe freely to byrdes of the ayre
 That they conuey it aboue the cloudes blake
 My bones as right is let the erthe take
 My maysters of the chauntry shall haue my skyne
 Gray amyses to make whan they prebendes wyne
 Myne eyes bright I wolde blynde men had
 Myne eres to the defe to make them glad
 My tongue to those whose tongue is nought
 Tho it be longe it neuer lye wrought
 ...
 My sprynge chere to euery dissembler
 My grynyuge and laughyng to them shalbe proper
 My flyes and wyles unto the weuer
 My flaterynge also to the bruer
 My obedyens to euery good wife
 My fast holdyng to hym that wyll make stryfe...
 (B. iii. r – B. iii. v)

The fox pulls apart his own body and his attendant abilities and gives them to those who may be in need of them in a final act of mutilation. The dismembered animal

⁶⁶ *The fantasy of the passion of the fox...* (London: Wynken de Worde, 1530), A. ii. r.

isolates his 'wyles', 'flaterynge' and 'obedyens' alongside his 'tongue', 'eyes' and 'bones', associating his appropriated human characteristics with his own physical beastliness. This piecemeal testament is a demonstration of the power of speech; it is words that enable the fox to bequeath his body, and words which enable him to identify his specific characteristics with human failings, so that his 'sprynge chere' is most appropriately given 'to euery dissembler' and his artful performance of 'grynyuge and laughynge' will continue into perpetuity. This incidence of self-harm does not appear to be an act of repentance but rather a judgement that condemns those to whom the fox bestows the pieces of his 'carcas'.

In Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia* the beasts demand of Jove a king in a version of the tale of the frogs in Aesop; he gives them man to reign over them on the condition that each animal bequeath a particular quality to this new creation and also forfeit their ability to speak: 'That from thenceforth to all eternity / No beast should freely speak, but only he'.⁶⁷ Man's supremacy over the animal world is therefore directly linked to his ability to speak, but man has fallen from grace so his speech is tainted by post-lapsarian knowledge. His attendant virtues and vices are also gifted to him by the individual animals: 'The fox gave craft; the dog gave flattery; / Ass, patience; the mole, a working thought' (85-86). This is a reversal of the process undertaken in the fox's testament in the *Fantasy of the Passyon of the Fox*, but it reinforces the idea of transferral between the animal and human worlds which is at the heart of Spenser's *Mother Hubbard's Tale*. While the ape and the fox do not directly cede their characteristics to humans or vice versa, Spenser's use of contemporary allusion succeeds in doing much the same thing. This too is a kind of mutilation, a

⁶⁷ 'The Old Arcadia' in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 109, ll. 104-105. All further quotations are from this edition.

dismembering produced by the pen of the poet; the imaginary world of the beast fable becomes a site of transferral which touches the heart of Elizabethan power brokering.

In *Mother Hubbard's Tale* Spenser also explores the phenomenon of the wandering beast that goes: 'Abroad where change is' (101) in order to adopt a new persona and seek fortune. The Fox lays great emphasis on his and the Ape's freedom to roam despite the risk of punishment for vagrancy: '...we will walke about the world at pleasure / Like two free men, and make our ease a treasure' (159-160). In order to ensure that they are not punished for being without 'pasport or good warrantie' (186) the Fox suggests that: 'we our counsels call, / How to preuent this mischiefe ere it fall,' (189-190). The two of them will travel by a false passport of their own devising and avoid the suspicion typically reserved for itinerant beggars; this passport is provided by their cunning counterfeits as they adopt the outward trappings of differing professions. The wandering beast was typically seen as a threat because it was not constrained or domesticated and in the case of beast fables the wandering, speaking animal paralleled the perceived danger provoked by unfixed, unemployed, and homeless men such as disbanded soldiers who were often injured, without income and commonly carrying arms. According to John Awdeley's *The fraternity of vagabonds* (1565) these men were called Rufflers and 'goeth with a weapon to seek service, saying he hath been a servitor in the wars, and beggeth for his relief. But his chiefest trade is to rob poor wayfaring men and market-women.'⁶⁸ There was often a perceived sense of brotherhood between vagabonds and Awdeley's text claims that a captured thief disclosed the nature of their fraternity, ascribing names and vocations to the various knaves. These wandering thieves and swindlers, 'washmen', 'jackmen', 'tinkards' and 'queer-birds'⁶⁹ could carry with them false rumours and dangerous gossip, ensuring that the immediate danger to

⁶⁸ Gamini Salgado, *Cony-catchers and Bawdy Baskets: an Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 63.

⁶⁹ Salgado, *Cony-catchers and Bawdy Baskets...*, p. 64.

those who came in their path was not only the loss of their purse, but the wrath of the authorities if they repeated news from a bad source. The spreading of rumour from place to place was principally achieved through the movement of travellers or traders, who would be quickly asked if they had any news from the last urban centre they had passed through, the problem was that this form of communication was difficult to monitor and could easily have little grounding in fact. If the purveyor of tales from town had an ulterior motive then they could rouse dissent amongst rural populations far from the easy reach of the Crown. As Adam Fox notes: ‘...a principal motive behind official concern over vagrants and wandering beggars throughout this period was the danger which they posed in the spreading of seditious rumours prejudicial to the stability of government and religion.’⁷⁰ During the late sixteenth century word of mouth would ultimately carry the fear of Catholic intrigue and recusant plotting and to underscore the outlandish nature of some reports early in Elizabeth’s reign one should note that several people would be indicted for their part in spreading a rumour that Edward VI was still alive and imprisoned in the tower.⁷¹ Spenser’s fox and ape’s itinerant wanderings leave them open to the charge of spreading gossip, as animals with the power of speech they can leave others at the mercy of their wandering tongues and potentially destabilise public opinion.

In *Raynarde the Foxe* Raynarde convinces the king to spare his life by persuading him that he knows the whereabouts of treasure that was intended to finance a rebellion against the crown. In order to avoid having to accompany the king to where the supposed treasure is buried he convinces the sovereign that he must go on a

⁷⁰ Adam Fox, ‘Rumour, News and Popular Opinion...’, p. 603. Fox goes on to cite civic records and draft bills which demonstrate an anxiety over masterless men and vagabonds spreading rumours.

⁷¹ Fox, ‘Rumour, News and Public Opinion...’, p. 614. See also Daniel Woolf, ‘News, History and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England’ in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brandan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 80-118, for Woolf’s examination of how news spread in England during the early modern period, he argues that ‘news travelled as quickly or as slowly as the men or women who carried it’, (p. 85).

pilgrimage to Rome in order to absolve himself of his sins (g. iii. r). This pious wandering is revealed as little more than a ploy to escape punishment at home by travelling abroad. This is mirrored in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* when the ape and the fox are continually forced to flee those they have tricked by 'passing through the Countrey in disguise' (575) and taking 'hastie flight, / Carried in clowdes of all-concealing night.' (339-340). Unsurprisingly Raynarde does not undertake a pilgrimage to the holy city, but rather feasts on one of his attendants - the unwitting hare - and then suggests to his wife that they conceal themselves in an unfamiliar forest: 'where we may lyue without fere and drede' (h. iiii. v). His wife disagrees: 'I counseyle you that we go not in to an other forest where we shuld be straunge and elenge, we haue here all that we desyre' (h. iiii. r). Dame Ermelyn puts her emphasis upon them being rendered 'straunge' and therefore vulnerable when forced into an unfamiliar environment, the very same fears which are articulated by Spenser's Sir Reynold when he insists that he and the ape adopt disguises as a form of passport in case they suffer the fate of rogues: 'And for eare marked beasts abroad be bruted' (188) – the insinuation being that if they are caught they may be marked/branded for their vagrancy. The difference is that Raynarde heeds his wife's 'counseyle' and agrees to stay on his familiar patch, while Spenser's ape and fox go forth into the world; both stories however, articulate an anxiety about being seen as a stranger and the fear of vagrants and itinerants who have no fixed abode.

Potentially the wandering beast trope is also indicative of ideas surrounding the dissemination of words and their manifestation into stories, propaganda and polemic which are passed from printer to reader. The speaking beast who is a mobile entity that cannot be fixed, mimics the subversive potential of the printing press as its wares were peddled throughout Europe and beyond by an army of ballad and pamphlet sellers. Raynarde peddles his lies and false counsels throughout the land in order to gain his

supper and mutilate his enemies, quickly moving from one prey to another before he is caught. Spenser's ape and fox are in a perpetual state of motion as they exhaust the resources of each disguise they adopt before swiftly moving on to another, more lucrative position. As all of these beasts move around their respective landscapes they carry with them their false words and counsels, indicating that they are burdened not only with the vagaries of a very human fallibility, but also responsible for the transferral of various subversive signs to others. It is possible to equate this vagrant like fluidity with the censor's worst nightmare; the unfixed and ambiguous text.

It is important that *Mother Hubbard's Tale* is introduced by Spenser as one of many 'pleasant tales' (26) told around the sick bed of the narrator: 'They sought my troubled sense how to deceaue / With talke, that might vnquiet fancies reauē' (23-24). Speech is here ascribed with the ability to 'deceaue' (23) the senses in order to banish 'vnquiet fancies' (24); storytelling becomes the means by which the well prevent the sick from slipping into delusional fantasies. The stories of 'Knights' (29), 'Faeries' (30), 'Giaunts' (31) and 'Squires' (29) are designed to 'delight' (32) rather than 'be beleueed' (31), providing a distraction from the 'wicked maladie' (9) that afflicts the narrator. The narrator is also purportedly struck down with his 'maladie' (9) in August during the deadly dog days that almanac writers linked to pestilence, plague and lasciviousness, therefore the storytelling around his bedside is directly linked to the animalesque constellations that circle the heavens. The animal is immediately identified as a site of symbolic importance and intimately entwined with a particular kind of wordplay. The poem produces a vision of speech as being double tongued, able to provide solace and entertainment for the sick, but perversely also able to manipulate and dissemble with disastrous consequences. The beast fable is a perfect vehicle for this double reading as the talking animal divorces the faculty of speech from the human body and enables the

reader to isolate its potential for misuse. The narrator of Spenser's poem is also at pains to emphasise that Mother Hubbard herself is but a common storyteller with no finesse: 'bad her tongue that it so bluntly told' (1388), thus demanding that the reader interrogate any pleasure that they derive from the tale. *Mother Hubbard's Tale* is also titled *Prosopopoia*, defined by George Puttenham in the *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) as 'the Counterfait in Personation'⁷²:

...if you wil faine any person with such features, qualities & conditions, or if ye wil attribute any humane quality, as reason or speech to dombe creatures or other insensible things, & study (as one may say) to giue them a humane person...it is...*Prosopopeia*. (p. 200)

This alternative title (or indeed primary title as it is listed first on the frontispiece to the 1591 edition) clearly states Spenser's intentions for the poem: all persons therein shall be counterfeited. The masking and mumming of the central players in Spenser's fable is ultimately achieved through false speech, and their various counterfeits of costume, posture and dialogue are identified as a slippery medium in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* that can only be harnessed virtuously by the conscientious courtier poet. Spenser holds up an image of an ideal rhetorician in contrast to the ape and fox's wily machinations at court. 'His minde vnto the Muses he withdrawes...With whom he close confers with wise discourse' (760, 763) while the ape 'would scoffe at learning' (832) and 'play the Poet oft' (810). In *Raynarde the Foxe* this oppositional tendency is produced by the rivalry between Raynard and Flegrym the wolf. The wolf is the only animal at court who refuses to be taken in by Raynarde's lies and eventually challenges him to a duel in which the unwitting Flegrym is blinded by Raynarde's urine and 'wronge...by the ballockes' (s. ii. v). The wolf represents the virtuous courtier to Raynarde's Machiavellian false counsellor, but it is to Raynarde that the king looks for

⁷² George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), p. 200.

advice, prompting the narrator of Raynarde's tale to despair that: 'There be many and also the moost part that crepe after his way and his hole...he hath lefte mani of his craft and syence in this wolde' (t. i. v). Spenser's ideal courtier with his similarities to Flegrym may be an allusion to the courtier poet who finds his counsel unheeded by those in power, it is those who play the poet like the ape who find the ear of the monarch; the genuine lyricist is ignored. There may be an allusion to Spenser's own experiences at court in this focus on the prevailing strength of the counterfeit over the legitimate article, but it is clear that he was fascinated by how difficult it is to judge what is truth and what is art, a prevailing preoccupation in the *Faerie Queene*. A good counterfeit requires both skill and art and perhaps arguably the knack of a good poet, who as Philip Sidney stresses should offer up a world more beautiful than nature as 'Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden' (*Defence*, 185). If as Sidney argues: 'Poesy...is an art of imitation' (219) then is not poetry itself a series of counterfeits? Harry Berger argues that: 'through style and art, the courtier *manifests* his virtue...But fox and ape have no reality, no interior at all. The deliberately inconsistent portrayal...reveals them as protean figures whose reality *consists* in their manifold appearances.'⁷³ The mutable, shifting nature of Spenser's two protagonists means that they cannot *become* the thing they counterfeit while the courtier can display his virtues through art. What Berger does not address however, is the impotence of those virtuous courtiers in Spenser's poem who know full well 'What hell it is, in suing long to bide' (894) for as the poem attests:

...none but such as this bold Ape vnblest,
Can euer thriue in that vnluckie quest;
Or such as hath as Reynold to his man,
That by his shifts his Master furnish can
(915-918)

⁷³ Harry Berger, 'The Prospect of Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry', *Studies in English Literature*, 1 (1961), pp. 93-120, (p. 105).

In both *Raynarde the Foxe* and *Mother Hubbard's Tale* there is a preoccupation with the ambiguous nature of the spoken word. This is most clearly figured in the anxieties surrounding counsel as a political and self-serving tool. By placing words into the mouths of beasts both stories are able to explore the beastly nature of linguistic dissimulation, while also retaining a circumspect distance from their respective courtly spheres. Caxton's translation of *Raynarde the Foxe* ends with the careful qualification: '...yf any thyng be sayed or written herein, that may greue or displease any man, blame not me but the fox for they bene his wordes and not myne' (t. iiii. r).⁷⁴ This is not dissimilar to Spenser's ending:

...pardon me, If I amisse haue pend,
For weake was my remembrance it to hold,
And bad her tongue that it so bluntly tolde.
(1386-1388)

One throws words committed to the page back into the mouth of the beast, the other pins them firmly onto an old female storyteller; neither writer will claim the words as their own. In the case of *Mother Hubbard* it is perhaps important to consider that many fables or ballads recited or performed to an audience were originally found in print, ensuring that Spenser's act of deflection can come full circle, travelling from print to oral performance and then back again.⁷⁵ This distancing effect is one of the primary functions of the beast fable as it allows the writer to disassociate themselves from the work at hand by getting an animal or a secondary storyteller to shoulder the burden of meaning or association. The animals that take on the fabulist role as beasts of burden ultimately speak of the poet or writer's risk in seeking a public outlet for their work.

⁷⁴ In *Caxton and his World*, Blake notes that this line deviates from the Dutch version used by Caxton for his translation and appears to derive from Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, from where he also adopts the character of Chantecler the cock, p. 131.

⁷⁵ Robert A. Schwegler considers the interaction between oral culture and print specifically in relation to the singing of ballads in 'Oral Tradition and Print: Domestic Performance in Renaissance England', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 93 (1980), pp. 435-441, (pp. 435-439).

Spenser's choice of *Prosopopoia* as a title may be telling the reader more than just that the poem will be dealing with animals in disguise, the words on the page themselves may be conjuring counterfeits in order to befuddle the reader. *Mother Hubbard's Tale* not only warns of the dangers of false counsel, but also calls into question the motivations of any writer who chooses to seek an audience for his work, for what is a good imitation if not a counterfeit?

‘Go gather vp the reliques of thy race’: The *Golden Legend* and Spenser’s Textual Reliquaries

When we first see Spenser’s knight of holinesse ‘pricking on the plaine’¹ in the opening to Book I of the *Faerie Queene* it is immediately apparent that the bearer of the ‘bloudie Crosse’ (I, i, 2, 1) is none other than St George. By opening his epic with the Roman Catholic patron saint of England Spenser immediately confounds expectation. Why would an ostensibly Protestant poet with links to the Leicester circle at court choose to frame his work with a character so strongly allied to the superstition and error of the old religion?

During the Henrician, Edwardian and Elizabethan Reformations saintly hagiography had become a site of extreme and protracted conflict for reformers who wished to undo the iconography of the past – saints’ days had been abolished, relics destroyed and images defaced, although it is important to note that St George survived culls under both Henry VIII and Elizabeth.² Writers such as John Bale had rejected the textual *lives* of the saints and sought to reveal Catholic piety as founded on a false history of lies and magic, as Philip Schwyzer points out: ‘in classic Protestant manner, Bale sought to replace the false shows and spectacles of Catholicism with the truth of texts...’³ And yet on close scrutiny the new Protestant history espoused by Bale and others was found to be greatly indebted to the familiar vocabulary found in the saints’

¹ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1977), p. 29, I, i, 1, 1. All further quotations are from this edition.

² David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, 1989), p. 5. See also Peter Burke ‘How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint’ in *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 45-55, (pp. 45-6), for a brief reference to St George’s role as a saint who goes back to ‘time immemorial’ and his association with the classical monster slayer Perseus.

³ Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 70.

lives and elsewhere. Bale employed the records of the old church, ‘taking over enemy territory’⁴ in order to produce a new Protestant historiography, and as Helen Parish has noted, close engagement with medieval hagiography resulted in the saints being: ‘recast as players in an unfolding historical and doctrinal drama’⁵ rather than being rejected outright.

Studies of the Reformation in recent years have often stressed that there is considerable slippage between Protestant and Catholic forms of symbolism and vocabulary, as Alison Shell observes: ‘...there was considerable personal and literary interaction between individuals of opposing religious views. Catholics and Protestants often lived side by side, sometimes spoke to each other without quarrelling, and read each other’s books.’⁶ The power and veracity attributed to texts and particularly to scripture, encouraged Protestant reformers to reject the plays, pageants and feasts associated with the saints as without scriptural authority. The production of new texts however, which tried to reformulate the past in order to legitimise Protestantism’s claim to be the ‘one true faith’ and avoid charges of innovation and schism, inevitably borrowed from the vocabulary and iconography of the previous age.⁷ As Thomas Betteridge notes: ‘Tudor historians of the English Reformations, magisterial Protestants and Catholics, wrote to praise and condemn opposing events and persons; however, the historiographic discourses used by these writers to achieve their polemical aims display

⁴ Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and literacy in Late Medieval England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 236. Annabel Patterson examines Bale’s Reformation historiography in ‘Sir John Oldcastle as Symbol of Reformation Historiography’, *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688*, ed. by Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 6-26.

⁵ Helen Parish, *Monks, Miracles and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 4. See also ‘Impudent and Abominable Fictions’: Rewriting Saints’ Lives in the English Reformation’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32 (2001), pp. 45-65, for Parish’s examination of the transformation of the life of St Dunstan during the reformation.

⁶ Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 16.

⁷ R. W. Scribner in *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), pp. 50-1, refers to the disruption of Catholic rituals by reformers in Germany as a form of ‘anti-ritual’ resulting in a ‘counter-liturgy’ involving ‘play’ that ‘stands in close dialectical tension with the ritual it seeks to mock’.

a homogeneity of imagery that suggests a shared set of concerns transcending their doctrinal difference.’⁸ The seductive quality of the familiar and its seemingly contradictory role in the forming of new Protestant identities may be what underpin Spenser’s decision to incorporate a version of St George into the *Faerie Queene*, but it is also clear that the first book of the poem is teeming with allusions to the text as relic. Redcrosse’s identity as an important national saint associates him with a rattling casket of bones and his immortalisation in print heralds the emergence of a new form of textual memorial, a reliquary composed on the printing press. The book here serves the same function as a reliquary frame, encasing the relic in typeface rather than behind glass or crystal, but nonetheless leaving the fragmented saint open to view.⁹ In the *Faerie Queene* saintly relics and textual relics become jumbled together in a confused reliquary not unlike the ‘filthy parbreake’ (I, i, 20, 9) ‘full of bookes and papers’ (20, 6) and ‘great lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw’ (20, 3) which is spewed forth by the beastly Error.¹⁰ The ‘survival’ of St George in Spenser’s poem, despite its ostensibly Protestant credentials, draws attention to the tenacious nature of certain forms of iconography and language while also highlighting the inescapable links between Catholic reliquaries stuffed with the bones of saints and Protestant textual reliquaries. Spenser’s Redcrosse knight demands a closer examination of how and why the text becomes relic.

Spenser often attests to the immortalising quality of poetry, ascribing wholeheartedly to Phillip Sidney’s view that only the poet can provide an everlasting epitaph and that to disparage poetry will result in the curse of being swiftly forgotten by

⁸ Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530-83* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 1999), p. 218.

⁹ See Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* (London: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 35-45, for Kalas’s examination of reliquary frames and their ‘inversion’ of ideas of center and margin (p. 43).

¹⁰ For a discussion of the theological implications of Error’s offspring see Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 67.

history.¹¹ In *The Ruines of Time* Verlame despairs at the lack of monuments to the ‘great ones’¹² of the past: ‘Because they liuing, cared not to cherishe / No gentle wits...’ (362-3). In the same vein Clio in *The Teares of the Muses* despairs that there is ‘nothing worthie to be writ’¹³ about the ‘foes of learning’ (64):

So shall succeeding ages haue no light
Of things forepast, nor moniments of time,
And all that is in this world is worthie hight
Shall die in darknesse, and lie hid in slime
(103-6)

The posthumous survival of printed texts, described by Elizabeth Eisenstein as the ‘preservative powers of print’,¹⁴ alongside the form’s relative affordability and the potential for wide dissemination, ensured that publications were used as memorials by polemicists on both sides of the religious divide. This is most clearly seen in the promotion of Campion and Southwell’s literary remains by Catholic printers and the success of Foxe’s encyclopaedia of Protestant martyrologies, *Acts and Monuments*.¹⁵ The text becomes relic via the symbolic and literal destruction of the body and the stories of Protestant and Catholic martyrs alike become part of a new textual reliquary which replaces the sanctified flesh and bone which drew people in their hundreds to prominent churches prior to the Reformation.

The most famous form of Catholic textual reliquary was the thirteenth century *Legenda Aurea* or *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, which attempted to bring

¹¹ See ‘The Defense of Poesy’ in *Sir Phillip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 250, ll. 540-543.

¹² ‘The Ruines of Time’ in *Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 177, l. 358. All further quotations are from this edition.

¹³ ‘The Teares of the Muses’ in *Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 194, l. 100. All further quotations are from this edition.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 78.

¹⁵ See Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 9-31, for Marotti’s exploration of Southwell’s remains and the relationship between print and Catholic memorials. See also Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 330-339.

together all the disparate threads of the various saints' *lives* in one heavy compendium. Caxton translated the *Golden Legend* into English in 1483 and he added his own interpretation of the lives of the biblical saints, which had been missing from Voragine's original. Caxton's translation deviates from the Latin original in many instances, either due to mistranslation, error, or the repetition of existing misprints. It does, however, retain the essential character of the work.¹⁶ It was a very popular book despite its prohibitive size (it came in at around 450 pages) and many copies survive, although several have the life of 'saynt Thomas of Cauterbury' scratched out or painted over. An edition of the *Legend* from 1523 held at the Huntington Library has the life blacked out, but there are also places where the page has been slashed with a knife (folio. C. lxiiii.v). The *Golden Legend* provided the template for Foxe's great tome, *Actes and Monuments*, (which would become known as the *Book of Martyrs*), ensuring that there was continuity in form despite the fractious divide on content. Both books make great use of the visual power of woodcuts and provide 'icons' of their respective 'saints' at the head of each life, although Foxe would doubtless be uncomfortable with the implied similarity and indeed sought to deflect criticism that he had replaced Catholic saints with Protestant ones and produced a *Golden Legend* under another name. In the first edition of *Actes and Monuments* (1563) Foxe directly addresses this charge in a preface under the heading *Ad doctum Lectorem*, (John Foxe to the learned Reader). Written in Latin, perhaps to ensure that its readers were indeed 'learned', the preface seeks to address criticism that the text was not being produced quickly enough and challenges the disapproval of members of both faiths. To Foxe's annoyance his martyrology was deemed by Catholics to be heretical and by Protestants to be too close

¹⁶ Sister Mary Jeremy, 'Caxton's *Golden Legend* and Varagine's *Legenda Aurea*', *Speculum*, 21 (1946), pp. 212-221. See also N. F Blake, *Caxton and His World* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1969), pp. 146-7, for Blake's observation that the *Golden Legend* includes numerous additions by Caxton, possibly due to the episodic nature of the text and as a result of him using a variety of sources for his translation including versions in French, Latin and English.

to the fables of the past. Foxe insists wearily that his book will be in no way akin to the Catholic saints' lives:

...as far as concerns my martyrology, I would like it to be made manifest to all that I have taken pains to ensure that there should not be anything legendary in the work, or of such kind as either could be invented by me, or could not be everywhere very unlike that *Golden* (I should rather say *Leaden*) *Legend*. To this the substance and the innate character of the history will be able to bear witness, whose very fabric will be able to be seen to be drawn and conflated from the very archives and registers of bishops, and partly from the martyrs' own letters.¹⁷

Foxe's insistence that *Actes and Monuments*, unlike the *Legend*, will be grounded in historical record indicates that his Protestant martyrology is to be trusted as a true memorial rather than a work of fantastic fiction; this book marking the defiance of Protestant belief under siege will have a very temporal paper trail. Foxe draws a line in the sand separating his book from the *Legend*, marking one side of the divide 'true/history' the other 'false/legend'. Just as reformers dismissed the miracle of the mass as mere trickery, an elaborate show of smoke and mirrors, the *Legend* is accused of being a book of lies: 'But away, you impudent liar, with your *Golden Legend*, which all of us know, nor do you yourself not know, to be a book abounding with unnatural monstrosities of lies and most empty inventions...' (p.3).

The Protestant association of saints' lives with falsehoods and fictions may also be prompted by the belief that hagiographical texts could provoke miracles, either through the process of reading, or by coming into physical contact with the text itself.¹⁸ The power attributed to the written word may have been a source of anxiety for reformers who elevated the doctrine of *sola scriptura* but shied away from attributing

¹⁷ Many thanks to Mark Greengrass from the University of Sheffield's Foxe Project for allowing me access to this translation prior to publication. *Actes and Monuments*, (London: John Daye, 1563), p. 3-4. All further quotations are from this source.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the thaumaturgic effects of the hagiographic text see Alain Boreau, 'Franciscan Piety and Voracity: Uses and Strategems in the Hagiographic Pamphlet', in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1989), pp. 15-58.

miracles to objects and icons which could then be venerated.¹⁹ The miraculous to reformist eyes was inevitably the result of hidden mechanisms and priestly deception, the product of the same 'empty inventions' (p. 3) that produced the *Legend*.²⁰ Foxe's claim is that his text will be a true narrative that will replace the 'deceitful rubbish' (p.3) found in the Catholic lives' of the saints, but the act of supplanting one narrative with another surely indicates that they are both born of the same impulse: the desire to fix stories of pious behaviour so that they may stand witness to the suffering meted out by the ungodly. One significant difference is that the *Legend* records the lives' of the saints in order to inspire others to act in the same vein, while *Actes and Monuments*, culminating as it does with the accession to the throne of Elizabeth I, sees itself as bringing an end to the pattern of suffering and martyrdom. Now that there is a Protestant monarch there should be no need for further additions to the martyrology. Although, the fact that Foxe feels impelled to repeatedly stress that *Actes and Monuments* is no *Golden Legend* (the *Legend* is mentioned by name nine times in the preface) also indicates that he keenly felt the charge that they were too closely allied.

John N. King notes that *Actes and Monuments* had a specific memorial function (copies were often bequeathed by individuals to churches, their names carved into the caskets which held the book or on commemorative plaques), which allows the text to be

¹⁹ See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 87-88. Alexandra Washam in 'Miracles and the Counter Reformation Mission to England', *The Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 779-815, (pp. 784-5), reminds us that there was a strong reaction against false miracles by Catholic evangelicals prior to the Reformation.

²⁰ See Peter Marshall, 'Forgeries and Miracles in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Past & Present*, 178 (2003), pp. 39-73, for an analysis of forged miracles and their role as 'a valuable hermeneutic prism through which the regime's policies could be refracted to appear in the best possible light' (p. 61). The *Golden Legend* also endeavoured to locate purgatory, further ensuring that it was an anathema to reformers, Peter Marshall in *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), examines ideas of purgatory before and after the Reformation and refers specifically to the *Golden Legend's* location of purgatory, p. 10.

associated with the Catholic monuments, such as saintly reliquaries, that it in fact endeavoured to sweep away.²¹

In manuscript or print, martyrological testimonials function in the manner of verbal, as opposed to corporeal, relics of the saints. Foxe's goal is to preserve the speeches and deeds of "true" martyrs in the form of documents that memorialize the faithful suffering of new-style saints. The book as a whole therefore functions in the manner of a symbolic reliquary that preserves for posterity the deeds and words that constitute the essence of saintly sacrifice.²²

Textual preservation here provides an unwitting link to the embalming process to which physical relics were subjected and as Foxe's Catholic critics insisted, perhaps replaced one monument with another rather than successfully breaking from the old tradition. A similar point is made by Thomas Betteridge: 'it is almost as though the text is laying claim to be a reliquary, a depository in writing of those moments of extreme spiritual courage and certitude that Foxe represented the deaths of the Marian martyrs as being.'²³ Foxe's work is designed to be a textual 'repository' or 'monument' a resource that people could draw on for spiritual sustenance in much the same way as pilgrims took comfort from the bones of those men and women thought capable of acting as intermediaries between heaven and earth.²⁴ As Bart van Es notes: 'those who had gone to their graves (or into the flames) marked down as heretics were effectively exhumed

²¹ John N. King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 5. In 'Print, Profit and Propaganda: The Elizabethan Privy Council and the 1570 Edition of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', *English Historical Review*, 484 (2004), pp. 1288-1307, Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman challenge the common assertion that the *Book of Martyrs* was placed in every parish church by royal decree. While a surviving letter from the Privy Council to the Archbishop of York does order that a copy of Foxe's work be placed in every church they provide evidence that there were not enough copies in circulation. They also argue that the letter cannot be used as direct evidence that Elizabeth herself approved of the *Book of Martyrs* or wished to have it available to all parishioners.

²² King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, p. 8.

²³ Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations*, p. 184.

²⁴ See John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 438, for a further discussion of Foxe's use of the term 'monument'.

by Foxe's scholarly spadework only to be reinterred in prose.'²⁵ The correspondence with Catholic reliquaries is almost inevitable.

Spenser's often confusing intermingling of Protestant and Catholic imagery in Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, evidenced by Redcrosse's self-flagellation in the house of Holinesse and the 'seuen Bead-men' (x, 36, 1) in the 'holy Hospitall' (x, 36, 3) testifies to a fascination with the blurring of vocabularies that is typified by the relationship between the *Golden Legend* and *Actes and Monuments*.²⁶ This blurring adheres to a reading of the Reformation as a struggle between a variety of different ideological groups for control of common tropes and narratives rather than a monolithic opposition between Protestant and Catholic.²⁷ Caxton's translation of the *Legenda Aurea* was part of a 'massive catechetical enterprise'²⁸ in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* undertook a similar task for a different religious purpose after the Reformation had gained pace under Edward and Elizabeth.²⁹ It is far from surprising that there would be an overlap of style and narrative. It is this climate of revision and appropriation which spawns the Redrosse knight, placing an old Catholic

²⁵ Bart van Es, *Spenser's Forms of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 24.

²⁶ Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 149-150. See also John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 47-58, for King's argument that when Spenser places Archimago in the habit of a friar he is drawing upon medieval traditions of monastic parody as well as Protestant iconography.

²⁷ For a discussion of how murder pamphlets and gallows publications (including 'eye witness' accounts of Catholic executions for treason) demonstrate that popular publications were a site of struggle for a variety of different ideological groups see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 262.

²⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 2. Duffy also argues that the *Legend* was part of an 'imaginative world' that would be whitewashed by the 'astringent and strident words' of the *Book of Martyrs*, (p. 593). Duffy does not acknowledge however that many of the systems of remembrance and stylistic tropes of the old faith were co-opted by the new.

²⁹ Jesse M. Lander in *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print, and literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), examines the 'multiple agents' (p. 59) involved in the making, disseminating and popularizing of Foxe's book.

saint at the heart of a text normally associated with the reformist impulse of Protestantism and leads to an exploration of the text as relic.³⁰

The *Golden Legend* exacerbates the unfixed nature of saintly hagiography; by acting as a compendium which brings together all the different threads surrounding the lives of the saints it succeeds in pointing out precisely how unstable their histories were. St George's life juxtaposes the fantastical tale of his duel with the dragon with the far more historically specific story of his martyrdom at the hands of Dacian, whose temple the saint reduces to rubble. It is also made clear in the Legend that 'hys marterdom hath no certayn relacyon'³¹ and several potential sites for his death are explored although only one is examined in full. The various and often contradictory strands which make up his life are further complicated when taking into account the fact that Caxton used a variety of sources for his English translation which was based on three versions of the *Legenda Aurea*, one in French, one in Latin and one in English.³² The jumbled etymology of George's name produced by Caxton/Voragine further adds to the confusion. George is variously interpreted as a 'holy wrastler' as 'of george may be said of gera: that is holy/and of gyon that is wrasteler' and as 'tylienge therth/that is hys flesh' because 'of George is sayd geos/whyche is as moche to saye as erth and orge/ye is tilyeng' (Cxi. r). George is revealed to be a rather unstable individual, an inference capitalised upon by Spenser when he goes about forming his unholy knight of holiness – the hapless Redcrosse knight. It also becomes clear that Foxe was reacting against this lack of precision when he asserted that *Actes and Monuments* would avoid 'the

³⁰ For an examination of the textual relationship between Spenser's Redcrosse and the life of St George from the *Golden Legend* see F. M. Padelford and Matthew O'Connor, 'Spenser's Use of the St. George Legend', *Studies in Philology*, 23 (1926), pp. 142-156. Padelford and O'Connor also consider the contribution to the legend made by a collection of narrative homilies compiled by John Mirk, (printed by Caxton in 1482), the tales written by Barclay and Mantuan and a tapestry poem by John Lydgate.

³¹ *Here begynneth the legende in latyn legenda aurea that is to saye in Englysshe the golden legende*, trans. by William Caxton (London: Wynken de Worde, 1498), r. Cxi. All further quotations are from this edition.

³² See Blake, *Caxton and His World*, p. 118.

particular plagues of history, namely fear and flattery' (p. 4). By examining Redcrosse in the light of the *Golden Legend* it is clear that fears surrounding textual error and confusion abound.³³ The uncertainty engendered by Caxton's popular translation of de Voragine further supports the anxiety surrounding textual error that was propounded by Sir Thomas More in his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, produced during the reign of Henry VIII.³⁴ The fact that the Redcrosse knight's first military test occurs when he battles the half-female, half-snake Errorr is perhaps significant in this light. Textual relics are revealed as potential sites for confusion and ambiguity, purveyors of falseness and dissimulation to rival the medieval reliquaries with their jumble of bones, hair and fingernails that so disgusted the Protestant reformers. If words and bones alike are of doubtful provenance then how is the reader to discern the author's intent? Or is the impossibility of this task precisely what Spenser would have us acknowledge? Ernest B. Gilman has noted that Spenser self-consciously alludes to his modes of production, revealing his work as a construction, an act of craft: 'the archaic language, the sound effects, the obvious intrusions and digressions- all this conspicuous machinery of authorship in effect defaces the text to expose the wires.'³⁵ By exposing the 'wires' of his poetry Spenser undermines the suspension of disbelief inherent in the theatrical nature of his work: the images that he creates are pictures suspended from strings in an elaborate puppet show and his textual reliquary is revealed as mere pieces of bone. This process alludes to the instability of textual creation and by extension questions the text's real ability to preserve or memorialise a 'true' likeness. If his epic is to become a repository or reliquary for the familiar then it shall destabilise the idea that the

³³ For an examination of the role of error in early modern writing see, Francois Rigolot, 'The Renaissance Fascination with Error: Mannerism and Early Modern Poetry', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 57 (2004), pp. 1219-1234. See also David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 97-138, for an in depth analysis of the mobile, unfixed nature of the printed text and its capacity for error.

³⁴ See Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*, p. 192.

³⁵ Ernest B. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation: Down Went Dagon* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 71.

recognisable can be fixed to a linear provenance. Potentially the familiar can trick and dissemble in the same way as false relics, Spenser like Chaucer's Pardoner can rattle his animal bones in order to confound his readers: '...shewe I forth my longe crystal stones, / Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones / Relikes been they, a weenen they eechoon'.³⁶

Darryl Gless points out that the *Faerie Queene* demands that its readers are able to accommodate a variety of perspectives into their approach to the text:

The author appears intent on offering alternative generic signals, clues that induce readers to construe the text by way of differing schemata or frames, and so to notice, project and invest with significance different patterns of detail at different moments of perception.³⁷

A proliferation of 'generic symbols' provides multiple lines of sight to the reader, but this also undermines the fixed nature of any of the ideas proffered by the text, if Spenser not only exposes the constructed nature of his work, but also subjects that construction to a variety of possible readings through the laying out of different generic clues, then Redcrosse himself can be approached and read from numerous perspectives. The possibility of one fixed character degenerating into multiples is clearly demonstrated at the point in the *Faerie Queene* when the reader is finally told that Redcrosse is indeed St George. Rather than Recrosse being named directly Spenser reveals his identity when describing Archimago's transformation into the knight's doppelganger:

³⁶ 'The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alfred David and James Simpson (London: W. W Norton & Company, 2006), p. 285-6, ll. 59-61. All further quotations are from this edition.

³⁷ Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, p. 50.

But now seemed best, the person to put on
 Of that good knight, his late beguiled guest:
 In mighty armes he was yclad anon:
 And siluer shield, vpon his coward brest
 A bloudy crosse, and on his crauen crest
 A bounch of haire discoloured diuersly;
 Full iolly knight he seemd, and well addrest,
 And when he sate vpon his courser free,
Saint George himself ye would haue deemed him to be.
 (I, ii, 11)

It is the false Redcrosse who is first linked to the great patron saint of the Order of the Garter, rather than the hapless knight who will eventually do battle with Una's dragon. Spenser's repetition of the word 'seemd' in this stanza also reinforces the fact that very little in this world is as it appears to be and a false replica of a saint can be just as believable as the real thing, even if it disguises a dangerous wizard; such is the power of the false idol. It is Archimago's 'costume' which enables him to adopt the pose of a saint, indicating that clothing, with all its hierarchical meaning can often be an unstable signifier on which to depend, a conundrum repeatedly raised by the sight of many men playing many parts and lowly players acting as kings on the Elizabethan stage.³⁸ Redcrosse's name, as well as St George's, is seen to be a rocky foundation on which to place saintly attributes or virtues, a name can be stolen and taken in vain while its etymological meaning can be obscured or lost when adopted by an unworthy bearer. Book I plays host to another doppelganger – when Archimago wants to separate Redcrosse from Una he conjures forth a 'Spright' (i, 45, 2) 'most like to seeme for Vna fit' (i, 45, 9) - indicating that Spenser is very interested in the process of doubling and

³⁸ In *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield and Wily Maley (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1997), Eudoxus despairs that the English by taking on Irish apparel will become Irish, as 'mens apparel is commonly made according to their conditions, and their conditions are oftentimes governed by their garments' (p. 72), Ireneus then points out that the English are in fact wearing the garments of the 'old English' (p. 73). For a discussion of the 'echoic' (p. 204) effect of doubling on the stage in Hamlet see Ralph Berry, 'Hamlet's Doubles', in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), pp. 204-212. See also John W. Sider, "'One Man in his Time Plays Many Parts': Authorial Theatrics of Doubling in Early English Renaissance Drama', *Studies in Philology*, 91 (1994), pp. 359-389. Sider pays particular attention to the doubling up of players in Bale's *King Johan*.

its role in confounding those who focus on surface alone. The fact that Redcrosse is so easily tricked by Archimago's apparition, leading to his separation from Una as they are 'diuided into double parts' (I, ii, 9, 2), indicates that he is unable to read through layers of meaning in order to discern the truth at the heart of an image. Both Una and Redcrosse go their separate ways leaving their doubles in their wake in a curious incident of simultaneous fracturing and reflection.

A. Bartlett Giamatti links this doubling to the relationship between surface and substance inherent in pageantry: 'in allegory or in pageantry, the surface is never sacrificed to the substance; surface is, rather, at the service of substance. We must learn as spectators, as readers, to read back from what is available to what is hidden. We must learn to read out of and into ourselves.'³⁹ Giamatti's focus on pageantry reminds us that saints were frequently depicted in pageants, their various virtues and themes of patronage writ large by their presence in a public space before an audience and it is indeed possible to read Book I of the *Faerie Queene* as a distorted pageant in which the assumed meaning of the surface is repeatedly confounded.⁴⁰ Pageantry was also an integral component of saints' plays in which players enacted a saint's particular virtues and divinely inspired behaviour in order to move the audience to devotion. There are references to two St George plays from the fifteenth century, both of which are now lost. One is from Lydd, Kent, 1456, and the other from New Romney, 1490-97.⁴¹ As George's story had a national focus due to his status as patron saint it is not unreasonable to suppose that there may have been many more plays performed which dealt with his life and battle with the dragon. St George and his fellow saints would be

³⁹ A. Bartlett Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's Faerie Queene* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1975), p. 83.

⁴⁰ See Muriel C. McClendon, 'A Movable Feast: Saint George's Day Celebrations and Religious Change in Early Modern England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 38 (1999), pp. 1-27.

⁴¹ See Darryl Grantley, 'Saints' Plays' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 265-289, (p. 266).

familiar figures of entertainment, associated with traditional holidays and festivals prior to the Reformation.

Saint's plays were a form of popular religious entertainment during the medieval period and mortal sinners would routinely be trussed up in the garb and habit of an individual who had suffered holy martyrdom, although it was common for medieval actors to be described, in the same vein as icons, as representing a saint rather than becoming divine.⁴² Archimago, with his disguise constructed by 'mightie science' (ii, 10, 2) is like an actor on a stage clad in the accoutrements of sanctity; the signs by which a particular saint was rendered recognisable and familiar, in his case the 'shield' (ii, 11, 4), 'bloudy crosse' (ii, 11, 5) and 'crauen crest' (ii, 11, 5) of St George. This particular performance however, has a far from holy intent. The saints' plays demanded a level of participation from their audience predicated upon a shared sense of what David L. Jeffrey calls 'divine pattern'.⁴³ This dictated that the repetition of saintly lives was part of a system of holy recurrence that had at its centre the holy sacrament, a process which saw Christ daily crucified and reborn in the hearts of parishioners. Archimago's disguise makes a mockery of such a 'divine pattern', subverting it to such an extent that the false St George is more closely allied to the saint's name than Redcrosse, whose name is a loaded sign without the familiarity of a Christian name.

As has been previously demonstrated Caxton's *Golden Legend* displays a singular preoccupation with etymology, something which is reflected in the medieval

⁴² For a discussion of the relationship between drama and divinity see William Tydeman, 'An Introduction to Medieval English Theatre' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 4-9. See Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 37-84, for further information regarding actors and biblical/saintly roles, (p. 42-3).

⁴³ David L. Jeffrey, 'English Saint's Plays' in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by Neville Denny (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), p. 72.

populace's attachment to their name saints.⁴⁴ Spenser shares this preoccupation, with many of his characters in the *Faerie Queene* having symbolically weighted names, whether it is Una (singular, pure, one true church) or Duessa (doubling, dissembling, false church). The self-conscious process of naming in the *Faerie Queene* is employed in order to further illuminate the nature of individual characters and their place within the scheme of the poem, as Martha Craig notes: '... "etymological" associations of language are a constant guide to the implicit meaning of the poem and form the very principle of its organization.'⁴⁵ The various players in Spenser's narrative are often named long after they have stepped onto the field of the text - a deferral that occasionally results in confusion as the reader is denied the traditional signifier with which to pin down the character. This is particularly apparent during physical or verbal duels as it becomes difficult to differentiate between the two parties concerned. For example in Book II when Guyon is battling Pyrochles three stanzas pass at the heart of the fight in which neither knight is named, the repetition of 'his', 'he' and 'him' (II, v, 4, 5, 6) resulting in a confused tangle of bodies not unlike the duel itself:

With that he drew his flaming sword, and stroke
 At him so fiercely, that the vpper marge
 Of his seuenvolded shield away it tooke,
 And glauncing on his helmet, made a large
 And open gash therein: were not his targe,
 That broke the violence of his intent,
 The weary soule from thence it would discharge;
 Nathelesse so sore a buff to him it lent,
 That made him reele, and to his brest his beuer bent.
 (II, v, 6)

This muddling of identities paradoxically emphasises the importance of names, as the reader inevitably breathes a sigh of relief once the duelling pair is separated and

⁴⁴ For examples of individuals honouring their name saints see Duffy, *Stripping the Altars*, p. 160 and p. 162.

⁴⁵ Martha Craig, 'The Secret Wit of Spenser's Language' in *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Paul J. Alpers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 454.

they are both aligned with their appropriate etymologies. It is also clear that in battle opponents can be most easily recognised by the signs they carry with them, the ‘flaming sword’ (1) and ‘seuenfolded shield’ (3) of Pyrochles and Guyon, rather than by their names. Redcrosse’s shield which carries the sign of the red cross, also serves this function although it has a dual purpose as it also recalls his name. The importance attached to naming in the *Faerie Queene* reflects the depth of analysis afforded to names by de Voragine in the *Golden Legend*. It also looks back to a time when a saint’s name would be invoked to ward off evil or repeated in prayer, a semantic talisman which afforded protection and reassurance. George’s name may also have proved to be particularly attractive to Spenser as it had clear associations with rebirth and reform as ‘Georgos’ is the Greek term for ploughman, this in turn provided a link to pre-lapsarian man as ‘Adam’ is derived from the Hebrew word for earth.⁴⁶ George can thus be identified as a saint who has the capability to plough the earth, to render man suitable for a spiritual planting and harvest. When the Redcrosse knight is taken to see the hermit Contemplation he is greeted by the old man as ‘thou man of earth’ (x, 52, 2), bringing to mind the etymology of the *Golden Legend* (‘Of George is sayd of geos/whyche is as moche to saye as erth’). George is also told by Contemplation that he was found and named by a ‘Ploughman’ (x, 66, 3).⁴⁷ It is subsequently unfeasible to suggest that Spenser was not at least aware of the content of de Voragine’s lives but it also demonstrates a surprising consistency of narrative between the two divergent texts as well as bringing to mind the resurgent interest in Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and

⁴⁶ Craig, ‘The Secret Wit of Spenser’s Language’, p. 463.

⁴⁷ See Rosamond Tuve, ‘The Red Crosse Knight and Medieval Demon Stories’, in *Essays by Rosamond Tuve: Spenser, Herbert, Milton*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 39-48. Tuve notes that Redcrosse’s changeling status and affinity with the earth allies him to the figure of the foundling in medieval demon stories. She associates the variety of sources for Spenser’s Redcrosse knight with ‘the shreds and patches gathered by an eclectic imagination’ (p. 48).

Langland's re-habilitation as a proto-Protestant writer.⁴⁸ The Redcrosse knight is St George, another player in a divine pattern which has roots in the Catholic past; rather than change and innovation we have a form of continuity. This continuity is made possible because of the sanctity afforded to the written word by Protestant reformers.⁴⁹ The Word has the potential to become a new idol and the book replaces the saint. Spenser's work is drawing on a tradition which fetishises the book and replaces fallen icons with leaves of papers embossed by the printing press.⁵⁰ This was however, very far from being a wholesale transferral and there was considerable anxiety on the part of Protestants that people would fail to read scripture properly, as Brian Cummings points out:

Nowhere is modern writing about the Reformation more at risk of bathos than in its simplistic attention to the Reformation doctrine of the primacy of the Word. The cabbalistic appeal to the sanctity of the word played itself out against a material dispute over material words. Such words were prone to ambiguous interpretation, and every ambiguity concealed a threat as well as a promise.⁵¹

The *Golden Legend* provides a textual link that plunges Spenser's poem into the Catholic past, but it also draws to the surface the ambiguity surrounding textual transfer and the translation or transformation of a familiar vocabulary. The *Golden Legend* as a

⁴⁸ Padelford and O'Connor in 'Spenser's Use of the St. George Legend', observe that 'Spenser may have taken a hint' from the etymologies proposed by Caxton when deciding to frame Book I around the life of St George, (p. 156).

⁴⁹ See John T. McNeill, 'The Significance of the Word of God for Calvin', *Church History*, 28 (1959), pp. 131-146, for a discussion of the central role of scripture in Calvinist thought and the importance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit when reading the Word of God. See also Richard Rex, 'The Crisis of Obedience: God's Word and Henry's Reformation', *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 863-894, (pp. 889-894), for a discussion of the connection made between obedience to the monarch and the Word of God, (as predicated on the fourth commandment), specifically in relation to the preaching of the Royal Supremacy.

⁵⁰ John N. King, "'The Light of Printing': William Tyndale, John Foxe, John Day, and Early Modern Print Culture", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), pp. 52-85 (p. 55). King asserts that Foxe believed that 'divine providence insured the invention of printing' and that the rise of print was a necessary prerequisite for the Reformation.

⁵¹ Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*, p. 10-11. See also Jean Francois Gilmont, 'Protestant Reformations and Reading' in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1999), pp. 213-237, (pp. 219-223), for an analysis of the dangers of reading espoused by Protestant thinkers and the restrictions placed on popular reading.

textual source for Catholic hagiographies which had been translated into the vernacular, perhaps also inhabits an ambiguous space which demands an interrogation of the fixity and ‘truth’ of the written word and by extension its ability to transcend any charges of error. As we have noted Errour’s vomit links fleshly relics with textual relics and in the same way Redcrosse’s central position in Spenser’s ‘Protestant’ epic testifies to an inevitable intermingling of both Catholic and Protestant reliquaries.

When he is in the House of Holinesse Redcrosse performs several acts of penance in which he mortifies his own flesh in an attempt to remove his ‘filthy blots of sinne’ (x, 27, 7). As self-flagellation was explicitly linked to Catholic ideas of atonement, which had no place in a religious landscape dominated by the Lutheran and Calvinist theories of predestination, this further complicates his religious position.⁵² This episode also draws further attention to Redcrosse’s corporeal self; this is unsurprising given that it is the knight’s fleshly appetites which get him into trouble, but by laying bare ‘His daintie corse’ (x, 26, 2) Spenser alludes to the body of the text as well as the body of his knight.

Redcrosse’s body is described as ‘infected’ (x, 25, 2) by sin and in need of spiritual purgation. His body is corrupted by festering Errour and has to go through a process strangely reminiscent of editing. This is most clearly seen in the following lines:

And euer as superfluous flesh did rot
Amendment readie still at hand did wayt,
 To pluck it out with pincers firie whot,
 That soone in him was left no one corrupted iot.
 (I, x, 26, 6-9)

The editorial clout of *Amendment* coupled with the dual meaning behind ‘iot’- (there are many examples of ‘iot’ from the sixteenth century meaning the ‘last letter or

⁵² See John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 53, for a brief discussion of flagellation as a form of penitence designed to identify with the sufferings of Christ and provide a visible sign of contrition.

written part of any writing'⁵³, the OED references both Foxe and Bale for using it in this context), results in a reading of the body as text. Therefore, Redcrosse's punishment of the flesh can be explained in the light of the poet's processes of revision rather than being solely allied to Catholic acts of penance. It may be that this episode in the poem indicates Spenser's motivation for incorporating a revised vision of St George into the *Faerie Queene*; by reforming/rewriting a saint so closely allied with Tudor iconography and the prestigious Order of the Garter Spenser indicates that the poet can rehabilitate the iconography of the past in order for it to serve a new master. Although, as ever, in doing so the shared vocabulary of the two religious houses is thrust into the spotlight. The editing of Redcrosse's flesh also corresponds to his inability to read situations properly, alluding to the difficulty of assuring that a readership avoided error and proscribed the eye in order to read properly, as discussed in chapter 2. As Hester Lees-Jeffries notes: '...the difficulties of Redcrosse's quest and the obstacles that he faces are often brought about by his shortcomings as a reader or interpreter of signs'⁵⁴, we will later see how Redcrosse's inability to read his own sign system leads to him putting off those marks which render him recognisable. If Redcrosse cannot correctly read the world around him or his own position within it, then it is natural that Spenser would appropriate his body in order to subject it to the revision and editing often demanded of a reformed reader.

St George's role as an 'establishment' saint meant that he was ripe for appropriation as he had repeatedly been adopted by monarchs in order to associate their reigns with the code of valour and chivalry epitomised by the crusades and the doctrine

⁵³ Oxford English Dictionary online <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/findword?query-type=word&queryword=jot>> [accessed 08 May 2009].

⁵⁴ Hester Lees-Jeffries, *England's Helicon: Fountains in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 123. Lees-Jeffries argues that Redcrosse's mis-reading extends to a confusion surrounding Book I's genre, resulting in Redcrosse adopting the pose of the errant knight when he is supposed to be the Christian knight, pp. 122-143.

of holy war. In a portrait of Henry VII and his wife and children from c. 1505-9, the royal family kneel, hands clasped in prayer while St George floats overhead battling with the dragon. The image is reminiscent of traditional votary pictures with an angel presiding over the kneeling King and his family, but with the fantastic inclusion of a battle from Christian mythology. The image clearly allied Henry with the patron saint of England whose victory over the dragon seems assured by the efficacy of the royal prayers which are directed towards him. It also confers dynastic legitimacy upon his heirs who are also watched over by the warrior saint, an ever-important preoccupation for a monarch who gained his crown in the heat of battle during the Wars of the Roses. This image may also signal a transfer of affiliation from King Arthur to St George, as the young Prince Arthur, so named to ally the Welsh Tudors with the ruler of Camelot, had died in 1502 (appendix 1). If George is afforded the role of guardian over the nation's rulers as he is in this image then there is always the potential for him to transcend political and religious change and be accommodated to a new regime. The saint can be moulded into a variety of different forms, revised and edited at the will of his maker, whether artist or poet.

Another image of the body revised and edited in the form of a text occurs when Redcrosse is presented to Contemplation. The old man is described as a 'godly aged Sire' (x, 48, 1):

Each bone might through his body well be red,
 And euery sinew seene through his long fast:
 For nought he car'd his carcas long vnfed;
 His mind was full of spirituall repast,
 And pyn'd his flesh, to keepe his body low and chaste.
 (I, x, 48, 5-9)

Contemplation lays bare the inner workings of his body through its malnourishment to the point where it can be 'red' by the viewer.⁵⁵ This is seen to be the consequence of his mind being 'full of spirituall repast' (48, 8), a condition to which Redcrosse must surely aspire given his recent trials at the hands of pride (Orgoglio) and Despair. A body which has achieved the goal of being 'low and chaste' is one whose bones can be 'red' and 'euery sinew seene', such transparency indicates that Contemplation does not have 'superfluous flesh' (x, 26, 6), unlike Redcrosse he requires no 'Amendment' (x, 26, 7). The revision of the body, its translation or transformation, here provides a parallel to editorial practice as well as spiritual development. Given the fact that Redcrosse's greatest burden is his inability to control his flesh we can perhaps infer that it is the unruly text which Spenser intends to pare down to its bare bones to reveal its inner workings.⁵⁶ This paring of flesh/text has distinct echoes in the mutilation of a saint's flesh prior to martyrdom, a process which Julia Reinhard Lupton associates with the transition from body to emblem.⁵⁷ The further transformations or reductions which take place during the preservation and dissemination of fleshy relics, also paradoxically prefigure the mode of their eventual destruction.

Bones, sinew, hair and teeth thought to come from saints would be dispersed to various religious houses and royal collections, stripped of their flesh they retained the essence of their owner's sanctity, no longer burdened by the unruly sinfulness of fleshly

⁵⁵ Linda Gregerson in 'Anatomizing death' in *Imagining Death in Spenser and Milton*, ed. by Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, Patrick Cheney and Michael Schoenfeldt (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 95-115, argues that by advocating the starvation of the Irish in *The View of the Present State of Ireland* Spenser is tapping into a colonial desire to anatomize the body in order to render it legible: 'to anatomize the body, or the body of a subjected nation, is to divide it into parts in order that it may be read', (p. 97).

⁵⁶ This is also reminiscent of processes of dissection, for a discussion of 'sacred anatomy' and self-dissection in the search for self-analysis in Calvinist theology see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 110-129.

⁵⁷ Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 40-70.

desire.⁵⁸ The process of decay resulted in body bits which were eminently ‘readable’ and therefore deemed all the more efficacious. These relics would however, be later stripped of another kind of ‘superfluous flesh’ (x, 26, 6), the aura of sanctity which had rendered them powerful, until all that was left were bare bones. The *Golden Legend* goes to great lengths to track the movement of saintly relics, in George’s case they are shown to move from East to West via Jerusalem, his ‘herte’ and ‘a piece of hys heed’ (C xiii. r) finally resting in ‘a noble college in the castell of wyndesore’ (Cxiii. v). This transferral of reliquaries between different sites not only lays claim to the providential nature of a saints’ final resting place, but also lays open the potential for further sights of transferral, as and when God wills it. The focus on the movement of relics in de Voragine’s *Legend* also succeeds in dislocating individual saints from particular geographical localities, demanding instead that acts of commemoration be synchronized across the church.⁵⁹ Relics are the result of a process of revelation which lays bare and displays the body of a saint through torture and martyrdom and are subject to an act of translation through preservation and decay and then transferred from place to place. The saintly body is thus no stranger to alteration and amendment, providing a site of constant revision and editing for hagiographers.

Reliquaries were attacked by reformers not only on the grounds that they failed to produce true miracles but because they were often deemed to be false objects, little more than Chaucer’s Pardoner’s ‘pigges bones’ (*The Pardoner’s Tale*, 702). During the process of reformation in the sixteenth century individuals would repeatedly attack the efficacy of holy objects, claiming that they had no power to intervene on the behalf of

⁵⁸ Peter Brown notes that the Christian veneration of saints blurred the traditional boundaries between the living and the dead: ‘...the Christian cult of the saints rapidly came to involve the digging up, the moving, the dismemberment – quite apart from much avid touching and kissing – of the bones of the dead, and, frequently, the placing of these in areas from which the dead had once been excluded’, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 4.

⁵⁹ Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints*, p. 63.

worshippers. Previously sacred items were destroyed, defaced or put to more mundane use, for example altar stones were used as paving stones or incorporated into fireplaces.⁶⁰ Iconoclasm was as much about stripping objects of their imagined power and revealing them as simple material things, whether they are stone, bones or water, as it was about the physical demolition of false idols.⁶¹ As the mystical became the mundane, a process which may in fact have proved far more effective than wholesale destruction, relics could literally be ‘seene through’ (x, 48, 6). In the *Golden Legend* St George is depicted as the ultimate iconoclast who is tortured for refusing to submit to Dacian’s will and make an offering to the Roman Gods, provoking an act of divine retribution that makes the Roman temple burn: ‘ye fyre descended fro heuen and brente ye temple and thydollys and theyr prestes. And sythen the erthe opened and swallowed alle the cendres and asshes that were left’ (Cxii. r). The temple is wiped from the face of the earth so that not even the ‘cendres and asshes’ remain. This moment of wholesale iconoclasm indicates that St George can be associated with a far more recent religious movement than his Catholic iconography would immediately suggest. He could even lay claim to the position of patron saint of iconoclasts. Like the Protestant reformers he too is a breaker of images, the destroyer of false idols.⁶² Shell points out that the imagery of broken idols can be traced back to medieval manuscripts which demonstrate a fascination with the process of iconoclasm: ‘...images survive of their symbolic execution, amputation of their hands and limbs, their automatic shattering in the presence of holiness or their explosion on the expulsion of the resident evil spirit’.⁶³ It is interesting that idols were thought to break when in the presence of holiness as this may

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 86.

⁶¹ See Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1977), p. 207, for a description of the public burnings of objects of veneration to prove that they were mere ‘human devices’.

⁶² For a discussion of the contribution of image-breaking to the debate over religious reformation between 1525-1535 see Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts, Volume I: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 210-219.

⁶³ Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination*, p. 32.

indicate why Spenser chose to fashion his St George as a knight of holiness; his emblematic nature is thus closely allied to his saintly power as a divine iconoclast.

St George asks of Dacian: 'O caytyffe telle me how mai thy goddes helpe the: whan they maye not helpe them self' (C xiii. v). This would be a charge laid out by reformers as they wrestled icons to the floor and moved so called 'immovable' objects. In the life of St George from the *Golden Legend* Spenser would have found a saint that could not only be allied to the Protestant cause, but also used as an example to demonstrate the strength and indelible nature of familiar tropes and narratives. The subsequent correlation with the repetitive history found in the Saints' plays attests to Spenser's interest in the survival of a form of history predicated on a faith in recurrence rather than a revision of the immediate past as a fatal deviance from the 'true' faith as espoused by Bale et al. George's iconoclasm is a central aspect of this repetitious history, as Lupton notes: 'the displayed martyr is a proto-icon who both destroys and stands in for the rejected idols'.⁶⁴

Redcrosse's visit to Contemplation reveals that he is 'sprong out from English race' (x, 60, 1) and it becomes clear that the knight is ignorant of his parentage and is unaware that he is 'ordaind a blessed end' (x, 61, 5). The reader has a superior knowledge of his eventual fate, which makes it possible for Spenser to defer his naming and the explanation of his destiny which is finally proffered by the Hermit.⁶⁵ It also makes the knight's behaviour harder to fathom as the saintly knight of holiness and the patron saint of England has a habit of behaving in a decidedly unholy manner. The reader is afforded this superior position precisely because they would have been familiar

⁶⁴ Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints*, p. 46.

⁶⁵ This process of deferral is also interesting in relation to the sixty five year hiatus between 1523 and 1588 in which no new saints were canonised. Peter Burke in, 'How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint', p. 46, attributes this gap in saint-making to a 'crisis of canonisation' prompted by the fear that 'to create saints was to invite mockery, but to refrain from making them was to yield the initiative in propaganda to the other side.'

with the story of the saint's battle with the dragon and eventual martyrdom from the *Golden Legend*. The reader may then infer that they potentially have a superior position within the text than that bestowed upon a saint; the divine hierarchy becomes muddled and indistinct, ensuring that this particular saint's power of intercession is severely undermined. It is possible that a familiarity with the *Golden Legend* is a prerequisite for such a reading, ensuring that those who knew the popular Catholic publication were the readership to which Spenser was looking.

Redcrosse's future (or history depending on whether you are within or outside the narrative) is portrayed by Contemplation in glowing terms:

Then peaceably thy painefull pilgrimage
To yonder same *Hierusalem* do bend,
Where is for thee ordaind a blessed end:
For thou emongst those Saints, whom thou doest see,
Shalt be a saint, and thine owne nations frend
And Patrone: thou Saint *George* shalt called bee,
Saint *George* of mery England, the signe of victoree.
(x, 61, 3-9)

Redcrosse is told that he has a place in '*Hierusalem*' amongst the other saints, a wonderful golden apparition of 'perle and precious stone, that earthly tong / Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell' (x, 55, 5-6). Now that they have been expelled from this holy land by the Protestant Reformation perhaps the *Golden Legend* becomes the last resting place, the last Jerusalem, for one of these Catholic martyrs. Contemplation reveals that George's life will be intimately bound with the nation of England from which he is descended, a fabrication on Spenser's part as George is identified as 'borne in capadoce' (Cxi. r) in the *Legend*. George does not become anglicised in the story of his *life* until he appears to the English crusaders during the siege of Jerusalem: '... they sawe appertely Saint george whyche had white armes with a red crosse that wente vp to fore theym on the walle and they followed hym. So was Jherusalem taken by hys

helpe...’ (Cxiii. v). This miraculous apparition is provoked by the presence of some of George’s relics, brought to the battlefield by a ‘preest’ (v. Cxiii) who had been commanded to do so by the saint’s spectre. George’s role as an English warrior saint and eventual patron of the Order of the Garter is based upon this moment in the *Legend*. It is not the deeds undertaken by the saint in life that link him to England but rather his efficacy in death. It is his relics that produce an English victory in Jerusalem and reveal the ever-familiar iconography of the red cross that would be adopted by future generations of crusaders and become the basis of the national flag. Subsequently, Redcrosse’s given name is directly associated with the power attributed to his relics, as the sign of the ‘bloudie Crosse’ (i, 2, 1) only becomes part of his symbolic vocabulary after his appearance on the walls of Jerusalem. This symbol imbues Redcrosse with a form of magical protection as alluded to by Sansfoy:

Curse on that Crosse (quoth then the *Sarazin*)
That keepe thy body from the bitter fit;
Dead long ygoe I wote thou haddest bin,
Had not that charme from thee forwarned it:
(I, ii, 18, 1-4)

While magic was closely allied to the Catholic mass in Protestant polemic Sansfoy’s reading of the symbol of the cross may be that of an ignorant knight who cannot distinguish between a sign of the occult and the sign of God’s blessing. However, while the Red Cross became the banner of the English crusaders and is thus associated with English holy war it is also reminiscent of the one true cross, which also became a relic in its own right. Reformers would mockingly infer that there were in fact enough pieces of the cross in various churches around Europe to build it several times over and Thomas Cromwell would receive notification of ‘peces of the olie crosse able

to make a hole crosse of 'found at the Abbey in Bury St. Edmunds.'⁶⁶ Even the pared down symbol of faith still carries with it the dangerous associations of relic and icon.

George's relationship with England begins with his bones, thus demonstrating how a reliquary can hold sway over national associations. George's bones are perhaps re-interred by Spenser in the *Faerie Queene* when he transfers them from the *Golden Legend* to a textual reliquary of his own making. It is important to note however, that relics are still imbued with a superstitious and magical power in the *Faerie Queene*. When Duessa seeks the help of Night to save the mortally wounded Sansfoy she charges her to:

Vp then, vp dreary Dame, of darknesse Queene,
Go gather vp the reliques of thy race,
Or else goe them auenge, and let be seene,
That dreaded *Night* in brightest day hath place,
And can the children of faire light deface.
(I, v, 24, 1-5)

Duessa's demand is that the Queen of night re-forms the scattered and dismembered parts of her followers so that they can challenge the forces of light. This echoes the call to arms invoked by the Papal Bull which excommunicated Elizabeth I in 1570 and absolved her Catholic subjects from any loyalty to her. The Bull also spurred the authorities into action and greater efforts were made to identify recusants and Jesuits in hiding.⁶⁷ The re-forming of Catholic relics and idols was deemed to be a very real possibility and the fear of such a volte-face encouraged Protestant reformers to commit further acts of iconoclasm. Duessa's insistence that Night must join the battlefield with

⁶⁶ This account is from one John ap Rice, quotation taken from Duffy, *Stripping the Altars*, p. 384.

⁶⁷ Christopher Haigh in *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 259-260, argues that recusancy was already established prior to the issuing of the Bull and that its main outcome was to increase the anxiety of the authorities. It would only be later that the Bull was held up as a principle reason for the Catholic rejection of Protestant church services. See also Michael L. Carrafiello 'English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581', *The Historical Journal*, 37 (1994), pp. 761-774, for a discussion of the political intent of the mission led by Robert Parsons. Carrafiello argues that the aim was the forcible conversion of the English realm rather than the pastoral care of the remaining Catholic populace.

an army of reconstituted relics echoes the anxiety of those who feared a return of the old religion and its popish superstition. Alexandra Walsham has convincingly argued that the counter-reformation mission in England ‘...fostered traditional beliefs and practices associated with saints, relics, and sacramentals and exploited the potential of exorcisms and visions for didactic and proselytizing purposes.’⁶⁸ This indicates that the reconstitution of Catholic practices associated with the saints was diligently underway within the realm of England despite the best efforts of the ruling powers. The ‘reliques’ of the old faith were being invoked and gathered up by those who wished to reverse the tide of the Reformation.

It is made clear in this episode that Night herself cannot mend the broken Sansfoy and Duessa must turn to a man from classical antiquity. The only person who is capable of putting Sansfoy back together again is the fabled Aesculapius who made Hippolytus’ corpse whole again:

...gathering vp the relicks of his smart
 By Dianes meanes, who was Hippolyts frend,
 Them brought to AEsculape, that by his art
 Did heale them all againe, and ioyned euery part.
 (I, v, 39, 6-9)

Hippolytus was killed by his father after being slandered by his treacherous stepmother, whose incestuous advances he had refused. Hippolytus was dragged to death by his own horses and at Diana’s behest Aesculpius stitched his body back together again, for his pains Aesculpius was banished to the underworld by Zeus who was unhappy at losing the privilege of immortality. This mythical Dr Frankenstein in whose hands ‘wondrous science’ (v, 40, 1) can undo the laws of nature agrees to revisit the deed for which he was previously punished and restore Sansfoy. Duessa hurries back to the House of Pride only to find that the Redcrosse knight has deserted her – just

⁶⁸ Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation’, p. 779.

as he had Una. Aesculpius' ability to stitch together wounded flesh, while pointedly echoing the danger of any Catholic resurgence and the futility of any belief that human agency or 'art' could ensure salvation, may also be analogous to Spenser's role as poet.⁶⁹ A certain form of spiritual and visual vocabulary had been decimated and thrown to the wind during the religious upheavals which followed Henry VIII's break with Rome, in the *Faerie Queene* we see a reworking and resurrection of this vocabulary on a par with Bale's remodelling of history. What better figurehead for this exercise than the St George of legend? A saint whose alliance to England was predicated on the power of his bones to inspire holy war and who was closely associated with the earth and re-growth to the point where he was often invoked at times of harvest. George's bones – although by this point lacking his head - were also thought to cure madness, as recorded by de Voragine: '...in hys tombe is an hool that a man may put in hys honde. And whan a sarasyn being madde is brought thyder. And yf he put hys heed in the hool he shall anone be made parfytely hool/and haue hys wytte again' (Cxiii. v). St George could make a man with broken wits 'parfytely hool' again and like Aesculpius stitch together the broken parts anew. It is interesting that George does not seem to be prejudiced towards the crusader's deadly enemy the 'sarasyn' and will cure him despite religious affiliation, although this episode may be analogous to a conversion narrative as only a 'sarasyn' is identified as being cured in the *Legend* and at no point is Christian madness mentioned. Sansfoy is repeatedly referred to as a 'Sarazin' (ii, 18, 1) in the poem but it is clear that Redcrosse fails to 'cure' him of his faithlessness – perhaps here we have a failed conversion indicating that Redcrosse does not possess the same miraculous powers as his forbearer in the *Legend*, an appropriate distinction given that

⁶⁹ Gless, *Theology and Interpretation*, p. 103.

Protestants were circumspect about miracles unless they indicated divine intervention by God, for instance the 'divine' wind which helped to destroy the Spanish Armada.

The bringing together of previously disparate tropes, whether they be relics, limbs, or the pieces of a fractured mind, is a theme which pervades the *Faerie Queene* and which can be linked to Spenser's obsession with the limits and possibilities of *copia* (discussed in depth in my introduction). The position of St George/Redcrosse within this schema becomes more explicable in relation to the life of the saint which is put forward in Caxton's translation of de Voragine, as he, much like our poet, endeavours to produce a whole out of many pieces. George's relics however, are not afforded the luxury of being housed all together. St George's heart, along with a piece of his head is identified by de Voragine as having been gifted to Henry V - the great warrior king and the last monarch to reign over a truly European English realm - by 'Sygysmond ye emperour of alamayn' (C xiii. v). It is George's heart and head which are explicitly linked to the foundation of the Order of the Garter and cement his relationship with England. Again it is the dismembered body of the saint which provides his anglophile identity rather than any deeds performed in his lifetime. The transportation and dispersal of his relics (a common problem for any saint) also reflects the fragmentary process of the Reformation as various nation states and sects within them began to diverge over points of religious and doctrinal argument.

When Duessa, weeping 'Crocodile' (v, 18, 4) tears, initially tends to the wounded Redcrosse after his duel with Sansfoy, her ministrations are reminiscent of the treatment of the body of a saint, further allying Redcrosse's broken body with saintly relics:

Home is he brought, and laid in sumptuous bed:
 Where many skilfull leaches him abide,
 To salve his hurts, that yet still freshly bled.
 In wine and oyle they wash his woundes wide,
 And softly can embalne on euery side.
 And all the while, most heauenly melody
 About the bed sweet musicke did diuide,
 Him to beguile of grieve and agony:
 (v, 17, 1-8)

Sansfoy's resurrection in the underworld conjures up fears of a new Catholic front headed by the reconstituted bodies of the soldiers of darkness, but Redcrosse's body also appears to be preserved by an act of embalming normally reserved for the deceased bodies of the nobility and those who will be claimed as saints. The bodies of the Redcrosse knight and Sansfoy become a locus for the tug of war occurring in Reformation England over the texts and traces of the past as two beliefs claimed sovereignty as the 'true' faith. The knight's 'relics' are clearly allied with Sansfoy's – both knights have to be revived through the bringing together of 'woundes wide' (v, 17, 4) - although Sansfoy's resurrection is entirely unnatural as he is dead rather than injured. The fact that the knight of faithlessness can be restored to life through magic while the knight of holiness can be brought back from the brink with the aid of 'leaches', 'wine and oyle' signifies that the bodies of the two men lie on a strange parallel, both recollecting a shared history. In this episode Redcrosse's battered limbs seem to be on the verge of being interred despite the fact that he is still breathing, producing the uncanny sensation that he may already be among the community of the dead. This will be echoed in canto viii when Arthur rescues Redcrosse from Orgoglio's dungeon, he finds the knight 'A ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly drere' (I, viii, 40, 9):

His sad dull eyes deepe sunck in hollow pits,
 Could not endure th'vnwonted sunne to view;
 His bare thin cheekes for want of better bits,
 And empty sides decieued of their dew,
 Could make a stony hart his hap to rew;
 His rawbone armes, whose mighty brawned bowrs,
 Were wont to riue steele plates, and helmets hew,
 Were cleane consum'd, and all his vitall powres
 Decayd, and all his flesh shronk vp like withered flowres.
 (I, viii, 41)

Redcrosse has been brought within inches of death by his suffering, his body desiccated to the point where it appears to have been removed from a grave rather than a prison.⁷⁰ This is the closest he will come to mimicking the actual relics of St George, which must have appeared to be little more than 'withered flowres' to those pilgrims who were able to gaze upon his remains.

In the *Golden Legend* St George's body is subjected to the usual acts of barbarity associated with martyrdom. When the provost of the Roman temple fails to 'drawe' George 'fro the faith by fayr wordes' he has him put upon:

...a gybet/and so muche bete hym with grete stauies and broches of yron/that hys body was all broken in pyces and after he dyde doo take brondis of yron and joyne them to hys sides and hys bowelles. (Cxii. r)

George's ability to withstand this treatment is testament to the strength of his faith and the Lord frequently intervenes in his torture to ensure that Dacian's persecution does not initially prove fatal. This includes ensuring that when George is placed in a 'cawdren full of molten leed' he 'seemd that he was in a bayne well at ease' (C xii. r). A large proportion of the *lives* recorded in the *Golden Legend* describe the physical torment suffered by saintly martyrs such as the tearing of St Christina's flesh and her burning upon a wheel and as de Voargine's work is an act of compilation the

⁷⁰ Fear of the processes, such as embalming, to which a dead body was subjected to, often led individuals to specify in their wills that they did not want their corpses preserved or their remains viewed after death. Clare Gittings cites several accounts of this practice from the sixteenth century in *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1984), p. 190. She links the fear of the embalmer's hands to a specifically female eroticisation of death.

stories of their torture are potentially gathered from different sources.⁷¹ Bodies are broken, scarred and torn limb from limb, but so too are their textual remains, which are stitched together in an attempt to form a coherent record of their life.

If Redcrosse's body becomes a site of editorial shift and revision then it is apparent that something very similar had already happened to the *Golden Legend*, particularly as Caxton was known to have changed the original format of the Latin text, not only including the Biblical saints but alluding to the difficulty in finding an accurate text from which to work, as there were several versions available in Latin, French and English: 'whiche varied in many and dyuerse places' (prologue, np).⁷² In the prologue to the 1498 edition produced by Wynken de Worde, Caxton begs the reader's indulgence: 'Besechyng all them that shall see or here it redde to pardonne me where I haue erryd or made faute/whiche yf ony be/is Ignoraunce and agayne my wyll' (np). The *Legend* was thus a text associated with compilation, revision and error – although Caxton distances himself from any charge of intent; these are a set of editorial premises/outcomes that can be duly transferred to Spenser's reading of St George. The body of the martyr can be analogous to the body of a text, but a reliquary by its very nature requires a death. Is Spenser working through the death of a traditional Catholic vocabulary: an end to the storehouse of familiar images which had previously impinged on every English man and woman's life? This is certainly a death which resulted in reliquaries of many different shapes and forms – whether it be the enduring festival held on St George's day in Norwich which survived, albeit in a circumscribed form, well into the reign of Elizabeth, or the survival of popular beliefs and practices at a local,

⁷¹ Jocelyn Wogan-Brown in *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), examines the torture of female saints as part of a dialectic between pagan and virgin which results in the saint's persecutor being 'torn up and discarded as rubbish' by their anger and frustration, while the virgin 'endures as territory and treasure', (p. 109).

⁷² Blake, *Caxton and His World*, p. 118.

parish level.⁷³ The bare bones of this vocabulary were often seen poking through prescribed forms of worship and they can be identified in the repetition of Catholic tropes found in Protestant martyrologies and histories. This seems if anything to be a kind of half-death. A similar process can be seen occurring when one examines the role of ruins within early modern discourse. The English landscape was dotted with the remains of old abbeys and monastic buildings which had been swept away during Henry VII's reign, they provided a tangible reminder of the religious shift which had taken place and also alluded to the potential for new structures to emerge out of the old foundations. The efforts of Protestant antiquarians such as John Bale and John Leland to preserve what was left of the monastic libraries also ensured that ruins, remains and relics were entangled with the various arguments surrounding the importance of textual preservation. There would be no easy erasure of the marks of the past.⁷⁴ No matter how much one tries to sweep them away the memory of sacred images, statues, rituals and pilgrimages remains. This may be due to what Frances Yates terms 'artificial memory'⁷⁵ and its composite building blocks of image, exempla and emblems. For generations worshippers had been required to memorise the names and lives of various saints, a task

⁷³ See Muriel C. McClendon, 'A Movable Feast', for an examination of the survival of the St George's day festival in Norwich. See also Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, for a wider discussion of the persistence of popular ritual and tradition during the Reformation.

⁷⁴ See Wily Maley, 'Spenser's Languages: Writing in the Ruins of English' in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.162- 79, for Maley's consideration of Spenser as a 'poet of ruins', (p. 169). Tom Muir's unpublished doctoral thesis *Ruins and Oblivion in the Sixteenth Century* (University of Sussex, September 2005), examines Spenser's interest in ruins and monuments through an analysis of *The Ruines of Time* and *The Ruines of Rome*. Muir posits that in these poems a 'ruin is not a physical structure but a kind of thought', p. 149. Jennifer Summit in 'Monuments and Ruins: Spenser and the Problem of the English Library', *English Literary History*, 70 (2003), pp. 1-34, reads the story of Eumenestes library in cantos 9 and 10 of Book II of *The Faerie Queene* as a companion to the ruination of the Bower of Bliss. She argues that this shifts 'the defining act of the Reformation from iconoclasm to biblioclasm', (p. 2). Philip Schwytzer in 'The Beauties of the Land: Bale's Books, Aske's Abbeys, and the Aesthetics of Nationhood', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 57 (2004), pp. 95-125, examines the relationship between the aesthetic and nationalist thought. When considering the role of beauty in Robert Aske's campaign to save the Abbeys and Bale's promotion of books which memorialised antiquity Schwytzer raises interesting questions as to the power of lost beauty which then has to be conjured in the mind's eye.

⁷⁵ Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1966), p. 85.

made considerably easier when each saint came equipped with a personalised set of signs. St Anthony with his pig, St Catherine with her wheel, St George with his red cross and dragon. The importance and tenacity of these memorial aids is alluded to by Una when she bewails Redcrosse's capture by Orgoglio to Arthur:

And ye the forlorne reliques of his power,
 His byting sword, and his deuouring speare,
 Which haue endured many a dreadfull stowre,
 Can speake his prowesse, that did earst you beare,
 And well could rule: now he hath left you heare,
 To be the record of his ruefull losse,
 And of my dolefull disaenturous deare:
 O heaueie record of the good *Redcrosse*,
 Where haue you left your Lord, that could so well you tosse?
 (I, vii, 48)

Redcrosse's 'byting sword' (2) and 'deuouring speare' (2), 'speake his prowesse' (4) and act as a 'record' (6) of the hapless knight's fate. His 'forlorne reliques' (1) are all that Una has left to show for his former success in battle. Unknown to Una he is only without his arms because he laid them down along with his armour in order to lie: 'Pourd out in looseness on the grassy grownd' (vii, 7, 2) with Duessa. They have thus become 'vnready weapons' (vii, 7, 9) and just as his putting away of his armour – corresponding to the Pauline armour from Ephesians – relates to a putting away of faith, the abandonment of his arms, including his shield bearing the red cross, may also allow for a sense that Redcrosse is abandoning the outward signs of his sanctity, the emblems by which worshippers and readers alike recognise and remember his true identity as St George.⁷⁶ The image of St George which accompanies his life in the 1498 edition of the *Golden Legend*, depicts the saint in full armour, his visor raised as he stabs the prostrate dragon through the mouth with his spear, his sword remains in its scabbard but it is

⁷⁶ For an examination of Redcrosse's removal of his armour as a sin of pride resulting from 'spiritual laziness' see Carol V. Kaske's introduction to *The Faerie Queene: Book One* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 2006), p. xxii. Paul Alpers in *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967) argues that Redcrosse's disarming can be read as an 'inevitable concomitant of his weariness' rather than a simple allusion to the putting off of faith, (p. 147).

clearly visible. As the patron saint of all holy warriors his armour and arms are an intrinsic part of his iconographic identity and by laying them aside he renders himself potentially unrecognisable. This image of St George in full armour battling the dragon was frequently employed by printers in the early sixteenth century, Richard Pynson used the image as a shop sign, possibly because it belonged to the house on Flete Street he was renting and as such it identified his location, but it was also an appropriate icon for a man often known as the 'King's printer'. Early printed texts such as Julian Notary's *St Albans Chronicle* (1504 and 1515), James Whyston's *De iusticia & sanctitae belli* (1512) and Alexander Barclay's *The Lyfe of Saynt George* (1515) all employed woodcuts depicting the saint. Yu-Chiao Wang has analysed all these images as well as those appended to continental service books produced for an English market and concluded that: 'the evidence of early printed books suggests that early-sixteenth-century book producers not only exploited cultural and historical associations of the image of St George and the Dragon that were long established, but created new meanings and new commercial uses for the image.'⁷⁷ George and his saintly accoutrements were thus well established as a recognisable and familiar set of symbols denoting national affiliation and chivalry, but his image is also closely associated with the English publishing trade itself. Malleable and compliant, George's symbology could be appropriated to different causes, becoming as Wang notes, a 'book producer's brand'.⁷⁸ Woodcuts depicting St George and the dragon were also employed on popular news pamphlets and the printer John Wolfe is identified by Paul J. Voss as using an image of the saint in news quartos and other earlier publications which would later appear in the 1590 edition of the *Faerie Queene* which he printed for William

⁷⁷ Yu-Chiao Wang, 'The Image of St George and the Dragon: Promoting Book Producers in Pre-Reformation England', *The Library*, 5 (2004), pp. 370-401, (p. 401).

⁷⁸ Wang, 'The Image of St George', p. 401.

Ponsonby.⁷⁹ The image is placed just prior to the beginning of Book II and is the only illustration in this production of the poem. Here we have a direct textual link between a popular publishing format and Spenser's epic, although as Eisenstein notes we should make a distinction between the 'careless' and the 'deliberate'⁸⁰ re-use of woodcuts and there is no way of knowing whether the impetus for this image's inclusion came from Wolfe, Ponsonby or Spenser.

In A Letter of the Authors at the beginning of Spenser's poem he describes the moment before the Redcrosse knight enters 'pricking on the plaine' (i, 1 1). Our knight of holinesse is identified as a 'clownishe younge man' (p. 738) who is transformed by the armour given to him by Una:

...the Lady told him that vnlesse that armour which she brought, would serue him (that is the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise, which being forthwith put vpon him with dewe furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in al that company... (p. 738)

Redcrosse's metamorphosis is explicitly linked to the putting on of the armour of faith, but at this moment it is also as if he is clothing himself in the recognisable saintly iconography of the past. There is a potential ambiguity in that he 'seemed the goodliest man in al that company', as previously noted Spenser repeatedly uses the word 'seemed' in order to denote dissembling or falsity so this may even undermine any argument that the armour's sole function is that of faith. The absence of Redcrosse's saintly accoutrements when he is captured by Orgoglio may disarm him in a theological

⁷⁹ Paul J. Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe & the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2001), pp. 88-97. Voss links the use of this particular image to Wolfe's staunch Protestantism and his association of the saint with King Henry IV of France prior to his conversion (the woodcut was employed by Wolfe in news pamphlets praising Navarre).

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 68.

sense, but he is also stripped of the signs relied upon by ‘artificial memory’⁸¹, Una’s focus on these signs when she later encounters Arthur indicates the persistent nature of images used as ‘aids memoir’, even when these outward emblems have been erased, or detached from their original meaning. This episode reinforces the sense that a martyrdom can only ever be a half-death as the martyr’s life should duly be preserved for posterity, affording them a series of iconographic signs whereby their qualities and deeds are entered into the collective memory; they will be recalled throughout time.

Redcrosse’s final battle with the dragon involves a series of half-deaths, each time he is revived and taken from the brink of death through the efficacy of a magic/holy object. Given that Redcrosse repeatedly succumbs to the temptation of female flesh in the *Faerie Queene*, whether it be the charms of the bewitching Duessa or the vision of Una’s double ‘In wanton lust and lewd embracement’ (ii, 5, 5), it may be valuable to consider the association between these half-deaths and the ‘little death’ that all male flesh was subject to after ejaculation.⁸² It is Redcrosse’s body which most clearly emphasises the ambiguous and fraught relationship between the physical and the holy, and the association between his collapses and sexual stupefaction perhaps also brings to mind the image of the hermit Contemplation’s readable flesh, which has clearly renounced any ties to the physical or fleshly world. As such, if the series of little deaths which Redcrosse is subjected to correspond to the weakening impulse of sexual intercourse then the dragon he is fighting could be analogous to physical desire rather than a totemic evil figurehead. This is a battle that has to be fought before he can attain true holiness and adopt his mantle of sainthood. The first time that Redcrosse falters on the field of battle he is revived by the Well of Life: wells and pools were often

⁸¹ Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p. 85.

⁸² The idea of the ‘little death’ stemmed from the Aristotelian belief that women were colder and moister than men and therefore took man’s vital heat from him during intercourse, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 30 and pp. 40-41.

designated as holy sites and their water imbued with healing properties.⁸³ In the *Golden Legend* the only pool is a 'ponde lyke a see' (C xi. r) in which the Dragon lives and there is no mention of St George having to be revived during his battle with the beast. He dispatches the dragon with apparent ease and swiftness: 'Smote hym wyth hys spere and hurte hym sore and threwe hym to the grounde' (C.xii. v). The princess then ties her girdle around the dragon's neck and he is brought to the walls of the city like a dog on a leash. George offers to slay the dragon on the condition that the people undergo a mass baptism. When this happens the king raises a great church in the name of the saint, inside which is housed 'a fountayn of lyuyng water/whyche heled the seke peple ye drynken therof' (Cxii. v). This fountain with its explicit links to the healing sites found on pilgrimage routes is of much the same ilk as Spenser's Well of Life. This too has a history of curing the sick and injured, although it is important to note that Redcrosse seems to fall backwards into its healing waters rather than seeking it out as a curative:

It fortun'd (as faire it then befell)
 Behind his backe vnweeting, where he stood,
 Of auncient time there was a springing well,
 From which fast trickled forth a siluer flood,
 Full of great vertues, and med'cine good.
 (I, x, 29, 1-5)

For vnto life the dead it could restore,
 And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away,
 Those that with sicknesse were infected sore,
 It could recure, and aged long decay
 Renew, as one borne that very day.
 (I, xi, 30, 1-5)

⁸³ For a reference to relic-water being used as a curative (p. 62-3) and the use of water taken from wells or springs associated with a particular saint as a talisman carried in a vial or ampullae around the neck (p. 90) see Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*. The medieval romance *Bevis of Hampton* includes an episode where the hero falls into a holy well which cures his wounds, for a brief synopsis see Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981), p. 7. Hester Lees-Jefferies in *England's Helicon* discusses holy wells as sights of pilgrimage and the carrying away of holy water to act as a talisman, she notes that: 'in the Reformed landscape of Elizabethan England, healing springs and wells had been effectively reinvented by medicine and science, yet they remained vital signs of God's grace and favour towards the English people', p. 146. Lees-Jefferies also points out that there were numerous holy wells in Ireland during this period but whether they served a comparable purpose to those in England is hard to discern, pp. 147-148.

The well's power lies in its ability to wash away sins in the same manner as baptism; Redcrosse's restoration is thus a form of resurrection as he is shown revitalised and new: 'So new this new-borne knight to battell new did rise' (xi, 34, 9). The repetition of the word 'new' in this line drums home the principle of re-birth; Redcrosse is no longer what he was, the battle with the dragon is his last act of penance, the culmination of Spenser's revision and restoration of the saint.

Baptism is a sacrament closely allied to de Voragine's reading of George's life, he not only insists that the people in the city are baptised before he finishes off the dragon, but his torment at the hands of Dacian leads to Dacian's wife converting; when she is sentenced to death she is anxious that she will die un-baptised but George reassures her that she 'shalt be baptysed in thy blood' (C xiii. v). The enchanter who is sent to poison George also converts when the saint avoids death by making the sign of the cross over the poisoned cup. The pre-Reformation saint was therefore closely associated with conversion, baptism and rebirth. St George's direct association with baptism may be alluded to by Spenser in his choice of name for his knight of holiness. As previously noted Redcrosse is identified as the saint because he is the bearer of the sign of the bloody cross, a sign to which St George became explicitly allied after his appearance on the walls of Jerusalem. The sign of the cross was also a site of doctrinal conflict as it was commonly used during baptism, although reformers noted that there was no evidence for its use in scripture. The 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* included it in the baptism service and the sign of the cross made on the forehead of a baptised child was often identified as a mark which separated the Christian from the infidel and provided protection for the godly. Reformers however, countered that the only true armour was faith and pointed out that if the cross was permitted to be used at baptism

then there was a risk that the ignorant would think it appropriate to use it elsewhere.⁸⁴ This debate often surfaced at parish level with parents refusing to baptise their newborn child unless the parson refrained from using the sign of the cross. Baptism was one of only two sacraments preserved by the Reformation (the other being Holy Communion) and a perceived rise in Anabaptism was usually attributed to reformer's unease at the persistence of ritual motifs in the ceremony itself (including the sign of the cross and the anointment with oil). The preservation of these signs of holiness also left the ritual open to charges of magic and superstition and it was not uncommon for parishioners to request water from the font to be used for suspect purposes.⁸⁵

Redcrosse's name can subsequently be seen as a potential provocation, an allusion to the saint's association with baptism and a reminder that there were myriad relics which littered even the prescribed sacraments. St George demanded and motivated acts of conversion and baptism, employed the sign of the cross as a talisman against poisoning, and became directly associated with the sign itself – none of this would be lost on Spenser's contemporary readership. The Well of Life episode however, makes it clear that Spenser's George is undergoing his own conversion rather than inciting that of others.⁸⁶ Rather than being the instrument through which others attain holiness he is shown to be desperately in need of his own conversion experience. His lack of agency at this moment may be attributed to divine providence, but it also borders on the comic as it is possible to envisage him clumsily falling into the well

⁸⁴ For an in depth discussion of the role of the cross in baptism see David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 124-148.

⁸⁵ See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 582, for MacCulloch's examination of the double bind felt by a church leadership who on the one hand had to persuade those of a Puritan persuasion to permit their children to be baptised with the cross, while on the other dissuading those who believed that the rite had mystical properties and that it provided the central focus for a christening.

⁸⁶ See Harold L. Weatherby, 'What Spenser Meant by Holiness: Baptism in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*', *Studies in Philology*, 84 (1987), pp. 286-307, for an examination of readings of the Well as a font and the implications of this for understanding what Spenser meant by 'holiness'.

behind him without realising that it will prove to be his salvation. Skits like this were a common component of popular theatrical productions and this incident is certainly not imbued with the solemnity one would expect to be afforded to a knight of holiness, although it is possible that even prior to the Reformation people were capable of ridiculing the holy martyrs.

George's second revival on the battlefield takes place when he is anointed with balm from the tree of life. Kings and Queens would be anointed with balm at their accession, but it was also an important component in Catholic ritual and oil and chrism were still employed in baptism, as dictated by the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*. The fact that it issues from a tree which may be associated with the tree of knowledge from Genesis which precipitated Adam and Eve's fall from grace potentially connects this second act of divine grace with original sin. Redcrosse's redemption may then spring from the symbol of man's sinful nature – something which accords with Spenser's depiction of the knight of holiness as ultimately flawed and fallible. Redcrosse is anointed with both holy water from the Well of Life and balm from the tree of life and while there is no one to mark the sign of the cross on his forehead he carries with him the sign in his name and on his shield – the baptism is complete. After being revived by the well George goes on to inflict a series of deadly blows on his foe; he succeeds in cutting off his tail:

Inflam'd with wrath, his raging blade he hefte,
And stroke so strongly, that the knotty string
Of his huge taile he quite a sonder clefte,
Fiue ioints thereof he hewd, and but the stump he lefte.
(I, xi, 39, 6-9)

...and one of his paws:
Vpon the ioynt the lucky steele did light,
And made such way, that hewd it quite in twaine;
(I, xi, 43, 6-7)

The Dragon is being dispatched piecemeal in such a way that his component parts resemble the dismembered relics of the saints. During Rogationtide processions prior to the Reformation it was traditional for church banners and processional crosses to be carried through parishes along with a standard of a dragon bearing a long cloth or linen tail on the first two days of the festival – often known as ‘cross-days’, on the third day the Dragon would be shorn of its tail, ‘as a symbol of the Devil’s overthrow’.⁸⁷ Redcrosse’s severing of the dragon’s tail echoes this moment in the ecclesiastical calendar and makes it explicitly clear that the dragon is the devil. When the Recrosse knight has dispatched his foe the common folk come to stare at the dead dragon and the victorious knight; their pressing bodies reminiscent of eager pilgrims anxious to get as close as possible to holy relics:

And after, all the raskall many ran,
Heaped together in rude rablement,
To see the face of that victorious man:
Whom all admired, as from heauen sent,
And gazd vpon with gaping wonderment.
But when they came, where that dead Dragon lay,
Stretcht on the ground in monstrous large extent,
The sight with idle feare did them dismay,
Ne durst approach him nigh, to touch, or once assay.
(I, xii, 10)

This moment prefigures the time when St George’s relics rather than his living deeds will provoke pilgrimage and excitement. In the *Golden Legend* one of the interpretations of St George’s name indicates that he too is a pilgrim: ‘It is sayd of george that is a pylgrem/and geyr: that is or detrenchyd out: os ye is a counceyllour. He was a pylgrym in the syght of the world and he was cutte and detrenchyd by the crowne of martydom/and he was a good counceyllour in prechinge’ (xi. r). George is a ‘pylgrym in the syght of the world’, a martyr who is afforded a place amongst the ‘rude rablement’ (xii, 10, 2) and who offers them counsel by ‘prechinge’. This interpretation

⁸⁷ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters*, p. 279.

of his etymological history enables George to be viewed as a man of the crowd, the mob and the congregation, rather than as an isolated hermit figure. As a preaching pilgrim he also has an affinity with the Protestant emphasis on the power of the pulpit and the word of God rather than the superstition and error of ritual and image.⁸⁸

Spenser draws on the *Legend's* various strands of interpretation when editing his own version of the saint, exploring and also discarding aspects of the life in order to unpick and remake his knight of holiness. Through this process the Redcrosse knight becomes intimately associated with the compilation of Protestant textual reliquaries such as Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and lays bare the blurring of vocabularies and iconographies that lay at the heart of the Reformation, corresponding to what Philip Schwyzer calls 'a fascination with the problems of perspective'⁸⁹ epitomised by works which deal with ruins. By alluding to a correspondence between the purged and purified body and the readable text Spenser ensures that the body in all its iconic splendour becomes the body as book. But if the saintly body becomes akin to the textual body, is it not bound and fixed by typeface, leather and paper? Up until now I have been focusing on Redcrosse as a work in progress, a shifting text subject to the rigours of editing, but is there any hint that Spenser intends to fix his saint, bind him and place him upon the shelf? The revelatory process to which Spenser subjects George and his iconography, the paring and amending of his flesh, indicates that he is indeed ready to take his place within the reliquary which is Spenser's epic, but a reliquary was a far from stable site, as the movement of George's actual bones clearly attests. There is also the risk that Redcrosse's bones are not all that they seem. If we follow this thread to its inevitable conclusion then the *Faerie Queene* itself is an unstable charnel house, rattling with

⁸⁸ See Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 17-49, for a discussion of the role played by discourses of preaching in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.

⁸⁹ Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 75.

unidentifiable bones and pieces of wood which speak of a time now passed, but which could be easily resurrected.

Conclusion: ‘A filed tounge furnisht with tearmes of art’

This thesis has endeavoured to demonstrate that Spenser was greatly indebted to the popular press and that far from being a poet solely defined by a love for classical and continental poetry he sought to bring the two together in order to better equip the English tongue. My hope is that by acknowledging that Spenser is a poet with an interest in a breadth of printed material further study can be undertaken on the role played by the popular press in the literary output of other poets and playwrights from the early modern period. This is a rich area of study which could further illuminate the relationship between ‘little’ and ‘great’ cultures and shift the boundaries ascribed to literary imitation, reference and influence.

One area which needs further attention is the relationship between printers, their popular output and poets. During this study certain printers have emerged as key players in the popular market in the latter half of the sixteenth century. As previously noted Thomas Marshe printed Geoffrey Fenton’s *Tragicall Discourses* while also publishing almanacs by John Securis, Lewes Vaughn and Leonard Digges. Richard Watkins printed Petties’ *petite Pallace* but also published an almanac by John Securis in the same year, indicating that he had a stake in different types of popular wares while also demonstrating that almanac writers were not necessarily loyal to one printer. Thomas Marshe also printed Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke named the Gouenour*. John Daye had a varied portfolio which included Ascham’s *Scholemaster*, John Dee’s *arte of nauigation*, Leonard Digge’s *Tectonicon* (this was printed for Thomas Gemini another printer of almanacs), and most famously John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* as well as his *Sermon of Christ crucified*. The fact that so many works by such a small number of printers (Caxton and Wynken de Worde can also be included in this number as de Worde inherited much of Caxton’s back catalogue) have been thrown up by a relatively narrow

study of the popular press, indicates that a comparatively small number of printers may have had a defining stake in the market during this period. The relationship between the different works they produced, as well as the people who produced them, would make for a fascinating study. The scope for unravelling the further connections between poets such as Spenser and their printers, as well as the differing modes of production, advertising etc applied to popular and poetical works published by the same and different printers, is also worthy of further exploration. This study has not uncovered any printers who published Spenser's poetry while also publishing popular material, but as this was not the focus of this thesis further work would need to be done to discern whether connections such as these exist. Of Spenser's prose works the *Three proper wittie familiar Letters* do provide a tantalising link to the popular press. The *Letters* were published by Henry Bynneman who also printed the second volume of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* for Nicholas England, as well as printing for George Byshop the sermon by John Stockwood which denounced 'the great Pallace and the little Pallace of pleasure' as 'suche filthy bookes'¹, indicating that at least one of Spenser's printers was implicated in the popular field and clearly had no scruples about printing a text which criticised a publication which he had a hand in getting to market.

The work of many poets from this period would doubtless benefit from a reading which incorporated the popular. Katherine Craik is currently working on a study of Shakespeare and the popular press, but countless other writers could be examined in this way. A valuable contribution could be made to the critical study of individual writers by broadening the scope of their literary influences, while also widening our knowledge of the role played by the popular press in the history of the book. Research such as this lays bare the anxieties surrounding reader response and the imagination, and

¹ John Stockwood, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse on Barthelomew day...* (London: Henry Bynneman for George Byshop, 1578), p. 147.

demonstrates that the popular press is a valuable tool when attempting to unravel the nature of constructed readerships during the early modern period.

I began this study by arguing that Spenser's interest in popular literature stemmed from a desire to exercise copious reading practises and 'garnish'² the English tongue in order to make it 'both ful enough for prose and stately enough for verse.'³ It is clear however, that Spenser saw the 'Mother tongue'⁴ as something which could be wielded by unscrupulous men in order to feign and dissemble, and indeed in *Colin Clovts Come Home Againe* (1595) this provides the justification for Colin Clout returning to Ireland, abandoning the English court and its courtiers who carry: 'A fild tounge furnisht with tearmes of art.'⁵ Colin goes on to dismiss the 'schoolery' of 'Courtiers' (702):

For highest lookes haue not the highest mynd,
Nor haughtie words most full of highest thoughts:
But are like bladders blownen vp with wynd,
That being prickt do vanish into noughts
(715-718)

In direct contrast to the garnished tongue Spenser aspires to in his earlier work the 'fild tounge' in *Colin Clovts Come Home Againe* produces a confounding emptiness which vanishes into 'noughts.' There may be a waft of disillusionment hanging around this transformation of tongues, as Spenser had failed to gain true recognition as England's 'new Poete'⁶ and while he had received advancement at the hands of his Cynthia in the form of a pension of £50 a year for the *Faerie Queene* it was not enough to tempt him back from 'that waste, where I was quite forgot' (183). But the separation

² *Three proper wittie familiar Letters, lately passed betwene two Vniuersitie men: touching the Earthquake in Aprill last, and our English reformed Versifying* (London: H. Bynneman, 1580), p. 6. All further quotations are from this edition.

³ 'The Shepheardes Calender' in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 27, l. 83. All further quotations are from this edition.

⁴ 'The Shepheardes Calender', p. 27, l. 82.

⁵ 'Colin Clovts Come Home Againe' in *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 364, l. 701. All further quotations are from this edition.

⁶ 'The Shepheardes Calender', p. 25.

of garnished and filed (maybe even forked) tongues may also allude to a sense that those wits dismissed as ‘base, or blunt’ (710) by the court are reminiscent in their ‘plaine attire’ (729) of Spenser’s ‘little booke’⁷ – the *Shepheardes Calender* and the almanacs and calendars which preceded it. The rejection of lowly poets may here correspond to the dismissal of the tongue garnished with the popular and the vernacular, rather than ‘filed’ and ‘furnisht with tearmes of art’ (701). The abandonment of that which is deemed to be ‘base, or blunt’ (710) is a crime which stands at odds with ‘the rustically rudenesse of shepheardes’ (38-39) praised along with Spenser’s archaisms by E.K. in the Epistle to *The Shepheardes Calender* for bringing ‘great grace and, as one would say, auctoritie to the verse’ (42-43). The shift in tone from the *Calender* to *Colin Clovts Come Home Againe*, speaks of Spenser’s loss: his literary endeavours have not borne the fruit he had hoped for.

A year after his death in 1599 Spenser would be in a small way inserted into the popular tradition from which he had drawn inspiration. *Kemp’s nine daies wonder. Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich* (1600), a description of Will Kemp’s famous jig which includes a series of excerpts from ballads and wordplays while systematically deriding ballad mongers for peddling falsehoods, ends with a ‘humble request to the impudent generation of Ballad-makers’ and contains what appears to be a sideswipe at Spenser:

...leauē writing these beastly ballets, make not good wenches Prophetesses, for litle or no profit, nor for a sixe penny matter, reuiue not a poor fellowes faute that’s hanged for his offence: it may be thy owne destiny one day, prethee be good to them. Call vp thy olde Melpomene, whose strauberie quill may write the bloody lines of the blew Lady, and the Prince of the burning crowne: a better subiect I can tell ye: than your knight of the Red Crosse. So farewell, and crosse me no more I prethee with thy rabble of bald rimes, least at my returne I set a crosse on thy forehead, that all men may know thee for a foole.⁸

⁷ ‘The Shepheardes Calender’, p. 24, l. 1.

⁸ *Kemps nine daies wonder. Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich* (London: E. A for Nicholas Ling, 1600), np.

Kemp's 'knight of the Red Crosse' must be Spenser's Redcrosse knight, (although it should be noted that there are other works besides Spenser's which refer to a knight of the red cross), indicating that the name was well known enough to be instantly recognised by Kemp's audience, but the player asserts that 'a better subject I can tell ye' and the symbol of the cross becomes a mark on the forehead so that 'all men may know thee for a fool'. The man who aspired to be England's 'new Poet' is grouped amongst ballad makers and all those who write for a 'sixe penny matter', turning 'good wenches' into 'Prophetesses': a rather inglorious fall from grace at the hands of a clown. What Kemp's allusion to Spenser may demonstrate however, is that his work could be allied to the popular press, even if his poetic output was not explicitly directed towards a popular market. Spenser's publications were weighty and learned, expensive to purchase, dedicated to a large number of noble patrons and apart from the *Shepherd's Calendar* did not conform to the publishing format of popular works. The *Faerie Queene* certainly couldn't be described as ephemeral and yet the definition of the popular press or a popular reading culture proposed by this study lays stress upon a work's ability to be widely appropriated and rendered familiar - even to those who had not read the original text - therefore this brief moment of convergence speaks of the potential for transferral across literary and cultural boundaries. Kemp's reference to Spenser provides an important link to the popular works discussed here as it indicates that the 'knight of the Red Cross' had managed to transcend his expensive bindings and enter into a textual dialogue with a popular form – however derogatory.

Spenser's interest in the popular press has been demonstrated by this thesis to be meaningful and complex, part of a wider urge to interrogate the ways in which the English tongue could be harnessed, but also indicative of a fascination with reading habits. At the point in English history in which the printing press and the process of

religious reformation radically changed how people approached text, Spenser's broad range of literary influences demonstrates that he was a poet absorbed by the debates surrounding the printing press at large, whether it be the production of 'great' tomes or 'little books'.

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Appendix 1



