

# Hermeneutics, Poetry, and Spenser: Augustinian Exegesis and the Renaissance Epic

Denna Iammarino-Falhamer  
*Marquette University*

---

## Recommended Citation

Iammarino-Falhamer, Denna, "Hermeneutics, Poetry, and Spenser: Augustinian Exegesis and the Renaissance Epic" (2011).  
*Dissertations (2009 -)*. Paper 124.  
[http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations\\_mu/124](http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/124)

HERMENEUTICS, POETRY, AND SPENSER:  
AUGUSTINIAN EXEGESIS AND  
THE RENAISSANCE EPIC

by

Denna Iammarino

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2011

ABSTRACT  
HERMENEUTICS, POETRY, AND SPENSER:  
AUGUSTINIAN EXEGESIS AND  
THE RENAISSANCE EPIC

Denna Iammarino

Marquette University, 2011

One of the major claims this study makes is that Spenser desires to teach and cultivate a poetic reader—a reader who will employ interpretation and contemplation to expand the possibilities and places of textual meaning according to the tutelage of Spenser’s text. The basis for Spenser’s exegetical schema derives in large part from the works of St. Augustine and Richard Hooker. In works such as *On Christian Doctrine* and the *Confessions*, Augustine erects a Scriptural interpretative model founded upon charity and faith—a model interested in the *process* of exegesis as much as the end products of the analysis. Similarly, in *Of The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Hooker views reason as a force that can aid the Scriptural interpreter in both understanding Scriptural passages, and, ultimately, extending the scope of Scriptural interpretation to include the outside knowledge of things indifferent. By drawing upon Scriptural reading schemas s/he already possesses, a reader can use poetry as a space to expand his/her knowledge of Scriptural principles, and, in turn, gain a better understanding of Scripture and poetry.

Spenser’s interpretative schema encourages identification, interpretation, and contemplation in order to generate multiple possible meanings. From these options, a reader is taught to choose from many potential meanings, instead of the one or two that comes from either/or perception. This examination argues that a reader can learn from the successes and mistakes of Spenser’s characters. For example, in Spenser’s pastorals, Colin Clout is a character who begins as a lovelorn youth, unable to see past his heartbreak. Yet, by interpreting his experiences he learns how to perceive beyond emotions in order to gain knowledge. Moreover, he teaches his shepherd peers to do the same. In *The Faerie Queene*, characters such as Redcrosse, Artegall, Calidore, and Arthur all animate Spenser’s interpretative model in various ways with varying degrees of success. Redcrosse is inexperienced yet desires to learn, whereas Calidore possesses knightly experience, yet refuses to interpret beyond sensory perception. However, Artegall and Arthur, begin with solid interpretative foundations and are successful because they allow interpretation and contemplation to influence their knightly actions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Denna Iammarino

On the heels of such an achievement there are several people that have been crucial to writing (and finishing) this dissertation. Dr. John Curran for his seemingly limitless enthusiasm and patience. I know this project would not have travelled far without you behind the wheel. To the rest of my committee, Drs. MC Bodden and Amelia Zurcher, whose comments and discussions kept me constantly thinking about the quality and place of my work. For the faculty and staff in the Department of English at Marquette University. Over the years, whether coursework or paperwork, I thank each of you for your help. And to the Smith Family Trust who, for two years, endowed me with a stipend and travel funding for research. You allowed me to bring the ideas of the Renaissance to my fingertips.

To my dear friend, Daniel E. Burke, whose humor and passion for poetry kept me moving forward when I did not think I could take another step. Thank you for listening and being there. For my family, who have spent years listening to me wax on about a far-distant period and an unknown author, I thank you for your earnestness and constant encouragement. Specifically, to my mom, Joy, who has helped me format several chapters during the revision process. And last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my husband, Mike, for keeping me humbled and focused via his effortless adherence to our unofficial family motto “Heckling’s Allowed.” You are a true example of faith, love, and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. THE EXEGETICAL MODELS OF ST. AUGUSTINE AND RICHARD HOOKER.....	17
St. Augustine <i>On Christian Doctrine</i> .....	20
Richard Hooker <i>Of the Lawes of Ecclesitical Polity</i> .....	54
II. SPENSER’S PASTORALS AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE SHEPHERDLY READER.....	107
III. REDCROSSE KNIGHT: INSTINCT VERSUS EXPERIENCE.....	176
IV. ARTEGALL: RIGHTEOUSNESS VERSUS RIGHTNESS.....	278
V. CALIDORE: FAME VERSUS FAVOR.....	331

## INTRODUCTION

Edmund Spenser, like many poets of his age, is concerned with both the nature of poetry and the nature of poetic reception. Debra Belt suggests “not only that Renaissance poems and plays have something to say about the problematics of dealing with hostile audiences and readers, but that they constitute a forum in which some of the most serious and the most sustained probing of the issue is carried out” (421).<sup>1</sup> For Belt, the ways in which a poet addresses and portrays his audience reflects this interest in reception. For Spenser, his concern with poetic reception can be seen in his lexical choices.

Momentarily comparing Spenser to another noted wordsmith, William Shakespeare, one can begin to see how Spenser’s lexical choices directly relate to how he shapes his narrative and addresses his reader. Of Spenser’s most frequently used words, “and” tops his list, while “be” and “I” are amongst Shakespeare’s first and second most used words.<sup>2</sup> Comparatively, “I” is twentieth for Spenser. The prominence of “I” in Shakespeare suggests that he tends to think in the first-person, and this tendency surfaces in his narratives.<sup>3</sup>

Though this first-person usage is not surprising, what interests me is Spenser’s considerably less frequent first-person, “I” usage. As David Quint points out, the use of

---

<sup>1</sup> Debra Belt. “The Poetics of Hostile Response, 1575-1610.” *Criticism* 33 (Fall 1991): 419-459.

<sup>2</sup> This data is calculated on WordHoard (wordhoard.northwestern.edu). Here, highly canonical literary texts are exposed to the insights and techniques of corpus linguistics.

<sup>3</sup> This outcome is not solely because of Shakespeare’s dramas. In “Venus and Adonis” “I” is the tenth most common word and the fourteenth in “Lucere”.

<sup>4</sup> This data is calculated on WordHoard (wordhoard.northwestern.edu). Here, highly canonical literary texts are exposed to the insights and techniques of corpus linguistics.

<sup>3</sup> This outcome is not solely because of Shakespeare’s dramas. In “Venus and Adonis” “I” is the tenth most common word and the fourteenth in “Lucere”.

narrative “I” in the *Mutabilite Cantos* “may comprise an effort to salvage the human identity of the poet’s voice once his fiction can no longer locate itself historically” after Diana (Gloriana) withdraws herself from the poem (165).<sup>4</sup> For Quint, Spenser begins to rely on an “I” narrative once he declines in favor with Elizabeth, causing a “loss of a historical source of allegorical meaning” (163). Extending Quint’s analysis, Spenser seems to introduce himself to the narrative in an effort to aid the reader in interpretation. If the historical sense of his poem is dislocated, perhaps Spenser enters the narrative to both voice his concerns and guide the reader towards varying readings.

Though the possibilities for this breakdown of frequently used words are numerous, hermeneutically, the choices are interesting because using “and” suggests that Spenser frequently added to the textual content and form—he focused on character development rather than the “I” of his narrative voice. Perhaps he sought to provide multiple instances and spaces for a reader to interpret and contemplate meaning. In these multifarious spaces, the reader can employ reason in his/her readings and exercise choice when seeking knowledge. Such textual provisions imply that Spenser desired to train his reader, first, by offering many examples, and, then, many opportunities for interpretation. Whether an issue of, literally, more details, or more rationale for character action, or more characters in an episode, Spenser’s frequent use of “and”, as opposed to, say, “be” or “which”, directs the reader to many textual places where he/she can interpret.

One of the major claims this study makes is that Spenser desires to teach and cultivate a poetic reader—a reader who will employ interpretation and contemplation to expand the possibilities and places of textual meaning according to the tutelage of

---

<sup>4</sup> David Quint. *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Spenser's text. As Chapter One argues, the basis for Spenser's exegetical schema derives in large part from the works of St. Augustine and Richard Hooker. In works such as *On Christian Doctrine* and the *Confessions*, Augustine erects a Scriptural interpretative model founded upon charity and faith—a model interested in the *process* of exegesis as much as the end products of the analysis. Similarly, Hooker sees reason as a force that can aid the Scriptural interpreter in both understanding Scriptural passages and, ultimately, extending the scope of Scriptural interpretation to include the outside knowledge of things indifferent.

But as one interprets, how does the Spenserian text open up meaning without getting completely lost in obscurity? In other words, how might we find specific ways to locate meaning in the text? It is an accepted notion that Edmund Spenser's poetry is one of transformation and generic play. But to what extent do these transformations occur? And at what cost?

This study examines Spenser's poetics from the perspective of Augustinian thought concerning exegesis and analyzes how Augustine's theories of doctrine as teaching relate to Spenser's readers. Spenser not only thrusts his poetic intention into the polemical issues of his time, but he desires to teach his readers how to participate with his text by building upon exegetical methods they already possess. I will not go as far as to say that Spenser teaches his readers how to interpret his text from scratch, but as critics like John S. Pendergast and John W. Wall argue, readers of Spenser's time are familiar with Scriptural participation via grammar school texts and the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> John S. Pendergast *Religion, Allegory, and Literacy in Early Modern England, 1560-1640: The Control of the Word*. Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2006 and John N. Wall *Transformation of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughn*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.



In essence, Spenser appears to draw upon these Scriptural interpretative skills when considering and creating his own exegetical schema.

From these beginnings, Spenser appears to utilize two kinds of textual spaces to develop his reader's interpretative abilities. First, there are the overt places, like the proems, where interpretation and reading are discussed. These places teach the reader by outwardly discussing the nature of exegesis, poetry, and error. The second, less obvious, space where Spenser teaches his reader is through the actions and decisions of his characters. Whether in the actions of the main character or the supporting characters around him/her, Spenser's characters serve as examples of how and how not to interpret one's surroundings. By examining Spenser's characters, we can begin to perceive what Spenser desires in his reader.

For example, as Chapter Two illustrates, when Colin returns to the pasture in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, his peers directly question his story in an attempt to better understand its content and his motivations. This interrogation, this interaction, serves an example for Spenser's reader. This interrogation shows the reader how to question a text and how to take the answers of this investigation to contemplate meaning ranging from the physicality of the text to more abstract ideas, such as the purpose of poetry. Or, in *The Faerie Queene*, knights such as Redcrosse, Artegall, and Calidore each illustrate an interpreter at different stages of his understanding. On their respective journeys, each encounters a teacher who helps him overcome barriers in order to better interpret. Some characters are more successful, like Redcrosse, while others struggle, as Calidore does. Other characters, like Artegall or Arthur, begin with solid interpretative

foundations and become the teachers. Yet, no matter whom the character, the reader can read his/her journey and learn from a character's successes and failures.

Thinkers like Richard Hooker can help contextualize and theorize this sort of textual maneuvering. It seems Spenser's assimilation of Augustinian hermeneutics has a precedent in Hooker. As Hooker puts forward in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, reason provides the interpreter with the ability to extend interpretation beyond Scripture, possibly into the secular realm. Hooker proposes that the reader of Scripture, when guided by the forces of reason, can and must extend beyond the literal meaning and can move into these regions of knowing safely as long as he/she is protected by doctrine which reason helps him/her adhere to. In a similar fashion to Augustine's charity, doctrine acts as a safety net when elucidating Scripture. It is the goodness, the Wisdom, the Faith present in the Protestant reader. Doctrine implies that Scripture is not solely self-validating, as many of Hooker's contemporaries argue. Instead, meaning can be unlocked through interpretation. And interpretation becomes an exercise of learning how to read—not merely ripping through the surface but exploring possibilities within the just boundaries imposed by the rule of reason.

And as this process, guided by doctrine, may extend interpretation beyond the borders of Scripture, could not poetry now be a place for interpretation? Or an acceptable instrument for employing doctrine, or teaching? With this extension to the possibilities of knowing, Scripture and nature, Scripture and poetry are no longer distanced but instead become accepted places to seek spiritual understanding. As suggested above, I argue that this is an idea Spenser utilizes in his own interpretive paradigms. If Spenser's

reader can bring to poetry the same approach he/she brings to interpreting Scripture then Spenser can build upon these skills to tutor and engage his ideal reader.

Critical attention on Spenser's hermeneutics has concentrated on the issue of allegory. The allegorical interests of this study lie in these issues of textual and often spiritual participation the reader must engage in. Allegory, as critics like Andrew Fichter have shown, goes hand in hand with discussions of the heroic and Christian epic and this study desires to see how this readerly participation transforms a text of discord into one of harmony.<sup>6</sup> My project, on the other hand, builds upon but does not emphasize allegory. Instead it emphasizes Augustinian ways of reading.

Moreover, the potential for this sort of textual harmony implies that Spenser had a body of ideas behind how he developed his reader to read. This body of ideas is tied to Augustine and reflected in Hooker. It opposes overly strict interpretation and prompts a kind of reading that encourages one to generate the many potentials for meaning, then contemplate these meanings to choose one. In this schema, interpretation and contemplation guided by charity or reason offers a more systematic method of coming to understanding, as opposed to the freefall of interpretation critics like Gordon Teskey, Suzanne Wofford, and Elizabeth Bieman suggest keep a reader in a state of chaos rather than understanding.<sup>7</sup>

These Augustinian roots not only appear in Spenser's exegetical concerns, but possibly his generic ones, too. According to Christopher J. Warner, Augustine's

---

<sup>6</sup> Fichter, Andrew. *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Teskey. *Allegory and Violence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996; Suzanne Lindgren Wofford. *The Choice of Achilles: The Ideology of Figure in the Epic*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992; Elizabeth Bieman. *Plato Baptized: Towards the Interpretation of Spenser's Mimetic Fictions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

*Confessions* not only articulates earthly struggles against the flesh but it provides a “plot line” or an allegorical system for a Christian design.<sup>8</sup> Warner claims that mixing personal conversion with Virgilian epic journey allows for the personal conversion narrative within epic. For Warner this formula of epic and action and personal conversion creates what he terms the “Augustinian epic.” Such an epic has a dual agenda: to create a version of Augustinian spiritual journey within readers and, from this motive, claim poetic purpose.

Spenser appears to desire similar outcomes, namely an *interpretative* conversion in his reader caused by exegetical lessons. He desires his reader to begin to decipher meaning from what is seen in the text, that is, the outward shows and actions of the characters. From these places of overt meaning, Spenser then urges his reader to consider the significance of these seen moments in order to generate multiple meanings as well as link these potential meanings to other textual places. For example, in Book V, the honest appearances in Mercilla’s court should prompt the reader to revisit the significance of the false appearances in Lucifera’s court in Book I. Or, the reader should evaluate Colin’s return in Book VI with the knowledge of his roles in *The Shepherds Calendar* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. These exegetical actions urge the reader to build upon his/her original readings and, in turn, expand the boundaries of meaning contained in the text.

These last steps occur in an effort to further illuminate textual understanding via interpretation and contemplation. Spenser employs these Augustinian exegetical techniques to train a reader that will both interpret his text and experience a similar

---

<sup>8</sup> Christopher J. Warner. *The Augustinian Epic, Petrarch to Milton*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

spiritual journey: that is, the reader, through the exercise of charity, will generate multiple viable meanings and thereby have access to a kind of vision.

More general critical discussions surrounding this study can be divided into three major focuses: Allegory, Augustinian exegesis, and Anglicanism. Each of these respective areas inform a different angle of Spenserian hermeneutics and often represent places of critical and literary overlap. Critical discussions of allegory call attention to how textual episodes move beyond the literal into something else—something figurative or spiritual. Augustinian exegesis also critically places us in a similar mindset to examine how we move beyond the textual but calls attention to the interpretative power and choice in Augustine’s conception of teaching. And finally, from a critical context, issues of Anglicanism are particularly etymological. Critics have long discussed or theorized what Anglicanism is. These critical discussions, when paired with the more literary ones of critics like Wall, introduce Protestant discussions to the literary realm and contribute to conversations concerning exegesis and Spenser.

When considering allegory and Spenser, this project reawakens discussions of allegory that are now considered foundational critical tenets. In turn, this examination engages many of these critical truisms with a more contemporary focus on Augustine and hermeneutics. The critical position of Renaissance allegorical poetics can be viewed in two extreme cases: on one hand, critics like Wofford or Bieman bring the effects of the deconstructed text to Renaissance literature to claim that allegory creates a chaos that can never be interpreted, while, on the other hand, critics like Kenneth Borris and, in part, Maureen Quilligan view allegory as a generic or structural strain all its own.<sup>9</sup> This

---

<sup>9</sup> Wofford. *The Choice of Achilles*; Bieman. *Plato Baptized*; Kenneth Borris. *Allegory and Epic in English Renaissance Literature: Heroic Form in Sidney, Spenser, and Milton*. New York: Cambridge University

second group of critics tend to see allegory as a device that opens the text to outside interpretative possibilities—possibilities that require the active participation of the reader to engage with both preconceived interpretations of the text and also to deconstruct and reconstruct the often transgeneric blocks of meaning held in the text.

The commonality between both of these extremes lies in how or if a text can be understood. While the latter allegorical state appears optimistic in its ability to be understood, it is usually done within the context of another set of values (i.e. history, culture, literacy). In effect, each of these allegorical positions suggests the need for an outside source of interpretative methodology. While Wofford places ideology in this gap and Fichter history, I claim that the Augustinian influences within the text paired with a preconceived Protestant interpretative ability open allegory to a multivalence of textual and spiritual possibilities.

Many of the interpretative issues associated with allegory (i.e. the capability of the text to be unlocked through the reader's active participation with the text) enter into discussions of Augustinian exegesis. For critics like Warner, Augustine represents a figure who exemplifies and teaches how to interpret both Scriptural and personal spiritual transformations. Concentrating on the *Confessions* as a spiritual analogue for the earthly and civic results of the classical epic, Warner terms the "Augustinian epic" as a genre that recreates the action of the epic while simultaneously eliciting the reader to self-reflection and individual spiritual journey. This examination works in large part with Warner, yet concentrates more on *On Christian Doctrine* to incorporate specific tenets of Augustine's

exegetical model—such as charity, obscurity, literal and figurative signs—with Warner’s Augustinian epic.

Pendergast, in contrast, similarly examines Augustine’s influence on the epic form, yet unlike Warner he concentrates on the historical-literary perspective. In other words, Warner examines Augustine’s influence on the epic as structure, and how this structure affected medieval thinkers and later Renaissance epic poets. Pendergast’s focus traces how Augustine’s ideas impressed the reader of epic, the literary public and literacy in general. Specifically, critics like Pendergast examine the sway of Augustine’s conception of teaching on both medieval and Renaissance literacy and the larger poetic aims of the period. Both critical perspectives inform the widely spanned regions of Augustine’s ideas.

Critics, such as D.W. Robertson, who study the theological and philosophical affects of Augustine, link Augustine’s ideas to his classical rhetorical and philosophical predecessors, while others like Ernest L. Fortin discuss *docere*, or teaching. As Fortin notes, Augustine’s inclusion of *docere* and *doctrina* in his teaching schema marks his largest departure from classical rhetorical traditions.<sup>10</sup> He notes that while *docere* designates an act by which knowledge is imported to another person, *doctrina* moves us towards a Christian rhetoric being the object of philosophical inquiry (universal truths for Augustine). This emphasis on teaching and process are greatly important when linking Augustine to Spenser’s exegetical concerns. Such discussions further contribute to Warner’s conception of the Augustinian epic.

---

<sup>10</sup> St. Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. Trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1958; Ernest J. Fortin. *The Birth of Philosophic Christianity: Studies in Early Christian and Medieval Thought*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, 117-119.

Some critical considerations surrounding Protestantism in Spenser's day focus on distinguishing between what it meant to be a Protestant, Anglican, or Puritan between 1550 and 1570. Peter Lake, for example, defines "Anglican" as an encompassing term describing all worshipers under the official rule of the English Church, while "Puritan" would describe a dissenter to this rule.<sup>11</sup> For Lake, the term "Puritan" becomes problematic since the characteristics for a classification of a dissenter are unclear.

In addition to these more etymological discussions, attention concerning the nature of literal interpretation in relation to theological and poetic issues makes up a large part of the critical commentary surrounding Protestantism in Spenser's time. For Lake, figures like Richard Hooker represent progressive Protestant thinkers seeking to repair rather than replace existing Church doctrine. Hooker's synthesis of reason and Scriptural interpretation distinguishes his thinking from that of his contemporaries like Whitgift or Whitaker. For Lake, this synthesis, in consideration with things indifferent, marks a truly unique variance from the orthodoxy of the time.

Critics like Wall transfer these discussions into the poetic realm. Wall suggests that the poetry of Spenser, Herbert, and Vaughn promotes the timely goals of the Church of England. This critical vantage point recognizes poetic purpose as that which is linked predominantly to the world outside the text. Any connection to tradition is primarily aesthetic and the meaning of the poem is defined by authorial intention rather than readerly participation. The interest of both critical camps offers insight into how we move from the religious ideas of Hooker and his contemporaries to the poetic issues

---

<sup>11</sup> Peter Lake. *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988.



plaguing Spenser and his contemporaries. Furthermore, each critical perspective provides input into the polemic influences of his exegetical ideas.

At the heart of this study's methodology lies character analysis. By examining Spenser's characters, we can begin to perceive what Spenser desires in his reader.

Moreover, the chronological order of each character's action informs the reader's textual understanding. As a result, each chapter tends to follow the narrative path Spenser provides. That is, each chapter addresses the events of each individual Book in chronological order. Central to the argument generated by this dissertation is the idea that the reader learns and strengthens his interpretative skills alongside the knights of each Book. Essentially, he/she learns by example. In this light, the sequence of each Book not only illustrates the exegetical journey of each individual knight, but it shows the initial path Spenser lays forth for his reader. Of course, this path is only a beginning. As the interpreter gains experience and interpretative strength, he/she can re-examine passages or episodes to open the text beyond the significance the overt order appears in.

These comparisons between characters, both pastoral and epic, occur in each chapter. As suggested earlier, Chapter One discusses how Augustine and Hooker influence Spenser's interpretative ideas and practice. In many ways, this chapter erects the theoretical framework placed upon the study as a whole. In this framework, the principles of charity, faith, and reason are tools that guide the exegete away from error.

Chapter Two examines *The Shepheardes Calendar* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* by tracing the poetic and interpretative development of Colin Clout. His maturation between these two works exhibits Spenser's continued meditation on the larger role of the poet and poetry. Colin Clout's reflection on his former self, his former

love, his former work, suggests a poetic and personal growth from experience—a growth that Spenser can arguably relate to. These texts illustrate an evolving exegetical theory and begin to uncover the problems Spenser confronts in exercising such a theory.

Furthermore, as this chapter argues, this evolution suggests that *The Faerie Queene* is possibly the product of an extensive process of poetic consideration rather than a desire for literary or professional fame on Spenser's part.

The analysis of these two pastorals is extended beyond Colin to consider the changes in Colin's shepherd peers. These changes illustrate an interpretative evolution in these characters—an evolution marked by questioning and consideration of Colin's experiences and songs. The changes in Colin's peers serve as examples of how the reader should interrogate a text. In addition to these interpretative lessons, the pedagogical implications of Colin's peers' evolution are seen in the lack of an E.K. figure. By teaching the reader how to approach the text, the poem no longer needs an E.K. figure to explicate the text for the reader. Instead, the characters show the reader how to use questioning as an investigative method.

In Chapters Three through Five, the examination's focus turns to Spenser's epic, *The Faerie Queene*. These *Faerie Queene* chapters trace Spenser's interpretative schema as reflected in the actions and decisions of Redcrosse Knight, Artegall, Calidore, and Arthur. What these chapters reveal is that each knight illustrates a varying stage of interpretative skill. For example, as Chapter Three argues, Redcrosse begins his journey as a weak, inexperienced reader whose lessons and personal experience eventually shape him into a good reader. This transformation from a weak to a strong reader, among other things, shows the reader how to rebound from error and return to a path of righteous

interpretation. Compared to other knights in the poem, Redcrosse is the most inexperienced, yet has the most potential for learning because he is most open to teaching. This potential is marked by his instinct. It is what draws Una to him, though he is inexperienced, and it is what keeps him from completely believing Duessa's falseness.

In Chapter Four, Artegall, on the other hand, begins his journey as an experienced reader, a surprisingly good reader. Though he begins in a place of experience, unlike Redcrosse, he still serves as an example of how to adapt one's initial method of investigation, as we see in his episode with the Egalitarian Giant (V.ii.30-50). He shows a reader how to apply reason onto a situation in order to entertain outside places as possibilities where one can consider meaning. These places can better inform a reader's interpretative decisions. In many ways, Artegall is more of an overt teacher, just as Redcrosse is more of an outward student.

In relation to these two knights, Calidore is a knight who, though likable, is an inadequate reader, and remains as such. Throughout Book VI, he never moves past either/or interpretation, that is, he only ever entertains two possibilities for meaning, instead of many. Like Redcrosse, he is provided with teachers and opportunities to learn how to expand his method of interpretation, yet he resists such lessons. Chapter Five argues that this may occur because Calidore is relatively successful with these either/or decisions, at least in the immediate context. While it can be argued that these types of decisions represent instances of *praxis*, I argue that they are usually reactions to a situation. These reactions are often the result of Calidore only perceiving at face value, without considering more than he perceives on a sensory level—what he sees, hears, or

smells. In essence, Calidore does not interpret, he reacts to situations. This may make him a successful knight, but not a successful reader.

And while these roles of knight and reader may not seem mutually exclusive, Arthur is a character who repeatedly illustrates that these are skills that must be used together. Throughout *The Faerie Queene* Arthur serves as an example of an ideal knight, that is, one who uses interpretation to inform both his *understanding* of a situation and his *actions* in a situation. He is both a readerly and a knightly example of how using reason can expand what he sees to consider the unseen elements of an episode. For example, in Book I, Arthur saves Redcrosse from Orgoglio's dungeon by defeating the Giant and outsmarting Ignaro, the key holder (I.viii.30-34). In this scene, Arthur shows how to defeat an opponent by using interpretation to inform his actions and decisions. He does not simply react to his sensory perceptions, but uses these reactions as interpretative starting points.

Importantly, Arthur serves as an example of knightliness for the reader and the other characters—an example of the type of charitable action associated with *praxis*. Yet, he never directly interacts with Calidore in Book VI. Perhaps this is why Calidore never applies the lessons he encounters in the pasture to his knightly action. He is never provided with a knightly example of using interpretation and contemplation, only shepherdly ones. But while Calidore never directly interacts with Arthur, the reader does in several scenes in Book VI. This exposure may prompt the reader to compare Calidore's actions with Arthur's to consider the depths of courteous and charitable actions.

Hermeneutically examining these characters and their actions offers counter readings to traditional understandings of characters like Artegall and Calidore. As suggested above, Artegall is traditionally perceived as a flawed character while Calidore is often a more stable one. But by looking at how these characters act and read, one can gain a fuller understanding into the extent and the goals of exegetical practice.

By looking at these characters, including Colin Clout and his shepherd peers, a reader is confronted with many places to learn how and how not to read as well as to contemplate meaning. Through these various examples, Spenser gives the reader countless places to begin his/her interpretative journey. But these characters also seem to provide Spenser with opportunities to explore the boundaries encasing traditional notions of virtue, interpretation, and action, as well as experiment with how these ideas can be applied to various situations, both fictional and real.

As suggested, Spenser is widely regarded as a transformative poet. But when considering the Augustinian and epic influences of his poetic project, we realize that he is more than merely introducing Christian experience to an ancient form. Instead, he is inviting the reader into an experience very similar to what Augustine and Hooker imagined for the reader of Scripture. Essentially, Spenser offers his readers the opportunity to expand textual boundaries and unlock meaning by considering his text beyond solely surface understanding or beyond solely allegorical understanding.

CHAPTER ONE  
THE EXEGETICAL MODELS OF ST. AUGUSTINE  
AND RICHARD HOOKER

In his 1879 biography of Edmund Spenser, R.W. Church depicts Spenser as the earliest of our great modern writers and quickly justifies this distinction by relating him to Richard Hooker, who he claims was the earliest of the great modern writers of prose. This connection between an inventive poet and a neoteric theologian illustrates Church's recognition that Hooker's and Spenser's respective innovations contribute to reviving the English imagination. In both men we witness the execution of a high literary perfection, giving life to what was previously only imagined in the minds of their countrymen. As Church muses, "But when the [literary and religious] exercises had been duly gone through, then arose the original and powerful minds, to take full advantage of what had been gained by all this practising, and to concentrate and bring to a focus all the hints and lessons of art which had been gradually accumulating" (3).<sup>12</sup> Church suggests that Spenser and Hooker were thinkers who were successful, in part, for their blending of past and present principles, and, in part, for their fated timing.

Teaching is one of the primary elements linking these two thinkers. For Hooker, teaching serves as a foundational principle instructing one to use reason in order, first, to identify things indifferent and, then, to explore within these extended boundaries created by things indifferent. Similarly, Spenser desires to employ poetry to teach his ideal reader how to interpret his text beyond the immediate textual, allegorical, and generic expectations to include outside influences like Scripture or contemporary literary works.

---

<sup>12</sup> R.W. Church. *Edmund Spenser*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1879.

In both cases, these thinkers desire to alter dominant hermeneutic ideas by teaching the reader how to gain readerly authority via interpretation. Such readerly agency stems from the reader's ability to execute an exegetical method that asks him/her, first, to begin interpretation by discovering fruitful places, both overt and obscure, then, to contemplate such passages in order to consider the multifarious viable possibilities yielded from these deliberations, and, finally, to view these potentially fruitful readings in relation to the textual whole. This exegetical schema is introduced to the reader via the events and characters of the poem. Ultimately, these episodes and figures allow the reader to concurrently learn these necessary interpretative skills, practice said skills, and gain insight into potential textual meanings.

But where do Spenser and Hooker acquire the foundations they go to such great lengths to adapt? As we shall see throughout this study, Augustine appears to be the link urging the intersection of the literary and religious worlds. Spenser's and Hooker's fixation on teaching and choice appears to derive from Augustine's formulation of these concepts. Moreover, when one reflects upon hermeneutic ends, each of these three hermeneutic apparatuses—Augustine's, Hooker's, and Spenser's—prefer exegetical process over product as an often pivotal, practice towards the acquisition of interpretative means and their truth-filled ends. This exercise in interpretation is what brings to convergence each of these thinker's hermeneutic schemas.

In essence, Spenser's and Hooker's synthesis of Augustine's ideas creates innovative exegetical models—each of which exhibits intellectual advancements ahead of its time. Advancements that desire to expand the span of human knowing, whether poetic or religious. Or, as Church posits, each writer takes significant steps in his thinking that

affect other spheres of human discovery and invention, “steps which make all behind them seem obsolete and mistaken” (39).<sup>13</sup>

This chapter shall explore the tenets of Hooker’s and Augustine’s interpretative paradigms by extensively examining Book II of Hooker’s *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie (LEP)* and Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine (OCD)*. In each of these works, we can begin to outline the finer points of each thinker’s exegetical model in order to see where their tenets intersect and vary. These places of agreement and divergence will ease us into discussions of how poetry, specifically Spenser’s poetry, fits into these theological interpretative practices.

From a larger, more general perspective, this analysis seeks to answer a set of questions Jean-Francois Lyotard asks of Augustine’s *Confessions*. He contemplatively asks, “Of whom are the *Confessions* the work, the *opus*? To put it differently, what are they working at, what are they setting into work, and what are they opening up, to what do they open the work?” (65).<sup>14</sup>

Such inquiry echoes the nature of analysis, interpretation, and contemplation that Spenser generates in his poetry. Lyotard’s inquiry looks for answers to his original question beyond the immediately knowable places of the text—he turns to the *effects* of an inquiry to fortify his search for meaning. Moreover, Lyotard’s line of questioning touches upon the vital relationship between reader and text. A relationship presupposing the necessity of the reader both to provide significance as well as unlock potential textual

---

<sup>13</sup> R.W. Church. *Edmund Spenser*.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard. *The Confessions of Augustine*. Cultural memory in the present. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.



meanings, or, as Lyotard begins to answer, “it is only my work because it is yours” (65).<sup>15</sup>

ST. AUGUSTINE  
*On Christian Doctrine*

As a religious thinker, St. Augustine embodies the quintessential theologian who enacted his ideas in a devotional life. Where *On Christian Doctrine* explicates the nuances of Scriptural interpretation, the *Confessions* illustrates these tenets in Augustine’s own life, while *The City of God* extends these ideas onto the entirety of human history.<sup>16</sup> Though each of these texts marks a significant contribution to Christian dogma, this section of Chapter 1 shall focus on the interpretative paradigm Augustine outlines in *OCD*. As the following discussions shall illustrate, Augustine’s conception of interpretation was something beyond scientific reason, untouched by historical context. Instead, Augustine’s idea of exegesis is one grounded in choice, fueled by teaching, and guided by charity—“the crown of all virtues” (108).<sup>17</sup> Augustine desired for the

---

<sup>15</sup> Lyotard’s answer begins to delve into Stock’s discussions of self-knowledge as proof that the interpreter is moving towards an elevated understanding. A large part of the interpretative process involves gaining understanding from ones own experiences inside and outside of the text.

<sup>16</sup> For more general discussions about Augustine, his life and his ideas, consult Gerald Bonner. *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*. Norwich [Norfolk]: Canterbury Press, 1986; Peter Brown. *Augustine: A Biography*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; Henry Chadwick. *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; Michael Marshall. *The Restless Heart: The Life and Times of St., Augustine*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987; Hugh Pope. *Saint Augustine of Hippo; Essays Dealing with His Life and Times and Some Features of His Work*. London: Sands & Co, 1937; Warren Thomas Smith. *Augustine His Life and Thought*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980; Gary Wills. *Saint Augustine*. New York: Viking, 1999. For a very brief reference list charting the internal and external events that shaped Augustine’s ideas between his departure from Carthage and his enrollment in catechumenate see Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, 176.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, and Louis A. Arand. *Faith, Hope and Charity*. Westminster, Md: Newman Bookshop, 1947. All reference to this minor work shall be from this edition.

Scriptural interpreter to move beyond the literal interpretation of the textual word and into a place of spiritual understanding that merges the mind and the heart.

In the following section we shall see that Augustine traditionally saw the immediate intellectual and spiritual ends of interpretation within the boundaries of Scripture, meaning that all meaning is contained in Scripture. But as D.W. Robertson notes in his introduction to *OCD*, these ends were applicable to the humanist project of the medieval and Renaissance periods. Robertson comments, “Late medieval defenders of poetry were almost as bitter about those who failed to understand the spirit beneath the letter as St. Augustine was about those similarly recalcitrant in scriptural study (3.5.9)” (xvii).<sup>18</sup> As Robertson so appropriately implies, Augustine perceived God’s love, this spirit of Scripture, as a principle beyond the literal prisons of the word. For Augustine, the limits of language keep man confined to the cerebral understanding of God’s love.

But Augustine’s exegetical model—his exegetical method—seeks to break man free of the hermeneutic shackles sentenced to him via literal language by helping him exercise his interpretative skills. This desire inspires late medieval defenders of poetry, Spenser included, to expand the limits of language via tropes like allegory. Moreover, Augustine’s predilection for teaching pushes these men of letters to use literature to instruct their readers how to truly engage with the text to ends beyond one-dimensional generic expectations or overt textual content. In turn, works like poetry become places of contemplation rather than emotive wastelands.

Brian Stock expands this idea of interpretation to consider the *effects* of Augustine’s teachings on exegesis. Pursuing a loose correlation between the divisions of

---

<sup>18</sup> Augustine. trans. D.W. Robertson. *On Christian Doctrine*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958. All subsequent reference and passages will be from this edition.

Books 1-7 and 8-15 of the *Confessions* and discussions of literal and figurative signs in *OCD* (2-3), Stock comments, “Yet, in *De Trinitate*, Augustine does not discuss *how* the truths of scripture are communicated by reading and preaching, but how the student of Scripture gains some idea of ‘blessedness’ as a *postreading* experience. The ‘enjoyment’ that is unique to the trinity is concealed within the mind, just as for the exegete, it is concealed in scripture” (245, my italics).<sup>19</sup> Stock implies that joy *and* knowledge can both be an outcome of exegesis. At the heart of interpretation, if guided by charity and reason, exists the opportunity for exploration. And, it appears such exploration occurs during textual pre-reading, that is identifying worthwhile passages, as well as in the more meditative actions of postreading. Moreover, this “postreading” experience is what Augustine, and, later, Spenser identifies as contemplation—an action that encourages the reader to consider more than one possibility for meaning by considering the effects of his/her interpretative results.

Augustine’s connection to literature resonates deeper than just pushing interpretation beyond the literal.<sup>20</sup> As a young man, Augustine finds the Bible a difficult book because the stories do not seem to accord with the justice and truth he expected.<sup>21</sup> He particularly struggles with stories that are impossible to take literally.<sup>22</sup> It is not until

---

<sup>19</sup> Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader*.

<sup>20</sup> For the sake of this study, “Literature” in the immediate context of Augustine refers to any non-Biblical text, parable, or fictive narrative. Yet, more specifically, this idea of literature links to Augustine’s *contra Mendacium*, where he makes the claim that fictive narrations can have true significations (1.64). Fictive narratives with significations that are true are to be found in the Bible and secular literature, alike. And it is both the existence of and potentials of these fictive narratives that extend Augustine’s discussions of Scriptural interpretation onto secular texts.

<sup>21</sup> This idea of a reader’s relation to the text is an issue that shall be discussed throughout this chapter and in the next with Colin Clout and Spenser.

<sup>22</sup> These early anxieties and disinterests are discussed in John J. O’Meara. *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St. Augustine’s Mind up to His Conversion*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1954. They also are briefly discussed in Peter Brown. *A Biography*.

Ambrose provides Augustine with an alternate way of reading that he resolves this dilemma:

I delighted to hear Ambrose often asserting in his sermons to the people, as a principle on which he must insist emphatically, *The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life*. This he would tell them as he drew aside the veil of mystery and opened for them the spiritual meaning of passages which, taken literally, would seem to mislead. (*Confessions* 6.4.6)

In this passage Ambrose points to a meaning beyond the literalist reading of the Bible—a reading dependent on a spiritual understanding of the Word.<sup>23</sup> This sort of spiritual understanding moves faith, grace, and charity to the center of the exegetical journey. But the poignancy of the phrase “the letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life,” suggests more than a desire to move beyond the literal word of Scripture.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Authoritative discussions about the intellectual and personal relationship between Ambrose and Augustine can be found in the work of John J. O’Meara. *The Young Augustine*; Gerald A. McCool. “The Ambrosian Origin of St. Augustine’s Theology of the Image of Man.” *Theological Studies* 20 (1959): 62-81; Steven M. Oberhelman.

*Rhetoric and Homiletics in Fourth-Century Christian Literature: Prose Rhythm, Oratorical Style, and Preaching in the Works of Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine*. American classical studies, no. 26. Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1991; Angelo Paredi. *Saint Ambrose, His Life and Times*. [Notre Dame, Ind]: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964; Christopher A. Hall. *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Hall employs a musical analogy in his work maintaining that the Church Fathers hear music in Scripture while the lay reader of Scripture remains tone deaf.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase “the letter death-dealing, but the spirit gives life” also refers to Augustine’s *Contra mendacium*, his defense of poetic fiction. Here, Augustine delineates between the allegory of the letter and the allegory of the spirit, suggesting that in the allegory of the letter, which occurs both Biblically and secularly, meaning is intended, while in the allegory of the spirit, meaning is determined by the spiritual significance placed upon such a passage by the reader. This allegory of the spirit occurs only in the Bible and is a divinely inspired way of interpreting a text in spite of an author’s intended meaning. These Augustinian terms also relate to Dante’s *Convivio*, a commentary that seeks to distinguish between the allegory of the poet and the allegory of the theologian. For Dante, and Augustine, the “letter” for the theologian refers to, say, the logistic history of the Jews, that is, the people and events of the Old Testament. The letter “teacheth us what happened” (*Littera gesta docet*). It may teach what happened, but it is not a mode in which words necessarily convey spiritual meaning. Yet, for the poet, the letter implies a link to more figurative language. So, for Augustine to comment that the “letter is death-dealing” immediately refers to interpretation and the potentials for meaning that can stem from a spiritual exegesis. It seems that Augustine’s “allegory of the spirit” links to Dante’s “allegory of the poet” in that the “letter” and the “literal” both refer to what words say, even if fictive. But the spirit animates the letter by providing interpretative possibilities—by providing meaning. The spirit is similar to Dante’s description of poetic allegory which is “the truth hidden beneath a beautiful lie” implying that behind the walls of the literal, exists true meaning. For further commentary on Dante’s *Convivio* and its detailed relation to allegory, see

Instead, Ambrose's message indicates a *necessity* to move beyond language in order to gain a true understanding of God's Word.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Ambrose's idea seems to resolve the problem with fiction and fact in the Bible, in that fiction can be read and understood spiritually or symbolically rather than merely literally. Based on this foundational belief instilled by Ambrose, Augustine himself reiterates this push beyond the literal in his interpretation of Genesis at the end of the *Confessions*:

Accordingly, when anyone claims, 'He meant what I say,' and another retorts, 'No, rather what I find there,' I think that I will be answering in a more religious spirit if I say, 'Why not both, if both are true? And if there is a third possibility, and a fourth, and if someone else sees an entirely different meaning in these words, why should we not think that he was aware of all of them, *since it was through him that the one God carefully tempered his sacred writings to meet the minds of many people, who would see different things in them, and all true?*

Of this I am certain, and am not afraid to declare it from my heart, that if I had to write something to which the highest authority would be attributed, I would rather write it in such a way that my words would reinforce for each reader whatever truth he was able to grasp about these matters, than express a single idea so unambiguously as to exclude others, provided these did not offend me by their falsehood. (12.31.42, my italics)

The necessity expressed in Ambrose's original words resonates in Augustine's own ideas surrounding exegesis. Here, the multiplicity of meaning is not merely a pleasant afterthought of the interpretative action, but instead a necessary part of attaining knowledge. Yet, while Augustine's words indicate a multiplicity of potential meanings, they also reveal an assortment of ways one can *receive* these meanings—the ends of interpretation are as saturated as the potentials for meaning. This two-fold heterogeneity

---

John Freccaro. "Allegory and Autobiography" from the *Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Rachel Jacoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> This idea of "life" also speaks to Stock's idea of pleasure in the exegetical process. The term life implies creation, not destruction. As this analysis will argue, the multiple places to gain potential meaning are being created. In essence, the text is given life by the exegetical process.

opens the door for secular literature to emerge as a place to enter the interpretative act as long as it follows the pattern and ends set forth in Scripture.<sup>26</sup>

In a Biblical manner, literature allows multiple meanings to prosper without diminishing the truth for which it strives. So, any literature produced that follows the pattern of the Bible, be it poetry, or prose, written or oral, has the possibility to fit in with Augustine's method or standard of storytelling. Or, "Literature can serve the highest purpose and be a vehicle for truth, in the same way that even the most flawed mirror, like that of the theatrical plays Augustine encountered, can still convey some truth about our internal condition" (6)<sup>27</sup>. In other words, if in our stories we desire to reflect divine truth, then, out of demand, we will tell them differently than those we only wish to entertain or deceive with.

And central to this storytelling pattern, as always, lies truth, and the ability to distinguish between fiction and truth. With relation to this distinction, Augustine comments on his own memory, "From what point, by what path, have you led my memory to this, so that I include in my confession to you these great happenings, which I had forgotten and *passed over*?" (9.7.16, my italics). Though this passage is often viewed in relation to memory and truth, the language of "passed over" alludes to issues of

---

<sup>26</sup> For more general discussions concerning the relationship between Augustine and literature, seventeenth-century literature in particular, see Stanley Fish. *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972; Martin Irvine. *The Making of a Textual Culture. "Grammatica" and Literary Theory. 350-1110*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 19, Cambridge, 1994. Print; Erich Auerbach. *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Medieval Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965; Brian Cummings. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; Louis L. Martz. *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Peter Kennedy, Kim Paffenroth, and John Doody. *Augustine and Literature: Augustine in Conversation*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006.

a more exegetical nature.<sup>28</sup> The type of awareness that allows one to identify missed meaning, or missed possibilities, acknowledges the existence of an active interpretative mind. Here, Augustine realizes that he has passed over the significance of a memory, identifies its importance, and, finally, he acknowledges the action of passing over. This scene identifies an ever-active interpretative mind, aware and seeking opportunities for interpretative moments.

Yet, this scene also suggests that the exegetical act begins with a relationship between the reader and the text. When Augustine realizes he has “passed over” a memory, as well as the opportunity to expand the meaning of the text via exegesis, he depicts an occurrence in which the text actualizes self-knowledge, and self-knowledge actualizes the text. Moreover, Augustine’s instance memory suggests that there is an organizing principle associated with interpretation. Before the memory was triggered, this now-significant-point was an external part of his life and story. But, once triggered, this once-external knowledge offers another possibility and place for Augustine to gain meaning and understanding.

In another passage he develops this initial notion concerning memory and truth, stating, “No one knows what he himself is made of, except his own spirit within him, yet there is still some part of him which remains hidden even from his own spirit” (10.5.7). Augustine implies that even the truest human stories are flawed in instances because there is so much we do not know about ourselves, let alone God. But as Augustine’s earlier quote suggests, God isolates the parts of memory that are necessary to complete

---

<sup>28</sup> As Stock notes when considering the relationship between memory, reminiscence and self-knowledge, “Augustine was convinced that realizing self-knowledge was a matter of both remembering and forgetting” (21). From *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

the individual story. This teasing out also suggests a shift in audience for the creator. Like a reflection in a mirror, the teller of the story once sought to reflect himself in art, but he now desires to reflect himself in God's image. This shift marks a difference in the ways we move toward truth and how our stories, our narratives, shift, too.<sup>29</sup>

Stock addresses a similar reflective occurrence when he discusses "self-knowledge." Stock comments, "In asking the question, the mind that seeks an answer is becoming something it inherently is not; it is reacting to an image of its own potential betterment *anticipated* in the reply. From this chain of reasoning, Augustine concludes that self-knowledge begins with the recognition of the mind's alienation from something superior to itself" (250, my italics).<sup>30</sup> This recognition of something higher, something always unknown, instead of the reply, encourages the journey of inward knowledge, or self-knowledge. Stock suggests that this desire for self-knowledge and the act of inward contemplation, rather than the literal knowledge or reply, serves as proof that one is moving towards a heightened understanding. Yes, the figurative grows out of the literal, the unseen of the seen, but the ability to recognize this extension is not guaranteed, though the potential to recognize these possibilities is.

This possibility for textual and readerly growth further links Augustine's exegetical model to literature and a literary understanding. But Augustine's connections

---

<sup>29</sup> These discussions of reality and narrative can be continued in works such as Erich Auerbach . *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953; John A Mourant. *Saint Augustine on Memory*. Saint Augustine lecture series, Saint Augustine and the Augustinian tradition, 1979. Villanova, Pa: Augustinian Institute, Villanova University, 1980; Jaroslav Pelikan. *The Mystery of Continuity: Time and History, Memory and Eternity in the Thought of Saint Augustine*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986. This topic also lends itself to discussions of the narrative form of the *Confessions*. Robert McMahon offers some nice insight in *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of the Confessions*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader*. In this passage, Stock refers to questioning as a way to enter into this interpretative process. As we shall see later in this chapter and in Chapter 2, questioning serves a central tenet in Augustine's and Spenser's hermeneutic concerns.



to literature are far greater than narrating his own conversion. In addition to influencing Medieval and Renaissance literature, Augustine becomes the voice of the ever-boiling religious controversy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In these periods many Reformation theologians returned to the early Church Fathers in order to accommodate growing Protestant predispositions for literal interpretation in an attempt to distance themselves from their Popish past.<sup>31</sup> Protestant thinkers of the time saw Augustine's *OCD* as a treatise often arguing for the literal interpretation of Scripture, especially when in conjunction with ecclesiastical law.

Richard Hooker was one of these men who employed Augustine in his work, but not for the same ends as those of his contemporaries. Instead of using Augustine to argue for literal interpretation, Hooker often perceives of Augustine as emblematic of a tradition too linked to literal Scriptural reading. But Hooker also keenly understood Augustine to be looking for meaning beyond the textual word, just with a different path for achieving a similar end. But whatever the minor differences of these two thinkers, we see both men striving to delineate a process of interpretation striving to generate meaning, rather than delimit it. Both Hooker and Augustine view the reading process as a search for similar outcomes—the enactment of sparking interpretation.<sup>32</sup>

This enactment represents the living out of doctrine, comprehension via one's faculties. Or as Stock notes with regards to Augustine, "Divided in response, readers are united in assumptions. Reading is an aural and visual confirmation of things that are

---

<sup>31</sup> For some general discussions of this influence see Brian Cummings. *Literary Culture of the Reformation*; Hobson, Theo. *The Rhetorical Word: Protestant Theology and the Rhetoric of Authority*. Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2002. Print.; Diarmaid MacCulloch. "The Church of England 1533-1603" from *Anglicanism and the Western Christian Tradition: Continuity, Change and the Search for Communion*. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003, 18-42; Gordon S. Wakefield. *Groundwork of Christian Spirituality*. Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Flores specifically considers Augustine's notions of reading as outlined in the *Confessions*. See "Reading and Speech in St. Augustine's *Confessions*" *Augustinian Studies* 6 (1975): 1-13.

unheard and unseen” (246).<sup>33</sup> This process of reading links the seen and the unseen elements of a text—the outward appearances and the inward shows. While the “unheard and unseen” may be the referent of what literal signs refer to, these unseen and unheard elements of Scripture can also represent the obscure places where meaning may lie. Once the reader can look beyond the literal, beyond the seen, the text opens itself to more than one possible meaning. In this regard, the unseen are just that—unseen meanings, unseen potentials. Such multiplicity is what Augustine and Hooker desire in Scriptural reading..

This ability to interpret beyond the seen and consider the many locations of meaning, as well as entertain the possibility of many various meanings, is something Spenser’s knights struggle with in *The Faerie Queene*. As we shall see in the chapters to follow, each of Spenser’s heroes, even Arthur, at one time or another struggle to interpret beyond their emotional and sensory readings of various scenes and figures. Redcrosse cannot see past the appearance of Duessa, and, in turn, misinterprets his surroundings throughout his journey. Calidore cannot, nor has any desire to, interpret beyond his sensory perception. Even Arthur momentarily succumbs to the emotional persuasion imparted on behalf of false Duessa at Mercilla’s court. The only knight who is consistently able to interpret and contemplate past the seen is Artegall. At the heart of his idea of justice exists this desire to know more than he sees or is told—exists the exegetical tenets of Augustine’s charity and Hooker’s reason.

Spenser’s varied representations of the struggles to employ interpretation and contemplation to expand the boundaries of meaning, carry similar intentions to those of Augustine in his *Confessions*. In the *Confessions*, Augustine desires for his reader to

---

<sup>33</sup> Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader*.

experience conversion from his stories—to learn from his experiences and actions. It seems Spenser desires the same for his poetic reader who learns from the actions and misinterpretations of his characters. As we shall see throughout this study, similar exegetical intentions and ideas appear to link the theologian and the poet.

On the other hand, while many of Hooker's concepts link to Augustine's they tend to differ in intent. Augustine's process allows the reader to bring experience into Scriptural interpretation in order to contemplate the word and move into a spiritual understanding of Scripture. Importantly, this process always remains inside the textual boundaries of Scripture. Instead of encouraging his reader to explore outside texts to inform Scriptural understanding, Augustine's exegetical process appears to generate multiple possibilities internally. That is, through contemplation, various textual meanings open to the reader as understanding moves from head to heart, mind to soul. Contemplation is central to Augustine's interpretative schema and what allows a reader to transfer this Scriptural exegetical process onto outside texts, like secular written works, stories, and sermons. Such is the interpretative process that Augustine favors over interpretative ends. It is a process that can be strengthened with practice and fruitful with time.

Though Hooker uses many of the same ideas, he reworks them to create a distinct exegetical model. Hooker also desires for experience to enter the interpretative process and he, like Augustine, sees a spiritual place beyond the surface of Scripture. But Hooker desires to use outside texts, or things indifferent, like poetry, to aid in divine understanding when returning to Scripture. Unlike Augustine, he wants the boundaries of Scriptural understanding to expand and include these things indifferent. Hooker strives

to include these outside works in order to propel the interpretative process beyond the literal.

On the other hand, Augustine's goal in *OCD* instructs one in the ways of Scriptural understanding, rather than arguing for the widening of ecclesiastical polity. In essence, Augustine merely remains closer to Scripture throughout the interpretative process, viewing outside texts, like literature, as proximate to the quest for understanding, while the core truths contained in Scripture are his primary focus. As Stock observes, "Augustine reshapes everything he reads" to bend to always return to Scripture (236).<sup>34</sup> But in some ways, Hooker's task of inclusion picks up where Augustine's ends. Hooker's idea of inclusion rests upon the idea that if one applies reason, he cannot misinterpret, and can therefore look to outside places for understanding similar to that of Scripture. Such a process is a natural progression from Augustine's encouragement of interpretation and contemplation because by widening the scope of place to practice interpretation it is widening the scope of places to practice interpretation Hooker ultimately expands meaning past the literal. And such a practice does so while still encouraging the employment of reason.

In many ways, what Augustine calls charity, Hooker calls reason. Each is a force that protects the reader from misinterpretation and guides he/she towards more than surface understanding. Charity and reason allow the interpreter to safely explore textual boundaries and content. Ultimately, they encourage the exercise of one's faculties grounded in certain truth. Such interpretative exercise in an interpreter equals a freedom of things indifferent. And while Augustine does not name interpretative freedom, doctrine becomes the interpretative work charity can do.

---

<sup>34</sup> Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader*.

These connections between exegetical tools, such as reason and contemplation, and interpretative processes align Augustine and Hooker, yet some of the foremost places of similarity between these two thinkers concern teaching. As we see in the Ambrose passage above, Augustine's teaching method is intended to show his audience how to move from the literal to the spiritual rather than simply telling them the ends of their journey. Showing his audience how to begin this sort of reading is what Augustine admires in Ambrose and desires to instill in the reader of the *Confessions*. We see just how important this sort of guidance is in the last segment of Augustine's earlier discussion of the Genesis passage. He comments that the truest purposes of writing are those that teach an audience, and that he "...would rather write it in such a way that my words would reinforce for each reader whatever truth he was able to grasp about these matters, than express a single idea so unambiguously as to exclude others, provided these did not offend me by their falsehood" (12.31.42).

Here, Augustine gestures to a larger method of teaching that will affect every member of the audience at whatever stage of interpretative training he is at. And though this pedagogical method may be large enough to reach many it does not desire to exclude any legitimate potential meanings and still desires to aid a reader in his expansion of Scriptural meaning. This multiplicity of meaning and wariness of single-sided understanding mark an important place of convergence between Augustine's and Hooker's ideas. In many cases, Augustine and Hooker differ most in language. Many of their concepts, such as charity and reason, appear to work to similar ends but are just named differently. In either case, each thinker centers his hermeneutic schema upon a

desire to open Scripture both to the internal potentials contained in the Word and the external influences that may help unlock places of obscurity.

But how can one be taught how to open Scripture or a text? Stock gestures to Augustine's answer as he addresses the manner in which Augustine teaches reading in the *Confessions*. In books 1-7 Augustine uses the image of a student, following the lessons of his teacher step-by-step. But in books 8-15, the same student is asked “to *reflect* on the desire to learn, the love of the knowledge acquired, and the understanding of wisdom or blessedness that results” (244, my italics).<sup>35</sup>

In order to perform these interpretative acts, the student must refer to his early lessons (books 1-7) in order to achieve the understanding of the latter (books 8-15).<sup>36</sup> In order to teach contemplation, one must begin with the step-by-step background. And this is what Augustine does in *OCD*: he educates his reader about signs and then asks him to consider the nature of these signs. For Augustine, literal signs are the seen, foundational steps that must be initially identified before one can discover their unseen, figurative meanings, and, in turn, open up the text. He appears to identify misinterpretation in the inability to discern meaning in signs, for when the reader is “obscured either by unknown or by ambiguous signs” misunderstanding occurs (2.10.15). Yet, despite revealing the importance of interpreting signs, of knowing about the nature of signs, Augustine is often ludic in his discussions of signs because he desires his reader to exercise his/her exegetical skills when learning about literal and figurative signs. He wants the reader to learn through the intellectual retention of reading as well as the action of reading. In this regard, Augustine's pedagogical acts involve making the act of teaching and learning the

---

<sup>35</sup> Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader*.

<sup>36</sup> I believe a similar classification can be made in *OCD*—books 1-2 define signs while books 3-4 consider the nature and place of these signs.

subject and object of inquiry just as he discusses the nature of signs, rather than merely listing the characteristics of each.

Continuing to outline his conception of a teacher, in 4.4.6 of *OCD* Augustine specifies the duties of a Scriptural teacher as, “Thus the expositor and teacher of the Divine Scripture, the defender of right faith and the enemy of error, should both teach the good and extirpate evil. And in this labor of words, he should conciliate those who are opposed, arouse those who are remiss, and teach those ignorant of his subject what is occurring and what they should expect” (120-121).

As seen, these duties demand more than telling one how to read or what a passage means. Possibly taking a cue from Ambrose, the teacher of Scripture should describe the larger purposes of Scripture, or “what they should expect”, thus allowing the novice to take these generalities and apply them to specific passages on his/her own. Moreover, as we see in the beginning of the passage, Augustine’s teacher bears the burden not just of teaching interpretive skills but of guiding his pupil to distinguish between error and the good. In this regard, Augustine’s conception of teaching encompasses an understanding beyond the intellectual. Instead, his teacher of Scripture instructs one how to extract a spiritual understanding in the passages read. And the reader does so by being emotionally affected as well as intellectually taught. With such an act we can infer that Augustine desires to balance the intellectual and the emotional in order to fashion a reader who will use all his/her faculties when interpreting.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Such emotional barriers are what Spenser’s knights struggle to overcome. This idea of “emotion” can refer to both positive and negative emotional reactions. For example, Redcrosse falls into despair when he realizes he has misread Duessa and Una. This despair keeps him from actualizing his intellectual faculties to their fullest potentials. Calidore, on the other hand, experiences pleasure when he watches the nymphs and muses dance to Colin’s song on Mt. Acidale. Pleasure keeps him from interpreting the scene, and eventually prompts him to interrupt it in order to know the details of what gives him such pleasure. In

But Augustine acknowledges the importance of intellectual understanding as a springboard into this sort of spiritual understanding. He says, “But if those who hear are to be moved rather than taught, so that they may not be sluggish in putting what they know into practice and so that they may fully accept those things which they acknowledge to be true, there is a need for greater powers of speaking” (4.4.6). While this passage speaks to Augustine’s connection to ancient rhetoricians, it also depicts a process of interpretation that begins with acknowledging truths inherently known in the reader—truths already possessed by the reader and discovered through introspection. These truths, or “those things which they acknowledge to be true”, are sparked by being intellectually taught. Being taught moves one, first, to look inward and identify already-possessed truths, then to carry these truths into the act of interpretation, or “into practice”.<sup>38</sup>

Moving from lessons into action, exegetical action, asks an interpreter to consider outside sources and experiences in relation to internally known truths—it asks a reader to first look inward, towards the unseen, to better understand what is seen. This process mirrors viewing the literal, contemplating its seen meaning, then coming to know the unseen, figurative meanings. Knowing these figurative meanings, in turn, informs the

---

either case, each character allows emotion to keep him from the interpretative actions that will allow them to independently gain understanding.

<sup>38</sup> Authoritative general discussions on the reading traditions existing before Augustine—traditions that influence his ideas of reading and teaching—often trace ancient methods of oral reading. As Stock identifies, in this practice, passages were read aloud and “after the literal—that is the vocal—sense was clear, the reader engaged in higher interpretative activities—philological commentary, textual criticism, analysis of style, and aesthetic judgment” (*Augustine the Reader* 5). For further studies of these oral practices see E. J. Kenney. “Books and Readers in the Roman World,” in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature, vol. 2: Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney and W.V. Clausen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 3-32; Robert A. Kaster. *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*. The Transformation of the classical heritage, 11. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, 32-50, 325-336; Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Methuen, 1982; Parkes Raihle M.B. *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.



literal understanding. Such interpretative action relies upon the spiritual understanding of the unseen, the figurative, as necessary to understand the seen, or the literal, and vice versa. The reader can apply “ what they know into practice [...] so that they may fully accept those things which they acknowledge to be true”.<sup>39</sup> But this move begins with the aid of a foundation in intellectual truths—a foundation in reason. In this regard, Augustine’s conception of reason appears to inform Hooker’s participatory idea of reason.

Similarly to Hooker, Augustine expresses leeriness of those who speak too eloquently and claim concretely to know and teach what Scripture means.<sup>40</sup> These men purport to tell what is beyond words. Augustine notes, “For a man speaks more or less wisely to the extent that he has become more or less proficient in the Holy Scriptures. I do not speak of the man who has read widely and memorized much, but of the man who has well *understood* and has diligently sought out the *sense of Scripture*” (*OCD* 4.5.7, my italics). In this distinction, Augustine describes his desired reader as one who seeks an understanding beyond the words of Scripture. This “sense of Scripture” describes a reader who uses the eyes and the heart when considering the meaning of Scripture—readers who “look into the heart of the Scriptures with an eye of their own hearts” (122). This combination of interpreting with the mind and heart distinguishes Augustine’s exegetical model from others and opens the interpretative process to many paths, both literal and spiritual.

---

<sup>39</sup> While this passage directly refers to Augustine’s ideas about gnosis and praxis, that is, being taught something and being moved to act on it, I believe the it can be read to consider how the act of teaching moves the “student” into interpretative actions, beginning with introspection and ending with contemplation.

<sup>40</sup> This is why Augustine’s teaching method is divided into two parts—one part relying in the sensory/tangible to identify and the other relying on faith and intellect to contemplate.

Hooker seems to draw upon a similar hesitation to trust those who claim to know the meaning of Scripture and desire to persuade others of this meaning. William Covell, in his 1603 pamphlet which includes a defense of the *LEP*, references Augustine to expound on Hooker in his defense of the *LEP*, saying “And S. Austin in another place, faith, Eloquence is not evill, but a sophisticall malignant profession, proposing to it selfe, not as it meaneth, but either of contention, or of commodity sake, to speake for all things, & against all things” (84).<sup>41</sup> Covell brings to light, via Augustine, Hooker’s desire to avoid extremes. In both Hooker’s and Augustine’s methodology, there is a refusal to prescribe a literalist exegetical technique because they see a danger in the extremes of knowledge. Both base their models on the individual interpretative process of contemplation rather than on the empirical reading of Scripture. Their models desire an understanding of Scripture that builds upon the outward, literal potentials of a passage—models that desire to build upon what is initially literally known as a starting point for the exploration of figurative meaning. For both thinkers, those who claim to know the meaning of Scripture and desire to persuade others are more dangerous than those who would let an individual interpret Scripture with an open heart aided by charity or reason.

As suggested in these above passages, Augustine’s pedagogical goals focus on teaching an essence or a “sense” of Scripture that begins with textual Scripture. Augustine argues against the prescriptive teaching of Scripture and instead employs teaching as encouragement for the student to enter into a process rather than as a demand for the answer. Moreover, this sense of Scripture relates to Hooker’s ideas of doctrine in that it represents an idea behind Scripture. Both thinkers go to great lengths to suggest a

---

<sup>41</sup> The William Covell (1603) manuscript is from the Huntington Library, call # 60424, or STC (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) 5881. Specifically, Covell writes in response to a letter critiquing Hooker’s *LEP*.

Scriptural energy outside the comforts of language. For Augustine this essence marks an exegetical goal within Scriptural contemplation whereas for Hooker doctrine is a safety-net, used as part of his larger intention to expand the pages of Scripture. In either case, this depth of Scripture and certain truth describes a foundational element to their hermeneutic aims.

Yet, the places in Scripture Augustine believes most benefit the interpreter are those that are obscure. By obscure Scripture, Augustine means the Scriptural passages that may not be the usual suspects when thinking of Biblical understanding. They are places where the reader can do the most interpretative work to determine the passage's meaning and significance. In the *Confessions*, Augustine's experiences serve as non-Scriptural entrances to Scriptural passages and understanding. He appears to extend what he sees as the benefits of obscurity into his own tale. An example of a non-scriptural, obscure passage often associated with Augustine's own work is his conversion scene.<sup>42</sup> In the *Confessions*, Augustine describes the completion of his conversion in great detail after reading a passage of Paul in Rom 13:13-14 (8.12).<sup>43</sup> Yet, in this vivid recollection of conversion, Augustine first finds himself underneath a fig tree where he "gave way to the tears which now streamed from my eyes[...]", finally succumbing to the stress of living two lives—a Christian one in his heart and a non-Christian one in his everyday existence (8.12).

---

<sup>42</sup> Discussions concerning Augustine's conversion range from addressing the rhetorical retellings to the spiritual nature of his conversion. For extended studies on these and other varying views of Augustine and conversion consult Leo C. Ferrari. *The Conversion of Saint Augustine*. The St. Augustine Lecture, 1982. Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1984; Karl F. Morrison. *Conversion and Text: The Cases of Augustine of Hippo, Herman-Judah, and Constatine Tsatos*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992; John J. O'Meara. *The Young Augustine*; Anne Hunsaker-Hawkins. *Archetypes of Conversion*; Riley, Patrick. *Character and Conversion in Autobiography: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004

<sup>43</sup> For further discussion St. Paul in this book of the *Confessions* see Leo C. Ferrari. "Paul and the Conversion of Augustine (Conf. VIII, 12.29-30)," *Augustinian Studies* II (1980): 5-20.

The fig tree reminds the reader of Biblical passages including the Fall as well as several New Testament scenes, including the parable where the fig tree that does not bear fruit is burned (Luke 13:6-9) and Christ's cursing of the fig tree that has leaves but bears no fruit (Matthew 21:19). Besides the link to Scripture, this reference to the fig tree reminds the reader of the more-obscure pear scene as a commentary on the nature of sin and conversion. In this pear scene, Augustine chooses to illustrate the nature of sin by confessing to stealing pears from a neighbor's orchard. This theft of a forbidden fruit can bring to mind for the reader Adam and Eve, reminding he/she that all are guilty because of the sin of the first parents. This connection between the two tree scenes offers a fuller understanding of the nature of sin and conversion. Yet, these connections between scenes in the *Confessions*, as well as their links to Scriptural moments, are work done by the reader. The more experienced the reader, the more exploration to be had, and the more connections and insight to be made.

For Augustine, obscurity is where the exegete can best train his interpretative skills to gain a more complete understanding both of the text and the larger divine principles. In the *Confessions* tree scenes, Augustine's reader can read the pear scene and consider its relation to the fig tree in the conversion scene. Or, he/she can read the conversion scene and let the obscure reference to the fig tree bring him/her back to the pear scene, where he/she can then contemplate the connections and significance of such a connection. In this way, though not Augustine's primary goal, the boundaries of Scripture open to this non-scriptural text. In the narrative of the *Confessions*, Augustine shows that individual experience can translate into general terms to affirm the equality of

all sinners in the eyes of God.<sup>44</sup> These places of obscurity do not in and of themselves speak of God and, in turn, are the places most in need of a reasoned interpretation by a well-trained reader.

But be not fooled, “Hardly anything may be found in these obscure places which is not found plainly said elsewhere” as we see in the tree scenes of the *Confessions* (2.6.8). For Augustine, these obscure places contain similar meanings as the overt ones, but they encourage exegetical exercise because they do not directly state their meaning. And it is this exercise that Augustine views as the most beneficial part of exegesis. As we have seen in Augustine’s discussions of teaching, he is concerned with process over product and in many ways the process of exegesis is self-fulfilling so that the mere exercising and strengthening of this tool helps one make interpretative progress.

Augustine continues to note the benefits of obscure Scripture, noting that “...the obscurity itself of the divine and wholesome writings was part of a kind of eloquence through which our understandings should be benefited not only by the discovery of what lies hidden but also by exercise” (4.6.9). This “exercise” is the process of interpretation. As seen in the famous road metaphor that opens *OCD*, the destination is not as important as the path taken. In addition to conjuring images of travel and personifying Augustine’s exegetical beliefs, we can view the road as a structure that creates connections and defines space. For Augustine, these connections are those fortified between reader and Scripture during the process of interpretation, but these connections are also the roads that lead the reader outside of the realm of Scripture and into secular texts, like literature. The spaces Augustine’s road works to define are the boundaries of Scripture. To extend

---

<sup>44</sup> For further discussion of the significance of the fig tree scene see John Freccero. “The Fig Tree and the Laurel”

the metaphor, Augustine's road simultaneously cuts through the Scriptural landscape and adheres to it in order to provide a path for the interpretative traveler.

Employing a metaphor to describe his interpretative goals was no accident. Through metaphor Augustine gestures to forms of knowing beyond the spatial and temporal and looks to innate ways of knowing that have been there all along. We are, Augustine says, to find in Scripture traces of what was, traces of other meanings that reside outside the surface of the text, footprints on roads that lead from the literal level of meaning. Augustine's hermeneutic notions seek to initiate the interpreter into a tradition of Scriptural understanding and participation that began with the Apostles. But while this initiation builds upon traditional ways of knowing it also desires to show a reader that interpretative progress can be made in different manners and places, such as spoken parables or secular literature, like poetry. In these outside places, the same interpretative skills can be utilized in order to traverse a text like Scripture with the hope of reaching similar knowledge-filled places.

What appeals to Augustine about obscurity is the exercise of one's interpretative tools, but there is an importance to the unseen element of these obscure passages which is central both to Augustine's exegetical model and belief system. In the small handbook written for Laurentius, *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, Augustine constitutes faith as believing in past events, such as Christ's death, while hope is placing belief in the future. But what is common to faith and hope is that the object of belief is unseen. This belief in the unseen elements of Scripture instinctively brings us to obscure Scripture. So it is not merely the exercise of reason that makes these places of obscurity beneficial, but the exercise of faith and hope. Or, as the Apostles say in Romans 8.24, "Hope that is not

seen, is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience” (16). Here, hope keeps the believer patient as he searches for these things that are unseen while faith nourishes the interpretative mind.

Augustine’s belief in obscure Scripture stems from a desire to encourage interpretative exercise and discovery. As he notes in 4.8.22:

...they [canonical authors and teachers] have spoken with a useful and healthful obscurity for the purpose of exercising and sharpening, as it were, the minds of the readers and of destroying fastidiousness and stimulating the desire to learn, concealing their intention in such a way that the minds of the impious are either converted to piety or excluded from the mysteries of the faith. (133)<sup>45</sup>

As seen here, obscurity not only works the reader’s interpretative skills, but it seems to protect the secrets of divine wisdom from the impious who refuse to work to gain Scriptural insight. Furthermore, as D.W. Robertson notes in his Introduction to *OCD*, Augustine in his letters “adds that this process of exercise and discovery leads to a love for the abstractions shadowed by the temporal things used to form figurative language” (xvi). These “abstractions” Robertson refers to seem to move us towards tropes in the literary world like allegory. This chapter’s introduction to Augustine suggests that while he keeps Scriptural interpretation within the bounds of Scripture, Augustine encourages the method of interpretation forged in exegesis to be used in outside places like poetry. As Robertson notes, the obscurity of Scripture develops a love for interpreting the shadows of meaning lurking behind the literal existing in both Scripture and non-scriptural texts.

---

<sup>45</sup> Augustine. *Faith, Hope, Charity*.

This desire for Scriptural interpretation to seep into the secular world emerges in Book III to *OCD* when Augustine refers to the Apostles' phrase "'For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth'" and comments, "Nor can anything more appropriately be called the death of the soul than that condition in which the thing which distinguishes us from the beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in the pursuit of the letter" (3.5.9).<sup>46</sup> Here, Augustine faults man for using a divine gift—the ability to understand—to seek only mortal or earthly wisdom. It would seem that using one's exegetical tools for solely earthly purposes limits a reader to the literal, surface meaning of a passage, rather than seeking the unseen, figurative understanding that comes with the exercising of one's interpretative skills.

Echoing Ambrose, he warns, "He who follows the letter takes figurative expressions as though they were literal and does not refer the things signified to anything else," suggesting that merely following the "letter", or the literal text, rather than the figurative possibilities behind the literal, abuses the very interpretative mind we possess (3.5.9). Furthermore, Augustine's ideas can be extended onto the contemplation of poetry or philosophy. Participants in these discourses can benefit from the activity of a spiritual mind because they, too, seek to know past what is seen, what is overtly read. Whether it be interpreting literary tropes, like allegory, or the back and forth of philosophical dialectic, secular discourse thrives on the employment of interpretation and contemplation to acquire an understanding of principles and values residing well past the

---

<sup>46</sup> Consider this passage in relation to the earlier one Augustine cites from Ambrose, "The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life." The relation between the two passages is evident, but the way in which Ambrose uses the passage is even more interesting. In a very Socratic way, Ambrose performs what he teaches. Rather than telling his audience what this passage means (in the biblical and pedagogical sense), he enacts the meaning by not revealing all the possible meanings. By doing so, he presents the passage to be contemplated by his audience, yet never explicates it. He points to the door, but the student must unlock and open it.



literal, past the seen. In Augustine's scope and the secular scope, both are susceptible to the limitations of seeking only the literal and, furthermore, accepting this meaning as complete truth.

Augustine concludes 3.5.9 musing, "There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal and created to drink in eternal light". Augustine appears to view those that stop the interpretative process at the literal erring more than possessing mere interpretative flaws. By not forcing the mind to employ all its potential faculties and allowing it to reside in the false safety of things rather than urging the mind into unknown, nonmaterial places, the interpreter fails himself/herself and never reaches his/her hermeneutic capabilities. Augustine identifies the readerly mistake of taking a sign for a thing, thinking that a word, a letter, or a figure gestures only toward a thing, not an idea. He also suggests that remaining in the literal, or employing signs for earthly ends, leaves a mind in the servitude of surface language. This servitude keeps a God-given gift, the interpretative mind, from performing its intended duty.<sup>47</sup> Essentially, for Augustine, not to use it, is to misuse it.

This matter of signs makes up a large part of *OCD*. As seen early in Book I, "All doctrine concerns either things or signs, but things are learned by signs. Strictly speaking, I have here called a 'thing' that which is not used to signify something else, like wood, stone, cattle, and so on; [...] There are other signs whose whole use is in signifying, like words. For no one uses words except for the purpose of signifying something. From this may be understood what we call 'signs'; they are things which are used to signify

---

<sup>47</sup> Hooker uses a similar argument to justify why things indifferent can be used to aid in the interpretation of Scripture. For Hooker, much like Augustine, reason is a tool given to man by God intended for the explication of His Word.

something” (1.2.2). In this definition of things and signs we learn that things are the literal, physical entities while signs are the words that then signify the thing or the idea, and, in turn give meaning to the thing.<sup>48</sup> As Augustine notes above, the flawed reader of Scripture thinks that signs refer only to things, that they are so closely related to things, that, in the reader’s mind, they become things. Therefore, when that individual reads, he/she becomes trapped in a world of things devoid of any meaning besides what is literally known.

An example Brian Stock refers to in his discussion of things and signs is in Exodus 15:25 where we read that “Moses made the waters sweet” by casting in them a tree chosen by God (8). In this passage, a piece of wood, an object, becomes a sign, and as Stock concludes, in Augustine’s view, “...words alone can perform this transitive function” between object and sign (8). This occurs because the word “tree” refers to the thing, but it also suggests that the tree signifies an idea. In this rather straightforward example, we witness the interconnectedness between things and signs and begin to understand just how important it is to train an interpreter to discover these various yet distinct meanings.

In effect, though, wood is a thing, and in the Moses example we see that a thing can stand for another thing. These objects (wood) are things but if the interpreter sees tire tracks and thinks of a car or sees smoke and thinks of fire, then he/she uses tracks and

---

<sup>48</sup> In the ellipses Augustine gives an example of things that are not things like, “...that wood which we read that Moses cast it into bitter waters that their bitterness might be dispelled, nor that stone which Jacob placed at his head, nor that beast which Abraham sacrificed in place of his son” (1.2.2). In each of these cases as Robertson notes, the wood is sign of the cross and the stone and the beast indicate Christ’s human nature.

smoke to signify another object (like a car or fire).<sup>49</sup> This chain of recognition is what Augustine refers to as signification. When the interpreter perceives a substance as a sign, then a connection is made between the thing (smoke, tracks) and what it stands for (fire, car).<sup>50</sup> This recognition between sender and receiver relies upon a recollection of associations housed in the mind of the interpreter. This recollection of meaning occurs when an interpreter draws upon his experience—like knowing that a fire produces smoke—in order to associate the thing and the sign.

In this regard, signs appear to carry intention, whether human or divine, and, in turn, draw upon familiar realities or situations in order to express new meaning. Depending on how and when used, the presence of certain signs can deliberately lead a reader towards a specific meaning. For example, the fig tree in Augustine’s conversion scene sparks a reader to consider the meaning of the pear tree, and vice versa. Arguably, Augustine intends for this connection to be made so that the reader can achieve a fuller understanding of the text and the divine principles the text addresses—an understanding brought about by continued interpretation and contemplation.

Referring back to the earlier conception of obscure Scripture, these places and intentions are often difficult to interpret because of the presence of unknown or ambiguous signs. Augustine expands these unknown signs to include figurative and literal signs, which the latter “...are called literal when they are used to designate those things on account of which they were instituted;” (2.10.15). Here, Augustine refers to the

---

<sup>49</sup> This sort of signification appears also in semiotics as an indexical sign, that is, it is defined by some sort of sensory feature distinct from icons and symbols. Specifically, in this example, the smoke would not stand for the fire, but be an effect of the fire.

<sup>50</sup> Importantly, in this example both smoke and fire are things, which presents a very different relationship than, say, between a tree and the *idea* of a tree.

signs that name what they intend to name, be it a thing or idea. For example, we say ox when we mean the animal.

But figurative signs “...occur when that thing which we designate by a literal sign is used to signify something else” (2.10.15). Based on Augustine’s definition, figurative signs use literal signs to infer a larger meaning beyond the thing. Ox as a figurative sign means the animal but also refers to the places in the Bible where ox signifies an evangelist or a believer. One of the foundational steps Augustine stresses in his exegetical process occurs when his exegete understands how to distinguish between literal and figurative signs in a given Biblical passage. Specifically, this foundation is the reader’s ability to recognize *good*, true figurative signs from *bad*, false ones, and, in turn, the reader generates plenty of good signs. This distinction exercises and strengthens the reader’s conception of choice, and allows for many possible meanings to emerge from a passage.

Ever expounding on his definition of signs in Book II, Augustine notes, “A sign is a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing causes itself to make upon the senses” (2.1.1). Here, Augustine describes a sign as a flag of sorts that triggers one to recollect a meaning associated with the image at hand. And while Augustine mentions “something” singularly, his idea of signification appears to imply that more than one meaning can exist “beyond” a sign. It seems that Augustine’s exegetical practice urges a reader to discover the meaning associated with a sign, and then entertain the possibilities of meaning, however many can be discerned. Based on the rest of Augustine’s exegetical model, one can infer that this collection of meaning accumulates from various levels of interpretative exercises his reader performs.

So, using an example Augustine employs in this passage, if we hear a human voice, we attend to the emotion it expresses, suggesting we associate what we hear with what we know. Continuing with the example, we gain this sort of knowledge from world experience and human interaction so when we experience, say, an angry voice we instinctively identify it as angry then know how to respond. For Augustine, this same sort of identification and classification based on experience occurs when interpreting Scripture. The more experienced a reader of Scripture is, meaning the more he has interacted with a passage both intellectually and emotionally, the more likely he is to correctly read and interpret Scripture within the framework of Augustine's model. Moreover, the more experienced a reader is, the more likely he is to make connections between passages and choose the contextually correct meaning from the many. But these interpretative experiences hinge upon charity. That is, we exercise and grow as readers by applying the rule of charity to the parameters of righteousness and purity. This application is how one can utilize individual, instinctive recollections with Scripture.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, in addition to these growing abilities and Scriptural experiences, these interpretative crossroads are the places Augustine desires his reader to employ his/her outside knowledge, which can work to illuminate Scriptural passages. For example, when describing the metaphors threaded throughout the Bible, Augustine notes, "Just as a knowledge of the nature of serpents illuminates the many similitudes which Scripture frequently makes with that animal, an ignorance of many other animals which are also used for comparisons is a great impediment to understanding" (2.16.23). Here,

---

<sup>51</sup> But as the earlier part of this Augustine section considers, Scriptural experience does not necessarily correlate to the number of times a passage is read. Instead, in a schema grounded in process, experience relates to the quality of interaction a reader has with a passage. And for Augustine, this quality translates to the growing abilities a reader gains when translating intellectual understanding to the spiritual kind. Also a large factor is the presence of charity. For Augustine, charity allows one to *use* what experiences he has.

Augustine suggests that an extra-scriptural understanding of serpents and their traits may aid in understanding their use in the Bible.

He continues this train of thought, concluding "...a knowledge of the carbuncle which shines in the darkness also illuminates many obscure places in books where it is used for similitudes, and an ignorance of beryl or of diamonds frequently closes the doors of understanding" (2.16.23). Augustine urges the reader to use outside knowledge as the intellectual foundation bringing him/her to Scripture, ultimately offering the reader a place to begin the interpretative process and move past the traits of the thing into its larger signification.

Furthermore, Augustine suggests in these passages that a knowledge of traits can work with a knowledge of tropes to open a Biblical scene. This knowledge of Biblical tropes comes from reading and working with Scripture. So, for Augustine, the repetition of Biblical images marks a place for the reader to begin the interpretative act, in that these images trigger connections between passages and offer an intellectual recognition of an abstract quality looming beneath the surface of the language.<sup>52</sup>

But while this description seems to depict one entrance to Scriptural understanding, Augustine certainly imagines a number of avenues existing in Scripture that will lead to his desired greater enlightenment. In a passage seemingly describing his ideal reader, Augustine provides a rather broad definition ranging from the desired attributes of a reader to the need for intellectual independence guided by charity. In it he illustrates an advanced interpreter who "...receives the precepts we wish to teach (and)

---

<sup>52</sup> This conception of repetition as a threading of signification is seen in the work of 20<sup>th</sup> century literary theorists like Peter Brooks metonymic examination of Charles Dickens. In this arena, repetition of an image within a paragraph or two pieces together a larger, hidden image carrying a rather esoteric signification.

will not need another to reveal those things which need explaining when he finds any obscurity in books...But by following certain *traces* he may come to the hidden sense without any error..." (2.12.17, my italics). These "traces" appear to refer to the above tropes or signs that guide a skilled reader to the hidden secrets of divine understanding. Yet, central to the pursuit of these traces are (or lies, not lays, or rather, lie, because your subject is plural – but "lie" isn't very clear) charity and faith, for we believe what we cannot know or recall (*Confessions*, 1.6.21-23). Charity is the force that moves exegesis along and protects the interpreter from error.

In a sense, Augustine's exegetical model hinges on his reader's participation with a text. Much as Hooker's rule of reason becomes the tool arming his interpreter to participate in Scripture, so do Augustine's intellectual exercises in obscure Scripture train his reader in the textual experience and knowledge necessary for a transcendent understanding beyond them. For Augustine, all the tools necessary for divine understanding are present within Scripture. The tools for explication are in the reader's mind and heart in the form of charity.

But the reader is never truly left alone to explicate the meaning of Scripture. As Augustine delineates, charity is the safety-net keeping the interpreter's heart clear so Scripture can be correctly used and understood. Though accompanied by hope and faith, charity is the greatest of the three, for, "...when anyone shall reach the eternal, two of these having fallen away, charity will remain more certain and more vigorous" (1.39.43). For the sake of this discussion, this eternal place appears to be the moment when intellectual knowledge and spiritual love meet and the interpreter gains a complete understanding of God's Word.

And in the hermeneutic process leading up to this moment, the reader is guided by hope, faith, and charity, the former two dropping off as the interpreter's mind moves closer to understanding. And while "there is no love without hope, no hope without love, and neither hope nor love without faith" charity, or the belief in God's love, is a force Augustine identifies as the most important element in the exegetical process because it represents the ultimate form of faith—faith, not in God's existence, but, in his love (17).<sup>53</sup> The interconnectedness and necessity of all three of these tenets depicts an exegetical model equally reliant upon reason for intellectual understanding but needing charity, faith, and hope to guide and protect the interpreter from error.

Yet, this conception of error is not as large of an issue when an interpreter centers himself in faith and charity.<sup>54</sup> Augustine comments, "To be in error concerning them, that is, to mistake one thing for another, is not to be judged a sin; or, if a sin it is, it is a very small one" (7.21).<sup>55</sup> Using Peter as an example, Augustine posits that an error caused by misinterpretation is not an egregious sin, but instead a step on the path towards understanding. He concludes, "Once and for all, then whatever its character and magnitude, such an error has nothing to do with the way that takes us to God—the faith of Christ *that worketh by charity*" (7.21).

As long as the interpreter has faith and allows charity to guide him, then the path to God, to knowing, is never compromised, but instead enhanced. For, "in these and similar false notions we are deceived, with our faith in God remaining intact, and we may go astray without departing from the way that leads to Him" (31). Or, as Stock notes, "the metaphor of errancy moves from the text to the soul: a narrative journey *in* the mind

---

<sup>53</sup> Augustine. *Faith, Hope, and Charity*.

<sup>54</sup> This idea of error will be further explicated and applied to Spenser and Redcrosse in Chapter 3.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine. *Faith, Hope, and Charity*.



is transformed into a narrative journey *of the mind*” (174). This transformation suggests that if the interpreter encounters error, he will not fail and become lost. Instead, error can positively alter the interpretative journey in that it forces the reader to contemplate the passage to consider why his initial reading was incorrect.

When protected by charity, faith and hope, the interpreter is open to consider the many meanings contained within a text. Just as we witnessed in that early Augustine passage commenting on interpreting Genesis, Augustine’s exegetical foundations are based on both the potential of multiple meanings as well as the acceptance of these meanings, for “it was through him that the one God carefully tempered his sacred writings to meet the minds of many people, who would see different things in them, and all true?”. God intends these many meanings since they reside in Scripture, and therefore charity, or God’s love, is provided as a tool to aid the Scriptural journeyman down the path of meaning. And for Augustine this path is best traversed when charity protects the spirit from the tendency of the mind to control interpretation. In this balance of intellect and soul Augustine implies that the cosmos displays a divinely inspired system of meaning in which signs and realities participate equally.

For Augustine, charity appears to exist both in the reader’s heart and in the pages of Scripture. In the heart, it guides the reader of Scripture to good ends and disallows falsehood to enter his interpretations. Charity in Scripture can be represented by God’s love present in the Scriptural word and underlying the entirety of the Bible. In effect, the charity present in Scripture acts as the larger idea lingering just below the surface of the text—the idea working in conjunction with God’s love that equates to truth. Charity in Scripture seems to be what attracts the charity in the pure heart of the skilled interpreter.

For “a man with right love also has right faith and hope. But one who has no love, believes in vain, even though the object of his hope may be truth” (31.117).<sup>56</sup> To find and understand genuine truth, one must employ God’s love.

At the end of Book I, Augustine notes “...when anyone knows the end of the commandment to be charity ‘from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith,’ and has related all of his understanding of the Divine Scriptures to these three, he may approach the treatment of these books with security. For when he says ‘charity’ he adds ‘from a pure heart,’ so that nothing else would be loved except that which should be loved” (1.40.44). Augustine’s description paints charity as the force that maintains purity in the heart of his interpreter aiding in the desired interpretative ends. In other words, charity guides a reader through the stages of Augustine’s process, helping the interpreter make Scriptural decisions, so that intellectual understanding can meet spiritual belief.

For Augustine understanding begins with contemplation. As the interpreter moves from a place of intellectual understanding to one of spiritual impression, this contemplation is protected by charity. As we shall see in Hooker’s paradigm, internal factors, like reason, when paired with external ingredients like things indifferent or discipline, allow the reader to achieve the fullest form of Scriptural knowledge . Augustine erects a similar hermeneutic equation as he pairs his internal charity with signs and obscure Scripture. Where Hooker desires for interpretation initially to depart from Scripture in order to shed a brighter light upon divine knowledge, exegesis for Augustine always remains within the bounds of Scripture—at least initially. Yet, while these methods differ, both thinkers view outside experience and interpretative exercise as necessary means for the attainment of divine knowledge. Connections like these and the

---

<sup>56</sup> Augustine. *Faith, Hope, and Charity*

ones discussed in more detail throughout this chapter paint Augustine as an important influence onto the work Hooker confronts in *LEP*.

RICHARD HOOKER  
*Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*

Richard Hooker's exegetical schema is founded on three basic tenets: Scripture, tradition, and reason.<sup>57</sup> Quite simply, Scripture is the written word of God, or the written past, that contains all things necessary for salvation. Tradition consists of both the Church's Catholic past and the emerging Puritan present, while reason is a participatory concept, rather than a theoretical one, in which knowing something is sharing or participating in something. Reason is how an interpreter can interact with Scripture as well as with tradition. It is the force that guides and protects the reader as he/she reads Scripture and tradition so that he/she can know more than the seen, or literal, like things or history. Because reason is a god-given tool imbued to the exegete, it provides the reader with the abilities to move closer to divine knowledge. Together, these parts interact with each other to dictate Church law, an individual's understanding of these ecclesiastical laws, and an understanding of God's Word.

In many respects, Hooker's hermeneutic task is to reconcile a Catholic past too insistent on an incontestable understanding of faith with a Puritan present

---

<sup>57</sup> For a more detailed explanation of these three pivotal tenets consult Atkinson, Nigel, and Alister E. McGrath. *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England?* Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997; Nigel Voak. *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace*. Oxford theological monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

presumptuously limiting knowledge to Scripture.<sup>58</sup> Through this reconciliation Hooker identifies a middle-place founded on tolerance and reliant on expanding the realm of salvific knowledge beyond Scripture and into that of things indifferent. In this expansion Hooker purports a mutual, inward hold between man and Scripture—a hold grounded in Scriptural interpretation and guided by reason.

In effect, Hooker’s basic premise appears to be summed up in this poignant rhetorical question, “Shall we hereupon then conclude that we may not take knowledge of, or give credit unto anything, which sense or experience or report or art doth propose, unlesse we finde the same in scripture?” (106).<sup>59</sup> The rest of his paradigm, the details of things indifferent, reason, doctrine and discipline, teaching and choice all work to attain these ends where extra-scriptural texts and experience shall be used to interpret and gain insight into Scripture and, ultimately, life.

Much like the allowance Augustine provides for multiple meanings in his Genesis passage, Hooker introduces his work with a relatively optimistic perspective, musing “I know no cause why either the number or the length of these controversies should diminish our hope of feeling them end with concord and love on all sides” (98). This sentiment is characteristic of the highly tolerant tone of Hooker’s writings. Unlike many of the theologians of his time, Hooker desires a balance between hard-line Protestantism and psuedo-Catholic tendencies. He expounds his desires for the *LEP*, stating “...for it [reformation of *LEP*] hath grown from no other roote, then only a desire

---

<sup>58</sup> For continued commentary on Hooker’s contribution to the Anglican church consult Philip Secor. *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism*. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1999; John Sedburg Marshall. *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition: An History and Theological Study of Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity*. Sewanee, TN: University Press, 1963.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Hooker. *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Early English Books Online. Web. All subsequent reference to the *LEP* will be from this source.

to enlarge the necessarie use of the word of God” (98). It seems the basic desire motivating Hooker’s treatise moves beyond mere refutation. Instead, Hooker appears to demand an open, yet revised, exegetical method—a method that would expand the authority of the Scriptural reader rather than diminish it.

Peter Lake notes a similar sentiment, stating, “...Hooker was doing a great deal more than merely reshuffling the pack of available polemical options. He was integrating them into a new synthesis at the centre of which stood a distinctive and novel vision of what English protestant religion was or rather ought to be” (146). As Lake suggests, Hooker’s task was fueled by intellectual desires, not necessarily institutional ones. As we shall see in the following discussion, while Hooker’s exegetical ideas do ask for the expansion of interpretative authority via reason and guarded by doctrine, he does not seem motivated to enter in on any side of ecclesiastical controversy. Instead, he works from a desire to enlarge the necessary uses of the Word in order to mend the religious controversies of his time, rather than enflame them.

Hooker begins by legitimating his desire to expand God’s word, to expand Scriptural interpretation, stating, “For whereas God hath left sundry kinds of lawes unto men, and by all those laws the *actions* of men are in some sort *directed*: they hold that one onley lawe, the Scripture, must be the rule to direct in all things, even so farre as to the taking up of a rush or strawe. About which pointe there should not neede any question to *growe*...” (98, my italics). In this passage, Hooker suggests that in Scripture, God has left directions for man—directions on how to live a holy life. But these directions should not impede the growth of a man’s god-given faculties. The flaws of his contemporary

shepherds lie in their limitation of Scriptural meaning to the point of stunting the spiritual growth of the flock.

As the *LEP* progresses, this limitation becomes one of the major places of contention for Hooker's argument—man places sole importance on Scripture at the cost of muting the extra-Scriptural faculties imbued from God to man. Moreover, in the above passage, Hooker's conception of growth suggests a positive effect to this expansion of knowledge. Again, such an effect assumes that Hooker's main goal is tolerance and understanding rather than suppression.

As Lake suggests, "...Scripture was a message encoded in terms expressly designed for rational creatures. It presupposed the powers and autonomous action of human reason to decode its message. Admittedly, those powers were themselves a divine creation, but that was Hooker's whole point. Reason provided a way to divine God's will" (152). Lake makes a good point.

For Hooker, as for Augustine, Scripture is infallible because it comes from God. This infallibility, this authority, that Scripture inherently exhibits, secures man's ability to discern Scripture with the aid of reason because the authoritative nature of Scripture, when aided by reason, should provide comfort for the interpreter, not duress. In essence, reason makes Scripture more accessible to man by instilling the potential for interpretative authority—an authority which allows the reader to expand the borders of Scripture. And it is this desire for accessibility via reason's application to the extension of Scriptural boundaries that moves Hooker's cause.

As W.M. Southgate comments, "He [Hooker] did not dispense with revelation to replace it with reason. Like the reformers before him, he accepted Christian revelation as

the primary basis for authority; but his chief interpretative authority was reason and he insisted furthermore that it be regarded as a valid supplementary authority...his was a demand that truth be sought, not a claim that had been found” (136-138).<sup>60</sup> The “supplemental authority” reason provides takes shape as the interpreter employs it to *seek* meaning beyond the literal lines of Scripture. As Southgate highlights, the authority reason provides never supersedes that of the authority contained in Scripture. Instead, it provides an instrument for the interpreter to seek the inner truth contained in Scripture—it is a god-given tool of interpretation.

Hooker posits why the boundaries of Scripture should be expanded as he begins to define his rule of reason, which asks “not to exact at our hands for every action the knowledge of some place of Scripture out of which we stand bound to deduce it, as by diverse testimonies they seeke to enforce, but rather as the truth is, so to acknowledge, that it sufficeth if such actions be framed according to the *law of reason...*” (98, my italics). In this introduction to reason, Hooker begins to characterize a fundamental tenet of his exegetical model and a primary part of his expansive Scriptural reasoning. Reason acts as the vehicle allowing for the spiritual growth referred to above.

Reason, for Hooker, is the universal tool that allows every Scriptural reader to examine the directives within Scripture and relate them to other places in Scripture and, I would argue, to relatable situations or scenes outside the realm of Scripture. The law of reason allows us to extrapolate the just boundaries between written Scripture and the meaning of Scripture.. With the aid of reason as both guide and protector Hooker seems to propose a two-part interpretative journey. The first leg of the trip trains a reader to

---

<sup>60</sup> W. M. Southgate. *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

distinguish what a thing indifferent is while the second part of the exegetical journey asks the reader to move from this expositive place into one revealing the multiple meanings contained in a passage.

Additionally, this sort of recognition expands the boundaries of Scripture by bringing outside places (literature, philosophy) into the Scriptural realm.<sup>61</sup> It allows the Scriptural interpreter to bring outside experiences into the divine one and consider how these events shape the spiritual self and how they translate into a working divine knowledge. This passage also suggests that one's actions should relate to Scripture but not be bound by it. As Hooker alludes to throughout his piece, Scripture is meant to expand an individual's experiences with a divine hand, not limit one's possibility for understanding.

However, reason really enters into Hooker's understanding of Scripture with the idea of hermeneutic multivalence central to his schema. This multivalence encapsulates a certain remittance to the *right* meaning—there emerges more than merely one right answer. And according to Hooker's two-part schema, if one identifies a thing indifferent then he sees a number of choices he can make. Each of these choices becomes a path to truth—an investment in truth. So for Hooker, right meaning is not a black and white area, but instead offers the reader a place/space to entertain options. Once the interpreter can appreciate that there is more than one right meaning to Scripture then he is already in

---

<sup>61</sup> There is a critical line that examines Hooker as a Christian humanist. This potential for a literary link to Scripture would appear to fit into these discussions. Edward Dowden, in particular, claims "The spirit of the Renaissance is brought into harmony by him with the spirit of the Reformation; he is serious, reverent, devout; with seriousness and reverence he does honour to human reason...he is at once humanist and theologian" (69). From *Anglican and Puritan: Studies in Literature*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1900. See also Hardin Craig. *The Enchnated Glass; The Elizabethan Mind in Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1936; Herschel Baker. *The Dignity of Man; Studies in the Persistence of an Idea*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947. In this analysis Baker asserts that Hooker, Bacon, and Shakespeare are all spokesmen of "Renaissance optimism" (28).



an advanced hermeneutic place. This understanding represents a hermeneutic paradox in the sense that the interpreter seeks right meaning, yet does settle for one right meaning.

Within this paradox the centrality of truth must remain even in the seeming diffusion of truth. Reason, for Hooker, allows one to learn how to assert just boundaries on this diffusion while simultaneously observing hermeneutic freedom. Yet, in this freedom, reason itself is always limited by a just boundary, which allows one, in turn, to assert just boundaries. Another facet of reason is the understanding of where to place just boundaries and the application of interpretation upon these boundaries once they have been placed. In its purest form, reason grounds oneself within just boundaries then explores within these boundaries. Furthermore, for Hooker, much like Augustine's charity, reason is the tool that allows one to find the balance between abusing Scripture via figurative interpretation and over-limiting it via literal interpretation. For example, one can be led to false worship and the idolatry of nature as an entity *but* one can also achieve Puritanic narcissism, believing one possesses the power to reject nature. Reason and just boundaries are what enable one to reside somewhere between these two extremes.

Hooker continues to develop his idea of reason, stating, "...the generall axioms, rules, and principles of which law being so frequent in holy Scripture, there is no let but in that regard, even out of Scripture such duties may be deduced by some kinde of consequence (as by long circuit of deduction it may be that *even all truth out of anie truth may be concluded*) howbeit no man bound in such sort to deduce all his actions out of Scripture" (98, my italics). For Hooker, this "circuit of deduction" represents a process

of interpretation beginning with Scriptural instruction.<sup>62</sup> But, most importantly, in this process exists the idea that truth can be discerned via *any* truth. Hooker goes to great lengths to illustrate that truth is an equable entity rather than a ranked/striated one—truth is truth no matter what prompts one to attain it.

This “circuit of deduction” also furnishes the potential for insight into truth and provides a readerly authority associated with a reason-based Scriptural interpretation. As Hooker suggests in his *all-anie* scenario, part of the reader’s power lies in deciding which particular truth provides insight into the larger whole and how it does so (or in Hooker’s schema, which part of Scripture leads to the larger truths contained in Scripture). In this model, we must assume that one can infer which fragmented truth leads to the insight of a larger truth. True readerly authority and the ultimate test of reason lie in this decision.

Yet, for Hooker, choice is not merely an action but is also the tool—it is the function and the machine informed by experience and meaning. Instead, the action surrounding choice simply makes available many different possibilities. This sort of choice strengthens the interpretative tools and the overall deductive power of the Scriptural reader. And as Augustine suggests, elucidative choice paves the path to divine understanding where each of these smaller truths becomes a brick on the road to knowledge. Essentially, any one truth participates in the nature of all truths, so that to grasp one truth is, in a sense, to grasp the whole thing.

Moreover, the italicized section of the above passage suggests truth in Scripture is present in every word of Scripture, rather than any individual passage. But when

---

<sup>62</sup> This concept of deduction also brings us again to Hooker’s problems with negative arguments. One should deduce actions based on what is missing under the guard of reason and situation rather than as an interpretative truism. As suggested earlier, Hooker has some hesitations with assuming that what is not said by the Apostles is treated like instruction. Instead, these passages should be treated like they have *not* been commented upon, well, because they have not.

considering the extra-scriptural places I argue Hooker pushes interpretation to move, one can infer this phrase to mean that truth, “anie truth,” can lead one to divine knowledge when reason is used to guide the interpreter. This rings especially true when considering the latter part of Hooker’s passage, “howbeit no man bound in such sort to *deduce* all his actions out of Scripture” (my italics). This notion of deduction directly points to reason as a participatory tool that can free one from the seeming confines of Scripture.

Hooker’s notion of consequence also provides the interpreter with the responsibility for the ramifications of his interpreting. If one reads without the aid of reason, he retains the consequence of misinterpretation.<sup>63</sup> These consequences illustrate a cause-effect relationship in the act of interpretation while simultaneously placing reason as a safeguard on the same act. For while reason *can* provide the just boundaries that open a passage and expand Scriptural interpretations, reason can also lead man to abuse Scripture for his own gain or deprive himself of open truth by literalism. Therefore, the most notable consequences that occur for the Scriptural reader are misinterpretation as the abuse of reason.

Robert V. Kavanagh addresses an idea of a grace-aided reason by specifically pointing out the limitations and enhancements of Hooker’s theological perspective of reason. He says, “Hooker...makes a place for reason, and for law as a work of reason, but only in so far as reason is aided by grace. Reason is competent, as Will is free, ONLY WHEN ASSISTED BY SUPERNATURAL POWER. His apparent confidence in reason is thus qualified and we may say, therefore, that Hooker has great confidence in

---

<sup>63</sup> This idea places reason in a similar protective light at Augustine’s charity. The major difference, though, is that reason directly guides the interpretative actions of the reader whereas charity works a bit more distantly. For Augustine, charity, in part, enters the interpretative process when needed rather than as a motivator for interpretation.

supernatural, but not in natural reason” (101).<sup>64</sup> This distinction between natural and supernatural reason depicts a reason rooted in the divine mind, rather than the human. This link between natural and supernatural reason ultimately keeps one from abusing the powers of reason and encourages one to utilize the potentials of reason.

Expanding this notion concerning those who carry such consequences, Hooker defines just from whom his treatise dissents. He claims that, “...they who claime the generall assent of the whole world unto that which they teach, and doe not feare to give very hard and heavy sentence upon as many as refuse to embrace the same, must have speciall regard that their first foundations and grounds be more then sc slender probabilities” (99). Hooker appears to describe the hard-lined Protestants of his day who refuse to accept those who dissent even a tad from the belief that all knowledge is gained from the literal interpretation of Scripture. For Hooker, these men should consider the possibility that the Biblical truths they hold onto, their “first foundations”, may be nothing more than possibilities. In other words, the foundational perspectives of these hard-lined Protestants are too rigid and rigidity is a form of weakness.

Moreover, one must consider where truth fits into Hooker’s paradigm. As mentioned in our earlier discussions of reason, within Hooker’s hermeneutic paradox the centrality of truth must remain even in the seeming diffusion of truth. Reason, for Hooker, allows for one to learn how to assert just boundaries in this diffusion. So, the truths associated with these “first foundations” still remain, but they can be moved and

---

<sup>64</sup> Robert V. Kavanagh. “Reason and Nature in Hooker’s *Polity*.” Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Wisconsin, 1944. This argument is often considered in discussions linking Hooker to rationality and natural law. Though often criticized for being too extreme in his position, Kavanagh’s distinction of a supernatural reason to distinguish between an earthly one is an important one.

shaped without being broken. Again, the foundational views of these hard-lined Protestants are too rigid because they see the first foundations of truth as static.<sup>65</sup>

This concept of “first foundations” becomes important when extending Hooker’s exegetical model to non-scriptural works like poetry. When considering things indifferent, these first foundations act as the basis for a reader’s interpretative journey. They relate to the Scriptural interpretative model that one shall extend to secular texts. For example, though a poet like Spenser addresses the poetic interpreter rather than the Biblical one, he seems to embrace the same primary principles as Hooker in that a reader should exercise and develop a participatory reason in order to gain the most insight from a text.

This connection between poetic and Scriptural exegesis is further developed as Hooker references the use of Scripture via St. Paul, stating, “(St. Paul) did simply without any manner of exception, restraint, or distinction teach every way of doing wel, there is no art but scripture should teach it because *every art doth teach the way how to do something or other well*. To teach men therefore wisdom professeth, and to teach thee every good way: but not every good way but one way of teaching” (99, my italics).<sup>66</sup> As noted in the highlighted portion of this passage, Hooker aligns the benefits of art with

---

<sup>65</sup> This concept of “first foundations” is an important idea when relating to Spenser and what he expects from his reader. The foundational principles Spenser’s reader most likely enters the text with are those of Scriptural interpretation/analysis. Spenser’s reader would navigate his text better with Hooker’s exegetical ideas rather than those of one like Whitaker who only acknowledges the rather static, literal surfaces of the text.

<sup>66</sup> Hooker is often linked to the early Church Fathers, particularly Augustine and Paul. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century criticism links him to St. Thomas. For discussions on the former see Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass*; Edward Dowden, *Puritan and Anglican*. For more general discussions of Hooker’s “intellectualist” depiction (and his link to St. Thomas) see Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952; H. O. Taylor, *Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: MacMillan, 1930; Dionisio de Lara, “Richard Hooker’s Concept of Law,” *Anglican Theological Review* 44 (1962): 382.

those of Scripture. Art, like Scripture, becomes a place to engage the mind and achieve an elevated knowledge.

As he concludes, man should pursue and attain wisdom, but there is not just one way to gain such wisdom. For Hooker, this connection names outside places, like poetry, as things indifferent and opens them to insight beyond their generic expectations. For Spenser, opening and encouraging this sort of textual movement illustrates his readerly expectations—to use their practice with Scriptural exegesis and apply it to his poetic works. Furthermore, in this light, the praxis of teaching and learning exceeds the bounds of Scripture, yet always returns to those Biblical roots.

For Hooker, choice in this conception is a hermeneutic necessity aiding in the understanding of sacred and secular texts. Dissenting from the interpretative premise that “...every cause admit not such infallible evidence as profe, as leaveth no possibilitie of doubt or scruple behind it...” Hooker reveals his hermeneutic goals, stating, “this whole question which hath beene mooved about the kinde of Church regiment, we could not but for our owne resolutions sake, endeavour to unrip and sift, following therin, as neere as we might, the conduct of that iudicall method which serveth best for invention of truth” (99). Here, Hooker begins to address his premises concerning the state of ecclesiastical law in England. For Hooker, possibility, or the choice associated with such possibilities, is the basis for Scriptural interpretation, but for most hard-line Protestants this sort of interpretation is discouraged out of past fears of loose Popish scriptural interpretation. Essentially, Hooker unveils and criticizes a Puritan paradox—truth and wisdom are desired but because of the limits they have set forth, Puritans make this attainment impossible.

Hooker provides an example of this Protestant paradox when he describes how wisdom is simultaneously cherished and abused. He says, "...they alleage *that wisdom* doth teach men *every good way*; and have thereupon inferred, that no way is good in any kind of action, unlesse wisdom do by scripture leade unto it: *see they not plainely how they restraine the manifold wayes which wisdom hath to teach men by, unto one only way of teaching, which is by scripture?*" (99, my italics). The first part of the passage begins to describe this paradox stating that wisdom is desired yet limited to Scripture. The latter part of this passage questions hard-line Protestants about their restraining wisdom by restraining Scriptural meaning.

Such questioning reinforces Hooker's central point that there are many ways to gain wisdom. This point is succinctly summarized as he asserts, "The bounds of wisdom are large, and within them much is contained" (99). These bounds form the premise for his argument concerning reason and just boundaries, for it is reason which expands the just boundaries beyond Scripture to include the "outside" knowledge of things indifferent. Essentially, Hooker desires to extend the bounds of wisdom to include places beyond Scripture.

Continuing with this line of thought, Hooker uses Biblical examples and characters in order to show the ways in which wisdom was gained and employed before Scriptural guidance:

Wisdom [that] was Adams instructor in Paradise: wisdom indued the fathers, who lived before the law, with the knowledge of holy things; by the wisdom of the law of God, David attained to excel others understanding; & Salomon likewise to excel David by the selfe same wisdom God teaching him many things besides the law. *The waies of well-doing are in number even as many as are the kindes of voluntary actions: so that whatsoever we do in this world may doe ill, we shew ourselves therein by well doing to be wise.* (99, my italics)

In this list, Hooker describes the Biblical men who successfully employed wisdom before Scripture was written. Within this line of argument, the ways to wisdom, or the desire to be wise, are innate in man rather than scripturally imbued. While wisdom must be earned through interpretation, man possesses the ability to gain it. Such arguments facilitate the epistemological investigations surrounding how and why reason can be such a powerful tool in the attainment of truth. According to Hooker, reason was a tool used by generations of men to gain the knowledge contained in Scripture long before the words of Scripture were written.

Furthermore, this passage's italicized section becomes particularly central to this line of reasoning because it places man's *actions* in accordance with Scripture and, distantly, interpretation. In other words, actions, including interpretation, can agree with Scripture though they do not derive from it. This sort of thinking suggests that even though one may err in worldly actions the desire to be wise keeps one moving on a noble path. Importantly, Hooker uses the active phrase "to be wise" rather than the subject of wisdom to allude to an active process of striving. This subtle phrasing suggests wisdom is a process rather than an object to be taken. In this highlighted passage Hooker, again, alludes to the multiplicity of potential ways to attain truth and wisdom. He aligns these ways with the many types of "voluntary actions".

This connection to voluntary action possesses an underlying presence of choice. As suggested at the beginning of this examination, choice marks an overlapping area for Hooker, Augustine, and even Spenser. With regards to voluntary action, by using reason one can choose where to set the boundaries without exclusively relying on Scripture.



This erection of just boundaries composes a part of step one in Hooker's interpretative process. Once these boundaries are set, then one can begin step two, which is to choose how a reading among many works or how many various readings can work. Once the just boundaries are set, an interpreter can explore within these boundaries (with the aid of reason)—and this exploration includes choosing and discarding specific places and signs in a passage.

For example, in one of his early sermons, Hooker centers his discussion on a passage from Matthew 7.7. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."<sup>67</sup> While these three steps seem similar, Hooker goes to great lengths to distinguish between these actions and who performs them. In asking we shall have, in seeking we shall find, and in knocking something shall be opened to us. To ask is easy, but to seek one must "let the love of obedience, the sense and feeling of thy necessity, the eye of the singleness and sincere meaning guide thou footsteps and thou canst not slide" (265). Through seeking Hooker implies that faith and reason must work together in order to choose boundaries and paths that will move one towards knowledge. Interpretation is more than just asking for answers. Instead it involves the *action* of interpretation—the seeking of passages and the knocking at extra-textual knowledge.

Seeking precedes the action associated with knocking. For "there is always in every good thing which we ask, and which we seek, some main wall, some barr'd gate, some strong impediment or other objecting it self in the way between us and home"

---

<sup>67</sup> This is a section entitled "A Sermon of Richard Hooker" from a larger manuscript by Izaak Walton, "The life of Dr. Sanderson, late bishop of Lincoln. Written by Izaak Walton. To which is added, some short tracts of cases of conscience, written by said bishop" (pub. 1678). The manuscript is from the Newberry Library in Chicago, IL, call # Case E 5 .S21554.

(265). In other words, in every act of interpretation something hinders true understanding. And part of the interpretative process is learning to move past this barrier—to knock and enter the space of certain truth. Importantly, knocking implies an earned method of knowing in that the interpreter must be allowed access to the meaning. Such access appears to require the contemplative action reminiscent of Augustine.

To illustrate this point, Hooker refers to the Israelites in Egypt. While they were enslaved in Egypt, the Israelites asked for freedom to seek the Promised Land. Once they were set free to seek the land promised to their Fathers they did not feel fear or toil until they reached the barrier of the mountains and the Red Sea, “those brazen gates, the barres whereof, as they have no means, so they had no hopes to break asunder” (266). In the midst of this doubt and despair, Moses “with all instancy beateth, and God with the hand of his Omnipotency casteth open the gates before them, maugre even their own both infidelity and despair” (267). In the Israelites we see the asking and the seeking and the fear felt when confronted with barriers to what one desires.

In this example, the barriers are actual physical doors that stand between the Israelites desire for the Promised Land and the actual land. But these barriers can be the Scriptural limits of the text, the present just boundaries, the vague language of a passage, or the hermeneutic restrictions of the Puritans. No matter what the barrier, each journey of desire, of knowledge, must encounter the instance where the seeker must arm himself with faith and knock at God’s door in order to step into the place of understanding. Once the interpreter enters this place, he can begin to explore the possibilities of meaning. In this exploration the interpreter can safely distinguish between the meaning and relevance of both Scriptural passages and how things indifferent relate to these passages.

Furthermore, the fear and despair the Israelites feel is part of the exegetical process. Part of the barrier is outer and physical, but part of it is internal, and spiritual. For, “many are well contented to ask, and not unwilling to undertake some pains in seeking; but when once they see impediments which flesh and blood doth judge invincible, their hearts are broken” (266). This act of knocking requires one to act with faith in order to attain a heightened understanding of the divine, the interpretative process, and himself—someone who can see beyond the initial barrier and into what may lie behind it. To truly knock at the door of knowledge is to move beyond the fear and doubt of the unknown.<sup>68</sup>

Augustine refers to this passage in his *Enchiridion, Faith, Hope, and Charity*, in order to discuss the role of faith in relation to charity. He comments, “And to the true faith of Christ, it is that which the Apostle praises, faith that worketh by charity; and what its love does not embrace, it asks that it may receive it, seeks that it may find, and knocks that it may be opened to it. It is faith that obtains what the law ordains” (109). Though Augustine uses the passage as an example in his discussions of charity, and Hooker uses the passage to discuss the role of reason, each thinker gestures to similar exegetical purposes. For Augustine, faith, in addition to hope, is one of the basic foundations that facilitates the workings of charity, which here is represented as God’s love seeking fundamental truth in His Word. And for Hooker, reason is the tool given by God and used to discover the same fundamental truth.

---

<sup>68</sup> In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Colin encounters this fear of the unknown when he must embark on the sea to Cynthia’s court. We also see this fear occurring in a more intense form of despair in Redcrosse in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. These discussions shall be extrapolated in greater detail in the chapters to follow.

Each of these tenets—charity and reason—is necessary to superseding the written laws of men in order to attain the divine essences in God’s Word. As Augustine so poignantly suggests, “the law can command, but cannot help” one in the attainment of truth. Instead, as both he and Hooker suggest in their models, man must be free to interpret Scripture when protected and guided by charity or reason. And while Augustine does not refer to interpretative freedom by name, the interpretative work that charity can do embodies this demand. For Hooker and Augustine the search for truth is central and quickly followed by the desire to preserve and defend it.

Hooker continues to deliberate on the repercussions of interpretative action and the tools used to attain such wisdom as he discusses the attributes of a personified wisdom:

as her (wisdome) are of sundry kinds, so her maner of teaching is not meerely one and the same. Somethings she openeth by the sacred books of Scripture; some things by the glorious works of nature: with some things she inspireth thee from above by spirituall influence, in some things she leadeth and trayneth them onely by wordly experince and practise. We may not so in any one speciall kind admire her that we disgrace her in any other, but let all her wayes be according unto their place and degree adored. (99-100)<sup>69</sup>

Again, Hooker alludes to the many ways to attain truth. These potentials are the cornerstone for his exegetical model, for while the ways to truth may differ, the desired fundamental truth always remains the same. As seen in this passage, wisdom teaches one truth via many different, yet equal, examples. Each of these examples, whether via Scripture, nature, or experience shape how the interpreter reads Scripture and the world around him.

---

<sup>69</sup> Richard Hooker. *LEP*.

Additionally, while Hooker offers each of these paths as places and manners in the acquisition of truth, he seems to push for the interconnectedness of these methods to attain a more complete form of truth. In other words, while there is not one way to attain truth (Scripture) there is not merely one alternate method (experience, nature), either. Instead, it is the combination of all these methods that provides the most enriching way to truth. The interpreter's real challenge is not necessarily deciding which form to use, but how life experience relates to and enhances Scriptural teaching, or how the workings of nature relate to and enhance those of experience.

When tracing the defense of Hooker's treatise on reason and experience, John E. Booty claims that the "mature Christian" will move beyond the authority of the church with the aid of reason and experience. He expounds on this idea, stating, "Reason is no infallible authority in itself, but reason operating in relation to church and Scripture is an instrument of testing to the truth of Scripture, aiding in the apprehension of and interpretation of Scripture" (220).<sup>70</sup> For Booty, Hooker's conception of reason presupposes the existence of a living, thinking participant in Scriptural exegesis. This participation must be guided by faith and reason, but the presence of an individual's outside experiences as well as his experiences with the text will always be an interpretative factor. Or, as Booty concludes, "Revelation presupposes man in the context in which he *has been* created and *is* being created" (220, my italics).

---

<sup>70</sup> John E. Booty. "Hooker and Anglicanism," from *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition to His Works*, ed. W. Speed Hill. Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972. For further considerations of reason and experience see Egil Grislis. "The Role of Consensus in Richard Hooker's method of Theological Enquiry" from *The Heritage of Christian Thought; Essays in Honor of Robert Lowry Calhoun*, eds. Robert Earl Cushman and Egil Grislis. New York: Harper and Row, 1965, 80-101.

In other words, what does an interpreter draw from as he reads and considers each passage? Meaning, does he use a prior knowledge of the passage from a sermon, from a previous reading, does he consider his own individual experiences with the passage, or Scripture in general, when contemplating the passage? For Hooker, it seems he would agree that all of these *can* inform reading as long as reason and faith guide one's interpretation.

When discussing Hooker's exegetical process, Egil Grislis considers how these outside elements effect one seeking truth in Scripture. He delineates Hooker's dialogical process of interpretation, in which, "human reason supplies the meaning of scriptural words; highly reputable human authority from within the church enhances the probability that the Scripture is in fact revelatory; yet such a witness does not in itself suffice to bring about an immediate acceptance of the truth" (194).<sup>71</sup> Knowledge is not reached, nor does contemplation occur by mere telling, even if the revealer is an authority like the Church. Instead "Deliberation continues, more questions are raised, and further acquaintance with Scripture takes place. All the while the witness of the wise is taken in account" (194). This "witness of the wise," or the explication by an authoritative source, can become a basis for contemplation, but it is not the end of exegetical process, instead, it is the beginning.

Moreover, this continued consideration turns the exegetical process fully inward, so that "The fruition of this process is complete when man finally recognizes the complete correspondence between the church's witness about Scripture and his own

---

<sup>71</sup> Egil Grislis. "The Hermeneutical Problem in Hooker" from *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works*, ed. W. Speed Hill. Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972, 159-206.

personal discovery of what Scripture means to him [Hooker]" (194). As Grislis understands Hooker, in this instance, one realizes the path to meaning or truth by a combination of objective and subjective truths guided by faith and reason.

In effect, the real difficulty in an interpreter's choice lies in how to combine these different manners to attain truth in a way that will provide the best possible path of inquiry for each specific situation. Referring again to the Israelites example, they had one goal in mind, the Promised Land. But their path was never laid out for them, they were never given a map to this Land. Instead, they had to seek out the path to their desired ends. And when they were met with the physical barrier of the Red Sea, they asked, "Is this the milk and honey that hath been so spoken of? Is this the Paradise, in description whereof so much glosing and deceiving eloquence hath been spent? Have we after four hundred and thirty years left Egypt to come to this?" (267). Even when they were so close to the Land they sought, they did not know exactly where it was. So, while they sought with great determination and toil, they did not know the end point of their journey until Moses knocked on God's door and He parted the waters to reveal the Promised Land.

With regard to interpretation, the path to truth can alter and differ but the final act of exegesis comes with combining grace with action. As Hooker's example suggests, God will show the seeker the final place of knowledge. The interpreter's main goal is to strengthen his exegetical abilities by discerning the things indifferent that will aid him on his journey and exploring within the newly set just boundaries of a text.

Grislis also comments upon the relationship between grace and reason in Hooker, specifically that reason is redeemed by grace, by distinguishing between three interrelated

yet distinct levels: the intuitive, which the principles of reason are “self-evidently” true, the demonstrative, where proofs are presented, and finally, that “of the greatest probability” that is used when there is no certain knowledge (178).<sup>72</sup> In this classification, Grislis suggests that according to Hooker truth can be attained in all three levels, but success greatly increases when reason is employed in Scripture rather than everyday human life.

However, Grislis does note the instances where Scripture is too limited and reason needs to be employed in these extra-scriptural locations. He comments that for Hooker, “Thus at no time is it possible to escape the problem of subjectivity. Although the approaches are not the same, whether we are dealing with reason or with Scripture, we always obtain truth discursively, and the possibility of error cannot be ruled out in advance” (179). In effect, Hooker realizes that appeal alone does not mechanically bring about truth and no method alone can insure infallibility. Therefore, grace is necessary when employing reason in that it guides one towards the “highest probability” of interpretation (which Grislis claims is for Hooker the highest form of knowing that can be “humanly achieved”).<sup>73</sup>

Extending the above passage from *LEP* in which Hooker names several different kinds and ways to know wisdom, Hooker begins to unload these terms, discussing just what these human ways of attaining truth and acting in God’s image are. At first he quotes St. Paul, “*I do in all things please all men, seeking not mine owne commoditie but rather the good of many, that they may be saved*” (100). This idea of the one and the

---

<sup>72</sup> Egil Grislis. “The Hermeneutical Problem in Hooker.”

<sup>73</sup> While I agree with many tenets of Grislis’ argument, I take issue with his claim that reason is only provided to those who “are of God” (178). Instead, as this chapter posits, Hooker identifies reason as a skill imbued to all men as a tool to interpret Scripture.



many echoes Augustine's discussions concerning the benefits of obscure Scripture. For Augustine, one passage leads us to many beneficial interpretations, and, in a similar vein, St. Paul's words suggest that one action can benefit (save) more than just the self, but (find salvation for) the many. Again, for Hooker, God's Will can be seen in additional actions to those warranted by Scripture.

Commenting on this idea Hooker expands his earlier premise of sundry wisdom, noting:

We move, we sleepe, we take the cuppe at the hand of our friend, a number of things we oftentimes doe, only to satisfie some *naturall desire*, without present expresse, and actuall reference unto any commaundement of God. Unto his glory even these things are done which we naturally perform; and not onely that which morally and spiritually we doe. For by every effect proceeding from the most concealed instincts of nature his power is made manifest. (100, my italics)

Here, Hooker suggests that these "naturall desire(s)" to help others in the nature of God are not found in a commandment, yet are still godly actions. He shows that while no overt command instructs one to do well to others, a general interpretation of God's will coincides with these actions. Though Hooker does not specifically name literal and figurative interpretation here, he implies that though these natural desires do not derive from a literal part of the Bible, but gained from combining humankind's instinctiveness for godliness with more figurative understandings of the nature of Scripture. This larger concept threaded throughout Scripture represents the divinely intuitive factor of interpretation that provides for an understanding beyond the literal.

As Hooker goes to such lengths to illustrate in *LEP*, there are larger precepts, like these natural desires, that exist *in between* the words of Scripture and the instincts of the individual.<sup>74</sup>

Hooker continues distinguishing between these thoughts on human action versus Scriptural teaching, musing that:

God may be glorified by obedience, and obeyed by performance of his will, and his will be performed with an actual intelligent desire to fulfill that law which maketh known what his will is, although no special clause or sentence of Scripture be in every such action set before mens eyes to warrant it. For Scripture is not the onely law whereby God hath opened his will touching all things that may be done, but there are other kindes of lawes which notifie the will of God, as in the former booke hath bene proved at large: Nor is there any law of God, whereunto he doth not accept our obedience his glorie. (100)

When alluding to natural law, Hooker importantly differentiates between then conflates deeds consciously performed in the name of God's will and those innately done. As seen in this passage, either of these actions can be performed to the fulfillment of God without a "special clause or sentence of Scripture". For Hooker, these deeds, no matter what the intent, reify God's will in human actions. In essence, these deeds begin to demonstrate Hooker's conception of discipline, in that they begin to embody the actions surrounding Scriptural understanding.

Additionally, Scripture is not the only place where God's law is seen.<sup>75</sup> For Hooker, as seen in prior passages, God's wisdom can be found in any number of places

---

<sup>74</sup> These ideas of "naturall desire" and acts which we "naturall perform" become important when considering reason as a god-given attribute necessary for the interpretation of Scripture and outside actions. In this passage, Hooker suggests that man possesses innate desires to do good—to do God's work. And these actions, since they are god-given, assumably, and done in the name of God must be accepted in the inner sanctity of God's desires for man.

<sup>75</sup> Hooker's relationship to church law and political law are popular veins of Hookerian studies. For more direct considerations consult Charles W. Irish. "Participation of God Himself": Law, the Mediation of Christ, and Sacramental Participation in the Thought of Richard Hooker," from *Richard Hooker and the*

including nature and man's deeds (as stressed here). Each of the above actions, in the performance of God's will, are representations of God's law though not written in Scripture.<sup>76</sup> In many ways "action" seems to align with "text". Can the same instinctive actions that prompt man to act by God's will lead one to instinctively perform exegetical actions of interpretation on non-Scriptural texts, like poetry, for instance? Essentially, can these instinctive actions extend from the physical acts that embody God's will onto the intellectual acts, like exegesis, that lead one to *understand* God's will? Moreover, can these secular texts, like poetry, prompt these interpretative and physical actions that lead to God's will?

It seems that for Hooker, the answer to these questions is "yes" for if the action is "good" or even good intentioned, like seeking to understand divine will, then it represents God. To reiterate this idea, Hooker quotes St. Peter: "to have their *conversation honest amongst the Gentilles, that they which spake evill of them as of evill doers, might by the good workes which they should see, glorifie God in the day of visitation*" (101). By referencing early Church Fathers, Hooker not only advances his own argument, but he uses the same vehicles as his contemporaries in order to prove this argument. He interprets this passage: "As long as that which Christians did was good, and no way subject unto just reproofe, their vertuous conversation was a meane to worke the Heathens conversion to Christ" (101). These "heathen conversions" allude to a spirit, a

---

*English Reformation*, ed. W.J. Torrance Kirby. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003, 165-185; W. D. J. Cargill Thompson. "The Philosopher of the 'Politic Society': Richard Hooker as a Political Thinker" from *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works*, ed. W. Speed Hill. Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972, 3-77; R. K. Faulkner. *Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981; J. P. Sommerville. *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952.

<sup>76</sup> Of course, this specifically refers to Nature as God's other book.

feeling, of Scripture inferable without the constant use of Biblical text. This spirit present in Scripture exemplifies the universality of divine good.

At the end of this section, Hooker poses a very poignant question: “But the question is, whether onely Scripture doe shewe whatsoever God is glorified in” (101). This question typifies the foundations of Hooker’s inquiry. Each tenet of his paradigm—things indifferent, reason, choice, doctrine and discipline—returns to this question in an attempt to answer “no.” Throughout this chapter, I have alluded to the outside places and experiences where Hooker desires the interpretative process to lead. For Hooker, these areas, these things indifferent, distinguish his ideas from those of his Puritan contemporaries. While things indifferent are a traditional theological topic, often negatively associated by his contemporaries with the misinterpretation of Scripture, Hooker perceives that the otherwise benign tenets of things indifferent can be viewed as positive parts of the exegetical practice.<sup>77</sup> Throughout Book II of *LEP*, Hooker elevates the principle of things indifferent by identifying them as major factors contributing to his expansive hermeneutic ends.

While beginning to define the “other things in Scripture” (things indifferent) and how far their reach should span, Hooker addresses the arguments of his opponents and continues to reference St. Paul, who “they say, is *of all other most cleare, where speaking of those thinges which are called indifferent, in the ende he concludeth, that whatsoever is not of fayth, is sinne. But fayth is not but in respect of the worde of God. Therefore whatsoever is not donne by the worde of God is sinne*” (101). While this conception of goodness and action is one almost exclusively backed by hard-lined Puritans, Paul appears to leave the door open for outside places reflecting the word of God, places

---

<sup>77</sup> By “benign tenets” I mean things that are in themselves neither good nor bad.

where faith extends pious action beyond the boundaries of the Word of God. For Hooker, this open-door provides the opportunity for things indifferent to offer places where, as long as faith is present, exegetical action can elucidate an understanding of divine will in extra-scriptural texts and situations.

Continuing, Hooker, inquires as to whether or not “[...] onely Scripture doe shewe whatsoever God is glorified in” and, if so, how does one know who can provide such understanding or where these other places that contain God’s glory exist? He comments:

Whereunto wee answere, that albeit the name of fayth being properly and strictlie taken, it must needes have reference unto some *uttered worde*, as the object of belief: neverthelesse, sith the ground of credite is the credibility of thinges credited; and thinges made creditable, eyther by the knowne condition and qualitie of the utterer, or by manifest likelihood of truth which they have themselves; hereupon it riseth, that whatsoever we are perswaded of, the same we are generally sayd to believe. (101-102, my italics)

In the italicized portion of this passage the issue of authority in a speaker/utterer of Scriptural truth emerges. Here, for Hooker, the word is made creditable by the integrity of the speaker and/or the thing credited.<sup>78</sup> He perceives the importance of faith as a concept applicable to more than God’s word. In this light, authority is more situational than an assumed, self-evident truth for the uttered word. Additionally, Hooker’s conception of reason appears to fit in with his idea of faith, in that faith leads the interpreter to the places of learning while reason encourages one to analyze and contextualize the information within the realm of Scriptural understanding.

---

<sup>78</sup> The credibility of the speaker and the nature of the thing credited also gesture to the importance of context. The reader can interpret the context to help inform the meaning of the words.

This sort of interpretative understanding means the spoken power of Scriptural understanding largely rests upon the individual experiences of the hearer/speaker. In other words, a Scriptural passage contains one meaning but needs an interpreter to activate the other possible meaning contained in it. So when this foundational meaning is applied to a different situation or individual then the meaning may expand into other directions. And while it will harbor the same basic righteousness in meaning, the extent of this meaning intensifies depending on context or specific Scriptural occurrence. In this regard, the more contexts/situations this “likelihood of truth” is tried/placed against, the greater the possibilities the interpreter has to contemplate the significance of these potential meanings. It appears Hooker answers his initial inquiry by determining that other places besides Scripture can offer a knowledge of God’s will.

With this line of reasoning, Hooker begins to introduce and address issues of truth via word and truth via experience. In the above passage, Hooker considers the credibility of the thing itself, in itself, or the credibility of the speaker. But at the heels of this discussion arise questions of what an interpreter should, or could, believe, and what he/she should question. And where would faith fall in these distinctions? On one hand, truth via word(s) begs for a different sort of faith than that of truth via experience, where a physicality gets introduced to the equation. This truth via experience seems to be a way to “own” Scriptural meaning; to take truth via word and appropriate it with ones experience or the corporeality of human life (a.k.a. facts) works to open Scriptural meaning in ways beyond that of literalness. But, most importantly, this appropriation must be guided by charity or reason.

Or, as Grislis comments, in Hooker "...when a tradition of faith and personal understanding concur, the individual is assured of the objective dimension of his subjectively held belief. Then it becomes possible to say that the discovery has taken place by the assistance of grace..., yet not without the exclusion of the instrumental role of human reason" (194).<sup>79</sup> In this regard, the subjectivity of human experience opens Scriptural meaning and vice versa. Utilizing one's experience does not lead to misinterpretation, but instead enhances the possibilities of the word.

While contemplating the definition of things indifferent and continually exploring the extent of their boundaries, Hooker references the Book of John, "*Though (sayth our Saviour) ye beleeeve not me, beleeeve my workes, that ye may know and beleeeve that the father is in me and I in him. The other Disciples sayd unto Thomas, we have seene the Lord; but his aunswere unto them was, Except I see in his handes the print of the nayles, and put my finger into them, I will not believe*" (102). This reference specifically addresses the distinctions between truth via word and truth via experience. St. John mentions the Disciples' method of belief as one that relies on truth via word (in this case, the direct word of God) since they believe they have seen the Lord via his words. But Thomas appears to manifest the idea of truth via experience since he desires to feel and experience the Lord's wounds in order to affirm His presence. This passage exemplifies Hooker's larger point that Scriptural truth can be discerned in many ways, not just the way of Scripture. Furthermore, these many ways carry possibilities for things indifferent, all of which lead toward a similar hermeneutic aspiration.

Hooker continues to analyze this passage from John: "Can there be any thing more plaine, then that which by these two sentences appeareth, namely, that there may be

---

<sup>79</sup> Egil Grislis. "The Hermeneutical Problem of Hooker."

a certaine believe grouded (grounded) upon other assurance then Scripture; any thing more cleare, then that we are sayd not onely to beleeve the thinges which we knowe by anothers relation, but even whatsoever we are certainly perswaded of, whether it be by reason or by sense?" (102). These "thinges which we know by another" are all things indifferent in that we can know truth by all these avenues. They are the alternate paths to understanding besides Scripture alone. As we see throughout his treatise, Hooker's perception of things indifferent separates him from other thinkers of the time because these things indifferent allow a space for outside knowledge to permeate Scriptural understanding. Or, as he says in the above passage, "...there may be a certaine believe grouded upon other assurance than Scripture..." (102).

Hooker's interpretation of things indifferent paired with his idea of doctrine truly unfold the boundaries of Scriptural exegesis by encouraging personal knowledge and interpretation to aid in, not deter, a more complete understanding of divine truths.<sup>80</sup> As he reinforces his idea of things indifferent, Hooker references a popular Protestant belief, stating "...they still argue, that *wheresoever faith is wanting, there is sinne, and in everie action not commandeded, faith is wanting, Ergo, in every action not commanded there is sinne*" in order to illustrate the flaws in such a narrow hermeneutic model (103). As

---

<sup>80</sup> After presenting the beginnings of a definition of things indifferent, Hooker refers to the "Heathen(s)" teachings as "Tullie, that nothing ought to be done whereof thou doubtlest whether it be right or wrong, whereby it appeareth that even those which had no knowledge of the word of God did see much of the equitie of this which the Apostle requireth of a Christian man" (102). After this passage, Hooker states, "I hope we shall not seeme altogether unnecessarily to doubt of the soundnesse of their opinion, who thinke simply that nothing but onely the worde of God, can give us assurance in any thing wee are to doe, and resolve us that we doe well" (102). In his retaliation, Hooker expands the influences of Scriptural understanding and divine desires to include the "Heathen" or ancient philosophers. Much like he references art as a place to gain divine understanding, so are the ideas of the ancient philosophers. This is a key passage when considering the places where knowledge can rest. Most importantly, in this passage, Hooker *shows* his reader how to discover and use things indifferent in a rather Socratic way. Methodologically, Hooker, like Augustine, defines then shows his terms.



Hooker continues his refutation of this logical syllogism, he says, “I would demaund of them, first for as much as *the nature of things indifferent is neither to be commaunded not forbidden, but left free and arbitrarie*: how there can be any thing indifferent, if for want of faith sinne be committed, when any thing not commaunded is done” (103).

The basis of this refutation is key to Hooker’s exegetical ideas in that he explicitly states that things indifferent *must* remain free and open to elucidation. Though he goes to great lengths to define and examine the benefits of things indifferent when considering Scriptural interpretation, he does not push for them to be concrete tenets prescriptively forced onto a text. Instead, the backbone of things indifferent for Hooker is their heterogeneity, which leads to their slipperiness of classification. This variegation seems to be what attracts Hooker to their use in Scriptural interpretation. But more importantly, things indifferent as extra-Scriptural entities represent a principle of freedom that Hooker values enough to make central in his exegetical model. With this freedom Hooker suggests that holiness can be found in the mere exercise of our God-given faculties. And the outcomes to interpretation that were once bad or irrelevant, through such exercise, may now be made good.

Secondly, along a similar vein, Hooker never preaches for the inclusion of things indifferent in popular interpretative models. It seems that once things indifferent become solid components of Protestant exegesis/truth they lose the very freedom which makes them necessary to larger divine understanding. In other words, a thing indifferent must be something accessible to an interpreter that cannot fall under direct ecclesiastical control or categorization—they cannot be things overtly categorized as acceptable or not. Instead, things indifferent should be determined by the individual exegete, who interprets

protected by reason. Ultimately, things indifferent encourage an interpreter to supplement already-existing ecclesiastical laws in the pursuit of an understanding of God's will.

One way Hooker does work to positively define things indifferent is by asking what are acceptable things indifferent and/or the acceptable thing God permits with approbation. He begins to answer this question and still continues to shape his definition of things indifferent, inquiring into "what those things be which God permitteth with approbation, and how we may knowe them to be so permitted" (103).

He goes into a lengthy example in order to answer this question:

When there are unto one ende sundrie meanes, as for example, for the sustenance of our bodies many kindes of foode, many sorts if rayment to cloath our nakedness, and so in other thinges of like condition:

here the end it selfe being necessarie, but not for any one meane thereunto; necessary that our bodies should both be fed and cloathed, howbeit no one kinde of foode or rayment necessary; therefore we hold these things free in their own nature and indifferent. The *choice* is left to our owne discretion, except as a principall bound of some higher dutie remove the indifferencie that such things have in themselves. (103, my italics)

Here, the openness of Hooker's conception of things indifferent begins to emerge. As the example goes, man must eat and dress as an end, but he has the freedom to eat and wear what he desires as long as he is sustained and reaches his end. In a similar way, as man needs physical sustenance, so, too, does he need spiritual nourishment. He may reach these spiritual ends with a freedom to choose the path to these ends. This freedom of choice is solidified in things indifferent, where the reader only possesses a choice over

deciding what is a thing indifferent. As we see here, things indifferent are the supplements or extra-scriptural places one may seek and find guidance towards truth.

Or, as Hooker reiterates, “Impossible therefore it is we should otherwise thinke, then that what thinges God doth neither command nor forbid, the same he permitteth with approbation either to be done or left undone...in things indifferent there is a choice, they are not always equallie expedient” (103). Occupying the space that is not the explicitly prescribed orders of God are the omitted ones of things indifferent, for what God neither forbids or commands is indifferent. Hooker trains his interpreter to use God-given reason to discern things indifferent and employ these spaces to open the bounds of Scripture in order to attain a deeper divine understanding.<sup>81</sup>

While these decisions of things indifferent can include deeming everyday actions, such as determining what one eats or wears, this examination is interested in considering the alternate textual places one can use to complement Scriptural knowledge. These supplemental places, like poetry, can offer the reader outside places to consider divine workings, such as considering the presence of God’s will in secular life or the relationship between human and divine virtue. Such deliberation allows the reader to extend the reach of Scripture. These spaces also provide the reader with the opportunity to practice the action of exegesis.

This conception of choice continues to develop in Hooker’s schema as an interpretative necessity when developing a strong interpretative mind. In Hooker’s hermeneutic model, choice arises when deciding which outside spheres inform Scripture,

---

<sup>81</sup>The last portion of this passage reiterates Hooker’s resistance to the indoctrination of things indifferent in Protestant thought. Instead, when “their indifference is removed, if either we take away our owne libertie...” suggesting that when the multiformity of things indifferent leaves then so diminishes the multiplicity of places and meaning associated with Scripture.

but it also emerges when the interpreter must decide which of the many meanings applies to a given situation. This latter interpretative responsibility truly represents the complexity of Hooker's paradigm. It is not merely about moving beyond the literal and viewing Scripture as a complex message, but, instead, it is about employing choice to discern the effects of this growth from literal to figurative.

Still unpacking his definition of things indifferent, Hooker suggests an alternative to knowing which things indifferent are acceptable. Besides employing an individual's choice in plots and paths to Scriptural truth, Hooker highlights a more traditional method designating the places in Scripture where God directs his flock by "...restraining us unto, or by barring us from some one or moe things of many, which otherwise were in themselves altogether indifferent" (103). Yet even in these places where God seems to restrict man's choice, he still allows for things indifferent to exist in the Scriptural places he does not delineate specifics (which are many).

For example, in one of his sermons, Hooker addresses the intentional vagueness of God's Word, for "what we give we leave; but what God bestoweth benefiteth us, and from him it taketh nothing: wherefore in his propositions there are no such fearful restraints; his terms are general in regard of making, *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my Name*: and general also in respect of persons, *whosoever asketh, whosoever seeketh*" (276-277).<sup>82</sup> The general and vague places of the Bible are intentional because there should not be restraints on what God bestows to man since what He bestows is always beneficial. To use concrete language only works to place finality on the benefits man can gain from God's Word. For Hooker, when one encounters these vague places of Scripture, he/she can introduce things indifferent to the passage in order to multiply the

---

<sup>82</sup> This passage is from the earlier sermon from the Newberry Library, call # Case E 5 .S21554.

potential meanings bestowed upon man by God. So rather than having an exegetical process moving from the many to the one, Hooker proposes one that starts from one literal understanding and moves into many, then introduces a thing indifferent and blossoms into even more possibilities.

The passage from the sermon also suggests that the vagueness of Scripture works to open the pool of interpreters beyond those who can speak of God's Word. Much like reason acts as a universal tool for those interpreting Scripture in that every individual possesses it, so too does vague language allow anyone to ask and seek for God's knowledge. The presence of obscure Scripture suggests that solely relying on man for the knowledge of God is incomplete, for "these are the speeches of men not comforted with the hope of that they desire, but rap'd with admiration at the view of enjoyed bliss" (270). In other words, the men who tell of the blissful ends of divine knowledge speak for their own benefit, not that of the hearer. For Hooker, like Augustine, the best way to truth is to discover it on one's own. And the role of the teacher is to instruct one *how* to travel the path towards knowledge, not describe *what* lies at the end.

Continuing to comment on the intended vagueness of certain Scriptural places, Hooker suggests, "we inquire not no whether any thing be free to be used, which Scripture hath not set downe as free: but concerning thinges knowne and acknowledged to be indifferent, whether particularie in choosing any one of them before another we sinne, if any thing but scripture direct us in our choice" (104). In other words, Hooker does not take issue with what is delineated in Scripture; instead, he speaks of the places where nothing is said (like the controversy with bishops) and how his contemporary religious thinkers interpret these empty spaces as places of divine commentary when, in

fact, they are not. It appears that open passages are places where things indifferent reside and one can use choice to discern meanings.<sup>83</sup>

But Hooker shows an awareness of the differences between one thing indifferent from another. These differences privilege one thing indifferent over another and indicate that first part of the interpretative process is not merely deciding what is a thing indifferent but deciding which ones best inform the hermeneutic situation. So while there are many ways to read what is not explicit, some are to be privileged. This sort of decision implies that a reader's choice is activated by reference to a fundamental truth as he tells the difference between what is and is not available.

To make his point Hooker uses what I will call "The Meat Principle" which states if a diverse plate of meat is laid before one, all meats indifferent, none unlawful, then he/she can choose to take whichever one he/she would like. If this same plate of meat is laid before him/her and Scripture instructs him/her to take whichever meat he/she would like, then these things are even more qualified as indifferent. So while Scripture says he/she does not have to make any choice of one, he/she makes a choice of one based on what his/her discretionary teaching has taught him/her to do and because there is always a choice to make. In each situation one can pick one meat, and while some answers are privileged, each pick is potentially correct. Moreover, one can re-exercise the act of choice any number of times with different results—each different, each correct—as long he/she remains within the guidelines delineated in Scripture or, if none are stated, employs reason in his choice.

---

<sup>83</sup> W. D. J. Cargill Thompson goes into great detail in his analysis "The Philosopher of the 'Politic Society'" about the origins of "things indifferent." He links this idea to the medieval theory of the hierarchy of divine law.

Even in the places where Scripture does not specifically state its intention, it is up to the interpreter to employ the skills and knowledge he has learned through other Scriptural passages and/or outside knowledge and choose what it means or instructs. In other words, experience, hermeneutic training, and one's governing sense of what's righteous and pure aid the reader of Scripture in discerning obscure passages. And while "The Meat Principle" serves as a minor example of the power of choice, for God may not be necessarily interested in what we eat, it represents the potentials for meaning such choices can offer. In some ways, this idea rests upon obscurity, in that things indifferent encourage a reader to seek meaning in remote, non-traditional places. It also alludes to Augustine's proclivity for obscure scripture where he believes authentic divine understanding begins. For Augustine, as seemingly for Hooker, what is sought with difficulty is met with pleasure.

Central to this hermeneutic principle of choice lies God's desire for man to make these choices. Hooker addresses this desire as he summates his example, stating, "Nor let any man thinke, that following the judgement of *naturall discretion* in such cases, we can have no assurance that we please God. For to the author and God of our nature, how shall any operation proceeding in naturall sort be in that respect unacceptable? The nature which himselfe hath given to worke by, he cannot but be delighted with, when we exercise the same any way without commandement of his to the contrarie" (104, my italics). In essence, God will not be disappointed if one acts with the innate tools given by Him, for these tools could never contradict the laws stated by God. As noted above, these innate tools—this "naturall discretion"—provide the means and the safety-net for one to work outside of the Scriptural realm and ultimately expand it.

Furthermore, this innateness can also be seen in Hooker's conception of reason. In each case, God arms mankind with the tools and desires to interpret both the world around him and the Word of God. Or as Hooker concludes, "...our naturall capacitie and judgement must serve us only for the right understanding of that which the sacred scripture teacheth" (105).<sup>84</sup> And with this innate reason Hooker advocates interpretation as a *process* not a product—an exercise set in choice and selection. In Hooker's exegetical model the process to truth is equally as important as the process from truth. That is, the interpretative paths one travels to *arrive* at truth, in this case Scriptural understanding, and the paths one takes when *beginning* with truth, or taking this Scriptural knowledge and applying it to things indifferent, are equally important because they require a skilled exegete. Such an exegete can navigate the many possibilities generated by interpretation instead of seeking just one.

Fortifying his conception of things indifferent, Hooker refers to St. Augustine: "Saint *Augustine* was resolute in points of Christiananitie to credit none, how godly and learned forever he were, unlesse he confirmed his sentence by the scriptures, *or by some reason not contrarie to them*. Let them therefore with Saint Augustine reject and condemne that which is not grounded either on the scripture, or on some reason not contrarie to scripture, and we are readie to give them our hands in token of friendlie consent with them" (105).<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Hooker uses a great example calling upon Biblical characters who have sinned against God. He says, "If therefore we sinne in every action which the scripture commandeth us not, it followeth that they did the like in all such actions as were not by revelation from heaven exacted at their hands" (104). This brief passage coyly calls into question the importance between interpreting and understanding the Bible and blindly following the past. These great characters disobeyed God and one must interpret the effects of these sins and consider how they reverberate in one's own life.

<sup>85</sup> Grislis briefly discusses the connections between Augustine and Hooker. By referring to 19<sup>th</sup> century sources like E. A. Washburn, Grislis outlines an image of Hooker heavily informed by Augustine but



Early in this passage, Augustine seems to credit only those who use Scripture to gain divine knowledge, but Hooker's citation of Augustine's phrase, "or by some reason not contrarie to them" indicates that he believed Augustine saw the silent places in Scripture where every ecclesiastical action was not outlined. This slight turn of phrase indicates that Hooker believed Augustine, much like Hooker himself, was leery of employing negative arguments to determine ecclesiastical practice—that is, for Hooker, it is not necessarily about what should *not* be included in ecclesiastical practice, but what should be included. In this regard, it appears Augustine supported a similar use of things indifferent to gain theological knowledge.

While it appears Hooker disagrees with the methodology of Augustine and other early Church Fathers, he uses these canonical thinkers as examples in his argument for the proper use of things indifferent. Contemporaries of Hooker use the Church Fathers to argue for the literal interpretation of Scripture citing passages like "If Scripture teach it not, avoid it therefore" but Hooker uses these same figures to illustrate the contextual importance present in even the most prominent theological treatises. As Hooker suggests, "The most that can be collected out of them is only, that in *some cases* a negative argument taken from scripture is strong, whereof no man indued with judgement can doubt" (105, my italics).<sup>86</sup>

---

appropriated through Calvin ("The Hermeneutical Problem in Hooker" 161-162). Peter Munz discusses this connection in greater depth in *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought*, 150-164.

<sup>86</sup> When Papist versus Protestants or Puritans versus Protestants one of the main lines of attack are calling Puritanism and Protestantism a negative religion—an arguing precept built upon an absence. For example, a Protestant talking to Bishop Andrews would say it is evil for him to wear a fancy outfit to preach because the apostles do not sanction it in the Bible. So, the Protestant Church is often criticized for basing a church on a negative, an absence (or, building a positive from a negative). The sanction in absence is an evil to have. In essence, the apostles have to be viewed in a certain way based on what is not there with them (ex. liturgies, archbishops, etc.). For Hooker, you cannot take what is not there and build from it. If the apostles don't mention an article like liturgy than it is a thing indifferent. Essentially, one cannot suppose that an unmentioned sanction has been commented on—in fact, it has very obviously *not* been commented on. For

As seen in the highlighted portion of this passage, Hooker remains non-committal in his stance on specific theological issues of the time. Instead, these resistances to commitment work to open places for interpretation, rather than dogma, in even the most sacred of theological thinkers, like Augustine or Paul. Moreover, this situational interpretation allows these texts to be viewed as things indifferent, which, in turn, informs Scriptural understanding rather than defines it.

And as seemingly non-committal as Hooker appears, he constantly inquires into Scripture's position as the sole place to gain knowledge. For example, above, as he implicitly questions the methodology of Puritans for misunderstanding the early Church Fathers, Hooker poses a very poignant question, asking, "For if it stand without reason thus to argue, Such a thing is not taught us in scripture, therefore we may not receive or allowe it; how should it seeme unreasonable to thinke, that whatsoever we may lawfully do, the scripture by commanding it must make lawfull?" (105). Between this passage and the earlier one citing Augustine, Hooker *shows* how he would interpret. He concerns himself not merely with what should or could inform Scriptural understanding but he contemplates the very relationship between interpreter and text.

By considering the boundaries of Scriptural analysis Hooker instinctively opens his hermeneutic argument to the literary world. This opening to the arts is directly addressed as Hooker asks:

If therefore it be not unlawfull to know and with full perswasion to believe much more than scripture alone doth teach, if it be against all sense and reason to condemne the knowledge of so many *artes and sciences* as are otherwise learned then in holie scripture, notwithstanding the manifest speeches of ancient Catholike fathers, which seeme to close up within the bosome thereof all maner good and lawfull knowledge,

---

Hooker, this absence of commentary paves the way for things indifferent and reason to interpret Scripture and ultimately the boundaries of Scriptural meaning.

wherefore should their words be thought more effectually to shew that we may not in deed and practise, then they are prone that in speculation and knowledge we ought not to goe any farther then the scripture? (106, my italics).

Here, as he does throughout the treatise, Hooker looks to outside sources, like the arts or extra-theological works, in order to enhance Scriptural and, ultimately, understanding.

These places are where the interpreter utilizes and trains his god-given intellectual faculties so that he can “correctly” read Scripture. In essence, Hooker stresses interpretative action over immediate ends.

But make no mistake, these places are not arbitrary, as Hooker suggests when he cites Tertullian, “We may not give ourselves this libertie to bring in any thing of our will, nor choose any thing that other men bring in of their will, we have the Apostles themselves for authors, which themselves brought nothing of their owne will, but the discipline which they receyved of Christ they delievered faithfully unto the people” (106). This passage reminds the wayward interpreter that not everything is translatable into good. In fact, as suggested throughout this chapter, part of Hooker’s idea of interpretative training begins with determining which things are indifferent to begin the play associated with the exegetical process. Such a schema further aligns with Augustine’s famous road metaphor in which the benefits of the process far exceed the destination.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, this passage appears to warn one against merely believing the words of others, what “other men bring in of their will”, too. Hooker seems to ask his interpreter

---

<sup>87</sup> Augustine is referenced before Tertullian as stating, “Whether it be question of Christ, of whether it be question of his Church, or of what thing soever the question be; I say not if we but if an Angell from heaven shall tell us anything beside that you have receyved in the Scripture under the Lawe and the Gospell, let him be accursed” (106). Again, Hooker’s connection to Augustine’s ideas strengthens as his argument progresses.

to train in textual and verbal interpretation. This sort of agency promotes the genuine attainment of Biblical knowledge based on individual contemplation and the evocation of choice.

In this schema Hooker further identifies the importance not only of reason which everyman possesses, but also of individual instinct and experience, to aid in the determination and interpretation of things indifferent. This instinct and sense emerges in Hooker's conception of discipline and doctrine. As Hooker begins to define, "...the name of discipline importeth not as they who allege it would faine have it construed, but as any man who noteth the circumstance of the place, and the occasion of uttering the words, will easily acknowledge, even the selfe same thing it signifieth which the name of doctrine doth, and as well might the one as the other there have bene used" (106).

This rather ludic definition of doctrine and discipline places discipline as the action or experience that aligns with a Scriptural teaching.<sup>88</sup> Doctrine, on the other hand, represents Scriptural teaching in the form of the message contained in Scripture. It is the stimulator of Scriptural exegesis—the Idea behind God's truth contained in Scripture. Doctrine implies that Scripture is not solely self-validating and a reader can move past the practical uses of Scripture and touch on the spiritual ones linked to individual salvation. In this regard, doctrine seems to possess a double importance in the exegetical act—on one hand, it is the larger message contained in Scripture and, on the other hand, its presence fuels the process of teasing out such truth.

Hooker, again, turns to the Church Fathers in St. Jerome and St. Hilarie in order to reify his concepts. Citing a passage from St. Hilarie, "*We beleeve it not because we*

---

<sup>88</sup> For further discussions on the historical basis of Hooker's doctrine and discipline see Peter Lake. *Anglicans and Puritans?*. 2-8, 74-78.

*reade it not? Yea, We ought not so much as to knowe the things which the booke of the Lawe containeth not, sayeth Saint Hiliari...*” Hooker depicts doctrine as the idea present behind literal Scriptural truth or purpose (106). As Hilarie suggests, one should know the general ideas behind a specific Biblical passage based on his/her experience with other passages. While the specific story may differ, God’s larger messages remain the same and pervade the entirety of the Bible. These larger messages or understandings are doctrine while the execution or enactment of these truths begins to define discipline. But as suggested above, the presence of doctrine fuels the interpretative process in that it becomes the motivating end of the exegetical voyage. Essentially, doctrine is the knowledge an interpreter asks then seeks for.

In this regard, doctrine and discipline are inherently linked because the motivation doctrine provides ultimately incites the action of discipline. In Book III Hooker says, “And the Gospell as they say containeth not onley doctrine instructing men howe they should believe, but also precepts concerning the regiment of the Church. Discipline therefore is a part of the Gospell: and God being the author of the whole Gospell, as well of discipline and doctrine, it cannot be but that both of them have a commen cause” (153-154). Here, doctrine is the internal truth contained in Scripture, a truth which promotes Christian action, and discipline is this outward action of an individual or the Church, an action that moves one towards the truth contained in doctrine.

For Hooker, as suggested by the above passage, these two tenets are linked by a common cause-effect relationship, although Hooker seems to place an extended importance on the role of discipline. Yes, discipline is the effect, the outward action caused by doctrine, or Scriptural truth, but it can also be re-used to return one to

Scripture. Discipline, as one's Christian experience, can also become the cause which returns one to the pages of Scripture in order to gain further insight into its possibilities. Thinking beyond ecclesiastical law, an individual's action under the guidance of Scripture may be considered in regards to the outside experiences that classify a thing indifferent. In other words, doctrine does not just spur action, it allows Christian action to influence Scriptural interpretation.

In many ways doctrine as the larger message contained in Scripture that represents the truth and love of God's Word, works like Augustine's charity in that it guides signification and how and where truth emerges through language. Just as Augustine commented that "faith obtains what the law ordains" to suggest that truth lies behind the laws of Scripture, the laws of men, so, too, does Hooker gesture to a similar situation between doctrine and discipline. Where faith propels one beyond the literalness of laws and into the realm of fundamental truth, doctrine moves the actions of discipline out of the language of the Bible and into the meaning of it. So, doctrine as underlying truth motivates the action of discipline in the making of laws, but it also acts as the force impelling humankind from these safe places of polity and into the unknown places of divine truth via interpretation.

Additionally, the dual roles of doctrine paired with the above conception of the specific and the abstract returns us to Hooker's basic premise that the attainment of divine knowledge can be aided by outside sources. In the early pages of Book II, Hooker begins to introduce his paradigm stating, "But it is not the word of God which doth or possible can assure us, that wee doe well to thinke his worde. For if any one book of Scripture did give testimonie to all; yet still that Scripture which giveth credite to the rest,

would require another Scripture to give credite unto it:...” (102). While this passage continues to illustrate the instability of literal Scriptural truth, it also gestures towards a Scriptural understanding of the one and the many, the specific and the abstract.<sup>89</sup> This sort of hermeneutic chain of signification implies that one passage illuminates a comprehension of the whole of God’s truth via the Bible versus existing as one isolated truth. Conversely, with this sort of understanding, one becomes armed with Biblical knowledge through each passage read. In essence, the practice, the process, of elucidating specific Scripture unlocks the larger divine purposes contained in the intentions of God’s Word.<sup>90</sup>

Through these ideas of the one and the many, doctrine and discipline, Hooker proposes Scripture can teach belief and action in the believer, propounding “Which Scripture being given to teach matters of beliefe no lesse then of action,...” (106). But the action he refers to here is not limited to ecclesiastical action but encompasses a larger action, an action of being—an action hinging on an understanding gained from interpretative practice. For Hooker, discipline comes to represent this sort of action not necessarily delineated as Church law but, instead, found in the exercise of reason, the understanding and the enactment of doctrine.

While still advocating his ideas of doctrine, discipline, and the action associated with these tenets, Hooker continually voices his contention with delineating Scripture as the sole place to acquire divine knowledge, and he does so in relation to doctrine and

---

<sup>89</sup> This idea of the One and the Many relates to Ficino’s *De Amore* in which he appropriates the same Platonic concept to a Christian conception of love. But beyond being a pagan truism, this idea of the One and the Many has peppered Biblical discussions since the early Church Fathers. Here, we see Hooker molding it to shape into his exegetical beliefs.

<sup>90</sup> As we shall see in the Augustine section of this chapter, he has a similar conception of Biblical understanding in his discussions of obscure Scripture.

discipline. Hooker muses, “Might they not hereby even as well prove, that on commandment of scripture is the only rule of all things, and so exclude the rest of the scripture, as now they doe all meanes besides scripture?” (107). In this question, Hooker voices his concern with the over-limiting of Scripture and paints a bleak interpretative future. He asks if we can limit divine knowledge to Scripture then what keeps us from limiting Scripture to one commandment or passage. In this regard, Hooker’s motivations for maintaining the elusiveness and vastness of Scripture are not merely hermeneutic but ethical.

Hooker’s argument against the delimitation of Scripture also seems to be motivated by a diminishing agency associated with literalist interpretation. As Hooker notes, “An earnest desire to drawe all things unto the determination of bare and naked scripture, hath caused here much paines to be taken in abating the estimation and credit of man” (114). Here, Hooker addresses the aftermath of one looking solely to Scripture for divine understanding. Throughout his treatise he claims God has imbued humankind with the intellectual capabilities, the tools, to discern His Word, but the literalist interpretation associated with a growing Puritanism diminishes the importance of these tools, ultimately undermining the interpretative authority of humankind. In this abyss-like quandary, Hooker argues for the authority of humankind based on God’s will.

To counter this diminishing agency Hooker depicts a cycle of understanding based on man’s thinking, teaching, and authority. For Hooker, “Wherefore to say that simplie an argument taken from mans authoritie doth hold no way, neither affirmatively nor negatively, is hard. By mans authoritie we here understad, the force which his word hath for th’assurance of an others mind that buildeth upon it, as the Apostle somewhat



did...” (114). In this passage, Hooker begins to delineate a process of understanding beginning with interpretation (from a preacher) then moving into the verbal exchange between men (the sermon) which then returns one to Scripture for the continuing enterprise of interpretation. In other words, mans authority is found in his own exchanges, and these exchanges are supposed to be grounded in a contract of truth.

But this contract is sometimes abused or misunderstood based on reputation. As Hooker notes, “The reason why the simpler sort are moved with authoritie is the conscience of their owne ignorance, whereby it commeth to passe that having learned men in admiration, they rather feare to dislike them, then know wherefore they should allow and follow their judgements” (115). Hooker aligns this abuse of power with the delimitation of authority rather than the inability for an individual correctly to interpret God’s Word. While this point seems a bit distant from the hermeneutic discussions central to this chapter, it illustrates Hooker’s awareness of the limits of seeing Scripture as the sole source of divine knowledge. Where his contemporaries would find fault in trusting anyone to interpret Scripture, Hooker discovers flaws in only allowing some to interpret Scripture, especially those apt to read too strictly. It would appear that his places of disputation arise when the few attempt to educate the many.<sup>91</sup>

For Hooker, Scripture speaks to us the truths of faith as one has come to experience them in his life. And it is these experiences that allow one to live out a Christian life and expand the places of knowing beyond the boundaries of Scripture. The

---

<sup>91</sup>In fact, towards the end of Book II, Hooker seems to protect against those who think they know Scripture too well as he states, “...it hath alreadie made thousandes so headstrong even in grosse and palpable errors, that a man whose capacitie will scarce serve him to utter five words in sensible manner, bluseth not in any doubt concerning matter of Scripture to thinke his own bare Yea, as good as the Nay of all the wise, grave, and learned judgements that are in the whole world” (119). Here, Hooker admits that Scripture is a place where even the simplest thinker feels he has the authority to go against even the wisest soul.

threat of one's misreading or misuse of Scripture cannot shake the foundations of God's Word, because it is humanity's teaching that has always initiated the potential for divine understanding in Scripture. As Hooker notes, "For whatsoever we believe concerning salvation by Christ, although the Scripture be therein the ground of our believe; yet the authoritie of man is, if we marke it, the key which openeth the dore of entrance into the knowledge of the scripture. The Scripture could not teach us the things that are of God, unlesse we did credite men who have taught us that he wordes of scripture doe signifie those things" (116). Here, Hooker acknowledges a tradition of humanity's authority through teaching others to use Scripture—a tradition stemming from the Apostles. This legacy of teaching paves the way for a continued faith in one's abilities to interpret Scripture, as well as marks the importance of hermeneutic process in understanding divine truths.

This apostolic tradition of action in addition to word briefly emerges in one of Hooker's sermons. When discussing prayer, he comments "So that, if in such cases as this we hold it safest to be led by the best Examples that have gone before, when we see Noah, what Abraham, what Moses, what David, what Daniel and the rest did; what form of Prayer Christ himself likewise taught his Church; and what his blessed Apostles did practise, who can doubt but the way undoubtedly be accepted, is conforming our Prayers to theirs, whose Supplications we know were acceptable?" (259). Even in his early sermons we see Hooker as an individual pushing for learning via action and experience in addition to learning via Scripture. By referring to the Apostles who acted before dogmatic Scripture, Hooker implies that actions guided by grace and reason are just as acceptable as those dictated directly by Scripture. In other words, interpreting holy

actions like the Apostles did—through contemplation aided by grace—must be an acceptable addition to solely heeding Scripture, because we know the actions of the Apostles are acceptable by God’s standards. Furthermore, Hooker implies that the actions of the Apostles represent discipline in that they enact the Word of God and the capacious, though rarely directly spoken of, wisdoms contained in Scripture like Love and Charity.

The examples of the Apostles work to encourage individuals not only in the good actions spurred by an understanding of God’s larger lessons, but work to forge a place for reason next to grace in the exegetical process. As Hooker notes reason marks the God-imbued tool arming all humankind with the ability to discern and contemplate Scripture. When considering this tradition of teaching, reason is what grounds individuals to discern not only what they read, but also what they hear, and emerges as a true path to understanding. Ultimately, employing reason provides agency for the interpreter in that it protects the reader as he/she trains to tease out doctrine and enact discipline. The rule of reason partly provides this interpretative agency and partly develops it by practicing and using this rule in the interpretative process. For Hooker, reason, as a participatory knowledge, guides the same intellectual practices of the human sciences as it does the contemplation of Scripture.

As Hooker so animatedly states:

But whom God hath indued with principall giftes to aspire unto knowledge by, whose exercises, labours, and divine studies hee hath so blest, that the world for their great and rare skill that way, hath them in singular admiration;...The truth is, that the mind of man desireth evermore to knowe the truth according to the most infallible certainty which the nature of thinges can yield. (117)

Hooker makes the case for a universal capability able to discern both Scripture and the surrounding world with the same intellectual craftiness. As he notes in the latter part of the passage, it is the common desire, the *raison d'être*, for an individual to know and understand the world around him/her, and this desire can best be aided by the inclusion of outside sources and a guidance to the possibilities contained in Scripture. Or, as Hooker notes, “Prayer proceedeth from want, . . .” implying that the desire to attain knowledge is the spark that ignites the interpreter’s voyage (260).<sup>92</sup>

These outside places of knowledge mark distinct variations of teaching. The manifold places to gain divine insight offer the equally multifarious methods for teaching these truths. This idea of teaching beyond Scripture marks a foundational tenet of Hooker’s hermeneutic paradigm. As Hooker notes, “First therefore whereas they alleage that wisdome doth teach men every good way; and have thereupon inferred, that no way is good in any kind of action, unlesse wisdom do by scripture leade unto it; see they not plainely how they restraine the manifold wayes which wisdome hath to teach men by, unto one only way of teaching, which is by scripture? The bounds of wisdome are large, and within them much is contained” (99). As seen in this early passage to Book II, Hooker advances that these outside texts not only mark the divergent places to acquire knowledge but they exemplify the numerous ways to be taught divine truth. In this regard, the concept of teaching is inherently linked to divine learning and the multifarious nature of Hooker’s schema makes necessary a teaching to match.

From these discussions of Hooker and his theological insights, we learn he was an individual looking far beyond the immediate ecclesiastical problems of his time and towards a larger conception of what it means to live a Christian life guided by Scripture.

---

<sup>92</sup> Sermon, Newberry Library call # Case E 5 .S21554.

In his exegetical model he outlines a method of understanding guided by reason and protected by doctrine, a model encouraging one to employ discipline as a way to enact the Word of God and contemplate Scriptural meaning. And finally, an exegetical model rooted in process and choice as means to teach the mind and soul to use extra-scriptural things indifferent to correctly interpret Scripture and gain divine insight beyond that of the literal. Furthermore, for Hooker, this model functions on the basic premise that God “approveth much more then he doth command” (122).

Hooker and Augustine provide the exegetical terms and concepts for the interpretative process I argue Spenser creates in his poetry. The limitations Augustine and Hooker present concerning both literal Scriptural meaning and the boundaries of Scripture itself represent similar issues Spenser encounters with secular poetry—limitations that run deeper than being remedied by a poet’s use of literary devices, like allegory. What is more complex in Spenser’s depiction of these textual limitations is his *representation* of these limits. Yes, Spenser desires to train his reader to understand more than the immediate textual meaning of characters like Redcrosse, Una, and Colin Clout or scenes like the cave of Error, House of Pride, Mt. Acidale. But Spenser also depicts his own characters’ struggles to understand both their surroundings and, in the FQ, the nature of their various virtues.

This depiction of character struggle offers another place where Spenser’s reader can gain insight into the nature of interpretation, such as, what to do when one misinterprets, or how to build upon one meaning to inform another episode. This sort of knowledge is gained similarly to Augustine’s reader of the *Confessions*, that is, he/she learns the nature of divine will through the experiences of another. For Augustine, his

experiences and struggles to align his everyday life with the presence of God he felt in his heart—to align his spiritual feelings with his human actions—could aid the reader in his similar struggles. Spenser seems to desire a similar interpretative exchange to occur between his poetic characters and his reader.

In many ways, Augustine provides the terms and format while Hooker supplies the potential for poetry to occupy more than a cultural or literary space. The reach of Hooker's idea of things indifferent gives Spenser an opportunity to push the limits of poetry to possibly overlap with the limits of Scripture. The exegetical act appears to be the place where the secular and the sacred can overlap to allow the reader to employ the methods of Scriptural interpretation onto extra-scriptural texts. Such action, in theory, opens the text to a larger set of expectations and potential meanings as well as elevates the poetic content, as in the treatment of virtue in the *FQ*.

Ultimately, Spenser needs his reader to move past his generic expectations in order truly to understand his larger poetic project, much as Hooker encourages his reader to use just boundaries to expand divine meaning outside of the Scriptural realm. In each case, the interpreter must rely on previously developed faculties to fuel his interpretative journey.

In the next chapter, we shall see how Spenser's early work begins to develop these hermeneutic ideas—ideas that will later be polished and executed by the knights of the *FQ*. Spenser's Colin Clout is a character who comes to mirror both the poet and his reader. Colin is the frustrated poet, who must leave the pasture in order to truly appreciate and understand it upon his return.

In many ways, Spenser's reader encounters the same sort of insight as he leaves Colin and the pasture in *The Shepheardes Calendar*, only to gain a richer appreciation and understanding of the interpretative inquiries of the shepherd and his peers when he returns in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Perhaps Colin's, and the reader's, most fruitful experiences come in the pages of the *FQ* where Colin is seemingly in his professional and personal prime, playing for the nymphs and muses. In either instance, Colin is a character who transcends textual borders, as does Spenser's reader, as he travels from pastoral to epic. He is a character who provides the obvious locations for textual contemplation concerning the nature of his character, his experiences, how the reader can gain insight into his earlier passages from his later ones, and vice versa. However, Colin is also a character who, because he is both removed from and part of the text, allows the reader to consider how the nature of poetry intersects with larger issues like virtue and contemplation.

CHAPTER TWO  
SPENSER'S PASTORALS AND THE EVOLUTION  
OF THE SHEPHERDLY READER

The previous chapter discussed several of the Augustinian and Hookerian foundations available to Spenser as he moves through his poetic career. This chapter shall build upon these foundations to consider Spenser's early pastoral, *The Shepheardes Calender (SC)*, in relation to his later one, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe (CCCHA)*. Using as a guide Augustine's conception of teaching, this chapter will examine the connection between the *SC* and *CCCHA* through Colin Clout's evolution between the works. Such a progression purports reading these two texts as one pseudo-epic in order to best reveal the poetic goals and struggles surrounding the project Spenser begins in between the *SC* and *CCCHA*, that is, the *Faerie Queene (FQ)*.

Colin's pseudo-epic quest from the pasture to Cynthia's court and back to the pasture marks a poetic and personal evolution in the shepherd boy—an evolution particularly distinguished by traits such as his shift from being a passive to an active narrator of his story, his transformation into a guiding shepherd to his flock of peers, and his development of a deeper consideration for his past experiences upon his present. I argue that the poetic development witnessed in Colin and his shepherd peers best depicts the goals and ideals Spenser carries for his epic work and his epic reader.

Colin's character transition from the Colin in the *SC*, a lovelorn shepherd boy who leaves the pasture, into the Colin in the *CCCHA*, a shepherd returned with a firmer grasp of the meaning of his experiences, indicates Spenser's ability to present poetry at



once playfully and seriously, or as Harry Berger suggests, for poetry to be “taken seriously as play” (60).<sup>93</sup> This playfulness can refer to the possibility for variance from traditional generic forms and expectations. For Spenser, such play occurs with the presence of traditional epic topics in the pastoral form and landscape. The effect of such play expands the immediate text and allows the reader to gain textual understanding of the epic or pastoral from places outside the immediate boundaries of the text. That is, from the epic when reading the pastoral or from the pastoral when reading the epic.

The publication of the *SC* in 1579 displayed both Spenser’s poetic skill and promise. As Thomas H. Cain notes in his introduction to the *SC*, “So imperative is this (Virgilian) model for Spenser that, although we know the names of the poems he had already written by 1579, he publishes none before his *Calender* and none after until three books of his epic are in print” (3).<sup>94</sup> Proclaiming its author as poetic heir to Virgil and Chaucer, the *SC* is a promising work whose author will quickly move from the simplicity of pastoral to the lofty heights of national epic. But something seems to occur between these low and high locations. As Cain reminds us, in between the first and second installment of Spenser’s epic, the *FQ*, *CCCHA* is written (1591) and published (1595). Twelve years after the publication of his first pastoral, it seems odd for Spenser to interrupt the writing of his epic for a complimentary gesture or an autobiographical musing.

Instead, this chapter argues that the pastoral is the early place where Spenser begins to erect the interpretative model he polishes in the *FQ*. By returning to the pasture

---

<sup>93</sup>Harry Berger, Jr. *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas H. Cain, ed. “Introduction to the *Shepherd’s Calender*,” in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. 3-10.

with *CCCHA* Spenser may desire to return, like Colin, to a familiar place where he felt early ease and success as he begins to write the second installment of his epic.<sup>95</sup> Much as Colin returns from Cynthia's court to the safety of his pastures, so, too, does Spenser return to the comfort of the pastoral form in order to reacquaint himself with his earlier goals and desires. This return not only validates Spenser's embryonic vision but it refines it to focus on Colin in the role of teacher—one who now uses his experiences to guide his shepherds rather than distance himself from them. Ultimately, Colin's ability to perceive his past experiences with the insight of his present ones mark him as a worthy guide and protector of his less experienced shepherd peers.<sup>96</sup>

Importantly, Patrick Cheney intentionally omits *CCCHA* from his analysis of Spenser's poetic career, arguing that it does not belong to the "generic progression organizing the fiction of the New Poet's career" (3). Cheney asserts that *CCCHA* is a metagenre fitting under the category of a complaint. For him, *CCCHA*, along with the *Complaints*, provides information about Spenser's career but not enough to find a primary place in the present studies of Spenser's vocation.

In many ways, this chapter's discussions of Spenser's career attempt to forge a place in Spenser's career for this important second pastoral. Similar to Patrick Cheney, this study works from an awareness of the Virgilian and Christian models of a poetic career. Yet, unlike Cheney, these models are used, instead, to argue that Spenser's return

---

<sup>95</sup> By erecting this interpretative idea in the *SC* and enacting it as his career progresses, Spenser's hermeneutic goals appear to fit into what Patrick Cheney terms the "Orphic idea of a literary career" (23). For Cheney, this Orphic idea must include the poet's ability to prophesize the direction and span of his *career* early on then fulfill it in the end. I believe that this prophetic tendency can also be used to interpret Spenser's career-long preoccupation with training and forging a reader who can evolve with the poem's content. Viewing Spenser's poetic task in this light—that is looking at content rather than genre—allows us to perceive his poetic career and achievements as successes rather than failures.

<sup>96</sup> In many ways, Spenser exhibits a similar sort of awareness with regards to poetry—after his first installment of the *FQ* is complete, he can now look upon his earlier pastoral and see where his poetry has been and where it must go.

to the pastoral in *CCCHA* marks an important nexus between these two models and the genres of pastoral and epic.<sup>97</sup> By returning to the pastoral Spenser not only returns to a place of comfort, but also is able to revise his earlier ideas of poetry and the possible content of this “low” poetic form.<sup>98</sup>

This revision is largely reflected in the picture of Colin Clout’s shepherd peers in *CCCHA*. While Colin’s evolution from the wandering, heart-broken shepherd in the *SC* to the confident shepherd-teacher returning in *CCCHA* is a central focus of this chapter, the newfound agency of Colin’s peers is a way in which Spenser introduces to the pastoral the Augustinian notions of questioning and interpretation. Where Spenser once depicted an audience passively listening to Colin’s lament, instead, we now find an actively questioning audience seemingly seeking understanding through their interrogation of Colin’s travels. Colin’s questioning peers create an environment of dialectic similar to the one Augustine describes between he and Ambrose—a dialectic that relies upon questioning to gain insight into an issue.

In both instances, such dialogue allows for information to be introduced without merely telling the listener what the answer means. A dialectic centered upon questioning mirrors the type of Scriptural reading Augustine calls for in both the *Confessions* and

---

<sup>97</sup> Patrick Cheney. *Spenser’s Famous Flight: A Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993. Here, Cheney argues that Spenser’s synthesis of Virgilian, Ovidian, and Augustinian career paths can be determined based on a six volume chronology of his work—The *SC* (1579), Books I-III *FQ* (1590), *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* (1595), Books IV-VI *FQ* (early 1596), *The Fowre Hymnes* (early autumn 1596). In these six volumes, Cheney asserts that Spenser reveals his idea of a literary career in that he creates a coherent fiction about the career of the ‘new Poete’ (as E.K. calls Spenser). For Cheney, this New Poet “is to be the national poet, heir to a long line of poets extending back to his native medieval heir, Chaucer, to his Continental classical heir, Virgil, and eventually to the legendary founder of poetry itself, Orpheus” (3).

<sup>98</sup> As Alastair Fowler notes, these genres were universally defined as pastoral ‘low,’ epic as ‘high,’ love lyric as ‘low,’ hymn as ‘high,’ no matter if on the Continent or in England (70-72, 216-221). From *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

*OCD*. By adding this type of example to *CCCHA*, Spenser appears to be training his reader both in the content and methods of Augustinian exegesis.

Traditionally, pastoral as a poetic mode employs the shepherd-world as an analogue or metaphor for the real world, using the countryside as an implied contrast to court or the city. The pastoral world is sometimes characterized by contradicting ideals, but “all of them affirm an alternative existence peripheral to the dominant social order; and they envision the non-urban, non-adult phases of life as a ‘golden world’ or a ‘better world’” (116).<sup>99</sup> Or, as S.K. Heninger explains straightforwardly, one of the major goals of pastoral “is to create an ideal existence in contradistinction to the real world” (255).<sup>100</sup>

Central to this contradistinction is an emphasis on and commitment to simplicity and tranquility in the pastoral world (10).<sup>101</sup> Frank Kermode agrees with this analysis, stating that “pastoral depends upon an opposition between the simple, or natural, and the cultivated,” but he also complicates these contrasting principles by noting that pastoral is an “urban product” (19, 14).<sup>102</sup> As such a product, the pastoral landscape is always a created world somewhere between the fallen city and the ideal Edenic world—written by fallen hands envisioning an ideal world.

Kermode’s idea of pastoral seems to be more than an opposition between rural and urban, town and country. Kermode appears to suggest an original space that directly participates in both rustic and urban, most notably in pastoral tropes, themes, and topics

---

<sup>99</sup> Steven Marx. *Youth Against Age: Generational Strife in Renaissance Poetry*. New York: Peter Lang, 1985.

<sup>100</sup> S.K. Heninger, Jr. “The Renaissance Perversion of Pastoral” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961): 254-61.

<sup>101</sup> David R. Shore. *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral: A Study of the World of Colin Clout*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985.

<sup>102</sup> Frank Kermode. *English Pastoral Poetry from the Beginnings to Marvell* London: G.G. Harrap, 1952.

(e.g. the loves between shepherds and shepherdesses or the decay of the city). In this light, this generic imaginative space can be the location of boundless variation.

The metaphoric nature of pastoral, often given authority from Virgil's *Eclogues*, allowed poets to use the mode for religious, social, and political commentary.<sup>103</sup> And while Spenser adheres to these generic expectations, his preoccupation with using pastoral as a place to consider both the making of poetry and the creation of a reader distinguishes him from his predecessors and peers who all view pastoral as a place to think about vocation and craft, but not with such readerly considerations as Spenser does. But according to Kermode, these variations and distinctions are always because of the very nature of pastoral form.

The places in the *SC* where we see Spenser's metapoetic preoccupation with pastoral occur most are the eclogues where Colin Clout himself appears. Like Virgil before him, Spenser shapes his shepherd persona after himself and chooses "Colin" as a moniker recalling Clement Marot's chief shepherd-poet who speaks graceful elegy in *Complainte de Madame Loyse de Savoye* (1531), while the full name "Colin Clout" recalls satirist John Skelton's *Colyn Cloute* (1519).<sup>104</sup> Choosing a name with such a loaded past allows Spenser to gesture to the classical, medieval, and modern conceptions of pastoral.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> For further discussions surrounding the general nature of pastoral see Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1970. For polemical concerns see Annabel Patterson *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 1987.

<sup>104</sup> Annabel M. Patterson. *Pastoral and Ideology*.

<sup>105</sup> For discussions of the theological nature of Spenser's pastoral roots, as in Robert Langland or Piers, see John D. King. *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, 319-357. For continued discussions of his possible classical and medieval pastoral roots, see P. J. Alpers. "What is Pastoral?" *Critical Inquiries* 8(1982): 437-60; Helen Cooper. *Pastoral: Mediaeval into Renaissance*. Ipswich: Brewer, 1977; M. L. Donnelly. "The Life of Virgil and the Aspirations of the 'New Poet,'" *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003):1-3; J. H. Hanford. "Classical Eclogue and Mediaeval Debate," *Romanic Review* 2 (1911): 19-31; Betty Nye Hedberg. "The *Bucolics* and

Such a span further gives him the potential to reconfigure traditional pastoral expectations and create a shepherd-world doing more than merely reflecting the real world. Instead, Spenser uses the familiar pastoral landscape to consider topics such as poetic purpose, audience, and virtue—topics traditionally aligned with epic. As this chapter shall at times argue, pastoral for Spenser becomes an inherently personal place—a place where his inner anxiety concerning his personal vocation surfaces along with more general conceptions considering the responsibilities associated with being a poet.

For Spenser, these responsibilities include attempting to balance the earthly fame of classical poetic and narrative models with the heavenly glory of Christian ones. For Patrick Cheney, the classical model is horizontal in that it encompasses only the earthly quest for fame, usually in the form of poetic immortality.<sup>106</sup> The Christian model is vertical, though, in that it seeks divine glory in the form of spiritual salvation—“eternal renown among God’s elect throughout eternity in the kingdom of heaven” (7-8).<sup>107</sup>

As Cheney notes, with this distinction authors such as Chaucer and Dante could represent two radically different constructions of the same set of terms (in this case genres/poetic forms). Consequently, the Renaissance writer inherits a problem—that is, as seen in Petrarch, “the relation between fame and glory is not merely a source of deep

---

the Medieval Poetical Debate,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 75 (1944): 47-67; Anthony Holden. *Greek Pastoral Poetry; Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, the Pattern Poems*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974; Peter V. Marinelli. *Pastoral*. London: Methuen, 1971.

<sup>106</sup> Patrick Cheney. *Spenser’s Famous Flight: A Renaissance Idea of a Literary Career*. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993. All subsequent references to Cheney will come from this edition.

<sup>107</sup> For the Renaissance reader, Augustine distinguishes between the earthly and the heavenly in the *City of God*. Fittingly, Augustine implies the earthly immortality of poets like Horace and Virgil in comparison to Scripture and Christian glory: “I have taken upon myself the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of that City” (Preface). Here, Augustine outlines his purpose as rhetorically defending the glory of the Heavenly City against the fame of the Earthly One.

personal conflict, but the very center of his literary enterprise” (9).<sup>108</sup> For Cheney, the pursuit of fame alone acts as a glass ceiling for the poet—he may attain earthly praise yet he always is left looking up.

But Spenser’s desire for pastoral to be a place where a reader can grapple with elevated ideas similar to those traditionally found in the epic seems to suggest that fame may have been an anxiety but not a final goal for Spenser. Instead, Spenser truly seems concerned not only with the general nature of poetry, but specifically with the hermeneutic potentials of pastoral and epic. These interests emerge in a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh prefacing the *CCCHA*. In this brief epistle Spenser alludes to the traditional nature of the pastoral as he offers to Raleigh “...this simple pastoral, unworthy of your higher conceipt for the *meanesse of the stile*, but agreeing with the truth and circumstance of the matter” (344, my italics). Spenser suggests that pastoral is a form not traditionally associated with weighty content or elevated contemplation. Outright, this passage is a traditional *humility topos*, yet its presence allows Spenser to depict pastoral as a marginal space. Such depiction casts pastoral as a non-traditional place to engage one’s “higher conceipt”.

However, it seems the content of his latter pastoral suggests differently. Spenser saturates *CCCHA* with issues such as the humanness of interpretation, the power of the spoken word, and the role of the good shepherd to demonstrate that the pastoral form is more than a humble genre centered on delighting its readers. Spenser’s focus on such

---

<sup>108</sup> Critics like William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden note this similar tension (William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden. *The Idea of the Renaissance*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

issues depicts his realization of pastoral's potential to represent at once a fallen world while simultaneously considering man's highest ideals and the nature of poetry.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, Spenser's claim that his poem is "unworthy" of Raleigh's "higher conceit" implies an issue of taste, not skill. That is, Raleigh could apply a more skilled reading of the poem if he saw fit. Spenser's allusion to the potential for Raleigh to use his higher faculties when reading this "simple pastoral" illustrates an Augustinian notion of choice—Raleigh may not *have* to employ an elevated intellectual consideration when reading the *CCCHA*, but he *can*.<sup>110</sup> This suggestion portrays *CCCHA* as an expanded pastoral sparring with larger issues than earthly love and pleasure. And in such a work a reader needs a guide to teach one how to use the interpretative tools he/she already possesses so that he/she can unlock the text. These guides for Raleigh, and Spenser's other readers, are Colin Clout and the other shepherds.

Spenser's perspective of the on the traditional conceits and purposes of pastoral continue to emerge in discussions surrounding the *SC*.<sup>111</sup> In a brief description of

---

<sup>109</sup> For discussions concerning the myths most closely associated with pastoral see Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969. For Levin the myth of the Saturnian Golden Age marks the most far-reaching as it depicts an ideal world without seasonal changes, harvest without labor, no sea travel, and no cities or laws. The myth of a Golden Age provides clear outlines generating many conventions that allow the pastoral poet to locate his metaphorical landscape within the range of fallen world and Edenic ideal. Levin notes that Spenser's pastoral, like many of his Renaissance peers', deals with a fallen world rather than a Golden one. See also K. W. Gransden. "The Pastoral Alternative," *Arethusa* 3 (1970): 182. Here, Gransden suggests that the "ideal Republic of Eden" is the desired pastoral state in which the "political terminology and hierarchy are meaningless" (182). This state sharply contrasts with traditional notions of pastoral (like Kermode's discussed above) which link the pasture to the city. For Gransden, though, pasture should be void of all urban vice. The passage "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want" embodies Gransden's ultimate pastoral ideal.

<sup>110</sup> As mentioned earlier, Cheney makes the claim that the Virgilian model allows the poet to work horizontally from pastoral to epic since it is guided by earthly fame. The Christian conception of poetry, however, encourages a vertical movement from earthly position to divine glory in the form of salvation. In many ways, this inclusion of choice allows the reader to enter this schema. As suggested in this passage about Raleigh, no matter what model the poet uses, the reader can choose their interpretative methodology—they can *choose* how to read the text.

<sup>111</sup> See Hallett Smith. *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952. Print. In his study, Smith examines how the "values of *otium*," or the traditional pastoral values of friendship, peace, and harmony, compare with the very different set of values



pastoral, Cain notes that, “Pastoral is essentially a literature of stasis. When something happens in pastoral it is verbal: a debate, an impoverished song. When action impinges on pastoral, it is either recounted (as in the fable of the oak and briar in *Februarie*) or foretold (as with Colin’s change of role in *October*)” (3-4). Though Cain further notes Spenser’s slight exploitation of this stasis to create poetic variety, it seems he fails to give Spenser credit for the larger poetic play that I believe the *SC* offers. While the genre of pastoral may be prone to stasis, the changes in Colin’s peers arguably overturn the equilibrium of this pastoral stasis, thus encouraging interpretative progress in both Colin’s audience and Spenser’s readers. Questioning Colin’s story gives his shepherd peers a narrative presence and interpretative authority over his song. The shepherds’ questions dictate the direction of Colin’s story. And, Colin, as a shepherd-teacher, encourages such interrogations.

In the *SC* alone, the intellectual progression of characters like Cuddie suggests maturation from experience as well as an intellectual awareness marked by a proclivity to ponder poetic purpose. Yet, in *CCCHA* the role of Colin’s shepherd peers changes from praising Colin to questioning his story and return. This character progression is a way Spenser exhibits his hermeneutic interests and aims. I argue that this sort of questioning mirrors some of the most crucial parts of Augustinian exegesis and indicates an

---

and topics erected in what David R. Shore calls the “moral” eclogues (43). Smith postures that when these pastoral characters become characterized by their rejection of the “conscientious” (*May eclogue*) or their inability to create “truly inspired poetry” (*October eclogue*) we are dealing with a considerably different set of values than those of mere *otium* (46-47). Unlike more traditional criticism, Smith’s study does not imply that this complexity is the result of a trading in of pastoral values for a set of higher ones, but, instead, suggests that these altered values simultaneously exist of each other. Such a structure leaves an opening for a trained reader to interpret the meaning(s) of these differing values and consider how they relate to the poem. Furthermore, this complexity allows for the evolution of *CC*’s peers in *CCCHA* as they no longer lounge and listen to Colin’s songs, but instead actively question the content and intentions of his poetry.

interpretative evolution and awareness on the part of Colin's peers. Moreover, this sort of awareness and practice is what Spenser theorizes his ideal reader should possess.

In some regards, Spenser's use of pastoral form echoes Augustine's sentiments concerning obscure Scripture. Though Spenser deals with entire works rather than brief passages, he uses pastoral as an example of the unexpected place readers can exercise their interpretative skills. As with obscure Scripture, where "Hardly anything may be found in these obscure places which is not found plainly said elsewhere", Spenser infuses into pastoral what is traditionally overtly discussed in the epic (*OCD* 2.6.8). As we see in the letter to Raleigh, this melange allows the reader to exercise his interpretative poetic skills if he so desires. For Spenser, as with Augustine, the benefit of this "obscurity" is the work it promotes as well as the content it uncovers.

Moreover, Spenser's pastorals provide examples of teaching and questioning in dialectic situations, which suggests that Spenser employs his pastoral as a place to begin training his ideal poetic reader, his ideal epic reader. Once this training begins, the pastoral form becomes a place where the reader can later return to reflect upon his original training, or, if necessary, restart it. Just as Colin returns to the pasture with knowledge gained from experience, so, too, can and should Spenser's reader.

Importantly, the publication dates of these texts appear to encourage the reader to follow Colin's journey and return to the pasture. Spenser publishes the *SC* in 1579, then the first three books of the *FQ* in 1590. Rather than publishing the next three books of his epic, Spenser instead releases *CCCHA* in 1591, and his next epic installment in 1596. The chronological order of these publication dates suggests that Spenser leads his reader back to the pastoral in between his epic.

Guiding a reader back to Colin and the pasture can benefit the reader for a few reasons. Firstly, it urges the reader to re-evaluate these pastoral characters and locations with the knowledge gained from his epic characters. For example, a reader can now interpret Colin's journey in the same way they would Redcrosse's. Such a reading would offer more insight into Colin's character, as well as, the virtues of Redcrosse. Secondly, leading his reader back to the pastoral not only provides insight into what he has published, but what he will publish in the second epic installment, especially with the presence of Colin Clout in Book VI. The reader can possess a strong understanding of Colin from three previous works (*SC*, *FQ* I-III, and *CCCHA*), two which actually contain him, as they meet him for a third time. This understanding arms the reader with knowledge of the character, genre, and Spenser's poetic intentions. Spenser seemingly perceives this return to pastoral as beneficial for both his poetic project and the reader's hermeneutic training.

Finally, this interlude in the pasture is as beneficial for Spenser as it is for his reader. As suggested above, Spenser may see pastoral as a place where his hermeneutic ideas for the epic were created and are contained. Returning to the form may allow Spenser to reacquaint himself with his early ideas and goals. In either case, the chronology of Spenser's work reveals the prominent position the pastoral genre holds for our poet. This idea of return, a central theme in Spenser's pastoral project and this chapter's analysis, plays into Augustine's belief in interpretative process. By returning to the pasture—whether physically like Colin, professionally like Spenser, or intellectually like the reader—one is able to apply experience onto and contemplate past actions resulting in a reinterpretation of previous perceptions and meanings.

One of the ways Spenser trains his reader in the style of Augustine is through questioning. With the desired knowledge held in the text, and the ability to discern it lying in the reader's mind and heart, Spenser illustrates in both pastorals that questioning and debate can lead one to an understanding beyond the surface. These places of debate and questioning can also be sites for the reader to enter the text via interpretation.<sup>112</sup> As Cain earlier notes, verbal debate represents a large part of the action within pastoral. From the onset of the *SC*, Colin's peers are homely yet thoughtful characters who enter into dialectical discussions with each other in order to contemplate topics ranging from youth and age to love to poetic intention. These dialectical discussions also signal debates interwoven throughout both the *SC* and *CCCHA*, suggesting that these are exercises Spenser desires his reader to be most familiar with.

For example, in the February eclogue we meet Thenot and Cuddie, debating issues of age.<sup>113</sup> While Thenot supports the aged by discrediting the follies of youth, Cuddie first criticizes the aged by criticizing Thenot, and then, later, continues into a more general critique. Early in the eclogue Cuddie smugly replies to Thenot, "For Age and Winter accord full nie./This chill, that cold, this crooked, that wrye," then goes on to compare Thenot's state to his own, concluding, "So semest thou like good fryday to frowne./But my flowring youth is foe to frost,/ My *shippe unwont in stormes to be tost*"

---

<sup>112</sup> See Shore for continued discussions of the eclogues employing debate as a structure, or what he terms the "moral" eclogues—February, May, July, September, and October.

<sup>113</sup> For authoritative general discussions concerning the February eclogue consult Harry Berger, Jr. "The Aging Boy: Paradise and Parricide in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*," *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance*, ed. Maynard Mack and George deForest Lord. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, 25-46. In this essay, Berger claims that the distinctions of age in the February eclogue are not sustained, stating that "youthful and aged speakers share the same values in spite of their apparent apathy" (26). Also see Patrick Cullen who notes the need for a "balance-in-opposition" between the shepherds and the natural world, youth and age, spring and winter (*Spenser, Marvell* 41). In these oppositions balance is reached because of the knowledge gained in the existence of the Other. For more general discussions of age and youth in Renaissance poetry and Spenser's pastoral see Steven Marx *Youth Against Age*.

(27-28, 30-32, my italics).<sup>114</sup> Here, Cuddie associates youth with freshness. He perceives his youthful state not with the insight of beginnings but, rather, with a superiority of self—an unmarred self, unbeaten by age.

Thenot's response to Cuddie's arrogant, youthful reply is "The sovereign of seas he blames in vaine,/That once seabeate, will go to sea againe" thus implying that the man who thinks he will not age or change via experience is a fool (33-34). Thenot continues:

Tho gynne you (youth), fond flyes, the cold to scorne,  
And crowing in pypes made of green corns,  
You thoughted to be Lords of the yeare.  
But eft, when ye count you freed from feare,  
Comes the breme winter with chamfred browes,  
[...] Then paye you the price of your surquedrie,  
With weeping, and wayling, and misery. (39-43, 49-50)

In this passage, Thenot metaphorically suggests that a youth plays "greene" instruments implying that he is inexperienced in life, and, in turn, his song playing ability.<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, Thenot's last lines imply that the younger getting older are not the ones who will eventually mourn their aged position (because he does not seem to, in fact, he carries an assuredness of experience over Cuddie's insults that allows him to seem wise and

---

<sup>114</sup> Edmund Spenser and William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell. *The Shorter Poems*. The Yale Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. All subsequent references and citations to Spenser's minor poems will come from this edition.

<sup>115</sup> This greenness in song playing ability may also relate to the content of the songs—inexperience in song playing implies inexperience in song writing. The simplicity of the pasture reflects itself in the songs of the shepherds. If a shepherd gains experience like Colin does, the content of his songs changes and his ability to relate to his audience, so, too, changes. In the beginning of the *SC*, we meet Colin unable to play the simple songs of his past because he is affected by his lost love. As we continue to meet Colin we also see that he is unable to relate to his inexperienced peers. For example, if we consider the discussions between Hobbinoll and Colin in the June eclogue we see Hobbinoll's inability to understand why Colin would leave the pasture. Since he has not experienced love or loss he cannot relate to Colin. When we finally meet Colin in *CCCHA* his experiences have completely changed, yet his peers find ways to relate via questioning. As I shall discuss later in the chapter, they use their interpretative tools to understand the unknown in relation to the known—for them the pasture. In turn, this link between experience and content may suggest why Spenser returns to the pastoral form. Upon writing *CCCHA* he has experience writing a pastoral and the first part of his epic. His past creative actions and experiences have shaped his future ones, but the result does not necessarily keep him on the track of the *rota Vergiliana*. Instead, his experiences and successes have turned (or returned) to his hermeneutic passions immediately in the form of generic alterations. And we see these alterations in the interpretative actions of Colin and his peers.

unshaken by Cuddie's remarks) but, instead, those who rashly take their youth for granted and disregard their elders are the ones who suffer in their latter years. According to Thenot, the pain of age seems to be a punishment of attitude rather than a physical punishment of nature. And with this sentiment Thenot carries us into the tale of the Oake and the Bryer.

This episode is important for several reasons. In terms of teaching, Spenser creates a dialogue addressing and animating the inexperience of youth and the experience of age. In some respects, this inexperience of youth can equate to an inexperience in interpretation. Cuddie fails to wholly interpret and understand the point of Thenot's insights and his tale, in part because of his youthful arrogance. Cuddie animates the shepherd's tale by acting like the Briar. Yet, with regards to teaching, Thenot's and Cuddie's exchange illustrates Spenser's ideal teaching form, in that Thenot does not tell Cuddie the meaning of his tale. Instead, he gives Cuddie the space to eventually interpret and understand on his own terms, perhaps when he gains more experience in life and interpretation.

These discussions of age permeate the *SC*. The issue of experience, as we shall see throughout this chapter and this study, is one that plagues the Colin of the *SC* since he is the same age as his peers, yet more experienced than they. In fact, this issue of experience and the results of his experiences with Rosalind eventually prompt Colin to leave the pasture, ultimately leading us into *CCCHA*.

Furthermore, this issue of experience and how one's experiences shape his/her interaction with the text extends further than Colin and his peers to Spenser's reader. For example, though Thenot appears to speak generally of youth and age, this scene can be

read as Thenot discussing Colin. As initial readers of the eclogue we do not pick up on this. But after having read the entire pastoral, our experiences with the text lead us to re-interpret Thenot's words with regard to Colin rather than Cuddie. This sort of re-interpretation comes with the reader's textual experience and contemplation of the issue of age. This sort of re-interpretation also carries us into the *CCCHA* where we meet the same characters in the same pasture. This scenario seems to push for a holistic reading of Spenser's pastorals as one fragmented text rather than two separate works.<sup>116</sup>

The sea imagery contained in Thenot's and Cuddie's exchange further illustrates this need for a textual connection forged by the reader and his experiences. This image of the sea directly brings us to Colin's voyage in *CCCHA*. Based on Colin's story he initially says of the sea, "So to the sea we came; the sea? that is/A world of waters heaped up on hie,/Rolling like mountains in wide wilderness,/Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse crie" (196-199). On the surface, Colin describes the vastness of the sea with fear rather than mere intimidation.<sup>117</sup> Yet, when considering Thenot's ideas we may now view the sea as a place of spiritual as well as physical passage and begin to see Colin's description as more than added detail to his tale.

Instead, Colin's imagery brings us as readers back to Thenot's and Cuddie's debate concerning age and maturity. Because of this reference we can now begin to see

---

<sup>116</sup> Importantly, the term "experience" has two universally accepted and used meanings. On one hand, it is the instance of personal encounter—the action. On the other hand, it is the knowledge and practical wisdom acquired from these encounters—the understanding gained from contemplating past events. In essence, it embodies both the cause and effect of interpretation.

<sup>117</sup> Fear suggests the "apprehension of a future evil" or the "prospect of some possible evil" (*OED*). This almost prophetic definition would suggest Colin's fear is caused by an experience of his past. But as discussed in the previous chapter and continued in the next, part of the interpretative challenge involves defeating fear (or Despair in Redcrosse's case) in order to continue traveling the interpretative path towards meaning. This dismissal remains a central part of the interpretative act. And in this case, Colin's fear may be a fear of the unknown—the physical seas and the knowledge contained on them. But, for the reader, Colin's fear becomes an opportunity for knowledge

Colin's tale fitting into the voyage expectations of the epic hero.<sup>118</sup> For Colin, much like Odysseus and Aeneas before him, the sea is where his daunting voyage begins.<sup>119</sup> But unlike these traditional heroes, Colin must overcome his fear of the sea in order to fully evolve from youth to maturity, shepherd to poet. Colin's growth is as much spiritual and emotional as it is physical.

Traditionally, the sea is associated with the romance and wandering element of the epic. In this regard, Colin's voyage on the sea mirrors that of Spenser's epic knights, who wander the woods seeking experience and insight. This connection further places Colin in a similar light as Spenser's epic characters, and, in turn marks a place for Spenser's reader to return to the pastoral from the epic and gain more insight into Colin's character, the quests of the epic knights, and Spenser's poetic goals. Perhaps, Colin can be viewed in the same light as an epic hero, as a knight, rather than solely as a shepherd. Such a reading would open Colin and the pastoral to more possible meanings than those contained in the boundaries of the pastoral. It would open Colin and the genre to the "higher conceits" and considerations of his reader, thus yielding more than one possible textual meaning or expectation.

Additionally, Colin's sea echoes the rough, youth-defeating one Thenot puts forward in the Februarie eclogue. Thenot associates the sea as a place youth will attempt

---

<sup>118</sup> While examining the influence of the *Aeneid* on Renaissance literature Michael Putnam elaborates on the importance of Palinurus' death in book five by examining how he seems a part of Aeneas "that part of Aeneas which pertains to voyaging, to wandering, and to a meaningless search for a goal which has, almost until this very moment, remained unstipulated" (98). When Palinurus dies, the hero must yield to a higher fate and a different world (98). In many ways, these same effects occur with Colin, only he seems to be both characters. Before Rosalind, he wanders carefree in the pastures. But after his heartbreak, he, like Aeneas, must yield to his fate—his higher poetic fate, in this case; *The Poetry of the Aeneid: Four Studies in Imaginative Unity and Design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966, 64-104.

<sup>119</sup> For other considerations of Virgil's influence on Renaissance literature fitting into this vein of inquiry see Christopher Baswell. *The Medieval Allegorization of the Aeneid*. Cambridge: Peterhouse, 1985, 158; Baswell, Christopher. *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Michael C. J. Putnam. *Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the "Eclogues."* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.



to traverse, fail, and then vainly attempt again without gaining insight into why they failed the first time. It resembles one of the larger entities, like nature itself, which forces a man to test himself based on past efforts. The sea is place of randomness—a force of nature without design. It is an adversary that demands contemplation successfully to maneuver through; and it is this contemplation Thenot faults an inexperienced youth for lacking. For Colin, the sea is a frightening beast that stands between his past and his future. It represents a physical and emotional passage he must endure in order to mature as a poet and a shepherd.

But the sea also acts as a marker, a connector, between Colin’s departure in the *SC* and his return in *CCCHA*. This type of connection suggests that Colin’s voyage, and Spenser’s reader’s voyage, is greater than the surface of each individual work. Instead, examining the works together provides the reader with a more complete picture of the evolution of Colin and his peers. Moreover, this textual connection gives Spenser’s pastoral reader more ground to traverse and exercise his interpretative skills upon.

From a poetic standpoint, the sea is the unknown poetic place of epic versus the familiar, comfortable place of pastoral Colin and Spenser must travel from in order to fulfill their desires and poetic fate. In this respect, consider Colin’s response to Coridon’s question, “And is the sea (quoth Coridon) so fearfull?” (200). Colin responds:

Fearful much more (quoth he) then hart can fear:  
 Thousand wyld beasts with deep mouthes gaping direfull  
 Therein stil wait poore passengers to teare  
 Who life doth loath, and longs death to behold,  
 Before he die, already dead with feare,  
 And yet would live with heart halfe stonie cold,  
 Let him to sea, and he shall see it there. (201-206)

Here, the sea is portrayed as a place of revelation—internal revelation discovered by fear. Implied in this place of fear, is that one must either turn inward, learn from his fear and gain insight into himself or remain static in his current lowly state, never learning and evolving.<sup>120</sup> Essentially, Colin’s fear marks a potential for knowledge if employed for internal contemplation—these fears are the impediments that stand between him and knowledge.<sup>121</sup>

If these potential places for understanding go unnoticed—that is, the interpreter never leaves his lowly state or does not realize that prosperity can occur from this position—then ultimately he fails to employ his interpretative powers to acquire knowledge of himself or the divine *in that instance*. Importantly, as both Augustine and Hooker tender, these potential places of knowledge wear many different guises. For Augustine and Hooker, Scripture contains all knowledge. But the places in Scripture that can contain knowledge change based upon the growth of the interpreter.

For example, Augustine asserts that the obscure areas within Scripture are places where a more complete understanding can occur because the interpreter must first use his skills to deem the passage an acceptable place to seek knowledge, *then* actually employ his exegetical skills. The unknown potentials of obscure Scripture makes it appealing to the experienced interpreter. In this schema, readerly authority comes from possessing an awareness of potential in specific passages or events, as well as from the ability to discern

---

<sup>120</sup> This conception of fear does not relate to Calvinistic Holy Despair. Instead, it refers to a ridding of the mind then an undertaking of interpretation. For further discussions of holy despair, the influence of spiritual psychology, and the rhetoric of self-loathing see Peter Iver Kaufman. *Prayer, Despair, and Drama: Elizabethan Introspection*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996. Further analyses of Kaufman’s text are present in Chapter 3 of this study.

<sup>121</sup> This idea of the sea as a physical barrier between Colin and his poetic fate resembles both Augustine’s and Hooker’s interpretation of the Biblical passage “To ask, to seek, to knock” discussed in Chapter 1. Such a connection further links Spenser’s pastoral with teaching a reader how to interpret his text with the aid of past experience and knowledge.

the actual text. This sort of awareness points towards a predilection for interpretative process in addition to product.

As seen with Colin, his fear on the sea represents an apprehension of his changing environments or the unknown. And while Colin did not feel fear in the pasture, just heartache, he still possessed an apprehension with the knowledge that comes from moving from youth to age. The same knowledge he discovered in his travels, he, too, could have acquired in the pasture, had he known to look. But he did not have the experience or the understanding to interpret his landscape or situation in such a way. In essence, Colin's newfound understanding comes from changes in his awareness, rather than changes in his environment.

As suggested in these discussions of Colin's fear, a humbled state is one of the many places this awareness can be discovered. The earlier expositive sentiment appears to be reinforced as Colin states, "And yet, as ghastly dreadfull, as it *seemes*,/Bold men presuming life for gaine to sell,/Dare tempt that gulf, and in those wandering stremes/*seek waies unknowne*, waies leading down to hell" (208-211, my italics).<sup>122</sup> Are these "waies unknowne" the places where poetic play and creativity occur? If so, they begin in a lower place—a place where one must desire to be brought up by knowledge discovered via introspection. In many ways, this lowly state is where Colin resides at the

---

<sup>122</sup> These ways unknown may also return us to Spenser's Letter to Raleigh in the *SC*. Raleigh is well known for his mercantile and explorative involvements. Furthermore, these "unknown waies" brings us to the poem for Book II of the *FQ* where "...dayly...though hardy enterprise/Many great Regions are discovered/Which to late age were never mentioned" (st. 2). Critically, this stanza often refers to Raleigh's colonial exploits and, in the *FQ*, Spenser's ulterior plan to aid in Raleigh's plead for a return to courtly favor. For alternate readings of Raleigh's relationship with the text and Spenser see Stephen Greenblatt. *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973; Donald Kimball Smith. *The Cartographic Imagination in Early Modern England: Re-Writing the World in Marlowe, Spenser, Raleigh, and Marvell*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2008; Shannon Miller. *Invested with Meaning: The Raleigh Circle in the New World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998.

end of the *SC* because of Rosalind (his “lucklesse lot”).<sup>123</sup> And though now he physically stands where he once emotionally existed, the feelings he experienced in either scenario are the same, but his perceptions have changed. Later, he describes this fear as an “inwarde feare” further gesturing towards interpretation and inward contemplation (228).

This sort of introspection flourishing in Colin between the *SC* and the *CCCHA* echoes many of the characteristics often associated with what J. Christopher Warner names the “Augustinian epic”.<sup>124</sup> Using Petrarch’s *Africa* as a case study to map the developing Renaissance epic against its classical counterpart, Warner pairs scenes such as the imaginary dialogue between Petrarch and Augustine in his *Secretum* to claim that the *Africa* is the first “genuine” Renaissance epic because it is an autobiographical spiritual allegory intended to instill a similar introspection in its reader as we see in its hero. Warner associates this sort of spiritual journey with Augustine’s depiction of his conversion in the *Confessions*—a tale that not only articulates the earthly struggles against the flesh but provides a “plot line” or an allegorical system for a Christian motive. Warner claims Petrarch mixes the Augustinian personal conversion with the Virgilian epic journey, thus allowing for the personal conversion narrative within the epic and creating what Warner terms the “Augustinian epic”.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> For further discussions concerning Rosalind as a character see David R. Shore. Shore posits that when Rosalind enters Colin’s world he loses all contentment, even before the loss of her love (*Poetics of Pastoral*); For more authoritative general discussions on the relationship between love and poetry, both classical and Renaissance conceptions, see Robert M. Durling. *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

<sup>124</sup> *The Augustinian Epic: Petrarch to Milton*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005

<sup>125</sup> Warner employs the term “Augustinian epic” for a specific purpose. For more general considerations of the concept of an Augustinian spiritual epic in the Renaissance see Brian Stock. *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996; Robert McMahon. *Augustine’s Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of the Confessions*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989. For even more general discussions concerning the traditional nature of epic see Thomas Greene. *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963; Andrew Fichter. *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982; Patrick Cook. *Milton, Spenser, and the Epic Tradition*.

While the effect of the Augustinian epic on the reader proves an important tenet of Warner's theory, Cheney only briefly refers to the effects on the reader. Cheney suggests that the reader's salvation becomes inherently linked to the poet's quest for salvation. This study, however, considers this relation between poet and reader in a considerably different light. By creating a poem that offers the *potential* for a reader to employ his interpretative skills in order to attain a heightened knowledge, Spenser provides the space for his reader to acquire a previously unknown agency within his/her interpretative actions. In other words, the reader's ability to employ his ever-evolving interpretative skills and contemplate a poetic passage allows the reader to gain knowledge at his own pace, rather than at the disposal of the poet.

According to Cheney, Spenser's Protestant poetic task is best fulfilled by expanding the movement of the earthly *rota Vergiliana* from pastoral to epic, to include the love lyric and hymn after epic.<sup>126</sup> As discussed earlier, this inclusion allows the poet to move from earthly to divine poetic content, form, and outcome. Spenser's commitment to interpretative development in any of these forms, I argue, supplants Cheney's generic arguments. Colin's return to the pasture suggests advancement in awareness and exegetical skill rather than a set, interpretative progression that mirrors a

---

Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996; Cheney. *Famous Flight*. Warner suggests that Augustine's personal journey blends with Virgilian epic journey to create an Augustinian epic. Cheney, however, says that Spenser cannot solely rely on a Virgilian model because it never considers a spiritual desire for heavenly glory. Though each author's argument leads him to different conclusions, both consider the importance of Spenser's alteration from a solely Virgilian poetic model—in terms of both genre and career.<sup>126</sup> For more detailed discussions of Spenser as a Protestant poet consult Athena Hume. *Edmund Spenser Protestant Poet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984; Carol V. Kaske. *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. Here, Kaske outlines a "concordantial" habit of reading Scripture that entails the recognition of repeated images that appear *in bono et in malo*. In this reading schema, Spenser's reader would anticipate and accommodate the shifting meanings of these images and words from positive to negative meanings, and vice versa. To continue with these connections between Protestantism and reading, John N. Wall suggests that the Kingdom of God is built in the day-to-day interactions between husband and wife, Christian and Christian, in addition to the national worship of the *Book of Common Prayer* (127). *Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughn*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988.

generic one. I believe that the interpretative ideas Spenser lays forth in the *SC* do not change from those presented in *CCCHA* or the *FQ*. Instead, what changes are the poet's and the reader's generic expectations of epic and pastoral—the interpretative ends once exclusively attached to epic can now be discovered in the pastoral and vice versa.<sup>127</sup> Colin's, and Spenser's, return to the pasture suggests that heightened interpretative discoveries can be found in even the “lowest” of generic forms because the form no longer dictates the sole potential for discovery, the reader does. Of course, the pastoral form still carries the potential for discovery, but these potentials can now be expanded to include more than the meaning contained in the pastoral—they can include the knowledge a reader brings from texts like the epic.

Specifically, for Warner, these textual expectations are altered with the direct inclusion of readerly experience and salvation. Augustine changes the classical epic journey to include an equally powerful internal voyage both in the character and reader. The dual agenda contained in Warner's Augustinian epic—that is, the author's intention to create a version of Augustine's spiritual journey both in his reader and from this claimed poetic purpose—appears in Colin between the *SC* and *CCCHA*. At the end of the *SC*, Colin leaves the pasture, leaves his “little flock” of shepherds, to discover new places and shake the decline he associates with the imminent winter of his life.<sup>128</sup>

Throughout this chapter, I argue that he does so because he resides in an in-between state, somewhere between youth and age, innocence and experience, shepherd and flock.

---

<sup>127</sup> While I am aware that Cheney's argument does not extend into these readerly effects because of his concern with Spenser's poetic career, these discussions extend the possibilities of his analysis to include a larger scope of poetic innovation than Spenser's generic expansions.

<sup>128</sup> Spenser's inclusion of the adjective “little” infers that there is a bigger flock for Colin to guide. Within the text, this larger flock would be assumed as Cynthia's court, while this larger flock for Spenser would be his epic audience.

This position can be seen in his farewell to his fellow shepherds as he says, “Gather together *my* little flocke,/My little flock, that was to me so lief;” (*December* 145-146, my italics). Even in this brief sentiment, Colin alludes to the fact that he is not an equal to the other shepherds, but instead he guides them (literally as tells them to “gather together”). Though he shows an acceptance or understanding of this position in this final eclogue, he resists contemplating what this in-betweenness really means for him. Not until he decides to leave do we realize he knows he must venture beyond the comfortable landscapes of the pasture.

When we meet Colin in the beginning of the *CCCHA*, he returns an active participant in his narrative and, moreover, shows himself to be an active teacher to his flock. As Augustine does in the *Confessions*, Colin centers this active role in the retelling of the past. Throughout the *Confessions* Augustine illustrates this sort of self-awareness as he constantly references his past from his present heightened state of spiritual awareness. We see this in Book IX of the *Confessions* when he says, “For I remember the kind of man I was, O Lord, and it is a sweet task to confess how you tamed me by pricking my heart with your goad” (IX.iv). In this passage, like most of the narrative in the *Confessions*, we feel that we are eavesdropping on a private conversation between Augustine and God. With this sort of narrative move, Augustine is able to place himself as part of the flock of fallen men, men that allowed him to be the “kind of man [he] was” yet illustrates a heightened awareness of self, in recognizing his separation from this flock with the aid of God’s love. And he does this through a retelling of his past in lieu of his present.

At the beginning of *CCCHA* we see a similar move when we meet Colin again. Unlike Augustine, Colin has the physical audience of his shepherd peers to address and answer to, but he demonstrates a similar self-awareness of his past and offers an interesting re-telling of his state when he left in the December eclogue. Upon greeting his shepherds he begins to recount the circumstances of his departure:

One day (quothe he) I sat, (as was my trade)  
 Under the foote of Mole that mountaine hore,  
 [...] There a straunge shepherd chaunst to find me out,  
 Whether allured with my pipes delight,  
 Whose pleasing sound yshrilled far about,  
 Or thither by chance, I know not right: (56-63)

In this passage, Colin depicts a phantom shepherd of the Ocean who seeks him out to cross the ocean. This marks a stark contrast to the Colin found in the December eclogue—a Colin who laments to Pan, “This is my sommer worne away and wasted,/Thus is my harvest hastened all to rathe” (97-98).

The Colin of *CCCHA* now views his past with an altered eye. Like Augustine who perceives his past with an altered spiritual lens, Colin sees himself, in all stages, through the lens of his present, refined state of poetic position—a position seemingly distant from the dark emotional one Colin inhabited at the end of the *SC*. Furthermore, both Colin and Augustine use higher deities as agents of change. God prompts Augustine to raise himself out of his pagan state, while interaction with an immediate, physical figure, such as the shepherd of the Ocean, and collective poetic ones, such as Tityrus or Pan, inspire Colin to begin a new spring. Where Augustine tells of his spiritual journey, so, too, does Colin of a similar poetic one.



One of the major differences between these re-tellings, though, is that Augustine portrays his past as bleak and empty until God saved him. The facts and effects of his past are rolled up into one self-history that only Augustine objectively knows. For Colin, however, we as readers also know the bleakness of his past. In the December eclogue we meet Colin whose “head besprent with hoary frost I fynd,/ And my myne eie the Crow his clawe dooth wright,/ Delight is layd abedde, and pleasure past,/ No sonne now shines, cloudes han all overcast” (135-138). Colin laments to Pan his wayward poetic position, his lost songs, his lost love and is at his lowest when he decides to leave and find new muses.<sup>129</sup> But in the *CCCHA* tale, we hear from Colin that he was at the peak of his song playing abilities, able to wistfully play note for note with the shepherd of the Ocean at the end of the *SC*.

Through this discrepancy Colin is depicted as a shepherd who views his past almost entirely from his present state.<sup>130</sup> And more importantly, with his return, we can assume that this former perspective plagued him while in Cynthia’s court. Though he was in a place where he found fame and praise we can infer that he remembered his past

---

<sup>129</sup> A.C. Hamilton focuses on the form of the calendar suggesting that when “the timeless pastoral world is placed in the order of time given by the Calender form...the simple pastoral life of enjoyable ease must be rejected for the dedicated life where man does not live according to Nature but seeks to escape Nature” (175-176). For Hamilton, this form suggests a false sense of simplicity in pastoral life, apexed in Colin’s departure in the December eclogue where “the poet casts off his pastoral disguise and frees himself from [his] bondage of pastoral life” (177). It seems Hamilton fails to consider Colin’s return to his pasture. Such a return suggests that the poet’s connection to the pasture (Colin’s and Spenser’s) is more like a lifeline than an anchor (“The Argument of the *Shepherd’s Calender*,” *Journal of English Literary History* 23 (1956):171-182.). For further dialogues concerning the structural nature of the *SC* see S. K. Henninger, Jr. “The Implications of Form for the *Shepherd’s Calender*,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (1962): 311.

<sup>130</sup> This narrative action of gaining future knowledge from past events relates to Fichter’s idea of the dynastic poet or prophet. The dynastic narrator speaks of “the past as though it were the future”(Poets Historical 1). But more importantly, the dynastic prophet is an analyst of historical experience. In the case of Colin, he analyzes his own historical experience, his own past. Or, as Fichter notes, “The strategy of the dynastic poet, then, is born of the desire, if not to order historical experience, to reveal whatever principle or order is thought to inform it” (2).

in the pastures with favor rather than pain.<sup>131</sup> These favorable memories, in addition to a desire to guide his flock, spurred him to return and tell his tale.

The passage most reflecting an Augustinian narrative style of introspection and re-telling is the one cited above where he discusses his fear of the sea. The “Thousand wyld beasts with deep mouthes gaping direfull/Therein stil wait poore passengers to teare” are physical manifestations of a discomfiting fear that Colin had to move past in order to reach his poetic goal. Moreover, the boat Colin describes as a “monster” that “neither car’d for wynd, nor haile, nor raine,/ nor swelling waves...through them did passe” insinuates that Colin needed a physical weapon to allegorically cut through his fear and guide him to safety (221-222).

Augustine draws upon a similar image as he refers to words as weapons, both positive and negative ones, when recalling his time of teaching rhetoric. In Book IX of the *Confessions* he recounts the time he told his peers that he would no longer teach falsehoods but instead work under the laws and love of God. He says that God “...had given us *sharp arrows* and *burning coals* to use against any cunning tongues that might speak against us under the pretence of giving good advice and devour us with their love, just as men devour food for which they have a liking” (IX.ii, my italics).<sup>132</sup> In this passage, Augustine refers to God’s teachings in protective terms as physical weapons arming one against false words, wayward interpretation, and misused language. This protection replaces Augustine’s fears and allows the knowledge and skill inside of him to flourish in his outside world.

---

<sup>131</sup> We also can assume that if Colin returns after gaining fame and praise that these were not his poetic goals. I argue that in this sense Colin’s return to the pasture directly mirrors Spenser’s, possibly suggesting the same dissatisfaction with fame and praise.

<sup>132</sup> These references to sharp arrows, burning coals and cunning tongues directly reference Psalm 119.

Similarly, Colin experiences a similar happening. As his weapon—his boat—cuts through the sea that instills fear in him, he begins to relax and regain confidence in his abilities. Once his confidence begins to be restored he asks questions about Cynthia and is eventually “...in the Ocean charge to me assigned:/ Where I will live or die at her behest,/ And serve and honour her with faithfull mind” (253-255). After he begins to suppress his fears of the unknown, he can then project his inward poetic abilities and skills onto his outside world and serve a new muse, Cynthia.

These transitional lessons we see in both Augustine’s and Colin’s narratives ultimately center upon interpretation. For Colin and Augustine, re-interpreting one’s past in lieu of his/her present illustrates one’s growing knowledge of how to exercise his/her interpretative abilities via poetic or religious experience and apply the outcomes to the text that is their lives. And while Warner specifically addresses these actions in light of the epic, what we see Spenser doing with Colin is a pre-epic practice of his ideal epic character—one who trains his interpretative muscles while traveling along the physical epic journey. For Spenser, as we shall see in characters such as Redcrosse and Artegall, the epic character should eventually find success when he learns how to interpret his surroundings in order to best traverse his journey. This sort of learning simultaneously occurs in the reader as well.<sup>133</sup>

If we consider that one of Colin’s goals as a spiritual/poetic autobiographer is to prompt his audience to undergo a similar journey inspired and aided by his own tale,

---

<sup>133</sup> The intentions of the poet and the actions of the characters guide these sorts of readerly interpretative lessons. As witnessed in the exchange about the sea between Colin and Coridon, Colin works to make his audience understand his journey within their terms (i.e. the pasture). As Warner suggests in his definition of the Augustinian epic, Colin desires to use his physical and poetic journey as a map for his peers to consider their experiences and depart on a similar journey, though not physical. Furthermore, the fear Colin describes in this scene acts as a barrier between himself and his personal and poetic growth. In order to mature, Colin must overcome this fear and use it to motivate and inform his physical journeys. In this regard, the two journeys—the physical and the poetic—are inherently linked.

interesting repercussions occur when we begin to consider the results of Colin's tale on his extended audience, Spenser's audience. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Spenser's audience can begin to re-interpret the *SC* through Colin's re-tellings in *CCCHA*. This re-interpretation results in the expansion of meaning in repeated images like the sea. This sort of repetition allows the reader to learn from his own interpretative experiences. Contemplating the image of the sea in Thenot's and Cuddie's debate, then transferring it to Colin's tale in *CCCHA* allows the reader to practice the sort of interpretative introspection necessary for the heightened understanding of poetry Spenser constantly strives to teach his reader to achieve. Moreover, exercising these connections allows Spenser's reader to consider his/her own experience in relation to Colin's and his peers'.

Augustine employs similar narrative acts in the *Confessions* linking the images of his conversion with those of the Bible. In doing so, Augustine can successfully teach his audience how to interpret his story as well as ground his conversion in its Biblical roots. The larger result of these tagged, repeated images works to bring the Biblical associations of these images to his story thus providing a new avenue for the understanding of the Bible via his own tale.

More importantly, Augustine exercises these actions to the benefit of the reader. Rather than explicitly relating the scenes, Augustine allows the reader to do the work. The more experienced the interpreter, the more connections he/she will discover and, in turn, the more insight he/she will gain. Importantly, even the novice interpreter can benefit from Augustine's tale of conversion. Even on the surface, Augustine's story compels the reader to consider his conversion in terms of himself. This sort of action builds the introspection necessary for heightened Scriptural contemplation.

Anne Hunsaker-Hawkins comments on the necessary transference associated with the spiritual autobiography, suggesting, “A frequent reader-response to spiritual autobiography is the recognition of a certain though elusive thread of meaning that is common to one’s own life” (15-16).<sup>134</sup> Here, Hawkins alludes to the same sort of image recognition previously discussed. For Hawkins, spiritual autobiographies like the *Confessions* prompt the reader to relate to the author’s journey based on his/her own experiences. These experiences fall under a similar category as the “repository of archetypes” which Hawkins claims the theologian would call the Mind of God (16). In this light, readerly experience and experience with these archetypes provide a repository of meaning for the reader to draw from when interpreting a text.

She continues to define the mind of God “being at once the ground of our being and the mirror of what we can only infer in ourselves” (16). This “Mind of God” or “repository of archetypes” equates to a pre-existing set of images that are triggered by tag words or scenarios encased in Biblical stories, images, and allegory. In other words, Hawkins’ terms evoke a practice of recognition through re-telling, re-interpretation, and contemplation.

While Augustine’s tale explicitly draws upon this repository of Biblical images, Spenser’s differs a bit. For Spenser, the images are different and a bit more self-contained in his poetic works, but the skill he charges his reader to use is one of universal Scriptural interpretation. Though he does not evoke images to link them inherently back to Biblical meanings as Augustine does, he does repeat images and topics throughout both pastorals so that his reader will perform the same action, linking images with their

---

<sup>134</sup> Anne Hawkins-Hunsaker. *Archetypes of Conversion: The Autobiographies of Augustine, Bunyan, and Merton*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1985.

previously discussed counterpart. Ultimately, Spenser desires his reader to draw upon the skills gained through reading spiritual autobiographies, like Augustine's *Confessions*, and apply them to his poetry.

The result expands the boundaries of the poem to include Spenser's previous works, such as the *SC* or Books I-III of the *FQ*, the reader's individual experience, Augustine's *Confessions*, and the list continues to include parts of Scripture. This sort of expansion allows the skilled reader to infer more and ultimately gain more from the poetic form.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, these maneuvers, though linked to an entrenched poetic past, mark a distinct revision of traditional poetic practices. As Hooker does with ecclesiastical procedure, so, too, does Spenser offer a fresh perspective to established disciplines, or genres.

As previously suggested, the conception of experience begins as a discussion between Spenser's characters. In the Februarie eclogue, Cuddie makes a contrast between age and youth that continues to be developed throughout the entire piece. The crux of this development hinges upon experience. Colin is youthful in age as Cuddie is, but because of his experience with Rosalind he has aged. The dynamic emerging is age via years versus age via experience. As we shall see throughout this chapter, Colin as shepherd, as poet, resides in an in-between place—he is young by age which makes him relatable to peers like Cuddie or Hobbinoll, yet he has experienced what he deems an elevated love and heartbreak aligning him with older shepherds, such as Thenot.<sup>136</sup> This

---

<sup>135</sup> John S. Pendergast examines a similar hermeneutic phenomena using the *Book of Common Prayer* as the work providing interpretative grounding rather than spiritual autobiographies like the *Confessions*. Pendergast works under the guiding premise that no interpretation is private or correct, in order to forge an argument that all understanding is reached via prior truths (*Religion, Allegory, and Literacy in early Modern England, 1560-1640: The Control of the Word*. Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2006.).

<sup>136</sup> Renato Poggioli describes the pastoral form as a “negative ethos” founded on a “wishful dream of a happiness to be gained without effort, of an erotic bliss made absolute by its own irresponsibility” (14).

in-between place Colin resides in during the *SC* ultimately prompts him to leave the pasture and move from youth into maturity. This move allows Colin to gain the experience associated with age and ultimately matures him into his role as teacher.

I argue that this in-between place in the *SC* mirrors the in-betweenness Spenser as a poet also resides in. He, like Colin, lives between youthful and mature poetic endeavors, innocence of an early career and the experience of poetic demands, pastoral and epic. Similarly, in Colin, we see a young poet young in age but grown in life experience because of his heartbreak from Rosalind. This tenor can be sensed as early as the January eclogue where we first meet Colin. He muses:

Such rage a winters, reigneth in my heart,  
My life bloud friesing with unkindly cold:  
Such stormy stoures do breede my balefull smart,  
*As if my yeare were waste, and woxen old.*  
And yet alas, but now *my spring begonne,*  
And yet alas, *yt is already donne.* (25-30, my italics).

Here we see one of the governing metaphors of the entire work forging a connection between the year and the individual's life. Colin has drawn a connection between his experience and the aging that Thenot and Cuddie will later discuss. This connection stresses learning via experience rather than via age. Furthermore, such a connection stresses an interpretative maturity necessary for heightened insight.

But it seems Colin's knowledge/position is a bit more complex than Cuddie's carefree youthful arrogance and a tad different than the wisdom Thenot proposes with an aging of years outlined in the Februarie eclogue. Instead, Colin's meditation suggests a

---

This negative ethos "as with all ways or visions of life, the pastoral implies a new ethos, which, however, is primarily negative. Its code prescribes few virtues, but proscribes many vices" (4). For Poggioli, Colin's love could never have worked for happiness and innocence can only be gained through retreat rather than conversion (*The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

void left by his experiences—a lost youth—yet his mindset also offers a sort of wisdom which is here reflected by contemplation. The pain of Colin's experience (his loss) severs him from the untroubled security of youth and forces him to consider the now unfitting content of his past, youthful songs.

And though he has vowed never to play again, this seems like a natural transitional move. In terms of maturity, Colin moves closer to Thenot because he alludes to a developing wisdom (even if this wisdom is never to love again) and indicates that he is in the process of learning from his experience. This wisdom is immediately understood in the context of the *SC*, but animated through Colin's actions and discussions in *CCCHA*. Essentially, Colin matures throughout the poem in that he begins to consider how his past songs relate to his past actions. Such a consideration marks the beginning stages of contemplation and re-telling that further link Colin and Augustine as narrator-teachers.

However, the interesting part of Colin's tale of love and loss is that we as readers do not learn the details of it from Colin. In the January eclogue we meet a Colin already detached from his story. From the January eclogue until the June one, Colin's peers tell his story. But in the June eclogue, Colin speaks with Hobbinol, (his “deare frend” according to E.K.) of his heartbreak and transitional position yet he does not really clarify the information given up to this point nor introduce many details. This sort of passivity indicates Colin's dependence upon his peers—his audience—to aid in the telling of his story. This narrative passivity starkly contrasts the Colin we meet in *CCCHA*. Here, Colin not only has control over his narrative, but apparently he desires to use this narrative to guide his peers.



This dependence may further allude to Spenser's evolving ideas concerning poetic purpose. In effect, the poet needs an audience and their interpretative powers to move the poem along. Spenser seems heavily to rely on his audience's ability to make connections to outside works in order to fortify his pastorals. We can see this sort of reliance in the relationship Colin maintains with his peers in the *SC* and later in *CCCHA*. In the *SC*, his peers depict Colin's present state by re-telling his past experiences. On the other hand, in *CCCHA* Colin guides his own narrative based upon re-telling his past.

While Colin takes a more active role in recounting his narrative, his peers' newfound agency overshadows his. So, while Colin now dictates his narrative, his peers' questioning throughout *CCCHA* truly guides the direction of the tale. In these actions, Spenser illustrates the importance of audience on his poetic. As with Colin, while Spenser may compose the tale, his audience unlocks the meaning.

Initially in the June eclogue, Colin alludes to a cursed "cruell fate" that has led him to his current lovelorn position (14).<sup>137</sup> And while this is not a surprising sentiment considering the January eclogue, Hobbinoll's response is a curious one. He tells Colin to "Forsake the soyle, that so doth thee bewitch:/...And to the dales resort, where shepherds ritche,/ and fruitfull flocks bene every where to see," suggesting that Colin should forget the illustrious place of love he has reached and return to his shepherd's home (18, 21-22). Hobbinoll advises him to remain in the pastures—a simple place peacefully touched by faeries and nymphs. In Hobbinoll's opinion the "pierless

---

<sup>137</sup> Further discussions concerning Colin's failures in love include Michael F. Dixon. "Rhetorical Patterns and Methods of Advocacy in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*," *English Literary Renaissance* 7 (1977): 152; In *Protestant Poet*, Anthea Hume suggests "It is in the control of passion that Colin seems to fail" (45-48); Steven F. Walker proposes that "Colin exemplifies a poet disabled by romantic passion... Colin has been defeated as a lover, but his defeat as a poet is only partial" (365). "Poetry is/is not a cure for love': The Conflict of Theocritean and Petrarchan *Topoi* in the *Shepherd's Calendar*," *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979).

pleasures...in these places [the pastures]” should prevent Colin from venturing to a larger place (32).

Hobbinoll offers curious sentiments in that they suggest a subtle intuition on his part—an intuition attempting to comfort Colin and keep him in his home. Yet, this intuition lacks sophistication since Hobbinoll fails to understand that Colin has already left his simple home, though not physically. His departure began with the awareness his experience gave him. In this passage, Hobbinoll represents a novice interpreter. With regards to poetic interpretation, Hobbinoll understands Colin's emotional state yet has not evolved enough as a reader to consider his intellectual one.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, if we consider Colin as an extension of Spenser, poetically this response may allude to Spenser's fear of or tentativeness about moving from the pastoral to the immortal epic.<sup>139</sup>

But Colin's response to Hobbinoll suggests a youthful mindset, a youthful innocence in the places shepherds roam. Colin refers to his time in the pasture: "...whilst youth, and course of careless yeeres/ Did let me walke withouten lckes of love,/ In such delights did joy amongst my peeres." (33-35). Interestingly, though Colin has not necessarily aged in years over Hobbinoll and his peers, love has matured him beyond his former self. He hints of this idea as he refers to the "yeares more rype" when discussing

---

<sup>138</sup> In all fairness, though, at this point in the poem Colin has only shown his emotional side. But as the examination continues we shall see that Hobbinoll does not seem to change or evolve while the rest of the shepherds change in some capacity by the close of the December eclogue.

<sup>139</sup> This connection between E.K. and Spenser is of critical importance. Critics like S.K. Heninger align E.K. with Spenser's Cambridge Gabriel Harvey, while others like Oram consider E.K. to be a persona of Spenser. I tend to agree with the latter. But when considering personas I believe the real interesting questions point towards Cuddie. In the October eclogue, EK mentions in the Glossery that Cuddie, "I doubt whether by Cuddie be specified the author selfe, or some other. For in the eight Aeclogue the same person was brought in singing a Cansion of Colin's making, as he sayeth. So that some doubt, that the persons be different" (1). E.K. seems to suggest that Cuddie and Colin are somehow aligned. I will argue later in the chapter that Cuddie does semi-morph into Colin through the recitation of Colin's poetry (August) and the judgment (August) and contemplation of poetry in general (October).

the job he has of adorning Rosalind. An issue between age in years and age in experience continues to develop and the distance between Colin and his peers continues to emerge.

However, Colin's inability to truly grasp his altered position keeps this distance agape. While Colin hints of his feeling of restlessness in the pasture, he does not exhibit a full understanding of the repercussions arising with this in-between position. Colin is mature enough to realize he has experienced more than his peers, but he still exhibits undeveloped interpretative skills as he wallows in his past rather than learns from it.<sup>140</sup> Until Colin fully moves from this immaturity and accepts his active teaching role, he will remain only distanced from his peers. Just as he has abandoned his flock and his reed, so too, does he continue to abandon his peers.

In this same stanza, Colin describes his new job, his "comen trade" of adorning Rosalind only to further illustrate the loss he now lives with. He notes, "And the losse of her, whose love as lyfe I wayde,/Those weary wanton toys away dyd wbye" (47-48). This position further suggests that Colin resides in an in-between position—one between youth and maturity, between past and future love, past and future success or notoriety. Such a position illustrates the process of his understanding/contemplation. Later in the eclogue, this sentiment of in-betweenness echoes loudest as Colin directly places himself outside the shepherd's world, stating, "But since I am not, as I wish I were,/Ye gentle shepheards, which your flocks do feede" (105-106). Here, Colin describes himself as an outsider, or other, to his shepherd world—a man trapped in his past rather than animated by it.

---

<sup>140</sup> Chapter 3 addresses a similar lack of interpretative development in Redcrosse as he spirals downward into despair rather than upward with the aid of contemplation.

And while Colin laments his position, he also appears to carry hostility towards the one who has landed him in this position, Rosalind. He instructs Hobbinoll to "...tell the lasse, whose flower is woxe a weede,.../That she the truest shepherds hart made bleede,/That lyues on earth, and loved her most dere" (109-112). This sort of fresh heartbreak indicates that Colin still possesses the characteristics of youth. Yet, these same scars of youth, fresh or not, are what ultimately push him into maturity.

Colin's request to relay these thoughts to Rosalind further indicates the importance of Colin's audience to move the narrative forward. Though we do not witness this exchange between Hobbinoll and Rosalind, Colin's gesture suggests he needs his peers to urge the events out of the past and into the present, thus indicating that he still is transitioning between youthful error and the wisdom of experience.

Even though Colin still partly resides in a youthful position, an earlier passage from this eclogue indicates he aligns teaching with future songs. Colin refers to the death of Tityrus, the God of shepherds and laments not the loss of the poet but the lost potential to learn from him.<sup>141</sup> Colin muses, "But if on me some little drops would flowe,/Of that the spring was in his learned hedde,/I soone would learne these woods, to wayle my woe,/And teache the trees, their trickling teares to shedde" (93-96).

By passively asking for the talent he seemingly already possesses, Colin indicates he has more to learn than poetic style. As Colin metaphorically suggests, mastering pastoral poetry includes a mastery, a subduing, of nature. In the metaphor Colin uses teaching as a way to master nature; or, poetically speaking, using words to subdue or capture the elements of forces larger than the poet or the poem itself. Nature and the

---

<sup>141</sup> E.K. aligns Tityrus with Chaucer but contemporary critics align him with Virgil, whose pastorals directly influenced much of Spenser's own style not to mention most Renaissance poets. Of course, E.K. is both.

relationship with such a divinity serve as the larger subject in the case of pastoral. And even though he has broken his oaten reed, it appears Colin desires to attain this sort of skill. These desires imply he sees a future for himself beyond his present heartbreak.

Moreover, Spenser's larger hermeneutic goals begin to emerge as Colin moves from student to teacher. This transition ensues as Colin states he will teach a lesson that he once had to learn himself. Much as Colin must be guided by Tityrus, learn his subject, and contemplate how these learnings relate to his poetic task, so must the general reader of poetry follow this same formula. As indicated in Colin's words, true learning and practice come from understanding through teaching and contemplation.

This conception of teaching through experience echoes the foundational elements of Augustine's teaching discussed in Chapter 1. Augustine's conception of teaching rests upon the premise that an audience should be taught how to move from the literal to the spiritual on their own terms rather than simply being told the interpretative ends of their journey. And these interpretative moves should generate many possibilities for meaning a reader can *choose* from, instead of just one.

This sort of pedagogical belief is what Augustine admires and desires to instill in the reader of the *Confessions*. When commenting on interpreting Genesis Augustine comments that the truest purposes of writing are those that teach an audience, and that he "...would rather write it in such a way that my words would reinforce for each reader whatever truth he was able to grasp about these matters, than express a single idea so unambiguously as to exclude others, provided these did not offend me by their falsehood" (12.31.42).

In this passage, Augustine gestures to a larger teaching method that will affect every member of the audience, no matter what his level of interpretative training.<sup>142</sup> And though this pedagogical method may be large enough to reach many, it does not desire to exclude any legitimate potential meanings and still desires to aid a reader in his expansion of Scriptural meaning.

Looking at Colin throughout *CCCHA*, it seems that he adheres to a similar teaching method. When Colin returns from the unknown places of Cynthia's court, again, he finds himself in a situation where his experience surpasses that of his audience. In the *SC*, these experiences were love and loss, but in *CCCHA* these experiences are now the physical lands beyond the pasture. Colin's awareness of these discrepancies in experience between him and his audience distinguishes Colin's emerging role as teacher in *CCCHA*. Throughout the second pastoral, Colin tries to ground his descriptions of Cynthia's land in pastoral terms his peers will understand.<sup>143</sup> This sort of teaching strives to give his audience different points of entrance into the larger workings of his narrative.

An example of this gesture can be seen early in the *CCCHA* as Colin describes some of his first moments in Cynthia's land. Instead of merely detailing the characteristics of her landscapes, he re-places himself at the unknowing level of his current audience as he tells of asking his guide, "If then (quoth I) a shepherdesse she bee,/ Where be the flockes and heards, which she doth keep?" (236-237). His guide answers by

---

<sup>142</sup> Brian Stock refers to this sort of knowledge as "self-knowledge." Stock's study examines Augustine's treatment of classical contemplative practices in his practice of self-expression. For further consideration see Brian Stock. *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

<sup>143</sup> We also see this in the much discussed sea passage. Here, Colin refers to the sea as a "World of waters heaped up on hie,/ *Rolling like mountains* in wide wilderness" (*CCCHA* 197-198, my italics). In this description, Colin uses images from the pasture to describe the sea. Such a narrative move suggests that Colin desires his audience to relate to his tale and works to do so through drawing upon examples they would be familiar with.

putting the locale in terms the then-novice Colin would understand, answering “These be the hills (quoth he) the surges hie,/ On which faire Cynthia her heards doth feed:/ Her heards be thousand fishes with their frie,/ Which in the bosom of the billows breed” (240-243).

Colin shows himself to be a tourist, or questioner, in this episode. Rather than just sharing the answers to his questions, Colin makes a point to elucidate his method for gaining information—questioning. By doing so, Colin teaches his peers through the example of his past, the action of his past, as well as from the knowledge of it. Unlike in the *SC*, he discovers ways to forge a relationship with his audience. It seems he has not only repaired his reed, but learned how to play some new songs.<sup>144</sup>

Through these examples we can witness the Augustinian origins of Colin’s teaching method. In a very Augustinian manner, Colin reveals his dual role as teacher and audience member as he places himself in the role of unknowing tourist. Moreover, he opens the door for his audience to act in a similar manner and ask questions throughout the narrative. This sort of questioning becomes one of the major ways we see his audience evolve from the peers who tell his story in the *SC* to the audience interpreting his tale in *CCCHA*. Additionally, this mindful exchange as both tourist and guide shows that Colin has embraced his role as teacher and moved forward from his limbo in *SC*.

Returning to Augustine’s conception of teaching, Colin’s narrative actions work to allow his audience entrance into his narrative on his/her own terms. Rather than

---

<sup>144</sup> Importantly, he continues to re-enact this scene throughout *CCCHA*, only he plays the role of the guide, the answerer, as his shepherd peers ask the questions. This is depicted as he refers to Cynthia’s sheep, “landheards”, and shepherds suggesting he has an intimate understanding of her land now.

merely telling them what he saw and what his experiences mean, he seems to have a larger agenda at hand. I argue that this agenda reflects his desire to use his songs both to delight and guide his flock. In the *SC* Colin held a teacher role because his songs were skilled—he was the best piper in the pasture, and because of this, his peers looked up to him. But the Colin we meet in *CCCHA* is at the height of his poetic skill, yet desires to do more than merely delight his audience. Instead, he uses his songs as a vehicle for a poetic-dialectic between himself and his fellow shepherds. This sort of dialectic sharpens his shepherds' interpretative tools and brings them closer to truth on their own terms and at their own pace.

But like Augustine's teacher, who bears the burden not just of teaching interpretive skills but of guiding his pupil to distinguish between error and the good, Colin works to strike a balance between the emotional delights and the intellectual pursuits of poetry. As Augustine's teacher instructs one how to extract a spiritual understanding in the passages read, so, too, does Colin strive to move his audience, and poetry, beyond the empty pleasures of the surface prose.

This emotional reaction, however, appears a necessary springboard for the intellectual and spiritual potentials in poetry. Augustine says, "But if those who hear are to be moved rather than taught, so that they may not be sluggish in putting what they know into practice and so that they may fully accept those things which they acknowledge to be true, there is a need for greater powers of speaking" (4.4.6). In this passage Augustine depicts a process of interpretation beginning with the truths and experiences one already possesses. Such a process asks an interpreter to draw upon outside sources and experiences to aid in contemplation and move the believer from a



literal intellectual understanding of Scripture to a spiritual one. Based on these early analyses of Colin's song and poetic desires, we can assert that Colin employs his narrative to push his audience to use their experiences and evolving interpretative abilities to move beyond the surface pleasures of his tale.

Glimpses of Colin's attention to poetic purpose can be anticipated in the *SC*, too. Returning to the Tityrus passage in the *SC*, we continue to see Colin's awareness of his deficiencies as a teacher as he perceives the misuses of his songs to Rosalind. He refers to his former songs praising Rosalind as unnatural for a simple shepherd, commenting "I wote my rymes bene rough, and rudely drest:/ The fyttter they, my carefull case to frame:" (June, 77-78). Here, Colin critiques his past songs as crude in content and style. And while we as readers can assume based on the skill of his current songs that they were equally skilled in style, Colin's lament reveals an awareness of the baseness of his songs to Rosalind. In this awareness we can begin to see that Colin now considers what the higher purposes of his songs *should* be, though he has yet to act out these realizations until his return in *CCCHA*.

The Colin of *CCCHA* readily exhibits this sort of realization. In the beginning of the poem we encounter a Colin Clout armed with a heightened perception of the power of his songs. He displays a renewed understanding of the shepherds responsibility to guide his flock as he confronts "The shepherd swains that did about him play:/ Who all the while with greedie listfull eares,/ Did stand astonisht at his curious skill" (6-8). In this passage, our narrator describes an audience begging for Colin's songs—the songs they have missed for so long. But they soon discover that while Colin's songs have become more skilled, his style and goals have changed, too. Throughout *CCCHA* we see how

Colin builds upon his audience's enthusiasm for his words to train his audience to move beyond the pleasure of his songs into the discernment of truth.

Colin's awareness of the importance of his songs may be prompted by his reconfiguration of poetic purposes from pleasure to teaching since the June discussion with Hobbinoll cited earlier. As we learn throughout *CCCHA* Colin attributes guiding his flock as the marking of a good shepherd. At the end of *CCCHA* Colin responds to Thestylis' inquiries concerning the nature of his return stating, "...back to my sheep to tourne,/Whose utmost hardnesse I before had tryde,/Then having learned repentance late, to mourne/Emongst those wretches which I there descryde" (672-675).<sup>145</sup>

This passage becomes important for several reasons. Firstly, it indicates that Colin has successfully embarked on a version of the poetic path beyond earthly praise and pleasure he describes to Hobbinoll in the June eclogue. As Colin notes, he has contemplated his past and learned to consider this past in relation to his present and future. And from this contemplation, Colin desires to teach and guide his fellow shepherds via his own experiences and learnings. In some respects, he has become a Tityrus figure for his fellow shepherds.

And while his shepherds may not initially be able to associate his experiences with their own, this discrepancy returns us to earlier discussions concerning the ability of the pastoral landscape metaphorically to represent the landscapes of the poet's mind. Though we are not certain if Colin's peers can directly correlate their experiences with the sights and insights of his journey we see that each shepherd can inhabit different

---

<sup>145</sup> The earlier lines of this passage again lead us back to experience. Colin refers to the "...Court continually hooved,/And followed those which happie seemed to be" suggesting he has learned this latest revelation through experiencing and contemplating courtly life (666-667). We again see a man who uses his experiences to consider his past and future ones. In many ways, he has developed his ability to *see* as much as he has developed his poet skill.

landscapes at the same time. This co-habitation, isolated from Colin's teaching goals or aspirations, depicts a pastoral capable of containing both the "pretty tales of wolves and sheep" as well as heightened inquisitions into the nature of poetry.<sup>146</sup> These potentials continue to illuminate Spenser's belief that pastoral form can be a space to contemplate similar elevated issues as the ones often portrayed in the epic.<sup>147</sup>

As suggested in our discussions concerning teaching, these varying perspectives also mark different places that a reader can enter the text. Each shepherd's perspective and experience, when paired with the overarching narrative of Colin Clout, become different avenues towards similar ends. Though each shepherd's experience may or may not relate to Colin's, Colin carries the responsibility as narrator and teacher to corral each member of his audience from interpretation towards contemplation. During Colin's narrative moves—such as showing and encouraging questioning as a form of investigation or using repetition to continuously draw the audience to specific passages—the reader (and shepherd) must keep up with his song in order to train and challenge his ever-growing exegetical skills. Essentially, while Colin can diagram a tale, it is still the responsibility of the audience to interpret the text at hand.

From this perspective it seems that Colin's guidance may include a two-fold responsibility—teaching the audience how to relate to and contemplate both places and experiences outside of their own realm. On one hand, this explains why the shepherds question so much of Colin's journey. They need to find something to relate it to. For example, during Colin's retelling Cuddie asks him about heaven, "But if that land be there (quoth he) as here,/And is theyre heaven likewise there all one?/And if like heaven,

---

<sup>146</sup> Sir Phillip Sidney. *The Defence of Poesie*.

<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, the ability to balance light and serious, innocence and impurity, works to depict pastoral as a preferred place of contemplation and teaching.

be heavenly graces there, / *Like as in this same world where we do wone?*" (304-307, my italics). In this passage, Cuddie displays an ability to contemplate larger ideas and higher beings, yet he also does so within his familiar framework of the pasture. He attempts to anchor his point of reference in his own reality in order to consider larger ideas.<sup>148</sup> Importantly, in the both the content of the question and the act of questioning, Cuddie illustrates a desire to understand.

On the other hand, this sort of questioning, for whatever ends, reflects a more sophisticated form of interpretation than experienced in the *SC*. This sort of sophistication allows Colin to offer facts and guidance based on the demands of his audience. In other words, his peers are finding ways to guide his story and gain insight by questioning Colin directly rather than merely taking narrative orders from him. They are continually gaining agency. This may reveal why Spenser focuses so much on guiding the reader in this piece. As Colin desires to have his audience look past his praise of Cynthia and relate to the larger issues of his voyage, so, too, does Spenser desire his epic audience to see beyond the praise found in his epic. I believe even Colin's shepherd peers can do that. However, his larger problem is getting them to see beyond the boundaries of the text in order to truly understand his elevated experience.

Secondly, returning to Colin's answer of Hobbinoll's question, his words indicate a departure from his onetime in-between position. His gesture to *return* to the pasture indicates a concurrent physical and intellectual movement forward. How can he return to somewhere or something he has never left? It seems he has now considered his past, both with Rosalind and with Cynthia, and can now return to the land he once had to

---

<sup>148</sup> I wonder if this is an issue Spenser encounters in the *FQ* with the Land of Faerie. Maybe Spenser writes this work in order to illustrate how to use the familiar or the translated allegory to move beyond the surface of the text to fully immerse yourself in a place of contemplation?

abandon. Apparently, Colin has come to grips with his experiences and can now evaluate his past and *choose* to return to aid his shepherds. Such a choice suggests Colin has moved forward from his once suspended position. And so, agency, a new agency, is assumed in the poet as well as the audience.

And finally, this passage offers insight into Spenser's own poetic agenda. If we align Colin and Spenser, by the end of *CCCHA* we meet a poet who successfully attempts to traverse the boundaries of pastoral and epic and constantly works to do so via poetic and personal contemplation of purpose. By the writing of *CCCHA*, Spenser is a poet who has engaged with pastoral and epic forms.<sup>149</sup> Colin, once the adrift pastoral poet residing between youth and maturity, has now successfully transcended into the mature tradition of the epic. I do not believe, however, that this journey has been a smooth one for Spenser or Colin. One of the major motivating questions driving this examination is why Spenser returns to the pastoral once he has crossed into epic.

I argue these ideas of flock and poetic responsibility contribute to answering this seemingly straightforward question. For Spenser, and Colin, this conception and image of a flock suggests that the poet's true purpose and goal is not merely to praise and to attain fame through words, but instead, to also guide his flock, which by this point we understand are the poet's peers, his audience, his reader. Symbolically, the sheep in Colin's passage are the shepherds. Poetically, the poet's flock are his readers.

As posited above, the immediate question is why does Colin return "home"?

Discussions surrounding the elusive title of Spenser's second pastoral often hinge on just

---

<sup>149</sup> In many ways, the poetic interaction between the *SC*, *FQ* I-III, and *CCCHA*, between pastoral and epic, mirrors the actual interaction of pastoral and epic in Book VI of the *FQ*. Erecting this interaction between whole works offers the potential for readers to consider the scene in Book VI as more than poetic interruption.

where this homecoming takes place. Spenser's courtly audience would naturally consider home to be England—a return from Spenser's ten-year departure to Ireland.<sup>150</sup> But Ireland is often considered Colin Clout's home. Or as William Oram notes, “The uncertain reference of the title thus suggests one of the poem's governing concerns, that of the poet's proper place in relation to the world of power—the world of Elizabeth's court” (519).<sup>151</sup>

In many respects Oram's idea considers the multiplicity of potential homes for Spenser (and Colin). But let us think more abstractly. Where is the home of Spenser's ideas? I would argue that the pastoral is the true residence of Spenser's poetic concepts because pastoral best expresses his ideal of enlightenment through questioning. As this chapter suggests, the *SC* is where Spenser begins to consider the role of the reader and other interpretative issues that find maturity in the lines of the *FQ*.<sup>152</sup>

So, in this regard, we must accept all possible symbolic ideas of what home can mean. As outlined in the exegetical schema discussed throughout this chapter, meaning

---

<sup>150</sup> For authoritative general discussions of Spenser and Ireland see Jean R. Brink. “Appropriating the Author of the *Faerie Queene*: The Attribution of *The View of The Present State of Ireland* and *A Brief Note of Ireland to Edmund Spenser*,” from *Soundings of Things Done: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of S.K. Heninger, Jr.* eds. Peter E. Medine and Joseph Wittreich. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997; James Fleming. “A *View* from the Bridge: Ireland and Violence in Spenser's *Amoretti*,” *Spenser Studies* 15 (2001): 135-165; Andrew Hadfield. *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: wilde fruit and savage soyl*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; Hadfield, Andrew. *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Matter of Britain*. New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2004; Christopher Highley. *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Julia Lupton. “Home-Making in Ireland: Virgil's Eclogue I and Book IV of the *Faerie Queene*,” *Spenser Studies* 8 (1987): 119-147; Willy Maley. *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture, and Identity*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. For more general discussions of Britain's colonization of Ireland see Canny, Nicholas. *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001; Philip Schwyzer. *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>151</sup> William A. Oram., ed. *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*. The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

<sup>152</sup> One of the major differences between the *SC* and the *CCCHA* is Colin's state but more importantly the state of his peers. Maybe this represents the stress Spenser begins to feel between the *SC* and the *FQ*. After the *SC* he was received relatively well and Spenser gained a commission he may have started to feel the pressure of a high profile commissioned poet for the Queen. Could Spenser's greatest achievement been his greatest demise?

is realized by the creation of many possibilities rather than the limiting to one. Essentially, the result of an experienced reader's interpretation and contemplation is to reveal a multiplicity of potential meanings. These meanings are the reward for contemplation, the goal, not the punishment.<sup>153</sup>

A central component of Spenser's epic task rests upon his conception of teaching inherited in part from Augustine. Continuing with Colin's earlier passage in *CCCHA* describing why he has returned to his pasture he develops his notion of teaching even further, stating:

Cause have I none (quoth he) of cancred will  
 To quit them ill, that me demeand so well:  
 But selfe-regard of private good or ill,  
 Moves me of each, so as I found, to tell  
 And eke to *warne yong shepherds wandering wit*,  
 Which through report of that lives painted blisse,  
 Abandon quiet home, to seeke for it,  
 And leave their lambes to losse misled amisse, (680-687, my italics)

In the highlighted portion above, we see that Colin's return and reaffirmation of his original poetic purpose serves to guard his flock by teaching them how to guide their wit, their minds. And with this guidance comes a taming of natural instinct and desire. In other words, a taming of earthly instinct in order to attain a higher understanding both in their world and, as an afterthought, in the songs Colin sings.

The last line of the above passage suggests that Colin desires to teach the shepherds *not* to act as he did and abandon his flock. This is important. Colin's (and Spenser's) point regarding poetry is not to indoctrinate his reader to think like him, but instead to protect the flock. Colin does so through teaching his audience how to gain

---

<sup>153</sup>In essence, Colin's return home is an attempt to re-instill in his audience, his peers, and his readers the interpretative groundings via teaching. For Spenser, returning "home" may provide a place for him to reground himself in the epic task he conceived of here.

insight from his experiences, rather than providing an itemized list of the characteristics embodying a “good shepherd.”<sup>154</sup> Colin urges his audience to question his story in an attempt to identify with his experiences on their own terms. In essence, Colin desires, as both Augustine and Hooker do, to teach his flock, his audience, to awaken and use their individual faculties and, with the aid of a guiding wisdom larger than themselves, interpret beyond the surface, beyond the literal.

But the sentiments initiating this discussion, Colin’s entrance into *CCCHA*, echo Cuddie’s opening words in the October eclogue of the *SC*. In response to Piers’s introduction, Cuddie, like Colin, claims that he is tired of piping for the pleasure of youth asking:

The dapper ditties, that I wont devise,  
To feede youthes fancie, and the flocking fry,  
Delighten much: what I the bett for thy?  
The han the pleasure, I a sclender prise.  
I beate the bush, the byrds to them doe flye:  
What good thereof to Cuddie can arise? (13-18).

In this scene Cuddie searches for his *raison d’etre*. He appears frustrated because he feels he has mastered his art and metaphorically controls nature (by “beating the bush”) yet is impatient to gain all the fame associated with such poetic skill. In fact, he complains that the benefits of his skills go to the listeners rather than him. In this regard, Cuddie, who once spoke the words of Colin’s poetic ideals, represents a poet-teacher far from the ideals embodied in the Colin of *CCCHA*.

Here, an equally skilled poet as Colin, Cuddie lacks the desire to guide his flock and, instead, seeks only the fame and praise associated with poetry. Even the Colin of

---

<sup>154</sup> This characteristic is best embodied in Hooker’s work. Much as Hooker encourages one to utilize reason, to trust reason, when interpreting, Spenser appears to subscribe to a similar idea with regards to poetry and the poetic audience.



the *SC* who laments his fallen positions, claims that he “play[s] to please my selfe, all be it ill” and exhibits a self-awareness of his songs (June 71). Cuddie, on the other hand, has matured in poetic skill from the *Februarie* eclogue, but remained stagnant in awareness and consideration. This need for a balance between skill and teaching appears to embody Spenser’s ideal poet—meaning someone who can exhibit the skill to delight an audience while simultaneously guiding them towards a heightened interpretation of his work.

In essence, Thenot’s early warning in the allegory of the oak and the briar seems to have come true. In this allegory, the vain, brash briar, “with painted words tho gan this proude weede,/(As most usen Ambitious folke)/His colowred crime with craft to cloke” convinces the Sovereign of the forest that the oak “unto such tyrannie doth adpire:/Hindering with his shade my lovely light,/And robbing me of the swete sonnes sight?”(160-162, 172-174). After wooing the Sovereign with “sike fancies weren foolerie” the briar has “broughten this Oake to this miserie” (211-212). But the briar, like Cuddie, does not realize the importance of elders and soon:

...stands the Brere like a Lord alone,  
Puffed up with pryde and vaine pleasuance:  
But all this glee ahd no continuance.  
For eftstones Winter gan to approach,  
The blustering Boreas did encroache,  
And beate upon the solitarie Brere:  
...Now gan he repent his pryde to late:  
For naked left and disconsolate,  
The biting frost nipt his stalke dead  
The watrie wette weighed downe his head,  
And heaped snow burdned him so sore,  
That nowe upright he can stand no more: (222-234).<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> This idea of “repent[ing] his pryde to late” connects Cuddie’s youthful arrogance to Redcrosse’s interpretative errors that cause him to only seek one-sided meanings (line 228). When he is on the Mount of Heavenly Contemplation, Redcrosse is bathed in salt water by “sad Repentance” before he can meet Contemplation. Redcrosse and Cuddie both err by seeking earthly ends of fame rather than more heavenly ones of understanding through contemplation. Moreover, Chapter 4 shall make the connection between this scene and Arthur in Mercilla’s court during Book V. Linking Cuddie in the *SC* to Redcrosse and Arthur in

In this lengthy conclusion the briar suffers because he never realized that the elder oak protects the youthful briar.

As mentioned above, Cuddie seems to have fallen into this same trap. He has matured via age throughout the year but not via experience. Just as the briar in the *Februarie eclogue* fails to understand the larger ramifications of his request, Cuddie fails to grasp the larger workings of nature—the delicate connection between shepherd and flock, elder and youth. He will not let Thenot guide him with his wisdom of age as seen in his response to Thenot's fable, "Here is a long tale, and little worth" (240). Furthermore, the reference to "sike fancies" and empty words points to Cuddie's empty and incomplete poetic advancements since he has not advanced his awareness of natural workings nor his place in these workings. He has not matured in the same manner as Colin. And as a result, he pipes empty songs for the eager ears of youth rather than teaching and guiding them.

But Cuddie and Colin are an odd pair to consider. In many ways, Cuddie's position in the audience has advanced more than any other shepherd in the *SC* because later in the "year" he comes to be a judge, purveyor, and reciter of poetry. Cuddie may serve as the intellectual voice of a Colin so withdrawn that his teaching abilities become overshadowed by his heartbreak. Moreover, Cuddie directly becomes Colin's voice in the *August eclogue* as he reads Colin's poetry.

To add another twist to this relationship, in the *October eclogue*, EK says in the *Glossery* that Cuddie, "I doubt whether by Cuddie be specified the author selfe, or some

---

the *FQ* further connects the characters actions and the meaning of these actions to Spenser's larger hermeneutic goals.

other. For in the eight Aeclogue the same person was brought in singing a Cation of Colin's making, as he sayeth. So that some doubt, that the persons be different" (1).<sup>156</sup> E.K. suggests that Cuddie and Colin may be one and the same. I would tend to agree with E.K. here. I think that in some way Cuddie does semi-morph into Colin through the recitation of Colin's poetry (August), the judgment (August) and contemplation of poetry in general (October).<sup>157</sup> By the October eclogue, Cuddie acts as the refined mouthpiece of the dejected Colin—a mouthpiece with enough knowledge and emotional clarity to discuss the position of poetry and the place of poetic immortality. Afterall, "In Cuddie is set out the perfect paterne of a Poete..." (E.K. October argument).

I suppose the major question is "why?" Why are Cuddie and Colin, two seemingly opposite characters, aligned? And how does this alignment affect Spenser's evolution of the interpreter/reader? I would argue Cuddie seems to have all the desires of a reader wanting to move past his current position. As seen above, the "Unhappy Hearsman boye" appears frustrated with his place and poetic function. And while for Cuddie it may be an issue of task, I would argue that it is an issue of inexperience. Cuddie's youthful arrogance has isolated him from the guidance of his elders.<sup>158</sup>

But I would argue that because of Colin's withdrawal in the *SC*, Cuddie becomes his voice and, inadvertently, learns how to initiate poetic interpretation from Colin's

---

<sup>156</sup> I realize the legitimacy of E.K.'s glosses are constantly in question, or as Cain states, "These (glosses) should aim to assist the reader, but often seem to confuse, mislead, or misinform" but as far as we know his presence is still to help the reader (6).

<sup>157</sup> Some detailed discussions of the October eclogue include Hardin, Ricahrd F. "The Resolved Debate of Spenser's 'October'" *Modern Philology* 73 (1976): 258; Patrick Cheney. *Famous Flight*; David R. Shore. *Poetics of Pastoral*; Sam Meyer. *An Interpretation of Edmund Spenser's Colin Clout*. Notre Dame, In: Notre Dame University Press, 1969.

<sup>158</sup> But Colin appears to encounter a similar isolation as an effect of his youthful heartbreak. In many ways, Colin's emotional blow forced him to move inward before he could move outward. Cuddie never had this sort of experience and therefore has not moved into the stage of inward contemplation by the end of the *SC*. The result seems to be a poet equally as skilled as Colin on the surface but never destined to move past this stylistic skill. In this regard, Cuddie seems to represent the lacking poet—the poet Colin could have remained had he not left the pasture.

experience. This sort of evolution begins to occur in the August eclogue where Cuddie recites a song in which he claims Colin is the author. As expected, Colin's song is more contemplative than Willye's and Perigot's. In this song Cuddie tells of Colin's heartbreak at one point stating:

Let strames of teares supply the place of sleepe:  
 Let all that sweete is, voyd: and all that may augment  
 My doole, drawe neare. More meete to wayle my woe,  
 Bene in the wild woddres my sorrowes resound,  
 Then bedde or bowre, both which I fill with cryes,  
 When I them see so waist, and fynd no part  
 Of pleasure past... (163-169).

In this passage, although Colin authors the song, Cuddie is Colin when he recites the words. By becoming his voice, Cuddie may experience some of Colin's heartbreak. If so, this may be why he complains to Piers about his stagnant life in the October eclogue.

After this recitation, Cuddie can now begin to see past his own existence and, in turn, question it. In this regard, Cuddie seems to represent a model of character evolution spanning from Februarie to August to October.<sup>159</sup> But as suggested earlier, in the *SC* Colin holds a teaching role because of the skill of his songs rather than an intentional gesture to guide. The feelings Cuddie experiences, no matter the benefit of the ends, were inconsistent and unintentional results of Colin's song.<sup>160</sup>

Continuing with the October eclogue, Piers answers Cuddie's initial complaint stating, "Cuddie, the prayse is better, then the price,/ The glory eke much greater than the gayne" (19-20). Piers' response proposes that praise and notoriety are more important

---

<sup>159</sup> Does this represent a maturation mirroring that of Spenser? Could the combination of Colin and Cuddie represent a more complete picture of the Spenser creating this poem?

<sup>160</sup> The fact that Cuddie desires an end product—fame and praise—suggests that his intentions are rooted in earthly ends rather than the multifarious possibilities which are the growth of Colin's (and Spenser's) schema,

than reward.<sup>161</sup> As we learn throughout the eclogue, praise equals immortality and as Piers continues, “O what an honor is it, to restraine/The lust of lawlesse youth with good advice:” this immortality carries the responsibility to teach and guide generations after your own (21-22). Here, Piers depicts the role of the poet in very similar terms as that of the shepherd protecting his flock.

This is an interesting idea. Firstly, it transfers the physical act of protection into the spiritual/moral one. Secondly, it aligns, again, with some sentiments contained in the Letter to Raleigh of the *FQ*. It seems that the purpose of the poet or poetry is, in fact, to fashion a gentleman. But what we see here is that poetry can fashion *any* man from the shepherd to the nobleman.<sup>162</sup> This universality relates to Augustine’s notion of charity or Hooker’s idea of reason as a tool possessed by every human being that aids one in discerning his/her surroundings and gaining spiritual insight into goodness. This universality also suggests that any poet or reader can gain insight into a poem if they exercise and employ their interpretative faculties.

However, at a glance it seems that Piers’s suggestion places all the power in the poet and the work versus giving the reader the ability to discern these “lessons” from the piece. This idea of poetry being its own entity with an almost physical place in time and space is seen in Piers’s lament, “O pierlesse Poeyse, where is then thy place?” (79). This entire stanza paints poetry as an entity that begins internally (in the poet), tries to reside in the external world (as a physical text) only again to gain long-term existence through the internal meditation of the reader. The last two lines of this stanza reflect this process,

---

<sup>161</sup> This is an interesting distinction between praise and reward considering the two can easily be interchanged. But it seems Piers distinguishes between verbal praise and immortality and monetary reward. The former lasts forever while the latter carries a temporary worth.

<sup>162</sup> This is an idea we again see addresses in Spenser’s Letter to Raleigh beginning the *FQ*. This connection will be better forged in Chapter 3.

“Then make thee wings of thine aspiring wit,/ And, whence thou camest, flye back to heaven apace” (83-84). This passage describes an interpretative/creative process moving from poet to text to reader.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, this process of creation and interpretation is constantly revised as the reader re-interprets and gains more insight into past episodes based on his present hermeneutic state.

Cuddie’s response to Piers’ advice is also noteworthy. He asks, “But who rewards him ere the more for thy?/ Or feedes him once the fuller by a graine?/ Sike praise is smoke, that sheddeth in the skye,/ Sike words bene wynd, and wasten soone in vayne” (33-36). He counters Piers stating that praise, like money or physical objects, fades. Praise is a false reward. Or, as the metaphor of smoke suggests, it remains a product of something stronger. This something may be fame, timelessness, and/or the ability to guide and mold other generations of poets in the fashion of those who have molded him.<sup>164</sup> Cuddie’s response is interesting considering our earlier discussion of his possible evolution. Though he does question what reward a poet receives, he illustrates an awareness for false ends whether they be monetary or ego soothing. This sort of retort offers a continued promise of Cuddie’s potential to see beyond earthly rewards.

The next stanza starkly contrasts the advice Hobbinoll gives to Colin in the June eclogue. Piers counsels:

Abandon then the base and viler clowne,  
Lyft up thy self out of the lowly dust:  
And sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts...  
Whither thou list in fayre Elisa rest,  
Or if thee please in bigger notes to sing,  
Advance the worthy whome shee loveth best,

---

<sup>163</sup> Actually, this movement seems to resemble the Ladder of Love Castiglione describes in *The Courtier*.

<sup>164</sup> This concept of immortality through poetry or poetic fame echoes Sidney’s idea of poetry in the *Defense of Poesie*. For Sidney, poetry carries the potential to discuss history and philosophy with the guise of poetic devices.

That first the white beare to the stake did bring. (37-39, 45-48)<sup>165</sup>

Telling Cuddie to abandon the pastoral and write about topics of the epic signifies a Virgilian poetic progression. Poetically, this advice may narrate Spenser's own journey from pastoral to epic. Though Piers does not speak directly to Colin, this "lowly dust" may be meant to refer to Colin's heartbroken state. If Piers refers to Colin, he appears to offer Spenser a call-to-arms. And if Piers offers this same gesture to Cuddie, he seems to perceive some benefit in the transition from pastoral to epic. As we have seen in Colin, this move has made him a more insightful poet and narrator and allowed him to execute his role of teacher. Perhaps Piers similarly urges Cuddie to fulfill his poetic potential.

As mentioned, this counsel to leave the pasture contradicts the advice Hobbinoll gave to Colin in the June eclogue. This offers some interesting insight into Hobbinoll's character. Hobbinoll is Colin's dearest friend, but as we witnessed in the June eclogue, he worships Colin rather than acts as an equal.<sup>166</sup> As suggested in the beginning of the chapter, Hobbinoll cannot relate to Colin's experience and, in turn, fails to give him beneficial advice. It seems only Hobbinoll gains from his advice.

But when we compare characters, such as Cuddie to Hobbinoll, some differences emerge. Cuddie, though also a shepherd, can now begin to consider the larger issues like poetry and poetic purpose. I argue he can begin to do so because he has gained experience through reciting Colin's songs. In effect, Hobbinoll represents the simplicity of the pasture—the shepherd, happily bound to his land and his flock. Cuddie, on the

---

<sup>165</sup> It is interesting, though, that Piers is the one doling out advice. In the eclogue September Piers was arguing with an allegorical Catholic figure suggesting, perhaps, that Piers really represents the Protestant poet rather than the Protestant worshiper. If this is the case, Piers advice works on a much deeper level than merely discussing the general purposes of poetry. Piers may represent Spenser's voice concerning the nature of Protestant poetics

<sup>166</sup> They were once equals but, judging from the June eclogue, Colin's experience has distanced them. Now Hobbinoll can only praise Colin rather than relate.

other hand, appears closer to the urban landscape—he desires the fame of the city and he begins to grasp abstract, complex ideas. Interestingly, Colin can relate to both because of his in-between state. And as we move into *CCCHA*, Colin’s past allows him to relate to both forms of shepherd. Again, Colin, in either work, simultaneously acts as teacher and pupil, tourist and guide. This allows him to guide his flock without overtly reciting the lesson or diminishing their agency.

With regard to the shepherds’ role as audience, it seems interesting that once again we see Colin’s peers moving the content of the pastoral along. Here, Piers possesses the insight into poetic purpose, rather than Cuddie or Colin. This is an important theme we see in the *SC*. Colin, though the main character only gains insight and praise from those around him. For example, his poetry is only heard from the mouths of others until the November eclogue. Or, we learn about his predicament and the events of he and Rosalind from other characters. Essentially, Colin gives the other characters something to talk to or talk about, thus serving as the center of the story.

But in *CCCHA* Colin’s direct role in the poem changes. As suggested earlier, in the *SC* Colin was the main poetic subject though rarely heard from, whereas, in *CCCHA*, his active narration and role as answerer allow Colin to reside in the center of the action. *CCCHA* is a very personal story that *he* tells. In the *SC*, Colin’s situation was introduced by the other characters and then briefly commented on by Colin. Here, Colin has gained, or regained, the ability to play songs *about* himself, though not *by* himself. This regained ability reflects a confidence that he was lacking in the *SC*. But how do we view the shepherd’s role with this change? Can they now be considered equals?



Earlier in *CCCHA*, Colin discusses his meeting with the “shepherd of the Ocean” in which he had a dialectical-esque exchange of songs.<sup>167</sup> He describes this as, “Himselfe as skillfull in that art as any./He pip’d, I sung; and when he sung, I piped,/By chaunge of tunes, each making other mery,/Neither envying other, nor envied,/So piped we, until we both were weary” (75-79). Here, Colin describes the ideal exchange between peers—a back and forth encounter where all participants gain insight and pleasure without envy.

In the middle of this explanation of dialectical utopia, Cuddie interrupts Colin and asks what they played. He asks, “I would request thee Colin, *for my sake*,/To tell what thou didst sing, when he did plaie/For well I weene it worth recounting was,/Whether it were some hymne, or morall laie,/Or carol made to praise thy loved lasse” (83-87, my italics). The highlighted section of this passage infers that the questions each shepherd asks are for his own clarity or gain. Cuddie can take the information and form an interpretative sphere more familiar to him.<sup>168</sup>

With regards to the proposals put forth earlier concerning Cuddie’s interpretative evolution in the *SC*, his request suggests that he has progressed into another interpretative sphere. Cuddie’s question suggests also that Colin’s description of an ideal exchange was less than ideal and needed more details. This subjective consideration still portrays Cuddie as poetic judge and further illustrates Colin’s dependence upon his audience to generate the ideal narrative—a narrative interacting with its audience rather than standing self-contained.

---

<sup>167</sup> For a more detailed reading discussing the connection between Colin Clout and Sir Walter Raleigh consult Jerome S. Dees. “Colin Clout and the Shepherd of the Ocean,” *Spenser Studies* 15 (2001): 185-197.

<sup>168</sup> Also, Cuddie’s question reveals his intentions. If he knows what song Colin played, maybe he, too, can play the same song and gain both praise and insight.

As we continue to outline Cuddie's possible transformation, we consider his response to Colin's description, "There did our ship her fruitfull wombe unlade,/And put us all ashore on Cynthias land" (288-289). Cuddie again raises his voice, asking, "What land is that thou meanest (then Cuddy sayd)/And is there other, then whereon we stand?" (290-291). With this question, again Cuddie desires to know more than Colin has told—he sees an importance in an expansion of Colin's details. Possibly a logistic move in which Cuddie desires physically to imagine the place Colin describes, nevertheless it still represents a desire to possess a better understanding of Colin's song. Also, as suggested above, this possession of knowledge implies a personal effect to knowing even the largest of intellectual ideas. In other words, though we are dealing with larger ideas and theories of poetry, religion, poetic service, there is still a personal desire—an internal desire—to own this knowledge on an individual's terms.

Furthermore, this and Cuddie's earlier question indicate a general alteration from how knowledge is employed in *CCCHA* versus the *SC*. Here, Colin fields a question and answers his peers directly. And he answers them in rather open-ended ways, suggesting that Colin's presence and engagement never sway his teaching goals to guide, not direct, his audience. Just as Colin acts as a central participant so, too, do the shepherds whose questions directly shape Colin's narrative stylings. This form of questioning also suggests that Colin's audience in *CCCHA* is more educated to their individual methods of interpretation than they were in the *SC*. By questioning they interpret Colin's story.

But the most obvious change caused by this form of questioning is the absence of E.K.<sup>169</sup> Unlike in the *SC*, the reader no longer needs E.K. to interpret passages and

---

<sup>169</sup> The lack of E.K. as an interpreter raises interesting possibilities concerning his real role in the *SC*. As Cain suggests in the introduction to the *SC*, E.K. becomes more problematic than helpful causing the reader

answers. Instead, the shepherds anticipate questions ranging from plot summary to theoretical inquiry. Without E.K. Colin takes on more responsibility for his audience and, in turn, the reader. The absence of E.K. also moves *CCCHA* outside of the traditional definition of pastoral as a genre where a running commentary accompanies the work. The absence of such commentary further suggests that *CCCHA* resides somewhere between a pastoral and an epic. The re-emergence of *SC* characters, such as Colin, Cuddie, Hobbinoll, and Piers, and a continuation of plot, inherently links *CCCHA* to the pastoral, but the nature of the narrative and the content of the poem suggest a work more aligned with the characteristics of epic.

And while these questions aid in enriching Colin's narrative, it appears that Cuddie interprets his actions from Colin's response. In some ways, it appears Colin creates, or adds to, the interpretative spheres of these characters, which marks a very Augustinian prospect. Even though later in the song, when discussing the limits of humans contemplating things divine, Colin states, "But vaine it is to thinke by paragone/Of earthly things, to judge of things divine" it still seems that Colin's descriptions expand his audience's scope of recognition and, in turn, use an earthly form, like poetry, to expand their ability to consider higher forms of understanding (344-345).

But before Cuddie's entrance into *CCCHA* we meet Hobbinoll. He asks, "Colin, my lief, my life, how great a losse/Had all the shepheards nation by thy lacke?," telling (rather poetically, I may add) about the loss the forrest, fields, and shepherds experienced when Colin left. But now these wounded creatures rejoice at Colin's return: "But now

---

to interpret his answers. Could this readerly interpretation be intentional on Spenser's part? When considering the possible hermeneutic agenda Spenser theorizes could E.K. have turned from Skeltonic humor into a valid interpretative tool?

both woods and fields, and floods reviuue,/Sith thou art come, their cause of  
meriment,/That us late dead, hast made againe alive:" (29-31).

Here, Hobbinoll seems to represent the pastures, further exemplifying his simple shepherd position. Interestingly, considering Hobbinoll's alienated sadness at Colin's refusal to play in the *SC*, he asks Colin to tell his story—to explain where he has been. Hobbinol asks, "But were it not too painful to repeat/The passed fortunes, which to thee befell/In thy late voyage, we would entreat,/Now at thy leisure them to us tell" (32-35). In this exchange, we realize that Hobbinoll has not changed too much because he is still concerned with place.

Being the one who urged Colin to stay in the pastures, it seems fitting that Hobbinoll would desire to compare Colin's pasts—where he was in relation to where he is from. The supposition of pain in this retelling further indicates a deep attachment to home. For Hobbinoll, such a trip would cause pain too difficult to speak of. But for Colin, who knew he must leave the pasture, this does not represent a painful request. Inquiring about his "passed fortunes" reveals Hobbinoll's desire to know what Colin has learned on this trip. If so, it indicates a form of awareness based on his own experiences and knowledge.<sup>170</sup> Such a request seems to illustrate a newfound agency even in Hobbinoll. Ultimately, this questioning indicates an interpretative method I argue Spenser desires to encourage in his epic audience.

Spenser naturally returns the reader to teaching issues by showing his concerns with the audience's role and poetic purpose in *CCCHA*. As begun in the *SC* and executed in *CCCHA*, Colin's priority remains guiding his flock. But one of the interesting places

---

<sup>170</sup> For further discussions about Augustine's ideas concerning self-exploration and self-knowledge see Brian Stock. *After Augustine*.

he links guiding his flock with interpretation is when he distinguishes between flattering words and praise.<sup>171</sup> As witnessed in the allegory of the oak and the briar contrasted by Colin's vow to praise Cynthia "For that my selfe I do professe to be/Vassal to one, whom all my dayes I serve;" Spenser draws a sharp distinction, an ethical distinction, between words of praise and words of flattery (466-467).

For Colin, this distinction marks the fulfillment of his maturation. In the *SC* he displays an awareness that his past songs were of false flattery to Rosalind. But upon meeting Cynthia, he learns what true praise is. Yet, with this knowledge of praise comes Colin bearing witness to the false words of Cynthia's flatterers. Distinguishing between flattery and praise marks an important lesson and distinction for Colin on his journey. Furthermore, this distinction is also an important one for Spenser as he continues to consider what the true purpose of poetry should be.

This distinction between praise and flattery deepens in the last part of *CCCHA* where Colin goes to great lengths to distinguish between a gentleman and a courtier. Here, Spenser's purpose to "fashion a gentleman" through the words of the *FQ* echoes from his Letter to Raleigh into his pastoral. In this late section of *CCCHA*, Colin states, "To which him needs, a guilefull hollow hart,/Masked with faire dissembling curtesie,.A filed tounge furnisht with tearme of art,/No art of schoole, but Courtiers schoolery" (699-702). Here, paired with the earlier passage announcing that Colin's task is to "warne yong shephesrds wandering wit" it seems that Spenser desires to fashion a gentleman rather than a Courtier and distinguishes between the two. It seems that a Courtier is learned in the ways of false flattery and disguise whereas the gentleman is honest in

---

<sup>171</sup> Interestingly, Colin's discussions of flattery appears to educate the shepherds to the vices of the fallen city—false language. Such a lesson seems to relate to Kermode's earlier discussions of pastoral as an "urban product," possibly because its audience is.

praise and devoted to the pursuit of “single Truth and simple honestie...” (727).<sup>172</sup> Again, this distinction marks some of the lessons Colin learned on his voyage.

This episode also appears to represent one of the places in the poem where Colin *tells* his audience the good characteristics of a gentleman and the bad ones of a courtier, rather than allowing them to determine these conclusions on their own. This variance in narrative style and teaching appears to make this one of the passages in which even the newest interpreter can gain insight. Though not one of the more obscure places in the poem, where a more experienced reader will gain insight through contemplation and recognition, it remains a place for one to begin interpretation. The presence of both types of episodes—overt and obscure—shows Colin’s awareness of his audience’s varying levels of interpretation and provides places for each to learn.

Colin illustrates his desire to always be the good shepherd as he distinguishes between a gentleman and a courtier. This distinction becomes less objective as the passage progresses thus returning back to Colin’s desired teaching methods. Colin states, “For arts of schoole have there small countenance,/Counted but toyes to busie idyl braines,/And there professours find small maintenance,/But to be instruments of others *gaines*” (703-706, my italics). In this description of courtiers, we gain specific insight into Colin’s earlier sentiment that the true purpose of poetry is to teach and protect rather than bring personal gains. If the latter were the goal, then Colin (or Spenser) would be nothing but a courtier attempting to use all the available tools of advancement and refinement for outward personal gains (popularity, ego, praise). So, while the Letter to Raleigh distinguishes between a gentleman and a courtier, maybe in the *SC*, the

---

<sup>172</sup> This discussion directly relates to Spenser’s Blatant Beast in Book V of the *FQ*.

distinction is between a courtier and a poet. This would give grounds for Spenser's labored discussions of poetry and poetic purpose rather than morals or ethics.<sup>173</sup>

This idea of the distinction between courtiers, gentlemen and poets also reinforces the sentiment suggesting Cynthia's court was less than kind to Colin's songs. It was she, not her court, who was supportive of Colin's songs. This surfaces when Thestylis asks, "...Why Colin, since thou foundst such grace/With Cynthia and all her noble crew:/Why didst thou ever leave that happie place" (652-654). Colin replies, "Happie indeed (said Colin) I him hold,/That may that blessed presence still enjoy/...Some part of those enormities did see,/The which in Court continually hooved,/And followed those which happie seemed to bee" (660-661, 665-667). This experience with Cynthia's court also brought him home to the pasture. Again, we see his peers questions teasing out details, thus making Colin's narrative more complete.

But continuing with this strain of poetic discussion and personal value, Colin comments:

For each mans worth is measured by his weed,  
As harts by hornes, or asses by their eares:  
Yet asses been not all whose eares exceed,  
Nor yet all harts, that hornes the highest beares.  
*For highest lookes have not the highest mynd,  
Nor haughtie words most full of highest thoughts.* (711-716, my italics)

Words need substance, content, in order to reach full meaning potential. The hollow words of the courtier parallel the meaning-laden ones of the poet. Where the courtier flatters, the poet praises and gains a different sort of immortality through this praise than

---

<sup>173</sup> Such a suggestion may also offer insight into Spenser's Letter to Raleigh preceding CCCHA where he states, "Sir, that you may see that I am not always ydle as yee thinke, though not greatly well occupied, nor altogether undutiful, though not precisely officious..." (525). Here, Spenser seems to be tongue-in-cheek as he refers to the non-poetic duties associated with his commission.

the earthly shows of land and title that the courtier gains with flattery. In other words, words must contain substance and it is this substance, or viable meanings, that I would argue Spenser desires to teach his reader how to uncover and contemplate. Or, on the other hand, it is the empty, meaningless word that Spenser desires to warn his reader of.<sup>174</sup>

Both Augustine and Hooker comment upon a similar tentativeness towards speakers who are too persuasive in their speech. For Augustine, rhetoricians represented these smooth speakers, while the overly composed sermon put Hooker on his guard. In each instance, Augustine and Hooker rely upon the practiced interpretative skills of their audience/pupil to guide them from harms way to reveal and entertain many possibilities for meaning. Stripping the interpreter of his ability to discern truth from false, right from wrong becomes the largest threat that these persuasive flatters pose to the interpreter. Once this sense is compromised, the interpreter has lost his/her map which guides him/her towards truth and the weapon that protects him/her from foes. For Spenser, Augustine, and Hooker, guiding and strengthening these natural senses in a reader appears to best arm him against the threat of sophistry.

Expanding our original exegetical perimeters, Spenser's poetic project desires to teach the reader how to distinguish between the empty words of a flatterer and the meaning laden ones of the poet to discover that not all poetry exists on the surface as meaning does with flattery. In other words, *poetry is not all praise*. With this distinction begins heightened interpretation. It is more than true or false, though. Heightened

---

<sup>174</sup> The entire being of the courtier's words, like "...bladders blown up with wynd," is surface meaning/value. I believe that Spenser desires to move beyond the surface to discover where true meaning resides.



interpretation involves discovering intent and possibilities, and, ultimately, realizing that the poetic word can carry meaning as the Scriptural one does.

With this sort of heuristic model, Spenser envisions a national epic containing more than the praise of Elizabeth—an epic whose ideas link to Spenser’s pastorals and one that polishes the interpretative goals introduced in these pastorals. For Spenser the epic of the *FQ* becomes a place to consider what the true result and aim of epic poetry is—a place not just for praise but for contemplation, reasoning, and discerning, too. Moreover, Spenser desires for these epic aims to be realized both in and with the aid of pastoral.

Colin continues this discussion of empty, or superficial, language when he says:

So they (courtiers) themselves for praise of fooles do sell,  
And all their wealth for painting on a wall;  
With price whereof, they buy a golden bell,  
And purchase highest rowmes in bowre and hall:  
Whiles single truth and simple honestie  
Do wander up and downe despy’d of all. (723-728)

Colin continues to criticize the courtiers in Cynthia’s service as shallow and solely interested in material gains. According to Colin’s description, these types of men desire the glittery structures of earthly wealth rather than pursuing the interiors of heavenly and noble pursuits.<sup>175</sup>

Though never entering a courtly setting, Hobbinoll is quick to correct Colin’s critiques, stating, “Ah Colin (then said Hobbinoll) the blame/Which thou imputest, is too generall,/As if not and gentle wit of name,/Nor honest mynd might there be found at all” (731-734). Here, Hobbinoll notes the overextension of Colin’s criticism and

---

<sup>175</sup> In many ways, these courtiers resemble the members of Lucifera’s court in Book I of the *FQ*. They seek the material possession of earthly praise rather than the divine gifts of heavenly contemplation. And, as we shall see in the House of Pride, these courtiers are imprisoned by these earthly desires.

optimistically remarks that some of these courtiers had to be honest minded. This comment again exerts Hobbinoll's evolved interpretive skills. Here, he criticizes Colin's statement not out of disbelief but out of his own sphere of interpretation, which in this case is rhetorically.

Actually, Hobbinoll continually questions Colin and his narrative throughout the piece. As stated earlier in the poem, Colin mentions meeting at least one equal with whom "...each making other merry,/Neither envying other, nor envied..." (77-78). In either case, Hobbinoll exerts his readerly authority by directly questioning Colin's story.<sup>176</sup> Of all the shepherds, Hobbinoll's evolution seems the most rewarding since he has moved from novice to more advanced interpreter while always keeping his pastoral purity. During his journey, he never compromises the characteristics that make him important for Colin. In fact, none of the shepherds do. This may also contribute to Colin's development. Since his audience remains relatively the same, Colin can truly blossom as a poet-teacher.

Colin's response to Hobbinoll's criticism is, "Blame is (quoth he) more blamelesse generall,/Then that which private errours doth pursew:" (749-750). Here, Colin suggests that it is better to blame largely rather than specifically. He continues to

---

<sup>176</sup> Hobbinoll's interjection represents a brilliant rhetorical move on Spenser's behalf. This comment temporarily cuts some of Colin's narrative authority while simultaneously strengthening Spenser's authorial authority. This questioning allows Spenser to complain within a certain set of boundaries that are created by a fictional scolding rather than public disgrace. It allows the fictional Spenser to monitor the severity of his critiques, no matter where the world. This move also allows Spenser to control the allegorical interpretation of this poem and the characters. As readers, we assume Colin is analogous with Spenser, Cynthia with Elizabeth, etc. but in these passages, Spenser controls a reader's reaction to Colin (or himself) by using another character as a mouthpiece for their would-be defenses. In other words, this passage indicates that Spenser is aware of what his reader is going to think after Colin's critique and uses the text to voice and address these issues.

answer that there were men of “right worthie parts” and “spotlesse honestie” (752-753).

But others err and don’t realize they err because:

For either they be puffed up with pride,  
Or fraught with envie that their galls do swell,  
Or they their dayes to ydlennesse divide,  
Or drowned lie in pleasures wastefull well,  
In which like Moldwarps nousling still they lurke,  
Unmyndfull of chiefe parts of manlinesse. (757-764)

Here, Colin discusses the same sort of superficiality as before—these courtiers are prideful, idle, and lazy—but this behavior extends into the realm of physical love or lust. Also, this description reminds us of Cuddie’s in the *Februarie eclogue*. Like the youthful Cuddie, or the briar “puffed up with pryde”, who denied guidance from his elders and isolated himself from the larger spheres of existence, so does the courtier exist in an isolated, enclosed wanton of opportunities for fruitful contemplation.

Through this final comparison we can overtly see Colin’s evolution as a teacher and poet. Now he has courtly experiences to match his pastoral ones. Yet, even after gaining Cynthia’s praise, he uses his experiences in court to re-consider his pastoral ones. This sort of awareness echoes Augustine in the *Confessions*. It also depicts Colin as the mature and evolved poet-teacher finally embracing his poetic fate. Moreover, in addition to Colin’s evolution from the *SC* to *CCCHA* his actions in *CCCHA* illustrate what Spenser values in a “hero” and what he expects from his ideal audience. These expectations provide the reader of the *FQ* with a pre-set interpretative schema to draw upon. The following chapters shall trace how this progression affects the knights of the *FQ*.

Moreover, viewing Colin as an extension of Spenser's knights in the *FQ* suggests that Colin's experiences and travels can help the reader learn how to interpret both the text and his experiences. After reading the first installment of the *FQ*, Spenser's reader is led back to the pasture. This lead provides more than an interlude between epic installments. Instead, it further reveals Spenser's desire to both be a poet-teacher and show the reader an example of such a poet-teacher in the exchanges between Colin and his peers. These examples ultimately provide the opportunity for the reader to consider other teacherly characters in the *FQ*—characters like Una, Contemplation, Astraea, Meliboe, and even Corydon. Considering these figures unites the meaning and characters of the poems, thus encouraging the reader to exercise his/her interpretative abilities to contemplate the significance of these expanded meanings.

CHAPTER THREE  
REDCROSSE KNIGHT: INSTINCT VERSUS EXPERIENCE

Leaving Spenser's pastorals this study turns to his epic, *The Faerie Queene (FQ)*. The first three books were originally published in 1590 and the second three in 1596. In this early edition a Letter to Raleigh accompanied the work.<sup>177</sup> The purpose of this puzzling addition to the 1590 edition of the *FQ* has stumped readers and critics alike.<sup>178</sup> Promising to expound "his whole intention" and "giveth great light to the reader, for the better understanding [of the work]" this appendix outwardly serves to guide the reader to the general intention of the text. But, as readers over the centuries have discovered, the Letter provides only basic plot description and generalities concerning the nature of poetry while primarily treating the structural components of the story.

Rather than fulfilling the poet's promise, the Letter to Raleigh appears to guide the reader farther from meaning. By telling his reader one set of expectations then creating others, Spenser encourages his reader to distinguish between what he/she knows and what he/she sees. Just as the knights of Spenser's story must move past sensory perception, the seen, to consider potential, unseen meanings, so, too must Spenser's reader confront what the poet has told him/her with what he/she sees and interprets beyond this anticipated meaning.

---

<sup>177</sup> As A.C. Hamilton notes in his annotated Longman Edition of *The Faerie Queene*, the Letter to Raleigh was originally after Book III of the 1590 edition. If it was truly meant to be instructional, it would be more prefatory.

<sup>178</sup> As to why the Letter was not in the 1596 edition of the *FQ* nor the 1609 folio, Hamilton suggests that the Letter was absent because it was at the end of Book III and five concluding stanzas of that same book were accidentally deleted. Or, as Gordon Teskey argues, it may have been erased when Books IV-VI were added to the whole edition ("Positioning Spenser's 'Letter to Raleigh'" in *Craft and Tradition: Essays in Honour of William Blissett*, eds. de H. B. Groot. and Alexander Legatt. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990, pp. 35-46).

But while some early critics view the Letter as misleading, later critics, refusing to believe Spenser would intentionally misguide a reader, propose that the Letter to Raleigh is an early outline of the *FQ*. According to these later critics, in the course of writing his epic, Spenser wavered from his original plan without having a chance to revise these early parts of the poem.<sup>179</sup> The omission of the Letter in the 1596 edition of the *FQ* appears to reinforce such theories, but this omission largely suggests that the Letter is irrelevant to reading and understanding the poem.<sup>180</sup>

As this chapter shall illustrate, this need to “giveth great light to the reader” implies that the reader shall be without a guide, working alone in interpreting the text. That is, he no longer has an E.K. figure to explain the text for him. And while this helpful gesture does not really provide much interpretative aid, it establishes a pattern for a teaching schema that Spenser shall return to throughout the work. While the Letter does not provide the reader with much insight into the meaning of Spenser’s poem, it does allude to Spenser’s readerly interests. The reference to the reader and Spenser’s

---

<sup>179</sup> When introducing his collection of Spenser’s critical heritage, R.M. Cummings reminds his reader that we can never truly know Spenser’s compositional intentions (3). While this is a rather self-evident point, it is one that is often overlooked when considering what *evidence* we have of Spenser’s writing process, for “it is generally assumed that the composition of *The Faerie Queene* involved a number of changes in the whole conception of the poem, but precisely what changes of conception can hardly be known” (3). For a more complete discussion of these evidentiary limitations as well as a chronological collection of what Spenser’s contemporaries and subsequent readers thought of his work, see R. M. Cummings. *Spenser: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971

<sup>180</sup> Some critics, rightfully, posit that this omission was less poetic than political, especially after Raleigh’s falling out of favor in Elizabeth’s court. These political motivations can be linked to Spenser’s struggles with poetic and cultural identity. Though not directly referring to the Letter, David Lee Miller examines the often contradictory parts of identity, that is, the tension between public and private, sacred and profane, or intellectual and physical. See, David Lee Miller. *The Poem’s Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 Faerie Queene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988; Andrew Hadfield. *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994. For discussions directly linked to Spenser and the tension between his Irish and English identity see Willy Maley. *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture and Identity*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1997; Sue Pettitt Starke. “Briton Knight or Irish Bard? Spenser’s Pastoral Personal and the Epic Project in *A View* and *Colin Clouts*.” *Spenser Studies* 12 (1991; published 1998):133-50. To consider how these discussions of Spenser and identity extend into the poetic sphere, see Christopher Highley. “Spenser and the Bards.” *Spenser Studies* 12 (1991; published 1998):77-104.

desire to help this reader gain a “better understanding” of the text highlights Spenser’s interest in both the reader and the reading process. This continued interest emerges in the Letter itself as Spenser suggests that the Letter will aid “*your* better light in reading therof” (714, my italics). The reader’s possession of the light (“your light”) implies that the reader brings meaning to the text and the Letter’s intention is to possibly brighten this interpretative light, not necessarily supply it.

But it is the ambiguity of the Letter to Raleigh which truly introduces the kind of interpretation Spenser’s reader will and must execute throughout the poem. Specifically, the Letter teaches a reader to move past the easily understood segments of the narrative in order to discover possible viable meanings in the more obscure allegorical places. By dealing with the *FQ*’s plot rather than its meaning, in the Letter, Spenser, rather Socratically, points to the distinction between literal, surface meaning and figurative, hidden meaning. The literal meanings are the characters in the text whereas the figurative meanings of this cast range from the one-to-one historical allegorical correspondences that immediately provide the reader with answers to the deeper, potential meanings unlocked through interpretation—or the intentions and possible associations of such images that require contemplation.

As we see in Redcrosse as he reaches the mount of heavenly Contemplation, his most significant lesson, his most significant skill, is to frame his mortal life in holy righteousness. Essentially, Redcrosse begins truly to interpret the world around him when he can take the earthly, the seen, and consider it in a divine space, an unseen space. He is able to exercise this consideration through figurative interpretation.

I argue that this practice, this goal, is what Spenser desires in his reader. He expects his reader to take the overt meaning of the literal and contemplate it in order to open the text to many viable avenues towards meaning, rather than one.<sup>181</sup> This is why the Letter to Raleigh explicates the plot and the characters rather than the poem's moral or allegorical blueprints—because to display outwardly the meanings hidden in the text negates the purpose of the reader and the necessity of interpretation. Spenser's desire to prevent “gealous opinions and misconstructions” grounds itself in teaching and training the reader how to explicate the text (Letter 714). In essence, Spenser does not desire to foreclose interpretation, but, instead, invites healthy, abundant, and multifarious interpretation—an interpretation guided by reason.

Arguably, Spenser shows the reader *how* to initiate healthy interpretation by utilizing several pre-existing exegetical schemas his reader would be familiar with as interpretative starting points. One such paradigm that Spenser assumes his reader is familiar with is the tradition of the epic hero, and/or the romantic, chivalric hero, and another is the ways and rules of Scriptural interpretation.<sup>182</sup> By beginning with these pre-existing practices and expectations, Spenser's reader can begin interpretation from a common set of skills. And with these skills, Spenser's reader can travel with the various knights to experience how the alterations of these traditional paradigms affect meaning.

---

<sup>181</sup> In a similar vein, Isabel G. MacCaffrey asserts that the poem's goal is to awaken the reader to the “unapprehended reality” that surrounds “our own lives” (86). This awareness demands that the reader practices the same sort of self-contemplation that Spenser's characters experience. In essence, the potential textual hero is Spenser's reader, reflected in the poem's multiple allegories. See *Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

<sup>182</sup> For discussions concerning Spenser and romance or Spenser as a love poet, see Richard A. Levin. “The Legende of Redcrosse Knight and Una, or Of the Love of a Good Woman.” *Studies in English Literature* 31 (Winter 1991):1-24; Judith Dundas. *The Spider and the Bee: The Artistry of Spenser's "Faerie Queene."* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985; Colin Burrow. *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Additionally, if considering how Spenser fits into various Elizabethan genres, Cummings introduction addresses Spenser's popularity as a love poet—a reputation largely derived from the Elizabethan consideration of *The Shepheardes Calender* as a love complaint (*Spenser: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971, pp. 6-8).



Essentially, Spenser's reader is being trained through the actions and decisions of his characters.

An example of this methodology can be seen in Book I. Redcrosse is a knight shaped in the romantic tradition.<sup>183</sup> He travels with his maiden to save her kingdom, gain power, experience, and fame—a familiar story. But as the early episodes unfold, we soon realize that Redcrosse is far from a traditional chivalric knight. He lacks experience but possesses an instinct and sensitivity. What seems to drive Redcrosse is the desire to pursue and activate in himself an impulse to see beyond the surface in order to read and explore the possibilities of meaning.<sup>184</sup> Because of this impulse to learn, Redcrosse animates one example of the teaching model Spenser erects throughout the entire work. That is, as Redcrosse tries to learn, and apply the interpretive energies teaching opens him to, he brings to life for us what teaching is—we both share his position, as learner, and stand outside it to grasp what teaching means.

In many ways, as we shall see in this chapter, Redcrosse embodies one of the foundational precepts of the Augustinian exegetical process that one must “descend, in order to ascend”. As Redcrosse encounters Despaire and reaches new depths of emotional and spiritual conflict, he begins to become more receptive to contemplation in order to move past these earthly trials. His struggles, along with his journey, are as much

---

<sup>183</sup> Though addressing larger textual issues such as the location of meaning and narrative, Harry Berger, Jr. alludes to the ramifications of Spenser's use and alteration of multiple genres, and the expectations associated with these genres. He comments, if the narrator “kidnaps romance and its readership and brings them tied up like Acrasia to the wellhead of Tudor ideology,” then the poem “is a double agent that kidnaps the narrator and his chivalric idealism in the service of a more subversive agenda” (33). While Berger perceives the problems that arise with this readerly “kidnapping”, this study sees these generic discrepancies as intentional places where the reader can begin fruitful interpretation (Harry Berger, Jr. “Narrative as Rhetoric in *The Faerie Queene*.” *English Literary Renaissance* 21 (Winter 1991):3-48).

<sup>184</sup> Redcrosse's distinctiveness is further highlighted as Spenser introduces knights like Sansfoy, Sansloy, and Sansjoy who embody more common earthly knights seeking revenge, riches, and power. While they are trapped in earthly confines like Redcrosse, they seemingly possess no desire or promise to free themselves, while he does.

internal and spiritual as they are external and physical, thus continually aligning him with the Christian hero.<sup>185</sup> When paired with the physical journey of the chivalric knight, these internal struggles mark a depth of character and distinction from the conventional chivalric knight of the romance tradition. Spenser's reader would realize these distinctions and use them as a place to begin interpretation.

I believe that parceling out what makes Redcrosse special allows the reader to concurrently experience what he is going through and recognize the idea of teaching that comes into view through his experience. Redcrosse's internal wounds, as they manifest themselves physically, force him to use his mind, rather than his body, to solve his problems. Redcrosse reveals his ability to employ his intellectual training both in learning how to perceive his surroundings and in the actual act of contemplation. This practice of learning how to interpret on the way to contemplation echoes Augustine's exegetical goals while modeling the ideal way to free and righteous interpretation. I argue that what Spenser hopes to train his reader to do is distinguish these differences between what is sensed/seen and what is interpreted, then contemplate how they open the text to potential meanings.

Throughout the poem, Spenser uses historical allegory to play with a synthesis between the real and the ideal. Within Spenser's allegory there exist different levels of reality. Yes, we are dealing with fanciful poetry in a fictitious land of Faerie, but the poem still speaks to a version of history unfolded throughout the lines of the poem. For

---

<sup>185</sup> This connection comes to a head when we learn that Redcrosse is St. George, a canonized Christian saint. He is both a Christian saint and a national saint as emblematic of England and its greatness. Maureen Quilligan briefly discusses this Christian significance of St. George in *Milton's Spenser: The Politics of Reading*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. Here, she compares St. George's view from the hill of Contemplation with Milton's more prophetic invocation to light in *Paradise Lost* III. Michael Murrin also comments on Spenser's ability to de-historicize characters like St. George in order for a Christian audience to better relate (*The Allegorical Epic: Essays in its Rise and Decline*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

example, Gloriana as a character serves as an ideal, a memory Arthur searches for—an imprint he desires to make into a reality.<sup>186</sup> But Gloriana is based on an ideal of someone who exists in historical times. In this interplay, we as readers must ask: is Spenser gesturing to a certain reader who desires this one-to-one translatable allegorical read? Or, is Spenser merely playing upon the expectations of an epic reader? In characters such as Gloriana and Britomart, is there no link to a meaning beyond a simple correspondence to Elizabeth?

For Spenser, the answers to these questions lie in teaching. He not only targets a specific reader, but he desires to train this reader to read his allegory based upon generic expectations, the ability to identify where these expectations vary, and a common set of exegetical skills. Specifically, Spenser appears to take these preconceived generic expectations and expand their past traditions in order to recreate an epic tradition, an allegorical tradition that can exist beyond the literal and moral machines. Moreover, when Spenser's early works are viewed as a continuous whole, linked by the concept of teaching, it seems that Spenser's hermeneutic agenda begins long before the first books of the *FQ*.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Colin Clout from *CCCHA* shows us that experience and interpretation can reshape the pastoral landscape and provide even the lowest shepherd with agency. By encouraging questioning and contemplation, Spenser's

---

<sup>186</sup> In Elizabeth J. Bellamy's larger discussions of the *FQ*, she considers the significance of Arthur's dream of Gloriana as a "just-missed encounter" (221). This "just-missed encounter" provides a "temporal lag" in Arthur's quest for epic subjectivity that she aligns with Spenser's own "temporal lag" from Chaucer (*Translations of Power: Narcissism and the Unconscious in Epic History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). For further discussions of the scene with Arthur and Gloriana, see Elizabeth Spiller. "Poetic Parthenogenesis and Spenser's Idea of Creation in *The Faerie Queene*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2000):63-79. For further consideration of Gloriana and her role in the poem, see Jeffrey P. Fruen. "The Faerie Queene unveiled?: Five Glimpses of Gloriana" *Spenser Studies* 11 (1990): 53-88; Jeffrey P. Fruen. "'True Glorious Type': The Place of Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene*" *Spenser Studies* 7 (1987): 147-198.

shepherds begin to exhibit the exegetical skills necessary to move beyond the confines of the literal text and, in turn, begin to place themselves in a larger hermeneutic and poetic paradigm—a paradigm hinging upon a Christian conception of interpretation as the balance of intellect and emotion, reason and love. This same exegetical practice resurfaces in the *FQ*, but knights, rather than shepherds, are the subjects animating Spenser’s teaching ideas. In either case, Spenser’s teaching theory is presented and the reader can witness the many ways to enact this theory—some experiences are successful, like Redcrosse’s, and others less so, like Calidore’s. Others, such as Artegall or Arthur, are representative of ideal interpretative actions rooted in a balance between emotion and reason—exegetical actions that allows the two knights to effectively and successfully explore the multifarious places that contain meaning,

Redcrosse’s, and Spenser’s other knights’, enactment of this teaching schema further reveals Spenser’s poetic intentions. In the Letter, Spenser claims he writes the *FQ* “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” (Letter 714). I argue that Spenser writes the *FQ* to fashion a reader who will follow the actions and lessons of each knight in order train himself/herself in poetic interpretation and contemplation. As A. Leigh DeNeef posits “fashioning” can mean to represent or to delineate as well as to train and educate. “Discipline” also carries a complex meaning referring to moral teaching and, more specifically, to the instruction which will reform a student.<sup>187</sup> Such reform echoes Sidney’s premise that poetry should instruct, delight and move a reader into virtuous action and it appears that Spenser takes this job of fashioning a reader as a poetic obligation.

---

<sup>187</sup> Leigh A. DeNeef. *Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982.

Or, as DeNeef posits, “both poet and reader imitate an idea by bodying it forth in particular and concrete work, verbal in the first instance, moral in the second” (8).<sup>188</sup> But, as this study asserts, these moral considerations result in interpretative ends, not necessarily chivalric ones. Essentially, Spenser employs poetry to move his reader into the virtuous action of interpretation and contemplation. In Book I Spenser sets forth this exegetical theory as well as illustrates the practice of interpretation and contemplation. The result is not only a reader moved to interpretative action, but one moved to understand the nature of this action.

These hermeneutic lessons begin in the first lines of Book I where we meet Redcrosse Knight, the eventual hero of Book I, a knight “cladde in mightie armes and silver shielde,/Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,/The cruell marks of many a bloody fielde;/Yet armes till that time did he never wield;” (I.i.1). Redcrosse dons the armor of an experienced knight, yet does not possess much personal battle experience. Here, we encounter a knight literally filling the space of another’s knightly feats. But he is not satisfied with another’s experiences or image. Instead, he looks for experiences to better his battle skills, “to prove his puissance in battell brave/Upon his foe, and his new force to learn” (I.i.3).

Redcrosse is a knight without an identity, without a past, but he does have a future, as we learn from the hermit Contemplation. Lacking a past, but having a future alludes to the importance of gaining these exegetical abilities. While Redcrosse learns of his prophecy from Contemplation, he needs the interpretative and contemplative skills to achieve his potential—he must be *willing* to learn.

---

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

Along similar lines, in addition to mentioning his battle abilities, the narrator notes Redcrosse's desire to learn, thus placing the two appetites on an equal plane. This reference to learning also implies that Redcrosse is very aware of, even self-conscious of, his shortcomings as a warrior and, in turn, open to the teachings he will later receive from Una and Contemplation. Redcrosse's receptiveness to teaching, his desire to learn, eventually guides his actions throughout Book I.

Allowing this desire for knowledge to motivate him, rather than the traditional earthly desires of knights, Redcrosse can begin to gain insight from his experiences. These experiences will shape his interpretative skills, which will result in the sharpening of his combative ones and the fulfillment of his destiny. Such interpretative growth is similar to Colin's, who learns from his experiences to become a better shepherd, a better poet, once he sheds his earthly desires for fame. Redcrosse's experiences distinguish bad from good interpretation and allow him to exercise the latter. Essentially, gaining battle experience, and exercising his interpretative skills in these experiences, provides him with the practice needed to attain a higher realization and practice of the interpretative exercise.

Interestingly, though, the Redcrosse described in the Letter to Raleigh does not carry such potential, neither learning nor battle potential. He is described as a "tall clownishe younge man" sitting on the floor "unfitte through his rusticity for a better place" (717). It is not until Una gives him armor and replaces his unfitting garb for "the armour of a Christian man" that Redcrosse "seemed the goodliest man in al that company, and was well liked by the Lady" (717). Even in this early description,

Redcrosse is lost, identity-less until contoured and clad by Una's Christian virtue.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, though Spenser's description of Redcrosse literally describes a knight whose provinciality makes him unfit to sit anywhere but the floor, it hermeneutically suggests that he is "unfitte" for "a better place" because he does not possess the intellectual capabilities to move from his current location.<sup>190</sup> As witnessed in this description of Redcrosse, he must, and does, start from the basest of earthly positions in order to be fully receptive to teaching and achieve contemplation. In this light, providing him with fitting armor becomes representative of Una's beginning to prepare Redcrosse for his spiritual journey, as well as for his physical one.

But what really fuels Redcrosse's ambitions to gain battle experience is his desire to gain fame and praise, conventional knightly goals. Early in Book I, we learn that Redcrosse:

Upon a great adventure was bond,  
That greatest Gloriana to him gave,  
That greatest Glorious Queen of Faerie lond,  
To winne him worship, and her grace to have,  
Which of *earthly things* he did most crave. (I.i.3, my italics)<sup>191</sup>

Redcrosse pursues the earthly ends of combat, the earthly spoils of battle—power and fame.<sup>192</sup> While he does not possess this experience yet, he illustrates an awareness of a *type* of knight he desires to be. He wants to be the knight who is praised for his earthly

---

<sup>189</sup> This desire for experience ties into the hermeneutic model erected throughout chapters 1 and 2. In this model ones experiences shape how they interpret their surroundings and, in turn, Scripture. Ideally, the interpreter moves from the personal, internal experiences to the larger, external lessons contained in Scripture.

<sup>190</sup> Redcrosse's rustic, peasant heritage aligns him with the shepherds of the pasture suggesting that Redcrosse is a less obvious character than Colin who connects Spenser's pastoral with his epic. Perhaps another obscure passage leading Spenser's reader back to the pasture (significantly sooner than the end of Book III, I might add).

<sup>191</sup> Much like Artegall and Calidore, his quest begins with a request from Gloriana.

<sup>192</sup> In this scene, Redcrosse seems to equate fame with Gloriana's approval. As a traditional chivalric knight, Redcrosse desires the praise of his Queen. This praise, as Spenser well knows, gains one favor.

exploits. At this stage, Redcrosse's goals are motivated by the end results of his journey, rather than by his desire to attain virtue—the virtue which will aid him during his journey. His motivation solely exists in the earthly realm, rather than the spiritual. And, at this point, his actions are spurred by his *idea* of what constitutes a great knight rather than by a concrete example of such a knight.

Una, for whom Redcrosse fights the dragon, accompanies him from Gloriana's court. She is as her name suggests, the One, "so pure and innocent as that such lambe" (I.i.5). For Spenser, Una's purity and innocence, here, means virtue as much as it means chastity.<sup>193</sup> In an epic centered on virtue, Una represents the overarching virtue that has no name, but works much in the same manner as Augustine's charity. This link to Augustinian charity, and her potential to serve as a protective force guiding Redcrosse throughout his quest, suggests that Una is the embodiment of the highest form of interpretation. And as such, she teaches Redcrosse to unlock his power to choose, both by example and encouragement. She protects Redcrosse as he learns how to understand his surroundings, but she also encourages him to understand why he must employ interpretation and how he can do so to move towards contemplation. As a teacher, Una does not tell Redcrosse how to interpret, but, instead, urges him to employ faith in his decision-making process, in his interpretative process.

---

<sup>193</sup> In the previous stanza, Una is described "upon a lowly Asse more white then snow," (I.i.4). Hamilton notes in his analysis of the scene, "until she is named in [I.i.]45.9, Una is associated by the lowly *Asse* with Christ's humility (Matt 21-5.6, from Zech. 9.9)". This link to Christ's humility represents both the purity of Una's nature as well as the heights of her virtue—she is virtuous in heavenly terms, not courtly ones. This imagery in stanza 4, though not directly dealt with here, is an important one for critics considering the relation of Una to the true church, and/or in relation to Elizabeth. For further discussions surrounding Una as the true church see Steadman, John M. *Nature into Myth: Medieval and Renaissance Moral Symbols*. Dusquene Studies, v. 1. Pittsburgh: Dusquene University Press, 1979, 131-137; Claire McEachern. *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 41-50, who views Una as the true church, but in relation to Duessa; and Perry, Nandra. "Elizabeth I as Holy Church in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*." *Renaissance Papers* 1997, 33-48, who examines the Holy Church in relation to Elizabeth.



She teaches Redcrosse by example and dialogue rather than through instructing him in every action. This teaching method preserves Redcrosse's ability to choose and ultimately learn from his choices. Beginning in these early scenes and continuing throughout Book I, Una's guidance quietly urges Redcrosse on his path towards understanding. Even when Una is physically absent, Redcrosse's *idea* of Una spurs him forward on his journey. At times she is also the safety-net that protects him from misinterpreting the situation around him, as in the scene with Error or in the cave of Despaire.

But while Una serves as his guide, she cannot choose for Redcrosse. Instead, her urgings push Redcrosse to unlock *his* power to choose—that is, to distinguish viable right possibilities from evil ones and then explore in the right. As Spenser outlines in his exegetical model, good interpretation comes from identifying the array of possible correct choices, but relies upon using experience to enable this identifying. The more one interprets, the better he becomes at it. And the better he becomes at making the interpretive choices that lead him towards the discovery of many possible meanings and the safety to explore within these possibilities.

Redcrosse is confronted with choice early in the canto as he and Una lose their way when a storm leads them off the path:

They cannot find that path, which first was showne,  
 But wander too and fro in *wayes unknowne*,  
 Furthest from end then, when they nearest weene,  
 That makes them doubt, their wits be not their owne:  
 So many paths, so many turnings seene,  
 That which of them to take, in diverse doubt they been. (I.i.10, my italics)

This physical displacement is analogous to Redcrosse's interpretative one. Just as he is unable physically to navigate his way on an unknown path so, too, is he unable to discern which situations will relocate him onto the path.<sup>194</sup>

Moreover, Redcrosse finds difficulty in returning to the chosen path because he is not familiar enough with it. As of this moment, he has never chosen a path, but instead has been given another's footsteps to follow—another's armor to wear and another's quest to seek. One of Redcrosse's lessons on this journey is to employ choice to discover which paths might lead him to his ultimate, destined path of salvation. In this passage, inexperience and doubt keeps him from making these choices.<sup>195</sup> While the multiplicity of possibilities is the desired hermeneutic effect for Spenser's interpretative model, here, these many possibilities overwhelm him because he has not cultivated the intellectual tastes to savor the many. Instead, he chokes on the possibilities. Multiplicity is not negative, but Redcrosse must learn how to work with these options.

Also, the image of wandering seems particularly poignant in this case in that it alludes to a necessary part of an interpretative process—one must be lost before he/she is compelled to seek direction. But if one does not know he/she is lost, will he/she ever seek direction? Is wandering the proper way to handle this manyness? It seems that wandering, the right kind of wandering that moves one to *seek* direction, illustrates a desire to learn and gain direction. In this distinction, Spenser seems to distinguish

---

<sup>194</sup> The wooded location of this canto is traditional as most romantic knights travel between the unknown places of the woods and the civilization of court. In the previous stanza, stanza 9, Spenser lists the various types of trees found in the wood. He speaks of "that Maple seldom inward sound" (I.i.9). Hamilton notes that in the *Aeneid*, Sinon claims that the Trojan horse is made of maple wood, for "fair without, but unsound within, it stands as a fitting climax to the delightful wood with the monster at its center". With regards to interpretation, this scene is an early obscure place where Redcrosse must see beyond the outward beauty of the woods to consider the monster, Error, that resides in the center.

<sup>195</sup> These choices and the necessity of choice to enact Redcrosse's fate is similar to Artegall's enactment of his idea of justice. A justice which necessitates him to choose between the information he is provided with and the alternative places he can seek truth.

between random wandering and experimental wandering. In the latter, the mind works and makes an effort to interpret beyond earthly appearances, while the former implies a movement based solely upon sensory perception, like sight. Ultimately, this experimental wandering can display an awareness of need and can move the seeker towards discovery and knowing.

As Augustine exhibits in his road metaphor, the process of ascertaining truth centers upon the basic action of discovery. Redcrosse exhibits the individuality of this interpretative process—an individuality shaped by personal experience. One individual's path may not suit another, just as one knight's armor may not fit another. And while divine understanding suits all, the path leading to this knowledge differs for each seeker. Redcrosse's wandering marks a necessary part of the exegetical learning process because it allows him to discover his own path rather than be led down another's. Just as the desired outcome of interpretation and contemplation is to view the personal in lieu of the heavenly, so, too, is it necessary to take the archetypal parts of interpretation and make them personal.

Interestingly, however, we know that the pair is initially given a path to guide them, but when they stray from this path they cannot regain their bearings to find it again. So is the problem that they cannot find the old path they were instructed to travel on, or that they are looking for any path to keep them from randomly wandering?

I believe it is a bit of both. Staying strictly on one path and hitting upon *any* discovered path is equally wrong in that they both call for a one-track method of travel that encourages following rather than choosing. Part of Augustine's, and Spenser's, interpretative theories center upon the merging of an individual's personal interpretative

choices with the larger meanings associated with Scriptural knowledge. In this same spirit, Redcrosse appears to begin his individual quest by straying from the given path in order to discover his own way back to the suggested one. In this case, the given path, though taking him to his final objective (the dragon) is not where real learning occurs. Instead, the real learning occurs while he discovers *for himself* a number of ways to re-discover his original path. This reassessment is where his interpretative lessons occur and where he can start to train the spiritual and intellectual weapons needed to accomplish the task at hand and fulfill his destiny.<sup>196</sup>

Redcrosse eventually begins “resolving forward still to fare” (I.i.11). In this forward movement, Redcrosse travels the most worn path, “That path they take, that beaten seemed most bare,/And like to lead the labyrinth about;” (I.i.11).<sup>197</sup> But from this worn path “At length it brought them to a hollow cave,/Amid the thickest woods...” where they find an empty cave (I.i.11). Here, choosing the most obvious path, the worn path beaten and traversed by others, literally leads them to the den of Error. Much as wearing another’s armor will protect Redcrosse, but never fit him correctly, travelling someone else’s treaded path may take him to a road, but it will never be the road that will lead him to his destiny. Instead, he must discover and forge his own path.

But, the most obvious path leads them to obscurity. As favored by Augustine, obscure Scripture has more to offer an interpreter than overt passages because it forces the interpreter to work through the passage and train their interpretative faculties. For

---

<sup>196</sup> These sentiments echo back to Augustine’s ideas concerning the nature of interpretation and Scriptural understanding.

<sup>197</sup> Matthew A. Fike links Redcrosse to Theseus, whose travels in the Labyrinth to slay the Minotaur mirror Redcrosse’s maze in the woods, ending with the slaying of Error. This link to Theseus becomes even more significant when comparing Calidore’s experiences with Redcrosse’s, since the spirit of Aridane is a central component in the Mt. Acidale scene. See “‘Not Without Theseus’: The Mythic Weave of *The Faerie Queene*, Book I” *Classical and Modern Literature* 17: 231-249.

Augustine, obscure Scripture exercises these exegetical skills but it also instills faith in the reader. It seems Redcrosse encounters a similar opportunity. The path he is given at this point, the obvious road, leads further away from the road he was given—it leads him further into obscurity. And while it may keep him and Una from the initial challenge at hand, we as readers realize that Redcrosse's interpretative journey, and our own, begins with this entrance into obscurity. No matter if some paths might be more difficult, the focus must always remain on the process of interpretation. The action of choice, whether resulting in correctness or error, can and must always become a teaching moment.

As Redcrosse and Una approach the empty cave, Una's role as guide and teacher emerges more sharply. She warns Redcrosse:

Be well aware...  
 Least sudden mischiefe ye too rash provoke;  
 The danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,  
 Breedes dreadfull doubts: Oft fire is without smoke,  
 And peril without show: Therefore your stroke  
 Sir Knight with-hold, till further triall made. (I.i.12)

In this scene Una directly warns Redcrosse about the possible dangers lurking in the unknown. These unknown elements are examples of the unexpectedness associated with Augustinian obscurity as well as a reference to literal and figurative interpretation. For example, one would normally see smoke and assume fire, but if a fire is without the tag of smoke does it not exist? Even without the obvious signal of smoke, one must still be able to identify fire. This process of identification becomes an issue of seeing past what appears in order to examine what truly exists (based on its nature). Without this ability, one is destined to be ruled by doubt, instead of faith and reason.<sup>198</sup> This reference to

---

<sup>198</sup> Additionally, the presence of these unknown foes results, again, in doubt. For Una doubt's most dangerous aspect is its hidden, internal nature. As we see in the Despaire episode, doubt is an intellectual

smoke and fire should prepare Redcrosse, and the reader, for the upcoming episodes with Duessa. Redcrosse must see past her false appearances to evaluate her true nature.

Without this training, he cannot defeat Duessa or Error.

In this scene we imagine Una as the whispering voice of reason to a fearful knight. She both encourages him and guides him. Una acts in the ways of Augustine's charity or Hooker's reason in that she guides her interpreter without ordering him.

Though she warns Redcrosse, suggesting he hold his sword, she never postulates about what could be hidden in the darkness. The training Una encourages does not desire obedience but hermeneutic self-sufficiency. She knows Redcrosse's discovery of what lies in the unknown is important for his growth as a reader and marks his first overt test on the journey.

Interestingly, the language in this stanza and the previously cited one of Una and Redcrosse wandering the woods is quite similar (i.10). In stanza 10, the narrator describes the "ways unknowne", while, here, Una refers to the "place unknowne". In stanza 10, we learn of what "makes them doubt" or "diverse doubt" while, here, Una mentions what breeds "dreadfull doubts". Besides the importance of these concepts to Spenser's exegetical schema, the manner in which Redcrosse and the reader become exposed to these concepts is also important. In stanza 10, the narrator uses these terms to describe both the potential dangers or results of wandering as Redcrosse wanders the woods. But in this scene before Error's den, Una directly advises Redcrosse of these

---

weapon far surpassing the outward might of swords and shields. After warning Redcrosse of the unknown perils, she advises him to hold his sword until he is sure of what he has confronted. Here, she teaches/guides his internal, interpretative ways and his battle form linking the two. This link illustrates that the physical actions of fighting are subservient to the interpretative faculties of the mind. This early connection between interpretation and battle begins to outline the values of a Christian knight versus a chivalric one.

dangers. Though he does not know it, Una arms him with the knowledge necessary to defeat Error.

But the narrator's initial delineation of these potential problems to the reader suggests that Spenser first arms the reader with this interpretative knowledge, then Redcrosse. This separation of readerly and character knowledge implies that while we learn with Redcrosse, that we are Redcrosse, we are also apart from him. Once supplied with this knowledge, the reader will be able to see these moments of repetition as places to initiate interpretation and contemplate the many possibilities surrounding what these ideas of doubt and wandering could mean.

Moreover, the narrator uses Una and Redcrosse ("they" and "them") as examples of how these problems could affect the interpretative journey. In the narrator's words, they are both in danger of succumbing to doubt. But Una's awareness of these issues in her warning to Redcrosse suggests otherwise. As the personified example of charity or reason, Una cannot succumb to these earthly errors. Instead, she must guide Redcrosse as he seeks to overcome such earthly dangers and confine on his exegetical path. Her guidance to Redcrosse should also be reinforced in the reader.

Returning to the scene outside the cave of Error, Redcrosse responds to Una's warning, "Vertue gives her selfe light, through darkenesse for to wade" (I.i.12).<sup>199</sup> He attempts to illustrate his understanding of virtue, ironically, to a character representing Virtue herself. And though his response seems detached from the reality of the situation, it reveals a predilection for faith in Redcrosse as a knight, a man, and, most importantly, an exegete. This capacity for faith reveals that virtue must be accompanied by faith in

---

<sup>199</sup> Moreover, this image of light echoes Spenser's language describing his whole intention in the Letter to Raleigh. This reference further links the reader to Spenser's hermeneutic goals.

order to move beyond the earthly realm and into the spiritual one. Virtue without faith in something larger than the self that keeps virtue and the actions associated with virtue linked to structures like chivalry.<sup>200</sup> Virtue in such a structure relies on all action to be physical, not contemplative.<sup>201</sup> Redcrosse's faith is what must accompany him on his interpretative travels past earthly appearances into contemplative possibilities.<sup>202</sup>

Una retorts, "I better wot then you, though now too late,/To wish you backe returne with foule disgrace,/Yet wisdom warnes, whilst foot in the gate" (I.i.13).<sup>203</sup> Here, wisdom and virtue are depicted as dichotomous, with virtue needing faith to guide one through the unknown. Wisdom, on the other hand, implies an ability to confront present perils based on the experiences of the past. It seems wisdom can be carried in the mind, while virtue is carried in the heart. For Una, wisdom comes from experience but faith can initially supplement a lack of interpretative experience until it can blend with experience in the exegetical process, as Una illustrates.<sup>204</sup>

In her brief statement, Una implies that Redcrosse possesses faith and courtly virtue yet does not have the intellectual or spiritual wisdom to harness these tools into an

---

<sup>200</sup> And in Chapter 5, Calidore will show us the ramifications of existing in a one-sided, chivalric existence.

<sup>201</sup> Burton J. Webber posits that the *FQ* has "a narrative rather than an expository center" (177). Surrounding this center is the peripheral action that Webber suggests is grouped into sets that reflect the action. These sets, these triads, are interlocked and often consist of theological virtues (faith, hope, charity) and earthly ones (world, flesh, lust). Specifically, Webber examines the interlocking of these triads with Duessa and Una, but I believe these principles can be applied to Redcrosse, possibly in relation to Calidore (as James Nohnberg illustrates in his analysis of Books I and VI in the *The Analogy of The Faerie Queene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). See Burton J. Webber. "The Interlocking Triads of the First Book of *Faerie Queene*." *Studies in Philology* 90 (Spring 1993):176-212.

<sup>202</sup> In the opening stanza to Book I, Hamilton notes that the highest end of self-knowledge is "well doing and not of well-knowing only" suggesting that faith must escort one out of the confines of self-knowledge. In effect, virtuous thought yields virtuous action.

<sup>203</sup> As previously discussed in the brief comparison between stanzas 10 and 12, Una knows more about these issues than Redcrosse.

<sup>204</sup> This distinction echoes Augustine's call for a balanced interpretation gradually discovering the spiritual potentials of a passage from the initial solely intellectual interpretations. Essentially, this balance urges an interpreter to employ all his faculties when interpreting.



efficacious compass guiding him through unknown, dark situations. For Una, wisdom relies on experience, while virtue is more contingent on faith, and this is what Redcrosse must gain throughout the journey. This need for experience may be why she continues to urge him into the cave, though she knows (“I better wot than you”) the probable dangers that lay in the darkness. She knows that he must learn the nature of these dangers and how to use this knowledge to later interpret his surroundings. The experience he needs, though, is not solely combative, but interpretive as he trains to identify the physical and spiritual threats surrounding him.

Moreover, Una knows it is now “too late” to turn back, but also too late to wholly help him through this situation for she cannot *tell* Redcrosse how to defeat Error, only encourage him through the episode. If she directly tells him how to slay Error, she will undercut her teaching methods and counter Redcrosse’s gaining of interpretative knowledge and practice.

Una’s wisdom allows her to identify their interpretative and navigational error. She describes the wandering wood they have entered as “Errors den” a “monster vile, whom God and man does hate;/Therefore *I read* beware...” (I.i.13, my italics). As generations of critics have noticed, Una’s description directly refers to interpretation. In the unknown places of obscurity—places off the beaten path—error lurks. The emphasized portion of the passage illustrates how Una employs her wisdom gained from past experiences to read the immediate situation. It seems that Una’s wisdom comes from interpretative experience and an understanding of error’s scope and effects.

In Una’s description she alludes to Scriptural interpretation as she suggests that both God and man fear error. For man, misinterpretation of Scripture encapsulates the

type of error Una refers to here. And as suggested in a Chapter 1, conservative Protestants desire to combat this error by streamlining Scriptural understanding into the literal. But as Richard Hooker purports, and Una suggests here, God's concern with man's error does not pertain to missing the correct answer, but instead the misuse of god-given faculties such as reason when interpreting Scriptural passages. In many ways, man's fear of misinterpretation—his fear of erring—represents a form of doubt manifested in a lack of faith that God would provide him with the tools to understand his Word. But as we see in Una's final warning to "beware" she never suggests retreat, just caution. In this regard, Una seems to echo many of the ideals Richard Hooker purports in the *LEP*.<sup>205</sup>

But Redcrosse, "full of fire and greedy hardiment" continues to travel into the darkness where he sees the "loathsome, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine..." monster, Error (I.i.14).<sup>206</sup> At this point, this "fire" motivating Redcrosse is his desire for fame and praise, a brief collapse into knightly cliché, rather than the defeat of error to gain interpretative ground.<sup>207</sup> Such an earthly desire further illustrates Redcrosse's hermeneutic naiveté. He does not see the larger incentives to defeat error as the ability to move closer to truth. Instead he views defeating Error as a story that can provide him

---

<sup>205</sup> These dichotomies erected here are just one of several important distinctions Spenser seems preoccupied with. The relationship between virtue and wisdom, faith and error, shame and fame, for example, are all depicted as false dichotomies. Rather than working to show the separate nature of each, Spenser, instead, collapses these differences to inform one larger hermeneutic process.

<sup>206</sup> For a more detailed description of the significance of Error's shape and appearance, see Joan L. Klein. "From Error to Acrasia." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 41 (1977-78):173-99. For more general discussions of the allegorical importance of Error and Redcrosse's defeating of Error, consult Maureen Quilligan. *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1979; Michael Murrin. *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in its Rise and Decline*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

<sup>207</sup> Una implies that she knows where Redcrosse's motivations lie as she says it is "too late" to turn back from the cave for she would never "wish you [Redcrosse] returne with foule disgrace," (I.i.13). This disgrace comes from poor shows in battle and retreat. Una's awareness of his current earthly motivations serves to reinforce her credibility as a guide and illustrates that she knows where Redcrosse hermeneutically begins and where he must end.

with praise, not insight. He does not realize these goals because they are not his yet. They are the earthly aims of the traditional chivalric knight, not the spiritual and interpretative ones of Spenser's more-Christian hero.

In some ways, Redcrosse does not know how to read the allegory of error because he has yet to be taught that there is no clear solution to error—that multiple possibilities for meaning and action are desired over single, close-ended results. He sees his task as an isolated test rather than a part to larger whole. For example, next to Error lies thousands of young monsters, “each one of sundry shapes, yet all ill favored”, of which Error nurses by her “poisonous dugs” (I.i.15). Importantly, each of Error's offspring looks different yet each derives from and flourishes because of her, implying that much stems from error. These thousands of offspring show that many parts derive from a larger whole. But Redcrosse fails to realize this connection and eventually becomes overwhelmed by these small facets causing him to struggle with the larger task. In this scene, and throughout the rest of Book I, Redcrosse struggles because he only sees the immediate task at hand and fails to apply this small task to the larger picture or lesson. In essence, Redcrosse lacks foresight and vision.<sup>208</sup>

In this highly allegorical confrontation Redcrosse initially uses light, or chivalric virtue, as he earlier implies, to initiate his battle with Error. Once his light shines upon Error and her offspring “into her mouth they crept, and suddain all were gone” (I.i.15). This image continues to portray Spenser's preoccupation with interpretation. Here, error derives from the mouth and begins with words, and the listener's or reader's

---

<sup>208</sup> Charles Clay Doyle posits that Redcrosse's career coincides with the four stages of spiritual life outlined by Augustine. This connection reinforces this idea that though Redcrosse lacks vision here, he will eventually attain it as he spiritually and interpretatively progresses. See Charles Clay Doyle. "Christian Vision in *The Faerie Queene*, Book I." *College Literature* 3 (1976):33-41.

responsibility is to use his “light” to distinguish between truth and falseness. On one hand, Spenser directly links courtly virtue to the battle against the falseness of flattery as an error of language.<sup>209</sup> On the other hand, though, this implication that light is the knowledge necessary to defeat error indicates Spenser’s interest in how virtue interacts with the various routes towards spiritual understanding—possibly as a way to use language not only to defeat the error of falseness but the numerous errors contained in physical, earthly appearances.

While Spenser directly refers to Redcrosse’s situation, I argue that he also speaks to his reader’s. Spenser’s reader begins his/her interpretative journey with Redcrosse and is meant to learn with the knight. But where Redcrosse fails to remember this faith lesson, Spenser’s reader should not, but only because he/she is more experienced than Redcrosse. As Redcrosse struggles, the reader should succeed because we learn from his error. Moreover, the reader, and Redcrosse, learn that Error hates light and “Ay wont in desert darknesse to remaine,/Where plaine none might her see, nor she see any plaine” (I.i.16). Light is associated with truth and, as an agent of falseness, it seems fitting that Error would fear truth. But in this fight Redcrosse errs not in failing to use light as a weapon, but in his inability to recognize the power of his weapon. Instead, he discards his most powerful weapon to pounce on her.<sup>210</sup>

But as Redcrosse lies wrapped in Error, Una comes to save him, but not by physically interjecting herself into the conflict. Instead, she instructs him to “Add *faith* unto your force, and be not faint:/Strangle her, else sure she will strangle thee” (I.i.19, my

---

<sup>209</sup> As with the Blatant Beast who abuses language.

<sup>210</sup> By jumping on Error, Redcrosse commits an error, for though he initially stuns her, she eventually wraps him in her tail and “God help the man so wrapt in Errours endlesse traine” (I.i.18). Needing God’s help to defeat error implies the necessity of spiritual strength and faith to free oneself from the Error’s hold.

italics).<sup>211</sup> Una reminds Redcrosse that he possesses a weapon of faith. She instructs him to use faith to guide his sword suggesting that a necessary relationship between spiritual and physical awareness is needed to combat error and her offspring.<sup>212</sup> As we see in Redcrosse's actions, or inactions, he reads the situation incorrectly only to find himself, literally and figuratively, wrapped in Error. Una's insistence on faith demands that Redcrosse expel the doubt in his faculties from his mind and heart in order to defeat error.

In this scene, faith and light are weapons Redcrosse carries, yet fails to recognize their importance and reverts to his physical weapons of strength and the sword to try and defeat Error. He exhibits an awareness of these spiritual tools but his instincts still direct him to the familiar physical ones. This preference for physical weapons alone indicates Redcrosse's lack of interpretative experience.

Una's instructions to employ faith again echo Augustine's call for a balance between mind and heart when interpreting. One of the results of striking such a balance is faith. In *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, Augustine constitutes faith as believing in past events, as one believes that Christ died, while hope is placing belief in the future. But

---

<sup>211</sup> Hamilton notes the significance of adding faith to force. He says, "God's grace protects him [Redcrosse], as his shield of faith preserves him from harm. When he adds faith to his force, the combination defeats Sansfoy, as it had defeated Error [I.i.19]". Hamilton's analysis portrays Redcrosse as a knight who eventually learns, who benefits, from Una's interpretative lessons. Hamilton references Una's words to Redcrosse instructing him to "add faith unto your force" again in (I.v.12) as he comments, "since faith is aroused by Fidessa/Duessa, he [Redcrosse] is unable to kill his enemy". This idea highlights the importance of Una as true faith. It also suggests that though Redcrosse's actions of adding faith unto his force initially signifies a progressive interpretative move, his inability to employ faith into his *interpretative* actions are what limit his hermeneutic potentials.

<sup>212</sup> Sean Kane suggests that these episodes of wandering and Error represent "a sense of human community" and "natural moral sense" known to a classical audience, but not to a Protestant one (260). See Sean Kane. "Spenser and the Frame of Faith," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (Spring 1981):253-68.

what is common to faith and hope is that the object of belief is unseen.<sup>213</sup> Una tells Redcrosse to use faith to defeat Error, suggesting that the same instinct motivating him to enter the cave and discover the secrets of the darkness can save him from Error. His past actions, though immediate, can inform his future actions and successes. By asking him to use faith, Una also attempts to instill hope. She tries to encourage Redcrosse to expand his focus beyond the immediate disadvantages he encounters in his battle with Error and use his past actions to inform his future ones.<sup>214</sup>

Una's counseling instead of telling guide Redcrosse to victory. She proposes the use of weapons, such as faith and contemplation, to defeat his foe.<sup>215</sup> As a result, Redcrosse navigates his way to victory with the suggestion of ways to confront Error, not necessarily with the instruction of how definitively to overcome her. In this victory he begins to gain agency in his journey and learning in the form of interpretative confidence.<sup>216</sup>

Una's teaching goals and style emerge in this episode. In the style of the Augustinian teacher Una appears to focus on teaching an essence or a "sense" of meaning that only begins with textual or literal understanding. Much as Augustine argues against

---

<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, Augustine's implication that the objects of faith and hope are unseen alludes to the unseen elements comprising figurative signs. In this regard, faith and hope guide the interpreter as he/she moves from the seen places of meaning to the many unseen ones.

<sup>214</sup> Tamara A. Geoglein examines Redcrosse's scenes with Depaire (I.ix) and Contemplation (I.x) to propose that these discourses are not opposed, but instead comprise a holistic dialogical process of Protestant self-liberation—a process rooted in the "link between linguistic and spiritual states" (5). I argue that the interpretative conclusions she draws begin earlier than the cave of Despaire. Instead, I purport that this process of self-liberation begins in this episode with Error. See, Tamara A. Geoglein, "Utterances of the Protestant Soul in *The Faerie Queene*: The Allegory of Holiness and the Humanist Discourse of Reason." *Criticism* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1994):1-19.

<sup>215</sup> Importantly, she does not encourage him to choose between two options, but encourages him to use faith in his choice-making process so that he can consider many options. She does not encourage him to generate an either/or choice, but offers faith as a protector that will guide him through any interpretative situation. Essentially, using faith will aid him when he is ready to employ choice.

<sup>216</sup> For considerations concerning how this interpretation links Redcrosse's to 16<sup>th</sup> century biblical interpretation, see Lawrence F. Rhu. "Romancing the Word: Pre-Texts and Contexts for the Error Episode." *Spenser Studies* 11 (1990):101-110.

the prescriptive teaching of Scripture and instead urges for the teaching of a skill rather than an end so, too, does Una recognize the importance of learning from interpretative actions rather than products. This type of pedagogical and hermeneutic goal implies that there exists an idea behind the literal, behind the earthly. For Una, each individual's path can lead to the discovery of the many possibilities of universal, divine truths that organize the earthly universe, though do not always physically appear in it. This knowledge pervades the natural world but only the trained interpreter can employ it to expand individual experience with a heightened awareness.

Spenser continually reveals his interest in interpretation in this episode with Error. For example, as Redcrosse slays the monster, she spews poison with "Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,/with loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke;" (I.i.20).<sup>217</sup> In this vivid scene, we learn that Error literally feeds on these texts, figuratively on the contents of these texts. Error's feeding on the *entire* text suggests that error can reach every part of the text. Error can consume a text. And if consumed, what looks like truth, what looks like the text, becomes the "deformed monsters, fowle, blacke as inke" that threaten the interpreter's ability to discern truth. Deformity implies a perversion of truth, an alteration of expectation.

In this light, these deformities are a result of error, and threaten the interpreter as much as error because they appear as one thing, but are quite another—they test the senses of the interpreter. These deformities initially force the reader to use reason to

---

<sup>217</sup> Linda Gregerson uses this scene to consider how Error's spawn spewing "gobbets raw" relates to Catholic transubstantiation. For further consideration about such Protestant and Catholic issues see Linda Gregerson. *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 96; Anthea Hume. *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, links this refuse to the hypocrisy Bale discusses in *Image of Both Churches*.

choose between falseness and truth, rather than to guide the reader to contemplation in order to generate many possibilities for truth. In this regard, error limits the reader to an either/or choice, rather than allowing the possibility to consider many choices.

But if Lawrence Rhu is correct, and these books and papers in *Errour's* vomit represent the growing amount of literature, and, in turn, knowledge, being produced by new print technology, then perhaps Spenser perceives these growing amounts of circulating literature as more places where one must exercise reason to interpret.<sup>218</sup> In this massive amount of literature lies choice. The interpreter must now use reason not only to decipher which places in the text will yield the most possibilities for meaning, but he must also determine which text to interpret from—which text is real and not deformed.

In some ways, this choice falls under Hooker's conception of things indifferent, in that if reason is employed, then these decisions can aid in interpretation and knowledge, rather than deter from it. But if reason is not employed, the "filthie parbreake" will inevitably overwhelm the interpreter's senses, leaving him unable to discern between falseness and truth, virtue and vice.<sup>219</sup> If the interpreter cannot rely on his senses, he must rely on faith, as Una instructs, and reason. In essence, all truth in literature is not as pure and self-contained as Scripture, which just waits to be discovered and unlocked. Instead, the growing number of these secular texts forces the reader to use his interpretative faculties in order to generate meaning and avoid the sensory traps of error.

In this final scene with *Errour*, Redcrosse is on the verge of this sensory overload as his will begins to weaken as her small minions endlessly snap at him. While they are

---

<sup>218</sup> Lawrence Rhu. "Romancing the Word: Pretexts and Contexts for the *Errour* Episode", *Spenser Studies* 11(1990):101-109.

<sup>219</sup> The conclusion of sensory overload being a result of "parbreake" comes from Hamilton's reading of this line.



not a threat, for he can easily defeat “their tender wings/He brusheth oft, and oft doth mar their murmurings” Redcrosse’s desire to win stems from frustration rather than will (I.i.22). Redcrosse possesses the spiritual tools, such as faith and virtue, as well as the physical ones, such as his sword or light, necessary to confront error, it is just a matter of actualizing them. In essence, Redcrosse’s defeat of Error is as much overcoming his desire to quit as it is exercising his physical prowess. In these early episodes and throughout the first part of Book I, Redcrosse struggles with the internal drive and strength necessary to become a successful Christian knight and interpreter. As his physical state begins to erode, however, this internal strength must be cultivated in order to continue to travel towards spiritual awareness and the fulfillment of his destiny.

Redcrosse’s spiritual and intellectual states continue to be impeded as his fear of shame continually emerges, for he was “...fearefull more of shame,/Then of the certaine peril he stood in” (I.i.24). For Redcrosse, shame is the counterpart of his earthly desire for fame and praise, and what can derail his pursuit of these earthly spoils. Shame is the reputational consequence of not attaining fame. And, as we learn early in the canto, fame and the praise of Gloriana are what Redcrosse longs for, so much so that he fears losing his reputation more than his life. This one-tracked focus is what Redcrosse must learn to enlarge so he can move past these earthly pursuits and begin to realize the larger possible scopes of his actions— perspectives that provide fame accompanied with earthly and spiritual responsibilities.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> Ironically, when Contemplation reveals his destiny as St. George, Redcrosse should finally feel ease that his goals shall be fulfilled. But by the time he ascends the mount of Contemplation he has shifted his focus from the earthly to the heavenly so this need for fame and praise no longer drive him. Replacing these needs in the desire to lead by example and pursue a heavenly existence. But until this moment, until Redcrosse learns of his destiny and the importance of contemplation to achieve his holy goals, Redcrosse is plagued by doubt and fear. He fears for his reputation which makes sense considering his pursuits are all earthly, so why shouldn’t his fears also be?

But until he learns more and grows as an interpreter who can move past the earthly, Redcrosse cannot see past his immediate situations to consider the larger placement of his actions—the earthly barriers of fame and shame impede his vision. In this scene with Error all he focuses on are the negative results of his reputation if he fails to defeat this monster. Instead, he needs Una to guide him past these impediments with the help of faith and charity. As seen in the beginning of this scene, Una must teach Redcrosse how to navigate through Error's den.

And while Redcrosse does defeat Error and her minions it is not solely because of his actions. Instead, error defeats itself. Redcrosse, though he did deliver the final blow, does not defeat error on his own. Instead, "his foes have slain themselves" implying that Redcrosse's feat, nor the implications of such a feat, was not as magnificent as it originally seemed. In fact, in this scene with Error we discover that error is conditioned to feed upon itself—error feeds upon error. Ironically, *not* breaking the cycle of error is what helps Redcrosse defeat error.<sup>221</sup>

Though Redcrosse's motivations are far from noble and his victory far from grand, he still shows an early potential for the intellectual enlightenment he will gain later in the Book. As his fear of shame moves him he became "Resolv'd in minde" to defeat Error. Instead of looking to the emotional surge of hate or anger, Redcrosse looks to his mind to defeat the beast. His instinct to employ his mind to aid his body in defeating Error shows promise for Redcrosse's ability to learn. This instinct illustrates an inclination to enhance the physical action of the body with the interpretative action of the mind. All Redcrosse needs is the encouragement to cultivate this instinct into

---

<sup>221</sup> Although Carolyn VanDyke suggests that Redcrosse never truly defeats Error. For further reading, see Carolyn Van Dyke. *The Fiction of Truth: Structures of Meaning in Narrative and Dramatic Allegory*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985, 253-254.

interpretation and contemplation exercised with charity and reason. Ideally, the interpretative and contemplative actions will eventually spur physical action, rather than Redcrosse's physical action spurring interpretative action, as is the case in this scene.<sup>222</sup>

Yet, in some ways, Una is able to reach Redcrosse because he possesses this instinct and willingness to learn. Part of this willingness to learn, this ability to accept Una's guidance, comes from not succumbing to total emotional frenzy. At the end of this scene, Redcrosse is on the verge of succumbing to these earthly feelings of shame and frustration, but he is only "halfe furious", implying that he retains some rational ability to consider Una's words, then *try* to apply them to his immediate situation (I.i.24). His mind controls his physical actions, though not yet his interpretative ones. Redcrosse experiences a similar instance of partial emotional rage when he encounters the spirit posing as Una. Upon seeing it shamelessly acting, Redcrosse is "halfe enraged" again implying that he is not wholly controlled by his emotional response to a situation (I.i.50). His instinct keeps him from giving total physical control to these emotional responses.

Arguably, this instinct that keeps his mind in the interpretative act, even more than his willingness to learn, makes Redcrosse a promising pupil for Una. In canto vi, Una attempts to teach the savages truth. In this episode we can see what a pupil *without* this instinct gathers from Una's words. Una:

Glad of such lucke, the luckelesse lucky mayd,  
Did her content to please their [the savages] feeble eyes,  
And long time with that salvage people stayd,  
To gather breath in many miseryes.  
During which time her gentle wit she plyes,  
To teach them truth, which worshipt her in vaine,  
And made her th'Image of Idolatryes:

---

<sup>222</sup> With this gesture Spenser makes a strong, even necessary, connection between mind and action. Once Redcrosse resolves in his mind that he will defeat Error he becomes able to "stroke at her with more than manly force" implying that he is guided by a force larger than his physical drive (I.i.24).

But when their bootlesse zeale she did restrayne  
 From her own worship, they her Asse would worship fayn. (I.vi.19)<sup>223</sup>

In Una's teaching moment, she attempts to teach the savages truth by being truth—she teaches them by example, just as she does with Redcrosse. But what we as readers see here is a misinterpretation on the part of the savages. While they are guided by truth, their first instinct is to act, to worship, rather than interpret and contemplate. The savages cannot turn their lust from worship into interpretation. In essence, they are full enraged, not half, as Redcrosse is, suggesting that they do not possess the instinct to restrain themselves from this emotional fury. Instead, they perceive her truth *not* as a tool that can guide them through profitable interpretation, but as the subject of their worship. They see her as a thing, rather than a force, illustrating a classic Protestant moment of idolatry where images encourage worship rather than interpretation.

Furthermore, when the savages do heed Una's words, they merely shift their passion onto her asse instead.<sup>224</sup> The only options they generate are who (or what) will be the subject of their emotional worship, rather than considering how truth can

---

<sup>223</sup> The savages in this scene have been a significant critical topic, particularly for critics examining Spenser and his Irish connections. Andrew Hadfield identifies this worship of Una with the submission of the "savage Island", that is Ireland ("The 'sacred hunger of ambitious minds': Spenser's savage religion", in *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688*, ed. Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 27-45); Patricia Coughlan reads the same scene and aligns the savages' worship of Una with the Irish submission to Catholicism ("Some secret scourge which shall by her come unto England": Ireland and Incivility in Spenser", in *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Patricia Coughlan, Cork: Cork University Press, 1989, 46-74); Christopher Highley equates this worship to the Irish submission to the Anglican Church (*Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 127-128); Lisa Jardin reads this scene as an allusion to the decay of Christianity into paganism in Ireland ("Encountering Ireland: Gabriel Harvey, Edmund Spenser, and English Colonial Ventures", in *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660*, eds. Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 60-75). For further general readings of Una and the savages see Christopher Hodgkins. "Stooping to Conquer: Heathen Idolatry and Protestant Humility in the Imperial Legend of Sir Francis Drake." *Studies in Philology* 94, no. 4 (Fall 1997):428-64.

<sup>224</sup> The reference to an "asse" is often emblematic of the flesh. See Liam O. Purdon. "A Reconsideration of the Ass Image in Book I of The Faerie Queen", *English Language Notes* 26: 18-21. 1998.

encourage them to generate multiple possibilities for meaning. Their vision is one-tracked and guided by emotional response, rather than panoramic and guided by reason, or truth, in this case. The savages not only lack the ability to move from this emotional state, but they lack the desire to do so, and the instinct to perceive that their emotional response is limited. I suppose in this case, ignorance is bliss.

It seems Una recognizes this instinct in Redcrosse and the potential this instinct represents as she exhibits pride in his victory over Error, though she still contextualizes it. She says, “Well worthy be you of that Armorie/Wherin ye have great glory wonne this day,/And proof’d your strength on a strong enimie,/Your *first adventure...*” (I.i.27, my italics). While Redcrosse views his quest as one entity, Una illustrates her awareness that the processes towards truth are a series of feats, this battle with Error being the first step of a larger journey. This sort of perspective further aligns Una with the Augustinian interpretative journey in that she can align the desired multiplicities of possible of meaning with the many parts of the interpretative journey leading to these potentials. In other words, no part of Una’s perception is single-focused, not even her view of Redcrosse’s path. Instead, she reveals an awareness of the error in perceiving any journey—interpretative or physical—as one-tracked. This principle of many-ness pervades all aspects of Una’s role as teacher to Redcrosse and, in more general respects, as seen in the episode with the savages. She encourages him to explore possibilities through dialogue and example.

As Redcrosse and Una continue on their path, it appears Redcrosse has only killed the literal monster, but not killed error at all. But before they meet a disguised Archimago Spenser reinforces his idea that there are many ways leading to desired ends

as he states, “That path he kept, which beaten was most plaine,/Ne ever would to any by-way bend,/But still did follow one unto the end” (I.i.28). Here, the path that Redcrosse continues on has no apparent link to mainstream roads, yet it still guides them forward and out of the woods. In the beginning of this canto, Una and Redcrosse are unable to decide which road to take because they have too many options, and here, they travel on a worn road with no obvious ending but a general direction<sup>225</sup>. It is this direction that keeps them moving forward, gaining interpretative experience through various situations and by engaging with choice.

On this road, Redcrosse meets a disguised Archimago. In this meeting, Redcrosse exhibits his interpretative inexperience in that he cannot see past Archimago's nonthreatening image. As “an aged Sire, in long blacke weedes yclad,/His feete bare, his beard all hoarie gray,/...Sober he seemed, and very sagely sad” he can lure Redcrosse towards him and encourage him to let his guard down (I.i.29).<sup>226</sup> As an enemy Archimago is quite different than Errour in that he does not outwardly appear threatening, while Errour, in her serpent form, immediately raises Redcrosse's guard. Where Errour forced Redcrosse into physical battle, Archimago seeks to engage Redcrosse in an intellectual and spiritual one. In these arenas Redcrosse is especially green and Archimago appears to prey upon these limitations. Again, as witnessed with Una at the

---

<sup>225</sup> Joanne Grenfell Woolway aligns the straightness of Redcrosse's path with the separation from the Catholic Church and Exodus. She concludes that because Spenser does not provide maps in the *FQ*, one must rely on the correct interpretation of signs. From “Do real knights need maps? Charting moral, geographical and representational uncertainty in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.” In *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, Eds. Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 224-38).

<sup>226</sup> John N. King links Archimago's description as an “aged sire” to *The Three Lawes*, where Bale describes “Hypocresy lyke a graye tyre” (*Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 51).

entrance of Errour's den, Redcrosse struggles to identify the true nature of the situation because he cannot see beyond earthly appearances.

Moreover, at this point in his journey, Redcrosse is aware of his inexperience in battle and seeks more episodes to physically train before his meeting with Una's dragon. He is still concerned with the earthly ends of fame and praise. He illustrates this desire to practice as he asks Archimago "if he did know/of strange adventures, which abroad did pas" (I.i.30). This inquiry exhibits Redcrosse's lack of a path and destination. Though he travels to slay a dragon, he seems to realize that he is not ready to do so and desires more experience. Again, Redcrosse reveals promising instinct in realizing that he is unprepared to engage in physical battle, but does not extend this feeling of unpreparedness onto the interpretative act. He continues to remain rooted in earthly endeavors and appearances.

This initial exchange with a disguised Archimago indicates Redcrosse's inexperience, but it also reveals that Redcrosse wants to be told what to do. Initially, he asks Archimago if he knows where he can fight, then he lets Archimago guide him. After Redcrosse's initial inquiry, Archimago replies, "But if of daunger which hereby doth dwell,/And homebred evill ye desire to heare,/Of a straunge man I can you tidings tell,/That waseth all this countrey farre and neare./" in which Redcrosse asks him to "*shew* the place" (I.i.31, my italics).<sup>227</sup> Here, Redcrosse asks to be shown the specific place where he can gain experience. As indicated by previous discussions surrounding

---

<sup>227</sup> Archimago's language proves particularly important here. In a rather tongue in cheek moment, Archimago speaks of himself to the novice knight most likely because he does not view Redcrosse as a threat. The reference to homebred evil indicates a closeness to the speaker while the man's ability to suddenly speak of things he initially claims a "silly old man, that lives in a cell" would never know should have been a disclaimer for the more experienced interpreter. But for Redcrosse, he only sees the exterior of the man and never considers that he could be anything other than who says he is.

wandering, a large part of Redcrosse's exegetical training lies in discovering the many possible meanings spurred by interpretation and contemplation, but also in discovering the appropriate places to initiate/begin this inquiry. By asking Archimago to "shew the place" Redcrosse misses the opportunity to begin his interpretative exercises, and, more immediately, see Archimago's false nature.

Moreover, this want to be led or directed rather than exercise choice suggests that Redcrosse does not immediately recognize the importance/benefit of Una's encouragement to explore on his own the possibilities contained in each experience. In addition to cultivating Redcrosse's interpretative abilities, choice as a central tenet of the exegetical process generates interpretative agency. By superficially reading Archimago and asking him to serve as a guide, Redcrosse replaces Una's guidance/teaching and, ultimately, hands Archimago his interpretative agency.

The distinction between showing and teaching relies on the developing agency of the interpreter. In the scene with Error, Una instructs Redcrosse to use his own faculties and faith to defeat his foe. The power to overcome obstacles resides in Redcrosse, and Una encourages him to utilize these tools. In this scene with Archimago, however, Redcrosse places this power in another and relies on Archimago to simply tell him the answer. Redcrosse's failure to learn from Una's lesson, from his past experiences, makes him susceptible to deception.<sup>228</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> At the heart of this distinction lies Augustine's preference for obscure Scripture over more overt passages. In these places of obscurity one is forced to develop and employ his interpretative skills rather than being told the meaning. And while the knowledge gained in these obvious places is never poor, Augustine's concern lies with the manner in which one gains knowledge. Through obscurity, an interpreter can train and strengthen his exegetical faculties. Also, the vagueness of these obscure places encourages a variety of potential meanings which opens a passage up beyond its literal meaning.



Importantly, Spenser's narrator has not revealed Archimago's true identity, either. At this point Redcrosse *and* the reader are in the same place, experiencing the same interpretative dilemma. And while the reader is given a hint in the Argument of Book I, canto i that "Hypocresie him [Redcrosse] to entrappe", Archimago is never named, thus forcing the reader to consider if this is the hypocrisy that will entrap Redcrosse.<sup>229</sup> In fact, the reader may misinterpret this hint and follow Redcrosse into error by trusting his reading that Duessa's actions are Una's. If the reader does follow Redcrosse, he/she will perceive Una as the hypocrite alluded to in the Argument, not Archimago.

I believe that this early scene is representative of the places where the reader must make a choice to follow the interpretation of the character, or consider the implications of this scene for himself/herself. Spenser attempts to teach his reader how to interpret the work through the actions—or inactions—of his characters, and, in turn, forces the reader to also make interpretative choices alongside the character.

The narrator does give some clues to the true nature of our false guide through the suggestion that "Rest is their feast, and all things at their will;/*The noblest mind the best contentment has*" (I.i.35, my italics). This statement suggests that the knowledge Redcrosse seeks—everything the reader needs to know—exists in front of him, but lives in the will of the interpreter, be it the reader or the character. As the highlighted portion suggests, the mind holds the key that unlocks the door standing between reader and knowledge revealing the potentials for self-fulfilled agency and attainment. The implied

---

<sup>229</sup>Hamilton notes that Archimago is referred to as "hypocresie" only in the Argument, never in the text. This is a "rare moment" in which the Argument reveals more than the text itself. Again, this is an example of a place for the reader to interpret and learn from Redcrosse's actions (or misinterpretation, in this case). Like Hamilton, Hume views the Argument of I.i as an opportunity to investigate the significance of the dichotomous relationship between Redcrosse as virtue and Archimago as seeming holiness that begins to unfold in this episode (*Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

effect of this “noblest mind” is that the potential to attain knowledge is always present but cannot be accessed without thinking beyond the evident.

Ironically, in Archimago Redcrosse encounters the villain he seeks, yet does not realize that he is a foe. Once Archimago realizes he has fooled the knight, he begins to counsel him and coaxes him into his lair where he appears to discuss his own plan, disguised under false counsel.<sup>230</sup> He says, “the way to win/Is wisely to advise:[...]” which narrates his actions as he enacts them (I.i.33). Again, though false and intended for deception, Archimago’s counsel is prescriptive. He presents Redcrosse with a false truism centered upon an absolute. Archimago implies that the way to win *every time* is to wisely advise. Not only does this counter Spenser’s exegetical desire for multiplicity rather than absolutism, but it specifically undercuts Una’s advising to Redcrosse. In this gesture, Archimago reveals that Una, and the truth she embodies, is most likely his true target, not necessarily Redcrosse.<sup>231</sup>

Interestingly, Archimago’s advice is sound, but the false nature of the source undermines any truth in the statement. In this paradox, Spenser raises questions about the nature of where one ascertains truth. Can good come from a foul source? Or, in a more hermeneutic sense, can truth be interpreted from falseness? Can Redcrosse question Archimago’s nature but still employ his advice? Based on the exegetical schema Spenser

---

<sup>230</sup> Hamilton notes the contrast between Archimago’s residence “downe in a dale” (I.i.34) and Contemplation’s residence on a hill (I.x.46). Redcrosse is literally distanced from the heights of contemplation, but figuratively, Redcrosse is distanced from heightened interpretation associated with contemplation. Moreover, he is distanced from the tools and instruction needed to achieve such multifarious possibilities. Ideally, the this is another place where the reader should identify these connections, contemplate their significance, and consider many possible meanings for this connection.

<sup>231</sup> Archimago’s desire to engage with Una, or truth, reflects the limited scope of deception or falseness and that he needs truth as a counterpoint to enact his plan of deception. Truth can exist in the generation of many possibilities, but falseness can only exist as the opposition of truth. Essentially, Una does not need falseness to teach Redcrosse how to practice a contemplation that will open the potential meanings of truth, but falseness needs truth to work. Truth can exist without falseness, but never falseness without truth.

imparts, it would seem that the possibility for truth can come from any source as long as the interpreter is guided by some protective force, such as charity, faith, or reason. But Redcrosse fails to perceive that Archimago could be an agent of falseness because he does not *look* false. Solely relying on these sensory perceptions keeps Redcrosse continually deceived and trapped in the one-sided, earthly state of his surroundings. Redcrosse does not use faith to fight falseness. Instead, he chooses to travel alone, led by falseness.<sup>232</sup>

Archimago, like many of the most effective foes in the *FQ*, primarily preys upon the *mind* of the hero, rather than the body. In the case of Archimago, he utilizes both flattering language and Duessa as weapons to combat the underdeveloped interpretative mind of Redcrosse. Before Duessa, Archimago creates a spirit, “a Lady of that other Spright,/And fram’d liquid ayre her tender partes/So lively, and so like in all mens sight,/That *weaker sence* it could have ravisht quight” (I.i.45, my italics). As seen in the highlighted portion, Archimago identifies and preys upon Redcrosse’s weak mind—weak in the sense that Redcrosse does not have the interpretative knowledge or practice to

---

<sup>232</sup> Redcrosse does not realize the true intent of Archimago’s words because he is deceived by the wizard’s appearance and eloquence, for “That old man of pleasing wordes had store./And well could file his tongue as smooth as glas” (I.i.35). At this point the only weapon Archimago needs to tangle with Redcrosse is eloquence. This cautioning towards eloquence recurs as a theme for Spenser as we shall later see with the Blatant Beast of Book V and VI, and, I believe, relates to his ever-developing ideas concerning the purpose of poetry to do more than merely flatter and praise. Both echoing Augustine and Hooker, Spenser appears to warn against trusting the words of even the most overtly religious man. Without suggesting heresy, it appears Spenser subscribes to a hermeneutic model giving preference to the interpretative abilities of the individual over the overarching truisms of the sermon. Again, at the center of this issue exists the distinction between teaching and preaching. Spenser’s leiriness towards eloquence and flattery only works to strengthen his desire to train his reader in the ways of interpretation. Through disguises like Archimago’s old sage, Spenser advises his reader to not only question the content of the work but the words of those who claim to know the content, maybe even the poet himself as seen in the Letter to Raleigh.

employ his spiritual weapons, such as faith and reason, to see beyond Archimago's deceptive words and appearances.<sup>233</sup>

Identifying and preying upon Redcrosse's shortcomings becomes a necessary part of his plan. Interestingly, Archimago enacts a warped version of Augustine's exegetical schema. Archimago is able to *interpret* his prey by *identifying* Redcrosse's weakness then *contemplating* how this weakness can be exploited for his gain. The large difference between Archimago's skills and the ones Redcrosse must cultivate is that Archimago's interpretative endeavors always end in one answer or action, deception.

As a villain, Archimago, like Despaire, is only as powerful as his foe's weakness. If Redcrosse were a stronger exegete, he would not be as extensively deceived by Archimago. For example, in the sprite's description we get the impression that Archimago creates her ahead of time but waits for the right "suitor" to engage her with. In this regard, Archimago's weapon is only partially the sprite, or later, Duessa. Instead, most of his power lies in the weakness of the receiver. Without Redcrosse's inexperience, Archimago would have less of a chance to successfully deceive the knight.<sup>234</sup>

But Archimago's plan does not work as smoothly as he hopes because he assumes Una's purity is false—an imitation, like the spirit's or Duessa's. As Archimago enters

---

<sup>233</sup> For Sean Kane, Archimago, Duessa, and Despair "stand for doctrinal abuses while simultaneously representing the diseased faculties in Redcrosse at every stage of his slide from truth" (256). For a more detailed discussion of how these connections depict "the pattern of belief of Protestant idealism" (263), see "Spenser and the Frame of Faith," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (Spring 1981):253-268.

<sup>234</sup> Archimago strengthens his chances against Redcrosse by preying upon him as he sleeps. Redcrosse lays, "His heavie head, devoide of carefull carke,/Whose sences all were straight benumbed and starke" (l.i.44). In sleep, Redcrosse's mind is even weaker and more open to Archimago's advances. While this may seem a cunning technique by Archimago, it is important to note that Redcrosse falls asleep without caution or care, thus leaving himself open to advances. Again, Redcrosse's inability to read Archimago's threat places him in danger. By creating the mind as the battlefield, Archimago preys upon the unknown of the darkness. He has also declared the places of action for the rest of Redcrosse's journey and chosen the weapons Redcrosse must fight with.

the battle arena of Redcrosse's mind and plants a "...dreame of loves and lustfull play" he attempts to prey upon Redcrosse's predisposition for error (I.i.47). But Redcrosse becomes disturbed by his pleasure-filled dreams, and, rather than waking to ravage the spirit, he instead wakes feeling mistrust towards the "halfe blushing offred him to kis,/With gentle blandishment and lovely looke,/Much like that virgin true, *which for her knight him took*" (I.i.49, my italics).<sup>235</sup>

While Redcrosse displays a strong exegetical instinct to decipher between right and wrong, he has not had enough encouragement or experiences to move from instinct to the interpretative action that will expand meaning. Instead, as we see in the above passage, he doubts his initial interpretation of Una as true, rather than fully doubting the cloaked apparition next to him. By conflating Una's nature and her outward appearance, he reveals that he still perceives meaning based on surface appearances instead of interpreting beyond these appearances. Just as he believes Archimago is a wise sage because he *appears* so, Redcrosse believes that both the spirit and, later, Duessa are Una not because they act virtuous, but because they *look* like Una.<sup>236</sup>

Redcrosse's inability to see past the spirit's appearance and interpret her falseness based on her actions and nature continues as she tells Redcrosse the story of her parents

---

<sup>235</sup> Richard Hasker posits that because the spirit is a spirit, the only sexual satisfaction it can achieve is found in luring others into sexual acts ("Spenser's 'vaine delight'", *Modern Language Notes* 62: 334-335).

<sup>236</sup> But Redcrosse does display a potential for heightened interpretation and deeper understanding. Though he has trouble distinguishing between truth and error in this scene, his hermeneutic instincts keep him from falling prey to another exegetical test. Ironically, Redcrosse he does so by employing the same advice Una instructed him to use when battling the monster Error—he relies on faith. Initially, "...enraged at her shamelesse guise,/He thought have slaine her in his fierce despight:/But hasty heat tempring with sufferance wise,/He stayde his hand, and gan himself advise/To prove his sense, and tempt her feigned truth" (I.i.50). Here, Redcrosse fights his initial instinct to slay her because of turned passion as he counsels himself back to the safehaven of his mind. These actions of self-council and exegetical faith encapsulate what Redcrosse should desire to achieve in every battle situation. Rather than relying solely on the body to defeat his enemies, Redcrosse needs to strike a balance between his body and mind. In this brief instance, he seems to do so again implying that hope for later achievement exists in his instincts.

and kingdom with the emotional detail she assumes would be attached to such a tale. Yes, Redcrosse again illustrates his sound instincts as he “tempts her feigned faith” but she seems to best his inquisition, offering a variety of possible excuses for her action, positing, “Shall I accuse the hidden cruell fate,/And mightie causes wrought in heaven above,/Or the blind God, that doth me thus amate,/For hoped love to winne me certaine hate?” (I.i.51).<sup>237</sup>

Redcrosse’s instinct that her faith is false marks another positive, though brief, moment where he could employ the faith that Una shows him into his interpretative action. But the spirit’s over-emotional telling of “her” story lures Redcrosse away from his instinct of doubt. With this emotional pull, Archimago’s weapon exercises the power of suggestion in her attempts to cut through Redcrosse’s resolve and undermine the instinct that keeps him from wholly succumbing to her deception.

She continues, “Yet thus perforce he bids me do, or die./Die is my dew: yet rew my wrietched state/You, whom my hard avenging destinie/Hath made judge of my life or death indifferently” (I.i.51). The spirit exhibits a near perfect imitation of nobility that Redcrosse as a knight would understand. She seemingly opens herself to his mercy and falsely puts the power of her fate in Redcrosse’s hands. Redcrosse seems to respond to a surface resemblance of what he understands. Essentially, he accepts what is in *his* realm of possibility—that is, the surface value of words and appearances—rather than using

---

<sup>237</sup> Hamilton notes the significance of Redcrosse replacing Una’s real faith with Duessa’s “feigned truth”. Rosemond argues that “truth” equals fidelity (121). With this definition of truth he claims that while originally Redcrosse tests Duessa’s feigned truth, he then goes on to only suspect it (*Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). This move from testing to suspecting implies that Redcrosse still has reservations about Duessa’s nature (or Una’s), but does not act on his instinct—he no longer actively questions or pursues his instinct. Instead, he represses it and allows Duessa to guide him and continually prey upon his weak mind and doubt.

faith to extend his scope of potential meaning beyond the comfort of his chivalric knowledge.

The spirit's rhetorical maneuvers are interesting in that they rely on the imitation of virtue and chastity yet her performance is not what sells them to Redcrosse. Instead, Una's *actual* virtue allows for the spirit's falseness to begin eroding Redcrosse's instinctual skepticism. For example, late in canto i, the spirit adds false emotion onto Una's actual story. She laments:

Your owne deare sake forst me at first to leave  
My Fathers kingdom, There she stopt with teares;  
Her swollen hart her speech seemd to breave,  
And then againe begun, My weaker yeares  
Captiv'd to fortune and frayle worldly feares,  
Fly to your faith for succour and sure ayde:  
Let me not dye in laguor an long teares. (I.i.52)

Just as Una's name is learned only in contrast to Duessa's, so, too is Una's virtue fueled by the spirit's, and eventually Duessa's, falseness. In this passage, the sprite applies the facts of Una's departure from her kingdom, yet she adds an emotional element to her performance of Una. Una, as an embodiment of virtue and an exegetical teacher, would not use emotional appeals to persuade or influence her listener. Instead, as evidenced in her exchange with Redcrosse in Errour's cave, she attempts to lure one away from the one-dimensionality of earthly emotions. In this scene, the false spirit employs an opposing strategy and uses emotional appeals to discourage Redcrosse from using reason.<sup>238</sup>

---

<sup>238</sup> Moreover, Duessa seems very aware of the traditional maiden-knight relationship and seeks to portray herself in the role of damsel in distress with Redcrosse as her hero. And while this is an element of Una's and Redcrosse's dynamic, Una possesses more power than being the provider of a knightly task. Instead, Una must teach Redcrosse how to employ his interpretative faculties in order to immediately defeat the dragon and save himself from earthly error. So when Duessa adds the emotional element to Una's tale, she

As suggested earlier, the spirit's success depends on how Una's actual virtue has been perceived by Redcrosse. This task of distinguishing between the spirit's false virtue and Una's actual one proves difficult, for "What man so wise, what earthly wit so ware,/As to descry the crafty cunning traine,/By which deceit doth maske in visour faire./To seem like Truth, whose shape she well can faine" (I.vii.1, my italics). In the highlighted portion of the passage, our narrator alludes to the central component of the spirit's deception, her appearance rather than her character or actions. While Una embodies all aspects of truth, both internal and external, the spirit can only utilize the external in her deception because virtue cannot be falsified. In her fraudulence the spirit abuses the only aspect of Una Redcrosse can identify with—her appearance.

For Redcrosse, who lacks the exegetical autonomy to interpret on his own, Una's reflection of internal virtue in her external appearance allows him to trust her as she continually teaches him how to develop his interpretative skills. In effect, Una's outward appearance reflects her internal virtue and truth. Because of this complex simplicity, she is a character who should be easy and safe for Redcrosse to read. The real Una's virtuous nature encourages Redcrosse to inquire and discover the multifarious paths to truth. As a teacher, Una simultaneously serves as the representative virtue that Redcrosse must seek and the protector who guides him away from falseness as he searches for such truths.

But when the spirit feigns Una's appearance, she is also able to feign the virtue associated with it. And because of Redcrosse's pride, he is reluctant to question and

---

does so because this is how she perceives the damsel in distress would act, rather than how Una would act. Like many of the heroines in the *FQ*, Una expands the traditional epic expectations and introduces a female character whose virtue directly guides and instructs her knight, rather than her character's presence. This deviation from the traditional, expected maiden-knight relationship is one of these places Spenser hopes his reader will meditate on the importance of the changes in expectation. The immediate result changes Redcrosse and Una from characters of a chivalric romance to Christian pilgrims. The larger implications of this change will open the text to new meaning as the reader reads with an ever-evolving eye.



probe—to contemplate—his initial readings of Una as good and virtuous. In many ways, Redcrosse misuses the very act of faith Una introduces him to in his episode with Error. He dispels doubt from his mind, but it is self-doubt rather than the productive interpretative doubt that encourages inquiry and contemplation. Without Una’s encouragement Redcrosse struggles to develop his interpretative instincts into contemplative action. He remains in a cycle of self-doubt fueled by the spirit’s, and later Duessa’s, deception. And as Redcrosse’s journey progresses this static self-doubt opens itself to the despair that eventually imprisons Redcrosse.

Redcrosse’s interpretative instinct tells him to mistrust her doubtful words “...yet since no’ untruth he knew,/Her fawning love with foule disdainful; spight/He would not shend, but said, Deare damie I rew,/That for my sake unknowne such grieffe unto you grew” (I.i.53). Here, Redcrosse ignores his initial feelings of mistrust because he has never known Una to deceive him—he has no *experience* with Una and falseness. Here, he does look to his past experiences to determine his present and future ones and realizes that he has always had faith in Una, but fails to extend this faith into his interpretative inquiries. His faith only extends to Una’s person, not her personification. Again, Redcrosse struggles to move past the earthly appearances.

At this moment, Archimago’s scheme prospers because he has successfully transferred Una’s virtue and nobility onto the spirit’s, then Duessa’s, outward shows—because she looks virtuous, therefore she must be. But it is not the sprite’s performance that sells this virtue, it is the traces of Una’s true virtue in Redcrosse’s mind that allow for the sprite’s deception. Once the sprite compromises Redcrosse’s interpretative instinct, she is able to use her ways of flattery to wholly deceive him. She uses “her mournfull

plaints, beguiled of her art,/And fed with words, that *could not chuse but please*" (I.i.54, my italics). Once the spirit defeats Redcrosse's doubt, she utilizes her fiercest weapon, language, in order to appeal to Redcrosse's all too earthly mind and heart. She does so by taking away his *choice* to believe or disbelieve her story. She removes the possibility of choice, leaving Redcrosse with one possible truth, the sprite's realness, rather than the ability to entertain more options.

Importantly, though, Redcrosse exhibits some positive interpretative gestures and potentials. At the end of this canto, Redcrosse sits and considers how he misread Una. He lay, "much griev'd to thinke that gentle Dame so light,/For whose defence he was to shed his blood" (I.i.55). In this closing stanza, again, we see an interpretative awareness in Redcrosse that suggests future exegetical progress and achievement. In this moment, Redcrosse's reflection is a version of contemplation in that he is considering his initial understanding of Una. But this sort of reflection will only be a version of contemplation until he can move past how his reading, or misreading, affects him. In this scene, Redcrosse only thinks of Una in relation to himself and his earthly task of slaying the dragon.

This type of consideration takes all of Una's potential meanings and collapses them back into failures of understanding, rather than possibilities. In other words, *if* Redcrosse can truly consider that Una may not be what he originally thought, he does not move forward with his analysis to consider what she could be. Instead, he wallows in what she is not, rather than considering what she may mean.

His deflation is rooted in pride, for he could not have misinterpreted Una. But his deflation is also the effect of how he considers Una. Rather than using contemplation

to move past earthly appearances and truly consider the sprite's actions and nature in comparison to Una's, Redcrosse relies on his memory of Una. This trap of memory is a facet of Stephen Bateman's Protestant allegory, the *Travayled Pylgrime* (1569). Anne Lake Prescott addresses the importance of memory, as both an allegorical character and intellectual action, in her analysis of Bateman's Protestant allegory and the *FQ*.<sup>239</sup> Bateman's pilgrim, often accompanied by Dame Memory, travels a path much as Redcrosse does, in that he moves from "error to pride to despair to recuperative education and a final battle" (171).

In one scene along this journey, the pilgrim enters the "palace of disordered lovers" (mirroring Spenser's House of Pride). Here, the pilgrim is exposed to his sin by a mirror, held by what looks like Reason, but is identified as Memory (184). Memory looks like reason, but keeps the pilgrim from moving forward on his journey—it does not seem to generate the same interpretative or contemplative actions and options as employing reason does. This confusion between memory and reason is one that Redcrosse experiences throughout Book I. In the first part of the Book, Redcrosse uses memory *not* reason to guide him.

For example, Redcrosse relies on the *memory* of Una's virtue, rather than using reason to interpret the immediate character of false Duessa. Redcrosse also uses memory to punish himself, much as Bateman's pilgrim uses Memory to avoid sin, not conquer it (184). Once Redcrosse does learn that he has misread Duessa for Una, the memory of his error allows Despaire to nearly defeat him, because memory keeps Redcrosse imprisoned

---

<sup>239</sup> Anne Lake Prescott. "Spenser's Chivalric Restoration: From Bateman's *Travayled Pylgrime* to the Redcrosse Knight" *Studies in Philology* 86: 166-197. In this analysis, Prescott desires to view what Spenser's "legend of Holiness looks like if set not against Italian or medieval romance, not against classical epic, but against another Protestant allegory of knightly quest and dynastic celebration, one also troubled by the temptations of imagined sights and the risks of repose" (169).

in his earthly mind and emotion. Rather than employing reason to contemplate his error and eventually learn from it, Redcrosse uses memory to continually punish himself for first, misinterpreting Una, then doubting her. In these examples, we can begin to see that memory is a contrasting force to reason, and ultimately contemplation, in that it keeps one trapped in the mind, instead of using the mind to expand the possible meanings of a given situation or object. In essence, memory encourages stacticity, rather than forward-movement—movement gained by exercising reason.

Much as Archimago desires to strip Redcrosse of his reason-based faculties, so, too, does a solely literal interpretation of Scripture keep the reader from employing his/her interpretative skills. For example, early in canto ii, we can see where Archimago's amended plan still cannot pierce Redcrosse's instinctive faith in reason. After Archimago plants the lovers in "lust and lewd embracement" Redcrosse sees them and initially falls into a jealous rage. This stormy place of jealousy—of emotion and passion—is where Archimago wants Redcrosse to reside and remain. It is in this place that Archimago can best deceive Redcrosse because he quite literally is not in his right state of mind. But in Redcrosse, "the eye of reason was with rage yblent,/And would have slaine them in his furious ire,/But hardly was restrained of that aged sire" (I.ii.5). Here, Redcrosse's reason becomes overshadowed by his emotion, blinded by jealousy, and if not for the aid of another, he would have slain the lewd couple. In this scene we see Redcrosse's pride and doubt eating at his mind, for here he is no longer "halfe enraged" but "burnt" with rage.

Again, at this point, Redcrosse needs outside help to defeat error. Earlier, Una helps him by encouraging him to exercise faith and charity in order to strengthen his

mind to help his body and surpass fear. But, here, Redcrosse needs physical restraint to keep him from erring. Allowing emotion to rule over reason is how Archimago believes he will defeat Redcrosse. This emotion-over-reason scenario encourages reaction rather than contemplative action. And, as exhibited in this scene, Redcrosse needs help to choose interpretation and contemplation over emotional and physical reaction.

Furthermore, once Redcrosse exits the scene, he still carries his emotional response to the situation over his reasonable one—until he rids himself of these emotions, he denies the potential for interpretation and contemplation. He returns to his bed “in torment great,/And bitter anguish of his guiltie sight,/He could not rest, but did his stout heart eat,/And was his *inward gall* with deep despight” (I.ii.6, my italics).

In this passage, Redcrosse cannot move past the initial emotional response of seeing a false Una in a lover’s embrace. The poignant image of Redcrosse’s heart feeding on this anger and pain is iconographic of Archimago’s plan. Here, Redcrosse literally festers with emotional pain. But what does he really fester over? I would argue that the physicality of false Una’s deception does not stir him. Instead he broods over the belief that he has misread his lady—he breeds despair in himself, resulting in his inability to read anything. His anger stems less from jealousy than frustration over the conviction that he must have incorrectly assessed his lady’s virtue. He forecloses possibilities, rather than opens them.

I believe the complexity of such a reaction was never Archimago’s intention and becomes a reason why Archimago’s plan will ultimately fail. Archimago relies on the one-track plans of his books and the one-sidedness of human behavior with which he creates his falsities. He is unaware of the complexities of human understanding,

particularly with regards to reason. This unawareness is weakness. Though he desires to defeat Redcrosse by overriding reason with emotion, he does not appear to fully understand the many facets of reason. Instead, he regards reason as a simple binary to emotion. He does not have faith in the power of reason to overcome emotion. Instead, he views only the weaknesses of human understanding—that is, the ability to succumb to and be imprisoned by emotion. In essence, Archimago only studies the one-sided effects of emotion, not the possibilities of reason.

This one-sided concern with emotional control allows Redcrosse to eventually overcome Archimago's and Duessa's falseness with the aid of Arthur, Una and the sisters in the House of Holiness. But until that moment, Archimago controls the majority of Redcrosses's actions and reactions. In fact, at one point, Archimago arrogantly praises his "divelish arts,/That had such might over *true meaning harts*" (I.ii.9, my italics).<sup>240</sup> As indicated here, Archimago aims for the hearts, the emotions, of his targets in order to keep them from using reason to attain meaning. And as discussed in Augustine's exegetical model, the truest interpretation comes from a balance between heart and mind. So, as long as Archimago attempts to control Redcrosse's heart, Redcrosse will struggle to actualize his interpretative instincts.

Archimago's confidence in his art is reinforced as Archimago absently asks, "O who can tell/The hidden power of herbes, and might of Magik spell?" (I.ii.10).

Archimago sees himself as invincible when it comes to deception. But as we shall later see, Archimago may be able to deceive with appearance, but he reveals himself to Una because he cannot align his actions with his appearance.

---

<sup>240</sup> This reference to "true meaning harts" further reinforces the purity of Redcrosse's intentions and instincts. Though his interpretative abilities are weak, his intentions are pure.

Furthermore, I believe Spenser's answer to Archimago's query would be the reader and the experienced knight. As Archimago's story progresses, Spenser's reader becomes quickly versed in the facets of his deception and should be able to interpret situations more effectively than our hero. Again, Spenser uses his knight as a working example of the types of interpretative obstacles one may incur. By utilizing Redcrosse's experience Spenser can show his reader what these obstacles may be and how to transform them in order to learn from them. Even in Redcrosse's error, Spenser's reader, like the knight, can gain insight. Redcrosse's emotional and exegetical conflicts become teaching moments for the reader.

These possible moments for readerly instruction can occur when examining Una's and Redcrosse's respective journeys. In effect, Una and Redcrosse encounter similar obstacles on their paths, yet their stories generate far from similar outcomes. Both have met deceptively pious individuals who desire to lead them astray—Archimago as the “devout” man for Redcrosse and Corceca, the blind woman stealing from the church for Una. Both are accompanied by false versions of themselves—Duessa-Fidessa as Una and Archimago guised as Redcrosse. And while each must endure similar challenges, Redcrosse seems stagnant in his pursuits. Once Una realizes Archimago depicts himself as Redcrosse, the purpose of her quest becomes to discover Redcrosse's path, find him, and guide him.<sup>241</sup> Redcrosse, on the other hand, cannot move beyond the falsehoods of Duessa-Fidessa. This inability to perceive past earthly appearances keeps Redcrosse from travelling with a purpose, as Una does, that is, finding and guiding Redcrosse. His

---

<sup>241</sup> For considerations of the significance of Archimago's impersonation of Redcrosse as St. George see Judith H. Anderson. “Narrative Reflections: Re-envisioning the Poet in *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Faerie Queene*” in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*. ed. Theresa M. Krier. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998, 87-105.

task is still the earthly one of slaying the dragon, rather than an elevated one of learning how to exercise his exegetical skills in an attempt to fulfill his destiny.

Redcrosse has yet to realize Duessa's falseness leaving him with a directionless guide. As Duessa keeps Redcrosse from traveling towards truth and potential, she is both anti-truth and the anti-guide. Rather than providing a path with direction, she keeps him traveling in a circle of falseness and error, never moving past self-contemplation and doubt. I believe that while Redcrosse and Una do travel similar roads, Una's ability to see past Archimago's falseness and reassign herself a path to aid Redcrosse results in a dramatically different set of events in her story—namely her contemplative actions have animated her journey with a purpose. And though she breaks her cycle of error, her story is given new direction as she searches for Redcrosse. Redcrosse's inability to break his cycle of error keeps his story moving in circles as he accomplishes empty feat after empty feat. Without the consistent, rather than instinctual, guidance of faith and reason to direct his interpretative inquiry, Redcrosse is unable to move forward.

One of these instances of empty valor occurs in the House of Pride. Even upon nearing the “goodly building, bravely garnished,/The house of a Prince it *seemed* to be” Redcrosse encounters a more elaborate place of falseness and deception (I.iv.2, my italics). As the narrator suggests, the appearance of the castle is far different from the reality lurking closely beneath the surface. Again, Redcrosse finds himself in a situation in which he must interpret beyond the initial appearance in order to attain truth. As suggested in the opening stanza of this book, Redcrosse encounters difficulty with such tasks.



In a warning-like tone, our narrator speaks *to* Redcrosse rather than *about* him, cautioning:

Young knight, what ever that dost armes professe,  
 And through long labours hunttest after fame,  
 Beware of fraud, beware of ficklenesse,  
 In choice, and change of thy deare loved Dame,  
 Least thou of her believe too lightly blame,  
 And rash misweening doe thy hart remove; (I.iv.1)

Here, our narrator directly identifies Redcrosse's major problem—a displaced focus. Moreover, he speaks to the knight in an Una-like manner, cautioning the knight to beware of falseness. Part of this falseness can be seen in Redcrosse's pursuit of fame rather than the possibilities of truth. Because of this skewed focus, he cannot see the error in his interpretative choices. Instead, he plugs on into a vicious cycle of falseness and error, never realizing that he has an exegetical choice—an exegetical obligation—in the events of his journey. In effect, the important choice is *to choose* because to choose exercises Redcrosse's power of discernment.

But the beneficial employment of choice must be the result of contemplation. At the heart of contemplation is the desire to open the possibilities of many potential meanings that one can choose from. This conception of choice requires patient contemplation to consider each possible option. But, as the narrator warns, Redcrosse acts too rashly in his interpretative decisions and choices. He has yet to acquire the ability to successfully interpret and contemplate the potentials of his intellectual actions. Instead, he rashly makes his interpretative decisions based on emotion, rather than contemplation, which is exactly the type of reader Archimago and Duessa desire to maintain. Emotion delimits choices because it recognizes only one possibility.

At this moment, Redcrosse represents a novice reader moved solely by his initial emotional response to a situation, no matter if the response is moved by vanity, anger, or doubt. Ultimately, Redcrosse works within a false sense of control. He believes he controls the events and direction of his story—he believes that he is choosing. But, instead, his interpretative agency is controlled by Archimago's and Duessa's incessant deception.

Initially, much of Redcrosse's error occurs because of his lack of exegetical experience. But, as the events in the story progress, a lot of his error comes from misunderstanding the purpose of his journey and the true purposes of interpretation and contemplation. Redcrosse still strives for earthly gain rather than more hermeneutic ones. He associates fame with victory and greatness in battle. And this focus consumes these early episodes of Book I, especially those he encounters *without* Una's aid. He does not realize, yet, that the many obscure events on the way to these battle situations are equally as important as the fights themselves. He focuses on the ends of his journeys—the physical fights—instead of gaining wisdom from the events that occur along the way.

These minor, obscure events outside of battle include meeting Archimago, meeting Fraudubio, and traveling with Duessa-Fidessa. The scenes where he engages in battle—against Error, Sansfoy, Sansjoy and later the dragon—comprise a small amount of the action in Redcrosse's quest. Just as Spenser's reader should read these in-between scenes for value, so, too, should Redcrosse, for in these places he can gain freedom from deception and falseness. In essence, Redcrosse has yet to realize that these two ideals are somewhat intertwined. In his novice way, he does not realize that the ability to interpret a situation affects the physicality of battle, too. And the further into the pitfall of

deception he falls, the more narrow his focus becomes—as he grows increasingly disappointed with “Una” (Duessa) and aware of his misperception of her, the more he focuses on the opportunities for physical battle and challenges.

Redcrosse’s inability to connect the importance of contemplation with physical action seems to be the root of his shame. Early in canto iv Redcrosse serves as an example of what a knight should *not* do, “For unto a knight there is no greater shame,/Then lightnesse and inconsistencie in love;/That doth this *Redcrosse* knights ensample plainly prove” (I.iv.i). Here, Redcrosse is singled-out as a shamed knight, unable to choose correctly in love. But what really plagues Redcrosse here is not his inability to choose his love interest but, instead, his inability to see past one-sided, earthly appearances to consider the multifarious possibilities for meaning. The shame is to assume that only one possible reading can be correct, such as Una is false. It is not about distinguishing false from true, but instead about Redcrosse’s failure to consider what might be true, then to examine it.<sup>242</sup>

But misinterpretation is only part of Redcrosse’s problems. Another important issue that Redcrosse struggles with is his inability to realize that he is imprisoned by falseness. He is imprisoned not only because he proceeds with a false premise, but also because he is made it his *only* premise. For example, Redcrosse only considers that Una must be a whore. There is no consideration of any other possible meaning or nature.

---

<sup>242</sup> The “inconsistencie” our hero experiences with love occurs because of his inability to distinguish the false Duessa from the true Una—to view Duessa for her deceptive nature, not her appearance of truth.<sup>242</sup> This disparity portrays Redcrosse not as a flawed knight, but one inherently plagued by very human hermeneutic errors. He, like the reader, is susceptible to error but must learn how to employ an interpretation and contemplation guided by faith, charity, and reason in order to move forward towards the many possibilities for meaning and truth.

Redcrosse truly believes he controls his quest and, with his doubt of Una, believes he travels alone on his journey.<sup>243</sup>

Yet, just as Redcrosse begins to make some interpretative progress by reflecting on the effects of what he perceives as Una's falseness—progress that benefits him on the physical and interpretative levels—Duessa keeps him from moving forward. In fact, because she becomes weary, she makes him “bend his pace” and retire into the House of Pride (I.iv.3). In many ways the initial descriptions of the House of Pride work as fitting analogies for Redcrosses's current state and become yet another possible place for Redcrosse to identify the emptiness he must learn to avoid. As he and Duessa approach the House of Pride they see “A stately Pallace built of squared bricke,/ Which cunningly was without mortar laid,/Whose walls were high, but nothing strong, nor thick,/And golden foile all over them displaid” (I.iv.4).<sup>244</sup> Here, the House of Pride appears an imposing building, yet has no substance to it. Much like our knight's understanding, it seems solid yet rests on weak foundations.

As the above analogy of the stately palace resting on sand foundations suggests, both the act of interpretation and the knowledge gained from such acts establish the foundations for the successful opening of meaning to multiple potentials. But without these practiced exegetical foundations, we are left to solely rely on the *appearance* of truth—falseness hidden under the guise of truth. Without the foundation of truth, the realities created may crumble. And this is where our young knight resides—somewhere between truth and falseness, pride and error.

---

<sup>243</sup> On some level, however, Redcrosse chooses to travel alone because he fails to exercise his interpretative abilities of choice—abilities that would encourage him to see beyond the one-sided perception of appearances.

<sup>244</sup> Hamilton links Duessa's deformed genitalia to the bifurcated nature of Error and the House of Pride itself, in that it appears to be normal on top, but ill-formed in the lower portion.

This idea of appearance is also important when considering Spenser's conception of pride. As John M. Crossett and Donald J. Stump suggests, pride is separated from the other offenses and treated as the root of all evil (210).<sup>245</sup> As seen in the physical features of the House of Pride and, even, Lucifera's appearance, pride is beautiful while other sins are ugly, suggesting that pride is especially tempting. Just as the hidden parts of the palace "...that few could spie,/Were ruinous and old, but painted cunningly" concealed faults, pride is falseness dressed as truth (I.iv.5).

With regards to interpretation, pride is what deters the exegete from looking past appearances, especially seemingly beautiful or virtuous ones. It is the stubborn idea that one has the answer from his initial sensory perception—what he sees, or hears, or smells—and does not have to interpretatively work to consider any other possibilities because he is sure he knows what is before him. Pride seems to keep the interpreter unknowingly hidden behind earthly walls because he trusts his senses to a point of fault; pride opposes reason and contemplation.<sup>246</sup>

Pride seems to be what keeps Redcrosse from seeing Duessa's falseness. He is too proud to view Duessa's actual actions and nature in contrast to his idea of what Una would or should do. He cannot move past his initial readings of Una that, though correct, are inconsistent with Duessa's actions. Redcrosse does not possess the contemplative abilities to consider the attributes of truth that Una possesses against the selfish choices Duessa enacts. He does have moments of instinctual doubt or uneasiness but does not

---

<sup>245</sup> John M. Crossett and Donald V. Stump. "Spenser's Inferno: The Order the Seven Deadly Sins at the Palace of Pride." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall, 1984):203-18.

<sup>246</sup> In her analysis of the early scenes in the House of Pride, Anderson equates pride to adornment and flourishing to the leaves that "did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide" (24-25). The flourishing of the leaves deters light from entering the wood. Or, the flourishing of self-confidence keeps knowledge or outside meanings from entering the mind. With regards to Redcrosse, pride keeps Redcrosse from discovering his way. Judith Anderson. *The Growth of a Personal Voice: Piers Plowman and The Faerie Queene*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, 24-25.

know how to interpret or *use* these feelings to initiate interpretation. And for this, he imprisons himself in pride and continues to follow Duessa's empty lead.<sup>247</sup>

It seems that in this exegetical relationship between outward shows and internal nature the interpreter must first be able to discern between physical falseness before he can contemplate the possible *meanings* of these discrepancies between what he sees and what perceives really exists. In other words, even the most basic reader must be able to initially discern between real and false appearances before he can exercise the fullest extents of interpretation and contemplation. And as we have seen thus far, Redcrosse cannot discern between real and false appearances, which, in turn keeps him from exegetically moving forward.

Furthermore, this need to move past false appearances ultimately harkens back to our discussions of Hooker and literal interpretation. Relying solely on the literal readings of Scripture keeps one from gaining access to the many possibilities of meaning contained within Scriptural passages. But as suggested here, keeping one solely in the literal can also keep one in falseness. In the case of Redcrosse, he *must* move past the literal in order to begin to unlock the many possibilities of truth. The ability to see past physical appearances is one step, one pivotal step, on the long interpretative journey Redcrosse must traverse to fulfill his destiny. For Redcrosse, this movement past the

---

<sup>247</sup> The exegetical picture Spenser paints within these allegories of Duessa and the House of Pride is a two-fold model of interpretation—a model hinged upon internal and external interpretation. Redcrosse fails to interpret his surroundings correctly because he cannot interpret his internal feelings or ideas. He lacks the ability to contemplate his own situational feelings and reactions, and, in turn, carries no basis for truth to compare his external surroundings to. While these two types of interpretative acts are simultaneously interdependent with each relying on the other, it seems that they also answer to causality. If the internal interpretation falls short or fails, then the external suffers, too. But if the internal contemplation moves the reader even one step closer to distinguishing between error and truth, then the external interpretation will also benefit from such strides. When we see Redcrosse we see a reader who has yet to reconcile these two necessary forms of interpretation. The result is a knight caught in a cycle of error.

surface serves a necessary part of his interpretative endeavors, not just a benefit for exegetical training.

Redcrosse's interpretative shortcomings continue to plague him as he enters the House of Pride. Here, he enters a place dripping with false appearances.<sup>248</sup> The House of Pride feeds on its own false appearances, from the painted walls of the palace, to Lucifera who seems a queen, though she possesses no sovereign heritage, to the Ladies and Lords of her court who exist solely to out dress each other.<sup>249</sup> Moreover, as we see in the parade of Lucifera's six advisors—Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envie, and Wrath—the House of Pride's conception of teaching depends on obedience rather than strengthening the individual mind.<sup>250</sup> Rather than being encouraged to consider the worth of these shows beyond their appearances, the residents of the House of Pride are told that appearances equal truth.<sup>251</sup> In effect, they are led, not encouraged down a single-path to meaning.

Importantly, each of Lucifera's advisors relates to keeping one locked in the earthly flesh of appearance or in the sins of the flesh. For example, Gluttony “Unfit he

<sup>248</sup> Sayre Greenfield addresses Spenser's emphasis on the appearances in the House of Pride rather than on the idea of sin. From "The Politics of Allegory and Example." *Genre* 24, No. 3 (Fall 1991):233-55.

<sup>249</sup> For discussions surrounding Lucifera's description in relation to Elizabeth, see Michael O'Connell. *Mirror and Veil: The Historical Dimension of Spenser's Faerie Queene*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1977, 52-54; Robin Headlam Wells. *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth*. London: Croom Helm, 1983, 32-33; Paul Suttie. "Edmund Spenser's Political Pragmatism", *Studies in Philology* 95:56-76 (64-65); Sayre N. Greenfield. *The Ends of Allegory*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998, 41-42, 81.

<sup>250</sup> For general discussions of Lucifera's Pageant of Deadly Sins see James R. Fisher. "The Seven Deadly Passions: Edmund Spenser, Architectonike and Genre Critic." *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 19 (1993):135-46. Crossett and Stump conclude that Spenser's procession of sins is uniquely his own, though the details can be traced to traditional iconography (215). From "Spenser's Inferno. For a more Protestant, theological perspective, rather than a more symbolic one, Gless considers the spiritual indictment of Redcrosse at one point concluding that "authentic victories in spiritual warfare participate in the evils they combat" (155). This idea suggests that even the purest Christian knight must still engage with sin in order to conquer it. From *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>251</sup> I cannot help but wonder if the House of Pride is Spenser's way of commenting on the ecclesiastical endeavors of Protestant exegetical thinkers. It seems quite prideful to assume that man can make decisions about divine intention.

was for any wordly thing,/...Whose mind in meat and drinke was drowned so,/That from his friend he seldome knew his fo:” abuses the benefits of reason by oversaturating one in food and drink (I.iv.23). Or, Lechery, the “inconstant man, that loved all he saw,/And lusted after all, that he did love,/...Which lewdness fild him with reproachfull paine/Of that fowle evill, which all men reprove,/ That rots the marrow, and consumes the brain” entraps one by fixating his mind on fleshly pleasures (I.iv.26). Or, greedy Avarice, who “led a wretched life unto himself unknowne/...Whose greedy lust did lacke in greatest store,/Whose need had end, but no end covetise,/Whose wealth was want, whose plenty mad him pore,/Who had enough, yet wished ever more;” sacrifices any worth in life for the neverending pursuit of more (I.iv.29).<sup>252</sup>

As illustrated in these examples, each of these advisors keeps one bound in the pursuit of earthly pleasures rather than heavenly ones and, correspondingly, to dead-end, one-to-one symbolism. Specifically, each of these examples concludes with a quieting of the mind—usually in the form of affective overload. With such a foundational value system, it is no surprise that Duessa fits in to the House of Pride. As discussed earlier, Duessa and Archimago also rely on keeping their visitors captive under the rule of emotion rather than reason. And, similar to Lucifera’s advisors, Duessa depends upon Redcrosse’s pride as a gateway to these emotional potentials.

Moreover, at the onset of the parade, each counselor is “taught to obey their bestiall beheasts” further suggesting that the driving force behind these counselors’ instruction is the desire to keep one under the rule of emotion and reaction instead of teaching one to exercise reason in the contemplative act which can guide one out of these

---

<sup>252</sup> Hamilton notes that with Avarice, his mental disease manifests itself physically (6-9). Such an image links avarice’s mental shortcomings to a greed for the earthly, thus suggesting that the part of avarice involves not engaging the mind with higher pursuits.



emotional prisons.<sup>253</sup> Any one of these advisors, or sins, relies upon pride to trap the individual in false appearances.<sup>254</sup> By making pride central to each of these sins, Spenser depicts error as both a flaw that can hinder the interpretative process and a result of stunted analysis. And in order to overcome this flaw, one must let reason guide interpretation and contemplation in order to help one escape from the traps of earthly vice.

Spenser presents a two-tiered version of pride in the scene in the House of Pride. On one hand, these allegorical counselors illustrate pride as a sin keeping one in an enraged emotional state—a state where reason cannot pull one out of the earthly shackles of pride. These counselors are the physical manifestation of pride. On the other hand, in this schema, pride is an effect of error, keeping one from realizing they have misinterpreted. As seen with Redcrosse, he recognizes the falseness in this parade of attendants, yet cannot see the falseness in Lucifera. He kneels to her but scorns the others. Again, we find Redcrosse unable to read the person who *appears* beautiful and virtuous. Just as he cannot entertain the possibility that he may have misread Una's character, so, too, does he struggle to see the true nature contained in Lucifera and the House of Pride.

Though Redcrosse hermeneutically struggles, he still continually appears to possess the instinct and potential to move past error and strengthen his exegetical skills.

---

<sup>253</sup> For an analysis of Medieval and early Renaissance animal symbolism see Beryl Rowland. *Animals With Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolization*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973.

<sup>254</sup> As Hamilton notes, Lucifera opens the procession because pride is “the original of sinne” (Eccleus. 10:14). But traditionally when referring to the seven deadly sins, Gluttony opens the procession. This switch—a distinction that the reader would surely pick up on—indicates the importance of pride in Spenser's interpretative paradigm. I would argue that with such a distinction, Spenser desires to teach and warn his reader of the confines/dangers of pride. Consult James R. Fisher “The Seven Deadly Passions” for further considerations of the significance of Lucifera as one of the seven deadly sins (134-135). Or, for discussions concerning the traditional order of the seven deadly sins, see W. Ian Miller. “Gluttony” *Representations* 60: 1997, 92-111.

As long as these instincts are present, we can assume that Redcrosse is not totally overruled by his emotions. The narrator suggests a similar sentiment at the onset of canto v, as he comments on “*The noble hart, that harbours virtuous thought,/And is with child of glorious great intent,/Can never rest, until it forth have brought/Th’ eternall brood of glorie excellent*” (I.v.1, my italics). This passage identifies and reinforces the important pieces of exegesis—a pure heart, virtuous thought, and righteous intentions—necessary for departure from earthly error and the movement towards the many possibilities for truth. Here, Spenser’s narrator suggests that the combination of a heart possessing virtue that can then inspire the mind’s use of virtue with good intentions will encourage one towards the assessment of meanings. While Redcrosse seems to possess the good intentions, he does not know how to strike a balance between head and heart necessary for fruitful interpretation and contemplation. Until he can use reason or faith to guide his emotions, he will be caught in this vicious cycle of emotionally-bred error.

Moreover, this passage suggests that there is an internal force guiding one on the path towards the multifarious possibilities of truth. For Augustine, this force is charity. For Hooker, it is reason. And for Redcrosse, it is Una—an embodiment of the guiding attributes of virtue. For Redcrosse, Una acts as the outside physical force that actualizes his internal ones. When fighting Errour, she initiates him on his quest for truth, and in her absence, still guides him towards truth and his destiny as he wrestles to interpret Duessa’s actions with Una’s virtue. Even in her absence, Una’s virtue serves as an example to judge others by. But in these interpretative episodes, Redcrosse struggles to trust his initial instincts and, in turn, fails to utilize Una’s guidance and remains trapped in earthly error.

However, this pending battle with Sansjoy marks an important scene for Redcrosse in that here he begins to directly align his physical battles with honor and virtue. Throughout Redcrosse's journey, he has excelled in battle, physically defeating all he has been matched up against. But in these battles, Redcrosse was always driven by his desire for fame—by his pride. Yet, in this upcoming battle, he appears restless because he becomes more aware of the connection between battle and virtue. As he awaits the dawn, “such restlesse passion did all night torment/The flaming corage of that Faery knight,/Devising, how that doughtie turnament/With greatest honour he atchieven might;” (I.v.1).

Redcrosse again reveals an instinct for reflection—an elementary form of contemplation. And though he still remains far from the sort of awareness that will unite the affect of battle with the knowledge of contemplation, this scene represents a marked departure from the stagnancy Redcrosse has endured throughout Book I. He starts to consider what his actions mean. And while this is still self-centered interpretation, considering how he can achieve honors and praise, it illustrates a move towards self-reflection, which is more promising than action without thought. In these moments of self-awareness, he illustrates that he can trust his instincts and possibly break his cycle of error. But, as Sidney delineates, self-knowledge, or good intentions, without virtuous action is mute—the faithful interpreter is aware of “well-doing and not of well-knowing only” (83). Throughout Book I, Redcrosse struggles to perform virtuous actions because he cannot perform virtuous thoughts—the noble actions of interpretation and contemplation.

Though this is a small stride, Redcrosse, is still far from being out of the sight of error's broad scope. Just as he nears slaying Sansjoy, Duessa begs Redcrosse to "Let now abate the terror of your might,/And quench the flame of furious despight,/And bloudie vengeance;..." (I.v.14). Here, Duessa, though for reasons far from virtuous, makes a case for mercy and rationality over vengeance and emotion. Unlike her past guidance that works to keep Redcrosse in a state of emotional furor, Duessa attempts to guide Redcrosse away from these prisons. For a brief moment in this scene, Duessa truly imitates the nature of Una. Yet, her cries for mercy are only virtuous in a place, such as the House of Pride, where appearances supersede truth. For Duessa, though, her overt actions appear virtuous, yet her internal motivations are far from pure. Again, Duessa's actions serve as a warning to never truly trust appearances. Her very nature makes a case for the necessity of moving past appearances on the interpretative journey.

So, from this "virtuous" suggestion, Duessa quickly returns to her old ways by playing into Redcrosse's vanity. As she urges Redcrosse to spare Sansjoy she says, "The conquest yours, I yours, the shield, and glory yours" which feeds on Redcrosse's desire for victory and fame. By keeping him focused on the physical rewards of fame rather than the spiritual potentials of contemplation, Duessa continues to flaunt her powerful hold on Redcrosse.

His response to this list of spoils further illustrates just how distanced he is from the real Una's guidance and example. As Duessa begs for mercy, Redcrosse finds himself consumed with a desire for praise from the surrounding crowd. He, "Not at all satisfied, with *greedie eye*/He sought all round about, his thirstie blade/To bath in bloud of faithlesse enemy;" illustrating just how engrossed Redcrosse still is in these earthly

spoils and sensory perception, and how distanced he remains from virtue (I.v.15, my italics). All he desires from battle is fame and praise. The brief sparks of self-awareness Redcrosse experienced early in the canto have once again been extinguished by the powerful winds of fame and pride.

This idea of dissatisfaction is an interesting sentiment, though. Is Redcrosse dissatisfied with Duessa's request? With the events of the battle? With experiencing the same feeling after victory? Or, does he illustrate an awareness of the stagnancy of his quest thus far? Have the virtuous desires of his "noble hart" finally taken over? While the narrative clues in the beginning of the canto would suggest the latter sentiments, it seems Redcrosses's dissatisfaction is more prideful than epiphanic. In this scene he has obviously already won, yet he desires more than mere victory. Possibly, he is beginning to identify the empty feelings associated with these earthly desires of praise and fame.<sup>255</sup>

And after this battle in the House of Pride, Redcrosse frees himself from Duessa's hold. As she leaves to confer in Daemogorgons hall, Redcrosse learns of Lucifera's dungeons and leaves the palace.<sup>256</sup> In this prison, he hears of the captives who in "mortgaging their lives to Couetise,/Through wastefull Pride, and wanton Riotise,/They were by law of that Tyranesse/Provokt with Wrath and Envies false surmise,/Condemned to that Dungeon mercilesse,/Where they should live in woe, & die in wretchednesse"

<sup>255</sup> Unfortunately, what he desires in this scene is the praise of the audience—the cheers as he kills Sansjoy. His desire for more than victory seems a positive feeling, yet what he seeks to fill this newfound desire will not satiate his hunger. Though the immediate feelings he attempts to fill this empty area of want with are less than virtuous, the want itself offers potential. Redcrosse finally appears to start evolving. He wants more than victory. He is searching for a different feeling. But as long as he is with Duessa, he will never be able to search for other ways to fulfill this feeling—he will be caught in a vicious circle of pride. Once he frees himself from her falseness, his whole person can move forward towards truth.

<sup>256</sup> Details and inflated diction point towards a classical descent into hell. For further discussions surrounding this phenomena, see A. C. Hamilton. *The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, 70-71; Darryl J. Gless. *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994, 101-102. To consider this descent as a motif see Thomas E. Maresca. *Three English Epics: Studies of Trolius and Criseyde, The Faerie Queene, and Paradise Lost*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979, 13-73.

(I.v.46). These captives represent those who did not see past Lucifera's beautiful surface—they are Redcrosse's future if he does not begin to exercise his interpretative skills and cease his blind acceptance of surface appearances.<sup>257</sup> In many ways, these prisoners are the men and women punished for aligning themselves with the possibilities of pride rather than interpretation and contemplation. They sought earthly riches and power rather than spiritual ones. And as a result, they reside in a self-created prison.

Importantly, Redcrosse does not discover these catacombs on his own. He still needs guidance from the Dwarf to see past the falseness hidden by Pride, but he is able to flee error this time. In this final scene from the House of Pride more insight is gained into Redcrosse's interpretative problems. Throughout his journey, Redcrosse has encountered a limited number of opponents in each episode. In fact, he usually engages with only one opponent at a time.

Not only does this illustrate Redcrosse's inability to consider more than one viable truth or place to decipher this truth, but this limited opposition seems to represent the interpretative places Redcrosse struggles with throughout the text. Just as he cannot physically defeat more than one physical opponent, so, too, does he struggle to defeat a one-sided perception of truth. In either case, this limit of opposition leaves Redcrosse lacking the hermeneutic experience needed to successfully defeat an opponent and gain the self-awareness needed for movement towards contemplation and the many avenues leading towards truth.

---

<sup>257</sup> For further discussions surrounding the significance of those in Pride's prison see A. C. Hamilton *The Structure of Allegory in The Faerie Queene*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, 70-71; James Nohrnberg. *The Analogy of The Faerie Queene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, 172-173; Maren-Sofie Rostvig. *Configurations: A Topomorphical Approach to Renaissance Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 302-304; Darryl J. Gless. *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, 103.

For example, in Redcrosses's first battle against Errour, he fought Errour alone but when she split and left her minions he became overwhelmed. Allegorically, we quickly realize that Redcrosse can defeat error but struggles to deal with the effects of error and of his victory. This image highlighting the difficulty of wholly defeating error lurks in the background of his time in the House of Pride. Here, he is accompanied by false Una and increasingly grows suspicious of her actions, Sansjoy challenges him to battle, though he kneels to Lucifera, he mistrusts her advisors, and finally, he learns of the prisoners of Pride.

Redcrosse seems overwhelmed and underexperienced to handle the plentitude of possibilities held in each of these scenarios individually, let alone collectively. Just as he finds it difficult to move past a single meaning to unlock the multifarious potentials of meaning, he struggles to conquer more than one foe. Because of his past experiences, he only knows how to focus on the physical battle against Sansjoy. But when he defeats Sansjoy—as he has against so many others in the past—he does not feel the calm that came before. Instead, he feels empty and incomplete.

Because there are so many other possible confrontations facing him in the House of Pride—the falsity of Lucifera and her counselors, Duessa's inconsistent virtue, and the hidden dungeons of the prideful—Redcrosse cannot find solace in the single-acts of his past. Instead, he seeks more satisfaction from his victory, yet he does not know how to generate many possibilities from a single one. In this case, Redcrosse's victory must satisfy many appetites, not just those for fame. It seems Redcrosse desires the feelings he associates with victory to do more than just feed his earthly desires.

This desire for more than fame, this instinct, blossoming in Redcrosse is progressive and moves him farther away from earthly confines. Yet, Redcrosse's inexperience with the many possibilities of meaning that lie beyond appearances makes him more doubtful and begins to drag him into despair. As he ventures alone, his internal self-doubt and shame begins to manifest itself externally. Once full of fierce physical strength in battle, though weak in intellectual interpretation, Redcrosse's mental weaknesses begin to exhibit themselves physically. For, "Eftsoones his manly forces gan to faile,/ And mightie strong was turnd to feeble fraile" (I.vii.6).

As suggested earlier, Redcrosse's goal as a knight, as an interpreter, is to blend physical action with the mind and learn to allow reason to guide his actions in battle, rather than becoming enflamed by emotion. But Redcrosse still appears unaware of this goal. And though Una always desired to guide him towards exercising his interpretative skills and understanding why these skills are necessary, he now has no guide, no model, no one. And as Redcrosse continues to wander without a goal or purpose, reason becomes overridden by self-doubt and shame over leaving Una, being deceived by the House of Pride, and misreading Una's virtue. Once these feelings invade Redcrosse's mind, his body begins to diminish. By the time he is imprisoned by Orgoglio, he is a man defeated not by Duessa and Archimago, but by himself.

In fact, as Orgoglio captures Redcrosse "Him to his castle brought with hastie force,/And in a Dongeon deepe him threw without remorse (I.vii.15).<sup>258</sup> This image harkens back to the catacombs of the House of Pride—an image that drove Redcrosse

---

<sup>258</sup> Webber identifies three challengers to Charissa's virtues—wrath, hatred, and lust versus temperance, justice, and wisdom. These three opponents govern Redcrosse's quest, ending with his capture by Orgoglio ("The Interlocking Triads of the First Book of Faerie Queene." *Studies in Philology* 90 (Spring 1993):176-212).



from the den of falseness. But as he lies in a similar cell, Duessa becomes "...highly honoured in his [Orgoglio's] haughtie eye,/He gave her gold and purple pall to weare,/ And triple crowne set on her head full hie./ And her endowed with royall maiesty" (I.vii.16). As Duessa ascends to this false throne, it seems Redcrosse becomes trapped in a self-fashioned House of Pride.<sup>259</sup>

After he labored to free himself from error and leave the House of Pride, he ironically has become physically imprisoned in a similar place because of prideful actions. Relying on his sensory perception and muting his interpretative instincts brings Redcrosse to this moment. The figurative confines that pride keeps the interpreter pent up in are now literal, physical walls. His imprisonment is a manifestation of his intellectual imprisonment by falseness and error. Little does he know that his mind is the key to his release, but he is so distanced from this knowledge that he accepts his fate in the darkness of the dungeon. Moreover, this acceptance is also prideful because he continues to wallow in the error of his past actions, instead of considering the many possibilities of what these errors may mean. He pities and mourns his current situation causing him to exist in a prideful state of self-pity.

The interpretative skills and experiences that keep Redcrosse in darkness and allowed Archimago and Duessa to deceive him are a sharp contrast to the exegetical prowess of Arthur. Arthur's shield which was "Not made of steele, nor nduring bras,/Such earthly metals soone consumed bene:" reveals a freedom from the constraints of earthly materials—materials that keep Arthur from error and pride (I.vii.33).<sup>260</sup> This

---

<sup>259</sup> Interestingly, this ascension is an action that could finally overtly illustrate Duessa's falseness to Redcrosse—it is a scene he could interpret.

<sup>260</sup> Eftepi Mitsi examines the meaning and function of Arthur's shield. In his defeat of Orgoglio, Mitsi identifies the shield as an embodiment of English nationalism and the defeat of Protestantism over

freedom is manifested not merely in the shield's composition but in its function, for "No magicke arts hereof had any might,/Nor bloudie wordes of bold Enchaunters call,/But all that was not such, as seemd in sight,/Before that shield did fade, and suddeine fall"

(I.vii.35). Arthur's shield aids in his interpretation by dissipating falseness and revealing truth. From this truth, Arthur is able to act and defeat his foes. In many ways, Arthur's shield is an extension of his true character. Where Redcrosse needs Una to teach him to develop his interpretative tools, so, too, does Arthur need an agent to aid him in interpretation.

But Arthur's shield greatly differs from the sorcery enacted by Archimago or Duessa or Lucifera. As seen in the exchange between Una and Arthur, error is slain and progress made through counsel and contemplation, "Mishaps are maistered by advice discrete,/And counsell mittigates the greatest smart;/Found never helpe, who never would his hurts impart" (I.vii.40).<sup>261</sup> As Arthur posits, error can only be slain if one admits their fault—error can only be defeated when pride is also abolished.<sup>262</sup> Just as an interpreter works to identify a passage or scene that will yield numerous potentials for meaning, he must also identify the places he may have erred and attempt to contemplate both the nature and extent of these errors as well as re-consider the possibilities contained in the original scene. By admitting to committing error, one can begin to move into more

---

Catholicism. From "Veiling Medusa: Arthur's Shield in *The Faerie Queene*." In *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature*, edited by Mike Pincombe. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001. Other discussions surrounding the nature of Arthur's shield include Paul J. Alpers. *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, 166-179;

Peter DeSa Wiggins. "Spenser's Use of Ariosto: Imitation and Allusion in Book I of the *Faerie Queene*", *Renaissance Quarterly* 44:257-279. On heraldry, see Ruth Berman. "Blazonings in *The Faerie Queene*", *Cahiers Elizabethains* 23:1-14, 2. Michael Leslie argues that the blank shield is contextually appropriate because Arthur is still a prince. See Michael Leslie. *Spenser's 'Fierce Warres and Faithfull Loves': Martial and Chivalric Symbolism in The Faerie Queene*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 14-15.

<sup>261</sup> For further discussions of the proverbial nature of this exchange between Una and Arthur see Mary Ann Cincotta. "Reinventing Authority in *The Faerie Queene*" *Studies in Philology* 80:25-52.

<sup>262</sup> We see Arthur enact this theory at Mercilla's court in Book V, where Arthur repents for his brief misinterpretation of Duessa (V.ix.49). This scene is further discussed in Chapter 4.

fruitful places of interpretation because he is no longer confined to the finiteness of prideful interpretation—that is, interpretation that keeps one rooted in initial impressions instead of being encouraged to contemplate past these impressions.

Moreover, the paradigm Arthur begins to outline in the above passage demands outside help to move one from error to gain. As Una's ideas do, Arthur's methods identify a similar need for encouragement, but his idea finds interpretative encouragement in the form of dialogue, or "advice discrete", not necessarily outright guidance. In the exchange between Una and Arthur, Una initially resists Arthur's call for discussion because she appears hesitant to exercise raw emotion without contemplation first, for "great grieffe will not be tould,/And can more easily be thought, then said" (I.vii.41). Una's adversity to Arthur's idea seems to be rooted in the limits of language to convey grief or pain. And without contemplation, this grief "breedes despaire" (I.vii.41). Arthur retorts, stating that despair can never exist where faith has first settled, for "...will to might gives greatest aid" (I.vii.41). But for Una emotional error, is a condition of the flesh—"no faith so fast (quoth she) but flesh does paire" (I.vii.41). Yet for Arthur, "Flesh may impaire (quoth he) but reason can repaire" (I.vii.41).

In this brief discussion, we are provided insight into the discrepancies between Una's and Arthur's ideas on faith and contemplation.<sup>263</sup> For Una, contemplation keeps one from experiencing the pain of grief—it protects the interpreter by allowing him to

---

<sup>263</sup> In "Arthur, Partial Exegesis, and the Reader" Walter R. Davis delineates a fourfold exegesis that can be progressively traced throughout the Apocalyptic images and scenes in Book I. The steps of this exegesis include the literal, the Tropological (Moral), the Allegorical (Historical), and the Anagogical (Prophetic). Davis considers this exchange between Una and Arthur as an example of Anagogical interpretation, alluding Arthur to the descent of the Son (Walter R. Davis. "Arthur, Partial Exegesis, and the Reader." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 18 (1977):553-576). For further considerations of Arthur's character, specifically of him as a sun-god see Alastair Fowler. *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*. London: Routledge & Paul, 1964, 214-215; or Douglas Brooks-Davies. *The Mercurian Monarch: Magical Politics from Spenser to Pope*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983, 74-75.

process before feeling. But contemplation for Arthur must occur after experiencing emotion. Error, and emotion, is inherent to the human condition, but contemplation can move one past the pain, not keep him/her from it. For Arthur, faith in reason, faith in the possibilities of the human mind, will move one towards the paths leading to truth. The balance between emotion and reason is the only way to move towards truth, and experience—even pain or doubt—will allow faith to enter the interpretative arena. Without experience, one may be protected from harm, but he/she is also impeded from progress—both knightly and hermeneutic.

Though Una's and Arthur's ideas differ in expression, they are centrally the same. Faith is the backbone of interpretation aided by reason and charity. I believe the major differences between Arthur's ideas and Una's comes down to their basic origin. Una is Truth and Virtue, both abstract and actual, internal and external. But ultimately she is an allegorical character, like Gloriana. Arthur, on the other hand, is more like Redcrosse in origin, just more experienced in action. Such experience leads Una to ask for his help, to ask for his advice. In the most Socratic of ways, Una, emblematic virtue and wise guide, seeks personal guidance from Arthur, hoping "...that your [Arthur's] wisdom will direct my thought,/Or that your prowess can me yield reliefe;" (I.vii.42).

Here, Una recognizes the depth of Arthur's experience and allows herself, the guide, to be guided. He is experienced in the physicality of battle, but, more importantly, he is experienced in employing reason and utilizing his wisdom both in and out of battle. Arthur's "prowesse" consists of more than victory in battle or contemplation. Instead, Arthur becomes the ideal who, in merging the physical, spiritual,

and intellectual, represents a knight with the ability to successfully balance the emotions of battle or pride with the wisdom of contemplation.

This is the balance Redcrosse struggles to strike somewhat because of his inexperience in battle but largely because of his inexperience in interpretation and contemplation—self, worldly, and divine. Does this inexperience in interpretation and battle provide Arthur with the potential to succeed? Is he a better pupil because he has less to lose and everything to gain from his interpretative lessons? Possibly. But, according to Una, she desired this inexperience in her knight. She confides to Arthur:

It was my chance (my chance was faire and good)  
 There for to find a fresh unproved knight,  
 Whose manly hands imbrew'd in guiltie blood  
 Had never bene, ne ever his might  
 Had throwne to ground the unregarded right:  
 Yet of his prowesse prooffe he since hath made. (I.vii.47)

For Una, Redcrosse's inexperience equates to innocence. He was not marred by the corruption of battle nor state nor self and, as a result, beyond guidance. Instead, he was a guidable pupil, capable of receiving all of Una's wisdom and guidance. But the same innocence that drew Una to Redcrosse imprisoned him in false Duessa's deception. However, we do gain a better understanding of Una's intentions from this description.<sup>264</sup>

In this passage, we as readers gain insight into Una's larger plan for Redcrosse. Unfortunately, what we have encountered thus far shows a journey quite different from her plan. Once Redcrosse and Una were separated, the plan to gradually teach Redcrosse as he and Una traveled to her parent's kingdom abruptly changed as Redcrosse traveled alone, misguided by a false Duessa. And though he is left with inexperience and

---

<sup>264</sup> Moreover, from this description, we realize that Una chooses Redcrosse based on his *potential* for learning rather than his feats or reputation to-date.

misdirected faith, he does not perish, largely because of his instinct. Because of this deviation from Una's pedagogical plan, Redcrosse shall be able to gain similar skills by following Arthur's. His experiences and his emotional vulnerability open him to Arthur's exegetical ideas. All Redcrosse has to do is admit and accept his error—that is, lower his shield of pride. Then he can continue his exegetical journey.

However, now more than ever, Redcrosse's problem truly lies in his interpretative inexperience and pride. His instincts removed him from the House of Pride and separated him from Duessa. But as Redcrosse lays in Orgoglio's dungeon, defeated by a "Gyant huge and tall,/Who him disarmed, dissolute, dismaid,/Unwares surprised, and with mightie mall/The monster mercilesse him made to fall", he has surpassed the point of self-teaching and relying on his instincts and literally needs Una to help him move out of his prison (I.vii.51).<sup>265</sup> In essence, Redcrosse does not possess the hermeneutic tools to move forward alone. He needs Una and Arthur not to save him but to show him how to save himself.

Importantly, in this dungeon, stripped of pride, questioning his instinct, unable to physically or spiritually free himself from his confines, Redcrosse truly embodies the everyman character Spenser intended. As reflected in our narrator's question and response "Ay me, how many perils doe enfold/The righteous man, to make him daily fall?/Were not, that the heavenly grace doth him uphold,/And steadfast truth acquite him out of all" Redcrosse finally reaches the place where he can defeat his earthly error

---

<sup>265</sup> Robert Lamberton traces Spenser's adherence to Christian reading of giants to perceive Orgoglio as pride. From here, Lamberton views Redcrosse's move from Redcrosse's pride to the suicidal cave of Despaire. Robert Lamberton. *Homer the Theologian: Neo-Platonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. For further theological considerations of Orgoglio as a character and an allegory see Anne Lake Prescott. "Why Arguments over Communion Matter to Allegory: Or, Why are Catholics like Orgoglio?" *Reformation* 6 (2002):163-170.

(I.viii.1). As this passage suggests, the tests that Redcrosse encounters, that all individuals encounter, are continuous and the tools to endure these tests, reason and charity, are constantly present, too. As this examination has shown in the works of Hooker and Augustine, reason and charity are god-given, intended to help one past error and towards the many paths leading to truth. They are always present, but not always used. Teaching must activate these tools and protect the exegete as he explores the possibilities of meaning.

It seems Redcrosse remains unaware of the constant presence of and need for reason and faith because he has not been fully taught how to employ these tools. And, as he sits confined he fails to realize he has the power to defeat falseness and error. Instead, pride keeps him from seeing beyond his immediate failure and begins to pull him into despair.

While Redcrosse has yet to learn how to defeat error through contemplation, he has also never had a model to work from, until Arthur. As Arthur enters Orgoglio's lair and battle ensues, he enacts the lessons Una desires to teach Redcrosse. As the Giant begins to run towards Arthur, "Inflam'd with scornful wrath and high disdain,/And lifting up his dreadfull club on high,/...Him thought at first encounter to have slaine" Arthur, the "wise and warie...noble Pere,/...lightly leaping from so monstrous maine,/Did faire avoide the violence him nere" (I.viii.7). As Arthur dodges the Giant rather than engaging with him, the Giant begins "trembling with a *strange feare*" indicating the success of Arthur's two-fold strategy to first weaken the Giant's mind by weakening his confidence and then engage in battle (I.viii.8, my italics). Importantly, Arthur animates

Una's exegetical lessons in a knightly light, so that the reader can animate it in a readerly one.

Once the Giant's club is lodged in the ground, Arthur reads the situation to find an advantage. Arthur maintains an advantage over the Giant because he maintains a calm head and uses his reason to read the situation with a purpose, rather than reacting to the Giant's moves as Redcrosse did. Even when Duessa uses her magic arts to restrain Arthur's mind, he still uses his sword to free himself from the Giant.<sup>266</sup> In the end, Arthur *accidentally* uses magic to defeat Orgoglio as his shield falls to the ground and the veil falls. But throughout the bout, even when he enters the castle, Arthur makes a point not to use his magic tools (I.viii.4). Instead, Arthur's ability to interpret and anticipate proves skill enough—he uses his mind to guide his sword, and when his mind is taken away, he has faith in his instincts and uses his sword. In many ways, Arthur embodies the ideal use of interpretation and physical prowess desired in a knight.<sup>267</sup>

By covering the shield, this agent of truth, Arthur further reinforces the necessity for individual discovery when contemplating the many potentials of truth—the importance of the journey rather than the fixation on the destination. As seen in Orgoglio's reaction, one can be overcome with the revelation of truth, especially self-truth. In order to discover and discern truth, one must practice interpretation and

---

<sup>266</sup> As seen in this scene, even when subdued and forced into physical engagement, Arthur still strives for the head as he “Stroke on of those deformed heads so sore,/That of his puissance proud ensample made;/His monstrous scalpe downe his teeth it tore,/And that misformed shape made mis-shaped more” (I.viii.16).

<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, the divergent types and effects of Arthur's magic compared to Duessa's appear to offer more insight into Arthur and the depth of his abilities. As seen throughout Book I, Duessa's magic, her deception, works to keep her target distanced from truth. Arthur's, on the other hand, is so powerful because it *reveals* truth. When the veil falls, Orgoglio's actions are “...all in vain: for he has *read* his end/In that bright shield, and all other forces spend/Themselves in vaine: for since that glauncing sight,/He hath no power to hurt, nor defend” (I.viii.21). The truth revealed to Orgoglio overcame him because it was thrust upon him rather than sought. While the shield is covered, its magic “...may be seene, if sought” indicating the importance of contemplation to first discover truth and then to discern it (I.vii.36).



contemplation. Contemplation allows the individual to safely consider both meaning and the many viable paths to truth. Without it, when one is *told* how to attain truth or *told* what truth is, he/she never enacts the god-given tools given to him/her to fully engage with the earthly and spiritual world around him/her—one never reaches his/her interpretative potential nor moves past one-sided meaning. Additionally, if the revelation of truth alone were a remedy, Arthur would have shown Redcrosse his destiny upon freeing him from Orgoglio's dungeon. Instead, he and Una take him to the House of Holiness where he can be taught how to discover and understand truth.

After Orgoglio's revelation, Arthur again interprets the change in situation and adjusts his battle plan to finally defeat the Giant. But Arthur's interpretive abilities are best witnessed in his interaction with Ignaro, the blind purveyor of Orgoglio's castle.<sup>268</sup> Ignaro holds keys to all the inner doors of the castle, including Redcrosse's cell, but "he could not them use, but kept them still in store" (I.viii.30). Ignaro becomes a working allegory of the pitfalls of unused interpretive skill, of the interpreter who does not utilize his god-given interpretative tools, such as reason. Ignaro is a man who literally and figuratively holds the keys to unlock doors yet is blind to the contents and possibilities behind these inner doors. Ignaro exists in a state of perpetual blindness, just as the man imbued with reason who chooses not to employ this god-given tool to move forward on the path towards truth and understanding.

Yet, as Arthur searches for Redcrosse, his exchange with Ignaro exemplifies Arthur's heightened interpretive ability. To start, he asks the old man where the people

---

<sup>268</sup> In this scene, Ignaro acts as the foil to Contemplation in the House of Holiness. Where Contemplation can see all, earthly and heavenly, Ignaro is blind to all around him. Though both aged, Contemplation uses age to inform his interpretation while Ignaro's age separates him from this sort of contemplation. Rather than uniting him with the larger ideas and meaning found through divine contemplation, Ignaro remains isolated and alone from both men and God.

are held, specifically where Redcrosse is laid, in which Ignaro answers “He could not tell: ne ever other answere made” (I.viii.32). Next, he asks which way he may pass, only to again meet Ignaro’s standard answer of “he could not tell” (I.viii.33). Initially Arthur reads these responses as hostile and intentionally misguiding. Arthur’s displeasure prompts the response, “...Old sire, it seemes thou hast not red/How ill it sits with that same silver hed/In vaine to mocke, or mockt in vaine to bee;” (I.viii.33). Here, Arthur begins to experience earthly emotion and faults Ignaro’s inability to read as his annoyance. When Ignaro again answers he “could not tell” Arthur adjusts his initial reading of the man, changes his method and nature of inquiry, and adjusts his initial emotional response, “calm[ing] his wrath with goodly temperance” then takes the keys without force or resistance. Ignaro, like the weak interpreter, needs to be *told*. After being told, he relies only on what he has been told, instead of questioning the information.

In this early scene with Ignaro, Arthur is forced to re-read the man and alter his initial interpretations. Importantly, he does so based on his reactions rather than a change in Ignaro’s. Ignaro’s response never changes, what does, however, is Arthur’s interpretation of the phrase. Originally, Arthur read Ignaro’s inability to tell as a defiance against Arthur and an allegiance to Orgoglio. But as their interaction continues, Arthur realizes that the man cannot tell because he truly does not know. Ignaro holds the keys but has no knowledge of the locks. Nor does he possess an inclination, or instinct, to see what keys might open what locks.

Arthur’s ability to adjust his initial reading of the man, of the events in the scene, represents what Redcrosse has been unable to do throughout Book I. Early, when

Redcrosse realizes that Duessa's actions do not integrate with his initial reading of Una, he fails to change his reading of Una or his subsequent actions. He allows himself to be misguided by Duessa's falseness because he fails to take interpretative agency in his journey. Arthur, on the other hand, uses his exegetical skills as another weapon, equally as strong and important as his sword or shield. Arthur represents the type of Christian knight Una desires to shape Redcrosse into—a knight who uses his interpretative abilities to influence his physical ones. Specifically, he is able to reason away his initial emotional reaction in order to act. He does so with his anger towards Ignaro and his pity for Redcrosse upon finding him (I.viii.39).

Arthur's physical and intellectual strength marks a sharp contrast to the Redcrosse found in the dungeons. Locked behind an iron door with no key, Redcrosse lays in darkness, plagued by physical and spiritual deterioration. In fact, when Arthur discovers Redcrosse, he is overjoyed because he thinks he has found an agent of death rather than salvation. He responds to Arthur's calls, "O who is that, which brings me happy choice/Of death, that here lye dying every stound,/Yet live perforce in balefull darkenesse bound?" (I.viii.38). Redcrosse's time in darkness has distanced him from hope—hope of life, hope of salvation, hope of any forward movement. Interestingly, Redcrosse can finally see beyond the confines of earthly appearances, but he still only sees one possible option—death.

When Redcrosse was captured by Orgoglio, he was in a delicate state—a state where he could transition from interpretative instinct to interpretative ability. His instinct guided him away from the House of Pride and Duessa, allowing him to free himself from deception, placing him on a path towards truth. Yet, while on the right track, he still

needed someone to show him how to navigate this path. But rather than move towards light, Redcrosse was immersed in darkness. The same potential that could teach Redcrosse how to travel towards truth, could also guide him away towards despair. When we meet Redcrosse in Orgoglio's dungeons, the only truth he believes in is death, which "bring[s] tydings trew" (I.viii.38). Being removed from the light, also removes Redcrosse from the possibility of truth. It severs his instinct from hope and potential, leaving him to fall victim to doubt, despair, and darkness.

By the time Una and Arthur find Redcrosse, he needs physical help as well as exegetical and spiritual aid. Redcrosse is physically and spiritually malnourished. His "sad dull eyes deepe sunck in hollow pits,/Could not endure th'unwonted sunne to view" while his "rawbone armes, whose mighty brawned bowrs/Were wont to rive steele plates, abd helmets hew,/Were cleaned consum'd, and all his vitall powers/Decayd, and all his flesh shronk up like withered flowers" (I.viii.41). But while Una and Arthur physically save Redcrosse by removing him from his prison, they soon realize his real prison is self-created, and only he can save himself. Una, as a teacher, can encourage him to exercise faith and reason to see more than one outcome in this situation, but Redcrosse must be willing to exercise his abilities. Una can guide Redcrosse, but he must perform the actions. He must be receptive to her teachings.

In this scene we again see that Redcrosse's intellectual weaknesses have physically manifested themselves as Redcrosse cannot literally or figuratively see. And though Una can see a promising end, for "good growes of evils priefe" Redcrosse needs more than possibility, he needs to be saved from himself. Even justice being served to his captors is not enough to bring him closer to the light for, "the chearesse man, whom

sorrow did dismay,/Had no delight to treaten of hid griefe;/His long endured famine needed more reliefe” (I.viii.43).

But just as Una took control when Redcrosse was too inexperienced to guide himself, so, too, does she when he is physically incapacitated by his mental frailty. Since she can guide, not tell, Una encourages Redcrosse to make his own choices.

For example, when Duessa’s fate is at hand, and Redcrosse must choose between allowing her to live or die, Una guides his decision implying:

Loe where your foe lyes stretcht in monstrous length,  
And loe that wicked woman in your sight,  
The roote of all your care, and wretched plight,  
Now in your power, to let her live, or dye.  
To do her dye (quoth Una) were despight,  
And shame t’avenge so weake an enemy;  
But spoile her of her scarlot robe, and let her fly. (I.viii.45)

Una knows that to spare Duessa’s life and let her exist in her real form is far worse than death.<sup>269</sup> Here, Una becomes the voice of reason, the reason that Redcrosse remains so distant from. But she still guides him by encouraging him to make this choice.

Ultimately, she is encouraging him to use his mind to influence his physical actions and his physical state.

The combination of Una’s teaching and Arthur’s example provide an animated, working model of virtue and contemplation. As suggested earlier, Arthur, in particular, serves as a representation of the ideal knight, merging reason with emotion to create harmonious and virtuous action. But Arthur’s influence may provide more than a model for Redcrosse’s future actions. As we learn more of Arthur’s story, we see that he has

---

<sup>269</sup> McCabe aligns the relationship between Duessa and Orgoglio with the one between Mary Queen of Scots and Norfolk in the Ridolfi Plot and the Northern Rebellion. According to McCabe’s reading, this is why Una, or Queen Elizabeth, must let Duessa go (“The Masks of Duessa: Spenser, Mary Queen of Scots, and James VI.” *English Literary Renaissance* 17 (Spring 1987):22-42).

encountered many similar situations as Redcrosse. From these experiences Arthur has learned to situationally interpret and gain an evolving knowledge that affects his current hermeneutic abilities. These similarities suggest that Arthur is not only an ideal model for any knight, but a specific one for our knight.

Though neither knight knows his past nor his future prophecy, anguish and loss unites these two seemingly different characters. The diminished state we find Redcrosse in is one Arthur has known, and, importantly, learned from, as we can assess from his exegetical paradigm discusses with Una. As Arthur begins to describe his unhealed, hidden wound acquired in his youth, the “...sleeping sparkes awake,/which troubled once into huge flames will grow,/Ne ever will their fervent fury slake,/Till living moisture into smoke do flow,/And wasted life do lye in ashes low” we realize that his successes and abilities all spur from pain. The lowly place Redcrosse now resides in—the distant place of shame—is a place Arthur appears familiar with. In his past Arthur has also felt loss, but has learned to find faith in his pain. Unlike Redcrosse, despair does not take over Arthur’s faith. Instead, faith must rise from despair, not be defeated by it.

Arthur’s wound was largely inflicted by pride. As a young, brazen knight, Arthur felt he was above the emotion of love’s arrows, the chains of earthly emotion. But he soon realizes that “...no fort can be so strong,/Ne fleshy brest can armed be so sound/...Nothing is sure, that growes on earthly ground:/And who most trustes in arme of fleshy might,/And boasts, in beauties chaine not be bound,/Doth soonest fall in disaventrous fight” (I.ix.11). Arthur’s youthful error was to never acknowledge an outside force larger than himself. Not only did he imagine himself stronger than love, but solely reliant on the immediate skills he possessed. In Arthur’s mind, his experience

never allowed him to consider his inexperience—particularly with regards to interpretation because he never saw beyond the scope of his reach. With this inability to acknowledge his limited scope, his error, Arthur was trapped in a prison of pride similar to Redcrosse.

In meeting with his love, later named as Gloriana, Arthur illustrates the varying planes of reality (I.ix.13-15).<sup>270</sup> In effect, before Arthur saw Gloriana his reality was mortality. But once he captured her essence, her ideal, his reality expanded beyond the corporeal and suddenly included the life behind existence—truth, and the quest for it. As seen in the narrator’s question, “What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might,/And *vaine assurance* of mortality,/Which all too soone, as it doth come to fight,/Against spirituall foes, yields by and by,/Or from the field most cowardly doth fly?” man’s sole dependence on the link between the truth and the appearance of reality provides a false sense of security (I.x.1, my italics). Much as Hooker calls for the expansion of Scripture beyond the literal, Spenser, too, seems to urge for a similar reality, beyond the corporeal, beyond the confines of language. Furthermore, the “vaine assurance of mortality” echoes the pride that keeps one rooted in the certainty of sensory perception—a certainty confining an interpreter to one possible meaning, as opposed to many.

---

<sup>270</sup> While asleep in the forest one evening, “...slobring soft my[Arthur’s] hart did steale away,/Me *seemed*, by my side a royall Mayd/Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay:/So faire a creature yet saw never sunny day” (I.ix.13, my italics). When he wakes, the place she laid was empty, “And nought but pressed gras, where she has lyen,/...From that day forth I lov’d that face divine;/From that day forth I *cast in carefull mind*,/To seek her out with labour, and long tyne,/And never vow to rest, till her I find” (I.ix.15, my italics). In this episode we learn that Arthur’s love exists as an ideal rather than a reality. Suddenly the security he felt in his reality—in his physical abilities, his ideas, his confidence—is shaken and his reality has expanded beyond the sensory. The only proof he has of his love is an imprint in the ground and an image in his mind. But, as suggested in the latter part of the above passage, he immediately latches onto the image in his mind and allows it to guide him. Importantly, in this brief meeting, Arthur simultaneously experiences love and loss and from this experience can never return to the confidence of youth.

Arthur communicates this discovery of meaning beyond the earthly much as Colin Clout re-tells of his adventures outside of the pasture—with the insight of contemplation. Importantly, though, the pain he felt when he awoke seems to remain and fuels his journey. Even though we never know if Gloriana is truly real, if “dreames delude, or true it were”, the faith Arthur discovers in pain accompanies him as he searches for his love and truth (I.ix.14). Remembering the words Una utters to Redcrosse as he battles Errour, Arthur has “add[ed] faith unto [his] force” to expand his reality beyond what is overtly known, beyond the literal (I.i.19). Faith subsides Arthur’s feelings of loss and moves him forward on his path to truth. Gloriana’s haunting image influences his perception of reality and the pain he carries teaches him to interpret the world around him with a combination of emotion and reason.<sup>271</sup>

Furthermore, after hearing Arthur’s tale, his earlier dialogue with Una concerning faith appears to further animate his experiences. Arthur says, “Despaire breedes not (quoth he) where faith is staid/...Flesh may impaire (quoth he) but reason can repaire” suggesting that faith and reason can bring one out of despair’s clutches (I.vii.41). According to Arthur, employing reason at any point, even after the succumbing to the lure of earthly interpretation, can save the interpreter. Using reason can repair the error of earthly interpretation. Additionally, this idea that the flesh, or corporeality, can impair one’s ability to interpret and contemplate, further suggests that exegesis with the aid of reason, and faith, can free the exegete from the confines of earthly interpretation and guide him towards contemplation. This freedom allows him to generate and consider

---

<sup>271</sup> Importantly, Arthur struggles to follow his own advice in this episode. Earlier, Arthur advises Una that “Mishaps are maistered by advice discreet,/And counsel mitigates the greatest smart” advising that confiding in another will help move one past pain (I.vii.40). Yet, in this episode Arthur is reluctant to disclose his pain and as he spoke “still he strove to cloke his inward bale,/And hide the smoke, that did his fire display” (I.ix.16).



many potential viable meanings instead of one, in this case the one solely produced by sensory perception.

Considering Arthur's words in relation to his experience with Gloriana, we can guess that he has gained this insight from his own experiences. Arthur, though wise and contemplative, has met despair—he has seen the same prison walls Redcrosse's stares at. But rather than falling victim to earthly pride and drowning in despair, Arthur finds faith, rather than sorrow, in his loss. This faith when combined with reason motivates Arthur's journey.

But as rich as this insight is, it appears lost on Redcrosse for he lacks the desire to learn how to guide himself. Redcrosse still suffers in his prison, unable to free himself because he does not have faith in something other than himself. Just as Arthur believed he was the center of his reality before meeting Gloriana, Redcrosse still believes a similar sentiment. For Redcrosse, meaning only extends as far as he allows it to. And even though he knows Duessa was false, he cannot move past his misreading, he cannot move past his pride. Instead, he faithlessly wallows in self-pity and darkness.

And, in this state, Una and Redcrosse meet Despaire. Before arriving at the cave of Depaire, Una and Redcrosse know how the villain operates from meeting a shaken Sir Terwin.<sup>272</sup> Terwin describes every aspect of how Despaire defeats a victim, thus teaching by telling. Firstly, Despaire enters the mind of the knight by inquiring into his state and deeds. Secondly, he feels his victim's "feeble hart" and "with wounding words and

---

<sup>272</sup> Contrary to conventional readings of the Despaire episode as a "personal psychological conflict", John J. O'Connor examines the episode in light of two European cities, Terwin and Trevisan, involved in 16<sup>th</sup> century religious conflict (328). He claims that Spenser's interest in these cities centers upon his interest in the shortcomings of theological reform. In his analysis, O'Connor asserts that Despair is revealed "not as a superhuman, but a villain" whose "evil springs from human frailty that can be surmounted—though only by a strong combination of faith and will" (335). See, John J. O'Connor. "Terwin, Trevisan, and Spenser's Historical Allegory." *Studies in Philology* 87 (Summer 1990):328-340.

termes of foule reprieffe,/He pluckt from us all hope of due reliefe” (I.ix.29). And finally, once he has washed away all hope, he “perswade us die, to stint all further strife:/To me he lent his rope, to him his rustie knife” (I.ix.29). According to Terwin’s account, Despaire feeds on a victim’s doubt and uses these feelings to turn one on oneself. He preys upon the mind, and because of this intellectual and spiritual threat, Despaire is only as dangerous a foe as one allows him to be.

After this account, Una and Redcrosse know what to expect as they approach the “darke, dolefull, drearie” residence of Despaire, but they still must experience it and interpret as they go. Yet, instead of traveling around the cave, Redcrosse enters the lair. Upon seeing the fresh remains of Terwin’s companion, Redcrosse briefly regains his courage and “with firie zeale he burnt in corage bold,/Him to avenge, before his blood were cold” but as with many of Redcrosse’s previous encounters, Despaire is not a physical threat, but an intellectual one. By employing a perverted, self-serving sense of reason, Despaire both justifies his actions and begins to test the strength of Redcrosse’s mind, asking “What justice ever other judgement taught,/But he should die, who merits not to live?/None else to death this man despairing drive,/But his owne guiltie mind deserving death./Is then unjust to each his due to give?/Or let him die, that loatheth the living breath?/Or let him die at ease, that liveth here uneath?” (I.ix.38).<sup>273</sup>

---

<sup>273</sup> Ernest Sirluck considers the warped nature of Despaire’s argument which identifies God’s justice, but ignores his mercy (“A Note on the Rhetoric of Spenser’s ‘Despaire’” *Modern Philology* 47:8-11. In a similar vein, Ann E. Imbrie analyzes the Biblical significance of Despaire’s argument (“Playing Legerdemaine with the Scripture’: Parodic Sermons in The Faerie Queene” *English Literary Renaissance* 17:142-155). For general discussions concerning the rhetorical nature of Despaire, see Brian Vickers. *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970, 157-160; S. Viswanathan highlights that Spenser emphasizes a salvation rooted in faith and grace rather than good deeds. From “A Context of Spenser’s Episode of Despaire” *Aligarh [India] Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 1 (1984):109; Nathaniel Stout views despair as an effect of pride. From “A Biblical Framework for Orgoglio’s Fall: A Note on *The Faerie Queene* I.viii.22.” *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 32 (March 1985):21-23.

Here, Despaire reveals his own system of justice in which he simply tests a man's will to live. If this will happens to falter, then the man does not deserve to live. Interestingly, Despaire places no culpability onto his actions, but instead presents himself as helpful.

Despaire's strongest tool against Redcrosse is romanticizing death as a place to "enjoy eternall rest/And happie ease, which thou doest want and crave,/And further from daily wanderest" (I.ix.40). Unlike Duessa who employs the same sort of magic irrespective of her receiver, Despaire seems to know Redcrosse's darkest secrets and preys upon them, as if he were with him in Orgoglio's dungeon, wishing for death. His deception appears tailor made.

For example, Despaire uses a journey allegory throughout his discussion with Redcrosse. Images of wandering recall Redcrosse's struggles to rediscover his initial path and guide. Despaire specifically refers to Redcrosse's passage, musing "For he, that once hath missed the right way,/The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray" (I.ix.43). In this passage, Despaire attempts to strip all hope from Redcrosse as he suggests that once one has strayed from his intended path, he can never return. Because Redcrosse cannot appreciate, or even consider, the possibility that more than one path can lead to his desired ends. And because of this continued myopic vision, Despaire is able to prey upon a real fear in Redcrosse's heart—a fear that he has forever lost his opportunity to achieve greatness and fulfill his destiny.

Despaire continues to prey upon Redcrosse's guilt and shame as he runs down Redcrosse's latest episodes. Similar to the ensnaring tail of Errour, Despaire's words daze and enwrap Redcrosse as he questions the frail knight's actions. Despaire not only

wants Redcrosse to lose all hope and feel only shame, but he wants him to believe that he cannot repair his current state. In this process, Despaire misuses Scripture as he suggests:

Is not he just, that all this doth behold  
 From highest heaven, and beares an equall eye?  
 Shall he thy sins up in his knowledge fold,  
 And guiltie be of thine impietie?  
 Is not his law, Let every sinner die:  
 Die shall all flesh? What then must needs donne,  
 Is it not better to doe willinglie,  
 Then linger, till the glasse be all out ronne? (I.ix.47)

In this passage, Despaire exemplifies the weak interpreter as he reads Scripture for his own gain.<sup>274</sup> Despaire employs the Augustinian principle of questioning but not to expand meaning in order to consider many potentials, but to repetitively lead Redcrosse to one meaning—he is a worthless sinner who can never repent for his actions.

Here, Despaire misuses interpretative tools, such as reason, to benefit his own needs and convince Redcrosse that he is beyond salvation. He creates a practical syllogism in order to convince Redcrosse that his error equates to sin and shall be judged accordingly.<sup>275</sup> Despaire aligns God’s judgment with his own black and white kind and attempts to minimize the power of God-given reason by preying upon fear.<sup>276</sup> And Redcrosse is, intellectually, spiritually, and physically so distanced from the

---

<sup>274</sup> Rufus Wood traces Redcrosse’s learning schema that teaches him to favor, “metaphoric interpretations” moving him towards “spiritual revelation” (41). In relation to this pedagogical schema, Wood posits that “metaphoric interpretation” is stifled by villains like Despaire, who depict a corrupt version of the world. With regards to this examination, such a static version seems to counter the encouraging teachings of Una by denying the active reading Redcrosse needs to interpret his narrative, and ultimately gain salvation (*Metaphor and Belief in The Faerie Queene*. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin’s, 1997).

<sup>275</sup> Tamara A. Geoglein juxtaposes the scene with Despaire and Contemplation to consider syllogism and humanism. While Despaire illustrates a syllogism without mercy, Contemplation offers the possibility to regenerate the self through considering more than a “singular and (earthly) being” (5). See “Utterances of the Protestant Soul in *The Faerie Queene*: The Allegory of Holiness and the Humanist Discourse of Reason.” *Criticism* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1994):1-19. For further examinations connecting Despaire and Contemplation, see also Thomas E. Maresca. *Three English Epics: Studies in Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980, and Richard Mallette. “The Protestant Art of Preaching in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*.” *Spenser Studies* 7 (1987):3-25.

<sup>276</sup> See Sirluck. “A Note on the Rhetoric of Spenser’s ‘Despaire’” *Modern Philology* 47:8-11.

understanding of faith he discussed in the cave of Errour's den, that he does not recognize the limits of Despaire's perverted logic.

Despaire's tactics are very similar to Duessa's and Archimago's in that they rely on emotion to impair reason and thus present what *seems* the only conclusion. His words move Redcrosse to reinterpret his past actions as "deformed crimes" thus crippling Redcrosse even further (I.ix.48). Ultimately, Despaire plays upon, relies upon, Redcrosse's pride in that he assumes Redcrosse possesses no other trust or faith in anything but himself. To highlight Redcrosse's failures quickly turns pride into shame and shame into hopelessness, for if Redcrosse can err there is no hope left in the world. Furthermore, by placing one's ability for judgment and punishment on oneself rather than the divine, Despaire allows one to enact the ultimate form of hubristic pride—playing God.

After Despaire's impassioned speech, Redcrosse believes he can only repent his sins with death for there is no hope in life. But just as he is about to inflict his "final smart" Una rescues him. She does all the talking and questions his actions, but Una's words desire to show him that he is part of a larger pattern of grace and justice, rather than segregate him from it, as Despaire attempts. She rhetorically asks:

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshy wight,  
 Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,  
 Ne divelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.  
 In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part?  
 Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?  
 Where justice growes, there growes greater grace,  
 The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,  
 And that accurst hand-writing doth deface,  
 Arise, Sir knight arise, and leave this cursed place (I.ix.53)

Una reminds Redcrosse that that he exists as part of a larger, extended model in which he is a part rather than a center. Her questions force the same internal evaluation as Despaire's, yet Una's promote the expansion of knowledge rather than the overspilling of emotion.<sup>277</sup> She balances the one-sided justice Despaire purports, with mercy and grace—forces that guide one to salvation and understanding. And she does so not by telling him how to defeat Despaire, but by reminding him of the knowledge he already possesses, but has forgotten.<sup>278</sup>

This moment is another teaching moment for Una. By offering Redcrosse the possibility that he is a part of a whole, instead of *the* whole, she invites him to see past the obvious, negative meanings of his actions and consider the possibility that after one has applied the just boundary, he *must* assume that God, love, and goodness exist within it. After one understands this, he can read things and situations, especially his own life history, in a number of ways.

Once Una and Redcrosse defeat Despaire, Una takes him to the House of Holiness where Redcrosse continues to re-learn his interpretative lessons and develop his exegetical skills. Upon introducing this episode, our narrator continues Una's lessons on grace, by presenting several important characteristics concerning the nature of grace and interpretation. After commenting on the mortality of man's reality—the limits of a solely literal existence—our narrator suggests that all the victories in such a reality are empty without the aid of grace, for “Ne let the man ascribe it [victory, success] to his skill,/That

---

<sup>277</sup>Furthermore, her questions not only guide Redcrosse away from Despaire, they also guide the reader towards knowledge. Her questions emulate the ones a reader should employ when interpreting a scene. They force the reader to look inward for the answers to external questions and work to unite the reader with the text.

<sup>278</sup>As Hamilton notes, in the Error episode she asks Redcrosse to add faith to his force, while here she asks him to add hope.

through grace hath gained victory” (I.x.1). Instead, “If any strength we have, it is to ill,/But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will” suggesting that any good in life is provided by God—His grace shows man something other than error. Essentially, our narrator refers to the overt fallen nature of man and his actions. Though he can discover victory and success against mortal foes, he cannot battle the spiritual ones without the aid of God and His gifts.<sup>279</sup>

Up until this point on his journey, Redcrosse appears to typify these sentiments. He is a man who finds great success in the physical battles of life, yet flounders when confronted with spiritual encounters. In his deception, Redcrosse has lost hope in truth and faith in himself—he is spiritually empty. And in this emptiness he fails to realize that grace’s help—Una’s help—is a positive experience, one in which he can begin to drag himself from despair. Instead, Redcrosse views Una’s help as a failure of his abilities. Redcrosse does not realize that he cannot battle spiritual foes like Despaire alone. He needs grace’s help.<sup>280</sup>

As Una approaches the “antient house.../renowmd throughout the world for sacred lore/And pure unspotted life:...” it soon becomes apparent that the House of Holiness works as a direct opposite to the House of Pride. Where Lucifera solely relied

---

<sup>279</sup> For the theological implications of this early stanza see Robin Headlam Wells. *Spenser’s Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth*. London: London and Canberra: Croon Helm; Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1983; James Schiavoni “Predestination and Free Will: The Crux of Canto Ten” *Spenser Studies* 10(1989):163-195; Darryl J. Gless. *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Carol V. Kaske. *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

<sup>280</sup> Moreover, as the narrator implies, the effects of physical victories are temporary, the strength one uses to attain these successes is temporary, but the effects of employing grace in the spiritual and intellectual pursuits of truth provide more permanent rewards. As Una carries her faint knight to the House of Holiness, she soon realizes he is both spiritually and physically weak, he “was unfit for bloudie fight” (I.x.2). In his current state, Redcrosse cannot even perform the physical feats he once accomplished. As his soul and mind spiritually starve, so, too, does his body. In fact, his diminished condition implies the connection between mind, body and soul. While the body can flourish, it cannot live long without the sustenance of intellectual interpretation and spiritual contemplation.

on the appearance of grace in the form of chivalry, Coelia, the matrone “Whose onely joy was to relieve the needes/Of wretched soules, and helpe the helpelesse poore” and her daughters work to move one past earthly appearances and towards truth (I.x.3). Upon entering the hall, the travelers are greeted with “no courting nicetie,/But simple true, and eke unfained sweet” rather than the courtly jargon of Lucifera’s court which aims to flatter and deceive (I.x.7).<sup>281</sup>

Moreover, the pomp of Lucifera’s court finds no place in the House of Holiness. Instead, attendants, such as Obedience, help Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa execute their healing gifts. It seems what has replaced the pageantry and false walls of Lucifera’s palace are teachers of truth, seeking to show one the attributes of divine justice and grace. But, most importantly, it seems the larger desire of the House of Holiness is to show one how to take a sensitive gift, like freewill, and use reason and faith to make choices moving one towards truth rather than towards the traps of an earthly existence.

In fact, even the manner of entrance marks a significant distinction between the two houses. When Duessa and Redcrosse approach the House of Pride, they “passed in forth right” without greeting or question suggesting that pride is an open path that all can tread upon. But when Una and Redcrosse approach the House of Holiness, they meet a locked door they must knock upon to gain entrance, alluding that while all can gain entry to the earthly, not all will knock upon the closed door in order to access to the possibilities of interpretation. As the Scriptural passage explicated by both Hooker and Augustine implies, once knocked upon, the door to truth must be opened for the seeker. Rather than just walking in, one must first desire to discover truth and then be taught how

---

<sup>281</sup> Ake Bergvall aligns the contrast of the House of Pride with the House of Holiness with Augustine’s earthly and heavenly city in the *City of God* (34-35). See “The Theology of the Sign: St. Augustine and Spenser’s Legend of Holiness” *Studies in English Literature* 33: 21-42.



to employ our god-given faculties in order to begin one's journey towards understanding. It seems Spenser subscribes to a similar hermeneutic schema.

In many ways, this gesture of knocking indicates a choice to walk the more difficult, overgrown path of interpretation and contemplation rather than the paved one of earthly pleasure and folly. Coelia specifically addresses the rarity of seeing a knight in the House of Holiness, for "So few there bee,/That chose the narrow path, or seeke the right:" (I.x.10). Instead of choosing the path towards truth, "All keepe the broad high way, and take delight/With many rather than for to go astray,/And be partakers of their evill plight,/Then with a few to walke the rightest way" (I.x.10). Though Redcrosse has been brought here by Una, his earlier instincts further indicate that he remains the knight Una originally believed he was. The inexperience, the innocence, which drew Una to Redcrosse seems reinforced in this passage. His lack of experience in battle also implied his lack of corruption from the spoils of battle. Rather than traversing the well-trodden path of earthly greed and lust, Redcrosse possesses the potential to walk the less traveled one towards contemplation and truth.

Moreover, in this light, the instincts Redcrosse possessed as he was misguided by Duessa and wandering alone further point towards Redcrosse's potential for learning. Rather than being a knight like Sansjoy or Sansloy, whose earthly motivations, such as revenge, keep them on this "broad high way", Redcrosse realizes he treaded on the wrong path. Knights such as Sansjoy and Sansloy believe they walk a virtuous path, but are really as astray as Redcrosse. It is this unknowingness that keeps them trapped in error's web and separates Redcrosse from their ranks. Rather than remaining deceived, blind by the false appearances of pride, he chose to break this cycle of error, even at the cost of

security. Importantly, Redcrosse knew he was lost, whereas the knight trapped in earthly sin never realizes he, too, wanders. He just did not possess the knowledge necessary to direct him towards this path which guides one towards the many possibilities of meaning and truth. But as he stands in the great hall of the House of Holiness, stripped of all spiritual and physical strength, at his lowest state, he is open to the teaching and wisdom needed for the enactment of interpretation and contemplation.

Redcrosse's first lessons come from Fidelity, the eldest of Coelia's three daughters, who carries the book of divine secrets, "wherein dark things were writ, hard to be understood" (I.x.13). Fidelity's lessons come in the form of sermons in which Redcrosse can "...*heare* the wisdom of her wordes divine" (I.x.18, my italics). Cultivating his ability to interpret the spoken sermon is an important first step in his learning in that it allows him to discover and cultivate his most basic exegetical abilities.<sup>282</sup> Where heightened reading involves discerning which passages are important then applying the interpreted meaning to larger issues, listening simply involves absorbing meaning. While this distinction may seem a bit trite, in Redcrosse's diminished state, he must begin with the most basic lessons before he can move into more advanced exegetical skills—he must crawl before he can walk.

Essentially, Redcrosse must first know of God and his powers before he can begin to understand and contemplate them. And because of his weakened state, Fidelity must rely on preaching since "That weaker wit of man could never reach,/Of God, of grace, of justice, of free will,/That wonder it was to heare her goodly speech" (I.x.19). While most

---

<sup>282</sup> Mallette considers these lessons of audible interpretation and instruction in light of Reformation homiletics. Mallette aligns Redcrosse's salvation with preaching, while this study considers Redcrosse's progress a result of exegetical skills—for Mallette the strides are made in hearing, for me, they are made in reading. See "The Protestant Art of Preaching in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*." *Spenser Studies* 7 (1987):3-25.

men lack the skills to understand the contents of her book, Redcrosse in particular possesses no working knowledge of the divine, even of heavenly lore. But his instincts suggest that while he does not know of specific godly deeds, his actions unknowingly embody the overall messages contained in Scripture. In other words, the virtue he possesses links him to divine virtue rather than chivalric codes. From this perspective, the main goal of the sisters' teaching is to first reawaken Redcrosse from his despair, remind him of his prior teachings, then fill in the gaps of his knowledge so he can develop his interpretative skills and enhance his divine understanding. The main goal of the sisters is to teach Redcrosse how to view his mortal life in "holy righteousness" (I.x.45).

But this task proves difficult, for the more Redcrosse learns of God's benevolence and power, the more he becomes plagued by the guilt of his past actions. Fidelity shows him the "...perfection of all heavenly grace,/That wretched world he gan for to abhorre,/And mortall life gan to loathe, as thing forlore,/Greev'd with remembrance of his wicked wayes" (I.x.21).<sup>283</sup> But, Redcrosse's ever growing knowledge of the divine acts as a sharp contrast to the selfish actions of his past. Instead of moving him away from darkness, Fidelity's wisdom seems to recoil him farther into despair as he desires to "end his wretched dayes" (I.x.21). This illustrates that he retains some remnants of the pride that keeps him trapped in self-loathing. He may be gaining knowledge of the divine, but

---

<sup>283</sup> Thomas Francis Bulger claims that Redcrosse achieves "historical self-awareness" during his conversation with the hermit Contemplation. This achievement falls under what Bulger delineates as the "divine history" contained in Book I of the *Faerie Queene* (in contrast to the "human history" of Books II-VI or the "natural history" contained in scenes like the Garden of Adonis). See *The Historical Changes and Exchanges as Depicted by Spenser in "The Faerie Queene."* Lewiston, N.Y., Queenston, Ontario, and Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993.

he is still far from using this knowledge to begin an exegetical practice that will open meaning to many viable options.

What we see in Redcrosse's suffering are his past experiences plaguing his present existence and jeopardizing his future. Unlike Arthur, or even Colin Clout, who can look upon their past experiences with the insight of age and wisdom, Redcrosse can only see his past experiences with the pain of his present. Until he can view his past experiences, his past errors, as lessons, he will fail to wash himself of his guilt.

Importantly, though, the sisters work together to teach Redcrosse how to heal his wounds. As Fidelia uses her words to teach him divine secrets, Speranza comforts him and shares the weight of his burden. As one feeds his mind, the other feeds his soul. In some ways, the House of Holiness is *Una writ large*.

But Redcrosse's training involves more than the sisters alone so they deploy a series of attendants to help ease Redcrosse's physical and spiritual wounds. With the help of Patience, Penance, Remorse, and Repentance the spiritual wounds which manifested themselves as physical sores, pains, and weakness began to cure and "in short space they did to health restore/The man that would not live, but eartst lay at deaths door" (I.x.27). Unlike in the House of Pride where the attendants work to strip a visitor of his intellectual faculties by overwhelming him with the emotions and pleasures of earthly vice, the attendants in the House of Holiness work to cleanse the soul of these earthly plagues. Furthermore, these allegorical characters become examples of the divine teachings Fidelia preaches of. Much as Arthur represents an example of the ideal knight, showing Redcrosse how to employ reason and emotion in battle, these characters work to

build upon Una's teachings and show Redcrosse how faith and grace can heal even the deepest wound.

And while these lessons begin with Una's request we soon realize that Una does not know how to rescue Redcrosse from himself, but she knows that the sisters can begin to help him. The consequence of her limits, though, is that she must sit and watch Redcrosse suffer without being able to help him. Throughout Book I, even when she was not physically present, Una has been Redcrosse's guide and protector. But as he struggles with guilt and despair in the House of Holiness she must watch his "distressed doubtfull agonie,/...Disdeining life, desiring leave to die,/She found her selfe assayld with great perplexitie" (I.x.22). Una's awareness of her limits further exemplifies her virtue, but it also illustrates just how far Redcrosse is from her watch. In his torment she "often tore/Her guiltlesse garments, and her golden heare,/For pity of his paine and anguish sore" (I.x.28). While she cannot help, she still feels for him. As Speranza carries some of Redcrosse's burden, so, too, does Una carry some of his guilt.

This stress upon teaching—counseling and advising—illustrates the greatest distinction between the House of Pride and the House of Holiness. In the House of Pride, Redcrosse gains knowledge through discovery but does not know how to digest his learnings. This inability to contemplate and qualify his knowledge in a larger scope is ultimately why he falls to such a low state. When he learned of the dungeons in the House of Pride, all he could do was flee. When he doubted Duessa's virtue/truth/identity, all he could do was flee. He did not know how to confront his knowledge, how to view it in a larger, holy scope. The result of all this running manifested itself in wandering and self-doubt. In effect, Redcrosse's knowledge led him further from his path than down it.

But as seen in the House of Holiness, teaching Redcrosse how to use his growing knowledge restores his self-worth and faith in a larger compass. He is taught to strengthen his mind in order to eventually interpret on his own, whereas in the House of Pride one is taught how to obey. For example, when he finally meets Charissa she “instruct[s] him in every good behest,/Of love, and righteousnesse, and well to donne,/...In which when him she well instructed hath,/From thence heaven she teacheth him the ready path” (I.x.33, my italics).<sup>284</sup> Through her instruction, Redcrosse returns to his intended path traveling towards divine understanding. He must still rely upon interpretation and discovery, but he now does so under the protection of faith and grace. By stressing teaching, we learn that discovery without guidance and charity never moves one towards true understanding nor does it induce the consideration of many paths and possibilities towards meaning.

After the sisters’ lessons and care Redcrosse is now able to tread on the path towards truth—he can finally begin to learn how to read with a heavenly eye. He has been taught that his “mortall life...had to frame/In holy rightousnesse, without rebuke or blame” (I.x.45). These lessons and healing allow him to ascend to the final stage of his teaching, the mount of heavenly Contemplation.<sup>285</sup> Upon scaling the mountain, Charissa

---

<sup>284</sup> Interestingly, Charissa’s Bead-men act as foils to Lucifera’s false attendants in the House of Pride. In a near one-to-one match-up, Charissa’s Bead-men work to unravel the earthly knots tied by the vices purported by Lucifera’s men. For example, Lucifera’s second attendant, Gluttony described as a “deformed creature, on a filthie swine, His belly was up-blowne with luxury,/And eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne” hordes and consumes food and drink in excess (I.iv.21). Charissa’s second attendant, on the other hand, occupied an office in which he “the hungry for to feed,/And thirsty to give drinke, a worke of grace:/He feard not once him selfe to be in need” (I.x.38). Where Lucifera’s attendant hordes food, Charissa’s feeds the needy. In this dichotomy we can witness the ebb and flow the constant struggle between choosing the earthly and the heavenly and see the ebb and flow of each side.

<sup>285</sup> When Redcrosse meets Contemplation he is described as a “godly aged Sire,/With snowy locks adowne hi shoulders shed,/As hoarie frost with spangles doth attire,/The mossy branches of an Oke halfe ded” (I.x.48). This image of the Oak recalls story of the Brair and the Oak in the *SC*. The knowledge Contemplation has acquired in age seems to prove Thenot’s point that the wisdom of age shall outshine the

rhetorically asks, “What end (quoth she) should cause us take such paine,/But that *same end*, which every living wight/Should make his marke, high heaven to attaine?” (I.x.50, my italics). In this question, Charissa suggests that the true leveling tool between men is not their exegetical abilities but their common end, their common desire to know and understand the divine.

Charissa points to Fidelia and her teachings as having armed Redcrosse with the keys to open the doors to such a knowledge. But the elderly man suggests that these lessons were successful because Redcrosse has always held the keys, he just never knew it. Contemplation asks, “Who better can the way to heaven aread,/Then thou thy selfe, that was both borne and bred/In heavenly throne, where thousand Angels shine?” implying, much as Hooker does with reason, that since man is created in God’s image, he is gifted with the tools to understand His word (I.x.51). But earthly thoughts distance man from these gifts, making the quest for knowledge difficult (I.x.49).<sup>286</sup>

Importantly, Redcrosse must desire to discover this knowledge. But this desire stems from his teachings. As discussed earlier, Redcrosse possessed no knowledge of the divine, let alone of the exegetical possibilities available to him. And though Redcrosse greatly suffered, as Arthur alludes, it was necessary for his achievement. As Contemplation posits, to “see the way,/...that never leads the traveler astray,/But for labours long, and sad delay,/Brings them to joyous rest and endlesse blis” (I.x.52). This sentiment echoes Augustine’s idea that one must descend in order to ascend—they must

---

guile of youth. With small gestures like this, we see Spenser polishing his earlier ideas of wisdom and experience. In this regard, the ideas in the *FQ* truly are being forged in his earlier works.

<sup>286</sup> Importantly, the man’s lessons now come in the form of rhetorical questions spurring contemplation. This transition from Fidelia’s preaching denotes RCK’s evolving hermeneutic state.

encounter earthly pain in order to move towards contemplation and a divine understanding.

This passage implies that one must experience personal suffering, must experience a lowly state, in order to truly ask God from the heart for his wisdom and aid. Otherwise, one solely uses his mind to ask God for guidance—he may learn the facets of God’s word, but he will never *feel* them. This use of reason touched with emotion embodies the type of balance Augustine demands for fruitful interpretation.

This balance becomes necessary because of man’s inability to articulate God’s wisdom. The feeling which accompanies the pursuit of divine knowledge allows man to experience the divine as well as learn of Him—it brings man closer to God in ways language alone will never allow. As seen in Fidelia’s and Speranza’s combined efforts, one must both think and feel in order to truly learn. Contemplation raises a similar point as he describes the City of God, “Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong/of perle and precious stone, *that earthly tong/Cannot describe*, nor wit of man can tell” (I.x.55, my italics).<sup>287</sup> While earthly emotion can distance an individual from God, so, too, can the tools, like language, one uses to know God also keep one from divine knowledge.

Continuing with his lesson, Contemplation reveals Redcrosse’s destiny as St. George.<sup>288</sup> As he does so, the elderly man’s sentiments echo Arthur’s earlier actions as

---

<sup>287</sup> Ronald Arthur Horton examines some textual contradictions beginning with the scene on the Mt. of Contemplation. Here, Contemplation tells Redcrosse that Faeries cannot see the vision of New Jerusalem suggesting that they are somehow excluded from Christian revelation. Yet, in the next book Guyon will not fight Redcrosse because he does not want to attack his Redeemer. Additionally, Guyon, like fallible humans, is a knight who needs an angel to watch over him. *The Unity of The Faerie Queene*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979.

<sup>288</sup> Linda Gregerson examines how characters gain subjectivity. Though primarily dealing with female characters, she also focuses on Redcrosse and the scene atop the Mt. of Contemplation where he gains



he says, “For bloud can nought but sin, & wars but sorrowes yield” (I.x.60). In this brief sentiment, Contemplation articulates the distinction between the earthly bound knight surviving for spoils, revenge and lust and the knight who strives for divine virtue, fighting to keep peace rather than incite violence. In his rhetorical manner, Contemplation asks, “What need of armes, where peace doth aye remaine,/ (Said he) and battles none are to be fought?” (I.x.62).<sup>289</sup> Here, he addresses a Christian knight whose goals are heavenly, rather than earthly. In this respect, the earthly spoils and power that accompany such fighting are no longer desired. Instead, the desire for divine enactment and understanding replaces the need for earthly treasures, since “so darke are earthly things compared to things divine” (I.x.67). Again, the Christian knight seeks to frame the mortal world in heavenly righteousness.

These contemplative lessons finally allow Redcrosse to turn his early shortcomings into beneficial interpretative tools. Furthermore, uniting contemplation with knightly action allows Redcrosse to immediately fulfill his promise to Una, and, ultimately, fulfill his destiny as St. George. Redcrosse’s instinct and willingness to learn allow him to be guided by Una and Contemplation, and eventually learn how to avoid error via contemplation.

As a character, Redcrosse illustrates the effects of seeking earthly ends rather than divine knowledge, and, eventually, the rewards of interpreting past these limited ends. By interpreting Redcrosse’s struggles and achievements the reader is encouraged to read

---

recognizes himself and his future. Consult *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>289</sup> Contemplation’s answer (his question) echoes the classical epic hero’s paradox—he fights to restore peace, but once found, his warrior-nature is restless. It seems that by adding interpretation and contemplation Spenser creates a Christian knight whose goals are heavenly rather than earthly. This focus seems to break the long-standing heroic paradox.

with the intention of moving past both the outward appearances of the characters and the text. By Redcrosse's example, he/she is urged to do what Redcrosse cannot, that is, consider what meanings may lie behind what is initially seen or read.

In the next chapter, Artegall offers insight into interpretation via the virtue of justice, yet he does so by offering a significantly different example. In Book I, the reader meets Redcrosse at the beginning of his interpretative journey, an inexperienced knight who continually mis-steps because he cannot see past earthly appearances and desires to fully enact his exegetical powers of reason and contemplation. With Redcrosse, the reader learns from his error and his eventual success. But Artegall is a knight similar to Arthur in that he already possesses the knowledge to move past the seen and consider the possibilities of the unseen. He learns of justice from Astraea and is encouraged from an early age to seek righteous ends, rather than right ones, in his interpretation and enactment of justice. In this light, Artegall repeatedly provides the reader with an example of how to interpret a situation by questioning what is perceived by the senses. Where Arthur teaches the reader through his error and repentance, Artegall teaches by example.

#### CHAPTER FOUR ARTEGALL: RIGHTEOUSNESS VERSUS RIGHTNESS

If we consider Book I as emblematic of the quest towards divine understanding, towards Holiness, then Book V can be seen as the desire to reconcile man's fallen, earthly state with such a divine one. Facilitating such a desire is reason, which serves as the connector between man and the divine—a god-given tool that, if employed properly, can open possibilities of meaning and pave the way towards an understanding beyond sensory appearances. Numerous critics view Artegall as a problematic, flawed character who is either too violent, or too alone, or too frustrated. He will always be controversial, but we can perhaps begin to elucidate Artegall if we see him as a character struggling to read and interpret his world. That is, he is trying to apply doctrine as we have understood it. Artegall is a character who serves as a surprisingly consistent representative of the precepts of Augustinian exegesis and Hookerian reason, and, as a result, is a surprisingly effective interpreter.

Compared to the other knights examined in this study, Artegall is a good representative of these Augustinian and Hookerian interpretative ideas. For example, Redcrosse is a knight who emerges from the prisons of self-conflict and doubt to employ faith in his exegetical process. He is a knight who desires to know, who is open to the teaching of Una and Contemplation, but takes a long time to harness his reading powers. As the next chapter shall address, Calidore, on the other hand, is a knight who also possesses a desire to know, yet turns out to be unteachable. He cannot, and does not, exercise himself to perceive past his initial sensory perception, his initial reaction.

He is a knight who needs to be taught, yet consistently refuses to enact the lessons and examples he is provided. Existing somewhere in-between these two knights exists Artegall, the Knight of Justice in Book V. As we shall see in the following analysis, he is a knight who operates as though he understands the rules and challenges of interpretation—that questioning and contemplation *should* generate many possibilities. He understands that this process of interpretation leads to an enactment of justice that moves towards righteous ends, not necessarily right ones. He possesses a well-grounded understanding of this knowledge before he begins his journey, rather than acquiring it as he progresses, as Redcrosse and Calidore do.

Part of Artegall's understanding comes from the manner and time in which he was taught. Unlike Redcrosse and Calidore, who encounter exegetical lessons as they travel along their journey, Artegall is taught from an early age the nature of interpretation and justice from Astraea, while she is on earth. Artegall "[...] in justice was upbrought/Even from the cradle of his infancie,/And all the depth of *rightfull doome* was taught/by faire *Astraea* [...]" (V.i.5, my italics). This "rightfull doome" is the act of judgment, but the "depth" of such judgment implies the complexity of such an act. It is not merely a decision between the black and white of innocence and guilt, right and wrong. Instead, the justice Astraea teaches Artegall of is as much rooted in right process as in right verdict. Artegall is trained in the practice of justice in which his mind is fully alive to justice, which means fully alive to its complexities.

Moreover, this idea of "rightfull doome" appears to erect an early contrast between equity and mercy, a correlation Spenser threads throughout the entire Book, seemingly culminating in Mercilla's verdict of Duessa (V.ix.50, V.x.4). Critics such as

Andrew Zurcher note the importance of the distinction between equity and mercy with regards to justice. By examining Spenser's lexicon, Zurcher traces the "troubled boundaries between strict justice and justice tempered by mercy" to determine that the real distinction between these two types of justice lies in issues of Elizabethan jurisdiction (65-66).<sup>290</sup> These "jurisdictional realities of legal process" manifest themselves throughout Artegall's journey in the form of location (66). Equity and mercy are distinguished by where Artegall performs his judgment, that is, within a castle (Mercilla's court) or outside of one (Egalitarian Giant episode). Zurcher appears to imply that these spaces differ in the type of justice enacted—equity at court and mercy outside of it. Artegall's ability to shift between these two seemingly opposing judicial demands—mercy, or process, and equity, or product—reinforces the fluidity of his interpretative skills and knowledge.

This skill and knowledge derives from Astraea's teachings. Hamilton refers to Thomas Cooper's delineation of Astraea, which describes her relation to justice: "It is taken for justice, as the woorde doth signifie. She [Astraea] detesting the naughtie and unjust living of men, flewe to heaven" (V.i.5n).<sup>291</sup> Of course, Cooper refers to the mythology of Astraea employed by Hesiod and Ovid which claims she flies to heaven when the men of earth descend into the Iron Age. But Artegall's lessons come from a time before the "filthe and foule" Iron Age—a time more like the Golden Age where humans and the divine could directly interact (V.i.5).<sup>292</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> Andrew Zurcher. *Spenser's Legal Language: Law and Poetry in Early Modern England*. New York: D.S. Brewer, 2007.

<sup>291</sup> Spenser completes this mythology in stanza 11 when "[...] the world with sinne gan to abound,/Astraea loathing lenger here to space/Mongst wicked men, in whom no truth she found,/Return'd to heaven, whence she deriv'd her race;" (V.i.11).

<sup>292</sup> Stump identifies Book V as an allegory of the return from the Iron Age to the Golden Age. In this allegory, the first eight cantos include four female figures who embody different stages of this return—

These early origins and trainings imply that justice is of divine origin and that Artegall is more than just a skilled enforcer of justice. He possesses a link to the divine conceptions of justice that he passes onto an earthly world throughout Book V. This connection to the Golden Age also may symbolize a high state of contemplation. If so, the “rightfull doome” he learns of from Astraea is the enactment of this elevated contemplation, instead of earthly justice. In either case, this link to the divine, rather than, say, an earthly court, obligates him to a process of justice which seeks “rightfull” righteous ends, not necessarily equitable ones.

Spenser continues to develop Artegall’s mythology by detailing the methods in which he was trained. Astraea, “Upon a day she found this gentle childe,/ [...]She did allure him with gifts and speaches milde,/To wend with her. So thence him farre she brought/Into a cave from companie exiled,/In which she nounsled him, till years he raught,/And all discipline of justice there him taught” (V.i.6). Here, it appears Astraea perceives something special in the young Artegall—something that will make him especially susceptible to the knowledge of justice. Once he goes with her, Artegall is reared with the idea of justice Astraea teaches him. In fact, he is exclusively immersed in this knowledge since he is secluded from other men. Perhaps this seclusion allows Artegall to be detached from the world of earthly justice so he can first learn the practices of heavenly justice.

By separating Artegall from others, specifically other men, Astraea not only teaches him of the practices and principles of justice, but also teaches him to pass

---

Astraea, Britomart, Isis, and Mercilla. The prominence of these female figures in this return suggests that a reunification of the sexes will occur in this Golden Age, allowing both men and women to rule Eden, just as Adam and Eve did before the Fall. See “A Slow Return to Eden: Spenser on Women's Rule.” *English Literary Renaissance* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1999):401-421.

judgment. But she does so secondly. Astraea appears to separate him from the earthly predilection to solely seek right and wrong, guilty or innocent, and in some ways, aims for justice that she may correlate with the corruption of fallen man. Sequestering Artegall keeps him from perverting this idea of justice by interacting with the limits of earthly, fallen justice before he is ready.

At the core of Astraea's teachings lies the idea that a sense of central good must take procedure over the particularities of a case. For Spenser, Artegall's interpretative pedigree aligns his idea of justice with purer, divine roots—a justice void of self-serving verdicts and limited perceptions.<sup>293</sup> Astraea teaches Artegall to “[...] weigh both right and wrong/In equall balance with due recompence,/And equitie to *measure out along*,/According to the line of conscience” (V.i.7, my italics).

Artegall is taught to expand his considerations beyond deciding right and wrong. Instead, by using his conscience, by using reason, and by “measure[ing] out along” Artegall can exercise the virtue of justice as he interprets and reads. In this light, justice is the act of reading, rather than the destination interpretation towards which it can lead. Artegall is a knight who, because of Astraea's teaching, is armed with the ability to weigh right and wrong not just for the sake of a verdict, but for righteous ends—he enacts justice as he deliberates on the evidence, not merely by ruling on it.

---

<sup>293</sup> Headlam Wells asserts that Spenser's justice is accessible to reason because of its basis in natural law. This access provides man with “an immutable system of ethical imperatives” (113). While earthly law can never be perfect, this link to natural law provides man with a template. Because of the fallen nature of this earthly world, earthly laws may seem harsh, which is why Astraea “must employ this harsh and ruthless brand of justice (117). See Robin Headlam Wells. *Spenser's “Faerie Queene” and the Cult of Elizabeth*. London and Canberra: Croon Helm; Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1983. Michael F.N. Dixon also seems to view the positive effects of Artegall's enforcing of justice on a fallen world. He appears to value Artegall's idea of justice and identifies the limits/flaws of such justice not on the basis of execution, but instead, on the flawed nature of a fallen world, a “world governed by the irrational flux and moral indecorum of fortune” (152). See *The Politicke Courtier: Spenser's “The Faerie Queene” As a Rhetoric of Justice*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

Moreover, Artegall is able to expand the just boundaries of evidence from the seen to unseen areas, not immediately studied. This expansion allows him to deliberate on more than what he immediately sees or hears, such as the appearance of those in front of him or the verbal responses of those who answer his questions. Instead, he can read looks, process context, and weigh the past, while keeping in view a vision of divine righteousness. For example, when he first comes upon the Egalitarian Giant, Artegall does not immediately send Talus to eradicate him. First, he interrogates him, which reveals that the Giant's real threat is his misunderstanding of truth, and his enforcement of this one-sided misunderstanding, not necessarily his size. Artegall is a knight whose strength lies in his mind, not solely in his body. As we shall see in the later, more complete analysis of this episode, Artegall shows the reader the way to explore and measure guilt.

Expanding these interrogative boundaries lets Artegall harvest his immediate situational knowledge in order to enact righteousness in his process of examination *and* in his conclusions. While the concept of justice may initially imply a limiting of, rather than an expansion of, possibilities since a conclusion must be found, the expansion of places where Artegall can gain insight roots his interpretative process in a multitude of possibilities and insures that his conclusions are fair and righteous. Essentially, Artegall uses just boundaries to expand his vision to see the possibilities within them. Astraea teaches him that justice is not necessarily about right or wrong, but, instead, must proceed from the premise that there is a right.

In Astraea's paradigm of justice, experience in interpretation is pivotal to enacting justice—Artegall must be practiced in interpretation and contemplation before he can



correctly employ her teachings. Once he has been taught the foundations of justice, “She [Astraea] caused him to *make experience*/Upon wyld beasts, which she in woods did find,/With wrongfull power oppressing others of their kind” (V.i.7, my italics). By judging the animals, Artegall is able to gain the necessary interpretative experience to begin to apply justice to situations. This experience allows him to contemplate and explore the possibilities for truth, then proceed and explore these possibilities. Astraea views this experience as a both an important and necessary part of the enactment of justice because it places reason in the forefront of exegetical practice.

This judgment of the animals in nature also places Artegall in the role of organizer and executer of natural order.<sup>294</sup> He does so by exercising natural law. His verdicts provide the natural world with order, just as Mercilla’s provide organization onto her commonwealth. Though referring to Redcrosse and Book I, Judith Anderson claims that humanity’s initial, and ultimate, error lies in our limited knowledge of the natural world and the natural order that surrounds us, and, often, overwhelms us. For Anderson, truth relies on the interpreter’s ability to “know what words and traditional answers can really mean, given human nature and the nature of this world” (14).<sup>295</sup>

And, to extend Anderson’s claim, a process of justice rooted in interpretation and contemplation can expand the possible places truth may reside, and, ultimately offer order through the exploration of these possibilities. Just as the reader can open a text by discovering and placing meaning onto episodes and words, so, too, does Artegall’s interrogation of the natural world with a judicial mind allow him to open the possibilities

---

<sup>294</sup> Artegall’s organization of the natural world and his familiarity with the Golden Age links him to the pastoral. Perhaps he complicates the simple understandings of nature to consider natural law and order in relation to the process of justice.

<sup>295</sup> Judith H. Anderson. *The Growth of Personal Voice: “Piers Plowman” and “The Faerie Queene”*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

of meaning and provide order for the natural world. These interpretive exercises ultimately organize the natural world by enforcing natural law, that is, the justice of Astraea. Or, as Headlam Wells suggests, natural law can be a guide for human law (117).<sup>296</sup>

In Artegall's practice, experience equates to knowledge and then to justice. That is why Astraea "[...] him trayned, and thus she him taught,/In all the skill of deeming wrong and right," (V.i.8). Artegall is *taught* the principles of justice and also *trained* in how to animate these principles in his judgments. He is given the knowledge and taught how to use it. This pedagogical format differs from the ones Redcrosse and Calidore encounter. For Redcrosse, Una must transform his experiences into lessons, rather than his lessons into experiences. Redcrosse, must act and simultaneously be taught how to use his experiences, both positive and negative, in an exegetical manner. His most successful learning occurs when he can be taught concurrently to his immediate experience—in a sort of play-by-play scenario where he can ask questions in the moment, rather than solely in hindsight.

For example, in the episode with Errorr, Una can only guide him by suggestions of faith, rather than telling him that, depending on the situation, he should use faith in the way of x, then y, then z. Most of Redcrosse's lessons derive from his experiences, rather than Una sitting him down and instructing him in the nature of Holiness or faith or reason. In part, her teaching must occur in this order because Redcrosse is so green at the beginning of his journey. He has neither experience nor knowledge, just instinct and potential. Much in the same way Astraea values experience, so, too, does Una see that experience is the only way to truly understand and practice exegesis, as well as virtue.

---

<sup>296</sup> Robin Headlam Wells. *Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and the Cult of Elizabeth*.

Calidore, on the other hand, is a knight with a lot of experience, yet little interpretative teaching. Characters such as Meliboe and Colin Clout must take his experiences, usually in the form of his actions, and try and turn these into teaching moments. In essence, Calidore's experiences are the *only* basis for teaching that he will work from and it will prove insufficient. Calidore's lessons derive from taking his experience and translating it into divine knowledge. For example, when Meliboe speaks of his life at court, this is an experience that Calidore can understand—it offers a point of reference for Calidore to consider and compare to the pastoral life and ideals. Though Meliboe does not necessarily offer this point of comparison on purpose, it allows Calidore to consider pastoral principles in a non-abstract way—it provides the opportunity for Calidore to see the pasture through Meliboe's eyes and understand his lessons. Essentially, in each knightly example, though differing in action and outcome, Spenser shows that an interpreter needs experience, practice, *and* a guide to help him/her towards contemplation.

But for Artegall, he is instructed in the principles and practices of justice, then encouraged to gain experience to fortify this knowledge. This experience helps him practice interpretation and contemplation and ultimately supplements the hands-on learning Redcrosse and Calidore are exposed to by characters like Una, Meliboe, and Colin Clout. And as Artegall ages and gains experience, he also gains authority. For, “[...] even the wilde beasts did feare his awfull sight,/And men admyr'd his overruling might” (V.i.8). Beyond judging right and wrong, Artegall is able to manage men and beasts with his abilities—to organize them. Artegall's employment of reason, here and throughout the book, not only provides him with the ability to judge, but it links the

divine origins of his conception of justice to the fallen place he roams. He can show those he judges what divine justice is and how it works.

As seen in characters like Colin Clout or Meliboe, he is a student who eventually becomes the teacher. In many ways, Artegall relates to these more teacherly characters, including Arthur and Una, because he does not need to be taught. Instead, Artegall becomes the teacher-judge that instructs others in justice by becoming the judge—by showing how one can inquire and interpret towards righteous ends using a variety of sources to inform his decision.<sup>297</sup>

Importantly, Astraea does not leave Artegall alone in his journey. When the “world of sinne” becomes too much for her to endure, and she returns to her heavenly home, Astraea leaves her groom, Talus, to help Artegall enforce justice (V.i.12).

As this analysis shall show, Artegall intellectually applies the rule of justice to situations, while Talus enforces his verdict. Talus, the “yron man”, embodies the action of justice, while Artegall, in comparison, exhibits the intellectual awareness of justice’s complexity necessary for a complete enactment of justice. Talus is “immoveable, resistlesse, without end” suggesting that he is the impersonal enforcer of justice—his immoveable strength lies in his ability to *not* use reason or his mind (V.i.12). Talus is able to enforce justice, but his understanding of it is limited, for he will “[...] doe what ever thing he [Artegall] did intend” implying that Talus acts on Artegall’s behest without questioning his verdict nor his methods.<sup>298</sup>

---

<sup>297</sup> Importantly, Spenser just provides the reader with a gloss of how Artegall learns of justice. Astraea’s reputation and mythology as well as the period of the Golden Age seem to give Artegall the judicial credibility necessary for the reader to trust his heritage. The reader must interpret these ideas and place them onto the text suggesting that Spenser is training his reader in the same manner as Artegall.

<sup>298</sup> Moreover, identifying Talus as the “yron man” links him and his methods of justice to the Iron Age while Artegall’s knowledge of justice—a justice rooted in inquiry, interpretation, and contemplation—

If Artegall can exercise justice by interpreting, Talus' inability to read and contemplate situations exposes the limits of his interaction with justice. He can be the arm of the law, the *enforcer* of justice, but never the true *enactor* of justice.<sup>299</sup> Essentially, Talus has nothing to do with the intricate idea of justice Artegall embodies, but, perhaps, he is there to acknowledge for the reader that contemplation does not exist in a vacuum. He is a character whose presence, whose protection, reminds the reader of the ever-present threats contained in the fallen world. In contrast to the physicality associated with Talus, Artegall's form of justice relies upon inquiry, interpretation, and contemplation to arrive at a verdict that is both righteous and fair.

Questioning is one way in which Artegall uses interpretation in his employment of judicious principles. In many ways, Artegall is an expert questioner, thus embodying a central component of Augustinian exegesis. For example, when he encounters a situation that demands his ruling, Artegall asks for the logistic details of the events, such as when he meets Sir Sanglier and the unnamed squire (V.i). He initially asks, "... who has that Dame so fouly dight;/Or whether his owne hand, or whether other wight?" and then again refines and repeats his question to ask specifically, "Who was it then (sayd Artegall) that wrought?/And why?..." (V.i.14,16). By directly asking questions like these, Artegall begins to interrogate beyond the seen and read the immediate situation and those involved.

---

echoes the lessons of Astraea in the Golden Age. For further, though more general, discussions of this shift from the Iron Age to the Golden Age see Stump "A Slow Return" 401-421.

<sup>299</sup> Nathaniel Wallace claims that the rhyme sound in V.vii.37 urges one to reassess the "nature of justice" (277). He contends that the -ire or "iron" accentuates the "intemperance of anger" in many of Artegall's judgments in Book V, thus suggesting there is internal discord in the idea of justice ("Talus: Spenser's Iron Man." *Spenser Studies* 10 (1992):277-279.

Such investigation offers Artegall the ability to extend his analyses past the seen, surface details to better consider the intent of actions. He asks questions that will move him beyond a re-telling of events. As mentioned above, he also interprets the teller to try and gain insight from more than one source. Instead of basing his ruling solely on surface facts, he travels other paths towards truth. For example, once Talus tracks Sir Sanglier who has fled the scene, Artegall asks him what “did betwixt him and that Squire betide” (V.i.23). As Sanglier answers, the narrator describes Artegall reading Sanglier’s “sterne countenance and indignant pride” as he claims he is guiltless in this crime (V.i.23). Artegall interprets more than the knight’s words as he begins to arrive at a verdict. Artegall eventually “... by *signes perceiving plaine*,/That he [the Squire] was not, which the Lady kild,/But that strange Knight, the fairer love to gain” (V.i.24, my italics). Here, Artegall arrives at a decision by interpreting beyond the words of those involved and using more obscure signs, like mannerisms, to consider character and intent.

However, Artegall is wise enough to test his analysis. After he offers those involved a choice to “swear my judgment to abide” Artegall flushes out the guilty in a Solomon-like fashion (V.i.25). His judgment calls for “... both the living Lady claime your right, Let both the dead and the living equally/Devided be betwixt you here in sight/And each of either take his share in wight” (V.i.26). Interestingly, Hamilton notes that Artegall’s verdict to divide the ladies could be interpreted as the victor receives the living lady, while the vanquished receives the dead one, but both Sanglier and the squire (mis)interpret it to mean that the living lady will literally be divided (Hamilton V.i.26n).

This misinterpretation is significant for several reasons. It illustrates how distant Sanglier and the squire are from the divine origins of Artegall’s justice. This distance

comes in the form of literal interpretation. Both Sanglier and the squire read Artegall's verdict literally, no matter how ridiculous it may seem to receive half of each lady, both dead and alive. They do not possess the ability to interpret what else his verdict *could* mean. And, furthermore, they are both prepared to accept this decision as fair, without question. Such acceptance shows their familiarity with the more-equitable judicial system of man—a system whose focus and process leads only to an all too simple verdict.

Yet, even amidst this misinterpretation, Artegall's plan to flush out the guilty party still succeeds. The squire chooses the burden of shame, "[...] rather than his love should suffer pain" while Sanglier happily accepts the live maiden (V.i.27). The actions of these men confirm Artegall's original suspicion that Sanglier was the perpetrator and the squire an unlucky victim of circumstance. By interpreting more than each party's story, Artegall is able to rule justly on this situation, punishing Sanglier to "[...] bear the burden of defame,/[...] [and] tell abroad your shame" (V.i.28). In this episode, Artegall exercises justice in his interpretation of each story and its teller. He can come to a righteous end by considering more than one possibility for where truth can exist. By expanding the just boundaries of justice to include more than an individual's recounting, Artegall can interpret and contemplate beyond the surface, beyond the literal, to arrive at a fair verdict, anchored in the right.

Artegall's exercising of justice aligns him with what Spenser apparently deems most important in a knight, that is, to "[...] defend the feeble in their right,/And wrong redresse in such a wend awry" (V.ii.1). For Artegall, this defense is often intellectual rather than physical, for Talus is often his enforcer. By arriving at a verdict, Artegall animates the virtue of justice. For example, when he rules on the episode involving Sir

Sanglier and the squire, Artegall defends the honor of the young squire and avenges the fallen lady. Importantly, he does so by exercising reason, not physical action. Artegall acts as the ideal knight by relying on his mind, on reason, as much, if not more, than his body. Essentially, Artegall is a mind working, rather than a state coercing.

Furthermore, because of this link between justice and chivalry, Artegall's actions reinforce Spenser's idea of right and wrong, for this passage appears to address fairness, not necessarily correctness.<sup>300</sup> Artegall's justice seeks to right wrongs, rather than punish the guilty. While this distinction may seem like the splitting of hairs, it paints Artegall's actions, his intentions, as noble, rather than vengeful. He seeks to help rather than punish.

Artegall is able to stay true to his intentions by almost exclusively using reason, interpretation and contemplation in his interrogations and exercising of justice.<sup>301</sup> Artegall's judicial exegesis desires to consider many possibilities that can inform truth. By exercising reason, Artegall is able to practice justice in his reading. This act of reading echoes Hooker's ideas concerning Scriptural interpretation and also appears to ratify his idea that things indifferent can positively inform understanding. In *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Hooker introduces his notion of reason to a long-standing ecclesiastical debate. Arguably, his introduction in the form of doctrine and discipline

---

<sup>300</sup> Lowell Gallagher traces Spenser's contradictions within the *FQ* to assert that these were intentionally included to problematize topics or opinions which were forced upon the poet. Spenser's conception and representation of justice is one such topic. He claims that casuistry is a relevant part of Book V, but one that is never mentioned outright since Artegall is taught "equity to measure out long/According to the line of conscience" (141-142). He considers the hermeneutic consequences of this method of interpretation, suggesting that the reader, depending upon the "conscience", or interpretative eye, can either produce devotional or heretical readings. See *Medusa's Gaze: Casuistry and Conscience in the Renaissance*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991.

<sup>301</sup> McCabe suggests that the fairy civilization of the *FQ* embodies mankind's most idyllic dream of society and social development. He posits that Spenser makes the fairy knight's mortal to emphasize that such perfection can be attained by man—through the combination of "right reason and justice" (102). See *The Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in "The Faerie Queene."* Dublin Series in Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989.



expands traditional manners of teaching truth. I believe Spenser is thinking along the same lines as Hooker.

In the proem to Book VI Spenser suggests an inward understanding of virtue versus “outward shows.” This articulates an idea he seems to apply to Book V, canto ii in Artegall’s exchange with the Giant. In this scene, Artegall employs his acquired interpretative skills to read the Egalitarian Giant’s actions and act within the just boundaries of his own virtue. The larger ramifications of such an adoption seem to point towards Spenser’s belief in a progressive, Protestant exegesis which reserves poetry as an appropriate place to exercise such interpretative skills.

Spenser varies Hooker’s premises in the proem to Book VI, though it appears he carries a similar awareness of the danger that arises when meaning is delimited to one possibility. In the proem to Book VI, Spenser condemns forged virtue, that is, one-sided virtuous appearances, that have no substance behind them:

Its now so farre from that, which then it was,  
That indeed is nought but forgerie,  
Fashion’d to please the eies of them, that pas,  
Which *see not perfect things but in glas*: (VI. proem. 5, my italics)

The highlighted portion of this passage suggests that the problem with false virtue is not the forgery itself, but what it keeps the interpreter from considering. When accepting false virtue, the interpreter stops with this self-satisfied image and does not explore other possible meanings. Furthermore, as the final line implies, these self-satisfied images are often conjured up by ourselves—reflections of what we want to see, not necessarily what is there.

In the previous episode with Artegall and the unnamed squire, Artegall does not come to a conclusion once each party tells his story. Nor does Artegall settle for *his* initial instinct that Sanglier is false. Instead, he tests the squire and Sanglier to verify his initial reading. By doing so, Artegall exercises justice in his interpretative practice, a justice that extends into his verdict. Artegall's exercising of justice through interpretation, as interpretation, allows him to entertain more than one possible place for the attainment of truth—he can consider many pieces of “evidence” to draw a righteous conclusion from. This sort of reading keeps him from pursuing a limited interpretation, that is, a reading that only seeks an end that determines what is correct or incorrect, guilty or innocent. In many ways, Artegall's idea of justice is private and internal in that it relies upon interpretation and contemplation as the foundations of justice.

The proem to Book VI appears to offer an analogy between courtesy and this sort of limited interpretation. Perhaps the idea of “courtesy” addressed in the proem has led courtiers to contentment with the single, prescribed meaning of the “text”, that being how they act and behave is outward and public, just as the justice they seek is (as in Mercilla's court, for example). This form of justice seems to contrast the private, inward interpretative process of justice Artegall predominantly enacts. We can see this acceptance of a single-sided meaning when Sanglier and the squire both misinterpret Artegall's initial verdict and then accept their misinterpretations as truth. Perhaps true courtesy would entail self-criticism and consideration with an active mind pursuing alternative ways of reading.<sup>302</sup> The squire appears to begin this sort of self-consideration

---

<sup>302</sup> This pursuit of potential readings relates to Isabel MacCaffrey's analysis of the Blatant Beast. She views the quest for the Blatant Beast as a preoccupation with human courtesy and justice, possibly in direct contrast to one of more heavenly forms of justice and virtue. I would extend this analysis to include the limitations these human pursuits place upon meaning. See *Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of*

when he chooses shame over the death of his love. He expands his choices and can now consider more than one possible outcome. By *choosing* to let Sanglier take his love, the squire exercises his interpretative abilities, and begins to correct the limits he erects in his earlier misinterpretation.<sup>303</sup>

Besides this interpretative gesture by the squire, Artegall's actions, both interpretative and judicial, illustrate a connection between chivalry and justice—a mutually serving relationship. As Spenser dictates in the first stanza of canto ii, an honorable knight defends the feeble and redresses wrongs. In this description Spenser references chivalry, “Ne better doth beseeme brave chivalry/Then to defend the feeble in their right,” only to later describes Artegall and his tasks as, “Herein the noblesse of this knight exceedes,/Who now to perils great for justice sake proceedes” (V.ii.1).

Spenser's reference to chivalry and justice links the two, suggesting that both are needed in an ideal knight. But Spenser's implication that Artegall travels for the sake of justice, before chivalry, before fame, before battle-action, suggests that Artegall's kind of justice can expand the one-sided nature of courtesy. By employing the mind, by employing reason, as Artegall does, he can expand the bounds of chivalry to include interpretation. This inclusion allows Artegall to exercise his virtue while also embodying the ideals of chivalry—he can save the feeble and right wrongs by uniting intellectual and physical action.

---

*Imagination*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. Dixon also perceives the limits of this connection between justice and courtesy. He argues that Mercilla's judgment of Duessa near the end of Book V sets a tone of earthliness for Book VI, the Legend of Courtesy, for “justice, the art of the ruler, and courtesy, the art of the courtier, are necessary complements” (156). Such a tone “demonstrates a moral truancy” (168). See *The Politicke Courtier* 156, 168.

<sup>303</sup>To have the squire, rather than the knight, arrive at this interpretative point further suggests Spenser's awareness of the limits of courtesy. The squire, because of his lower position, may be less entangled in the shows of courtesy than Sanglier.

To expand the analogy between virtue and interpretation a bit more, in this idea of forged perfection we can see a connection to Hooker's idea that using Scripture and only Scripture for *all* laws concerning man and the Church creates a risky situation. As witnessed in Spenser's example, the acts of such readings are potentially forged or "fashioned" to meet the predetermined expectations of the individual, or, in Hooker's case, Church law makers. For Hooker, he posits that Scripture tends to be read by Puritan literalists with the intention of fitting a manmade mold rather than fulfilling its divine purposes. It seems that justice as a virtue can be trapped by these same limits. Artegall's method of interpretation and idea of justice seeks to arrive at righteous ends, not necessarily right ones.

This desire for *righteousness* rather than *rightness* does not imply that Artegall has no interest in the distinction between right and wrong, but suggests that to judge for only correctness or incorrectness, guilt or innocence is to succumb to the very limits humanity too often puts on truth—that is, that truth must be either this or that, that truth is only a counterpoint to falseness. His interest in righteousness illustrates a form of divine justice that can entertain many possible places to help achieve a virtuous end. Artegall's form of justice contrasts the more earthly one that finds justice in the verdict, rather than the process of arriving at a decision.

Hooker's idea of Scriptural interpretation calls for similar ends, that is, to see Scripture as containing truth, not a *certain* truth. And reason can aid the interpreter as he travels to understand this knowledge.

Additionally, this idea of sight in the above passage proves important to Artegall's enactment of justice. The fashioned object/virtue, the seen/outward one, comes from a

preconceived ideal—something in the mind, something internal that drives the creation of this outward appearance. This would seem like the ideal exercise of Hooker’s doctrine and discipline discussion. But the problem that Spenser addresses in this passage from Book VI’s proem lies in the creation of a faulty, impure object deriving from an ultimately faulty, impure inward desire/guide. It seems Spenser, like Hooker, values the importance and purity of these inward impulses.

An awareness of the goodness of inward desires is indicated by the last lines of the proem’s stanza, which posit, “But vertues seat is deepe within the mynd,/ And not in outward shows, but in inward thoughts defined” (VI. Proem.5). Here, we see the Hookerian idea that virtue is found from within and best cultivated through contemplation or the exercise of reason. Not only does this further chastise the forged creations found earlier in the stanza, but it points to the interpretative potentials an individual possesses—potentials exemplified in exegetical tools such as reason or faith. For Hooker, reason allows one to discern what is right and wrong, “fashioned” or real, to arrive at righteous scriptural interpretations.

But in addition to merely emulating Hooker’s precept, Spenser appears to stress the differences between inward understanding and the *ability* for understanding internally. To Spenser, the latter seems to stress a process while the former suggests a preconceived (dare I say predestined) conception of virtue. Spenser seems to find value in the virtue constituted and cultivated from within—value in how one uses his internal virtue to govern external acts. Artegall is emblematic of this kind of virtue. He enacts

justice when he interprets and judges. His internal understanding of justice influences his external judgment and actions.<sup>304</sup>

Reason is a tool that links Artegall's form of justice to a more earthly one. As discussed throughout this examination, reason is a god-given tool that can help an exegete justly travel the interpretative path as he explores the many possibilities of and towards meaning. Artegall is a knight who relies on reason to help him interpret many evidentiary places and arrive at a righteous verdict. An example of Artegall's use of reason in his enactment of justice can be seen in his episode with the Egalitarian Giant. In this scene, Artegall successfully uses reason to help him discern the degree of invalidity of the Giant's agenda. Artegall also uses reason as a weapon to try and defeat the Giant. Reason, in both these employments, eventually aids him in defeating the Giant.

This scene begins with Artegall meeting a mob of people surrounding a giant "upon a rock, and holding forth on hie/A huge great paire of ballance in his hand,/With which he boasted in his subquedrie,/That all the world he would weigh equallie" (V.ii.30).<sup>305</sup> Here, the Giant does not capture an audience, but captivates one. The people, "so many nations", are there because they desire equality, because they desire

---

<sup>304</sup> This idea of process also appears in stanza 2 of the proem where "Such secret comfort, and such heavenly pleasures,[...]And there the keeping have of learnings treasures,/ Which doe all worldly riches far excel,/ Into the mindes of mortall men doe well," (VI.proem.2). These "heavenly pleasures" and "learnings treasures" fortify the minds of men and this treasure image can arguably translate into Hooker's conception of reason. In this action, attributing this treasure to "learnings" seems to further align with Spenser's interest in process. Attached to learning, these interpretative exercises are regularly exerted in order to maintain its strength when aiding interpretation.

<sup>305</sup> In stanza 30, I feel the seeming goodness of the Giant's actions should be noted. The giant does not desire to be a bully, but instead seeks to protect the people from misjudgment. But as we see in Artegall's rebuttal, this is a good intention gone awry.

balance.<sup>306</sup> The Giant is a threat not because of his size, but because of the false knowledge, the forged virtue, he will instill in this crowd. Artegall recognizes the flaws in his logic and methods and proceeds to challenge these ideas in an effort to defeat him.

In many ways this giant is analogous to Hooker's Puritan literalists who delimit interpretation by viewing Scripture as the only source of God's word. As the giant's objects of measurement vary, the balance is his only means for judgment, the only place he views truth. Unlike Artegall who uses many different tools to evaluate a situation or object, or Hooker who purports that outside places can inform Scriptural understanding, the giant only uses one tool, an anti-questioning tool, to determine rightness.

In his evaluation the giant seeks the appropriate physical counterpart to the moral vice he judges (ex. vanity=toys), thus, ultimately, attaching the weight of physical evidence onto his otherwise cerebral or philosophical objects. The giant attaches worth to the physicality of these objects; he declares rather than weighs. But everything must be measured and graded against an absolute—an absolute where there is only one answer. The virtue itself cannot be measured without its physical counterpart. Moreover, by aligning/coordinating each earthly thing with its counterpart, the giant tells the reader how to interpret the virtue or vice. In effect, the giant tells the reader how to read, rather than encourages interpretation and an expansion of just boundaries.

The giant is wrong in his anticipation of how the measurements will come out, for good will never be outweighed by wrong, nor will the scales balance. But he is also wrong to think in terms of measurements at all, for these are finite terms that must carry

---

<sup>306</sup> Greenblatt traces the 16<sup>th</sup> century representations of social disorder and hostility to suggest that these representations were “more menacing and more socially prestigious” than the historical events themselves (4). One example Greenblatt utilizes is that of the Egalitarian Giant who presents a universe of disorder, needing order, which contrasts the orderly universe conceived of by Artegall. See “Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion.” *Representations* 1 (February 1983):1-29.

an absolute meaning or worth with them. The giant is not necessarily wrong to desire to discover an earthly counterpart to divine virtues or vices in an effort to understand such slippery terms, but he errs by failing to understand, or refusing to understand, the complexity of ideas such as virtue, vice, and justice.

Furthermore, he is wrong to think that virtue can be qualified by earthly terms, rather than heavenly ones. The giant desires to attain divine knowledge on earthly terms. In doing so, he limits the possibilities of divine truth to one measurement and one *form* of measurement, rather than encouraging a range of places and potentials to discover meaning. His fault, his arrogance, lies in his belief that he can “[...] weigh the world anew” (V.ii.34).

Keeping with this line of thought, we soon realize the danger in such assessment when we discover the giant weighs and judges in order to *repair* the wrongs done, for “All which he undertooke for to reparaire,/In sort as they were formed anciently;/And all things would *reduce* unto equality (V.ii.32, my italics).<sup>307</sup> His intentions are similar to those deemed important by Spenser, ones that describe an ideal knight as one who defends the weak and rights wrongs (V.ii.1). It seems that this is what the giant believes he is doing—giving equality to the people and repairing wrongs. In fact, in some ways, the giant illustrates the potential shortcomings of chivalry by accepting a single-sided form of interpretation—a reduction of interpretative potentials, rather than an expansion of them. But the giant’s error lies precisely in these pseudo-chivalric intentions—in his

---

<sup>307</sup> This idea of repair seems to align with John N. King’s historical research on the later re-tellings of the episode with the Egalitarian Giant. King traces how royalists interpreted Artegall’s defeat of the Egalitarian Giant during the Second Civil War (1648), publishing the episode as *The Faerie Leveller*. In this text, the Egalitarian Giant episode is a prophecy of Cromwell’s defeat by Charles I. See “*The Faerie Leveller*: A 1648 Royalist Reading of *The Faerie Queene*, V.ii.29-54.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 48 (Summer 1985):297-308.



desire to reduce rather than widen the spaces of meaning. The giant desires to right wrongs on an earthly plane rather than seeking to understand on a divine one.

Moreover, what is the Giant trying to repair? With regards to Hooker, his actions are analogous to those of ecclesiastical thinkers trying to repair centuries of damage done to the Protestant Church, the “true” Church, during Catholic rule in the Middle Ages. Just as the Puritans desired to impede opportunities to create, by use of unwritten tradition, ecclesiastical law, it seems our giant also seeks to repair the damage of misreading by choosing one leveled method of judgment, one uniform set of answers. But he makes the same error that Hooker would say Puritans do, in that a single-method of interpretation, or measurement, compromises an individual’s potential to use reason.

Instead of showing his audience how to use reason, the Giant instead shows them a finite method of measuring truth.<sup>308</sup> He does not encourage them to use reason to assess the many faces of virtue and vice, but instead seeks to come to one conclusion concerning the nature of virtue and vice. Such a desire limits virtue to earthly confines, to earthly ends, rather than using the giant’s earthly examples, like “idle toys”, as starting points to interpret and contemplate the nature of virtue. In other words, the Giant seeks interpretative ends, rather than an interpretative process. He wants to know what is right and wrong, instead of what is righteous and fair.

Also, Artegall sees the danger in the giant’s methods, and is concerned that he misleads these “simple people.” Eventually Artegall challenges the giant, accusing that, “In stead of right me seemes great wrong dost shew,/And far above thy forces pitch to sore” (V.ii.34). Artegall sees that the flaw in the Giant’s interpretative system is his

---

<sup>308</sup> Arguably, this is what his audience desires, though. When Artegall and Talus defeat the Giant, the crowd becomes upset that they have been denied the knowledge of equality (V.ii.51)

failure to inquire towards the nature of what he judges, only what it aligns with. He fails to know “[...] what is less or more/In every thing, thou oughtest first to know,/What was the poyse of every part of yore;” and, in turn, cannot know the true nature of the virtue nor the earthly counterpart. He has not adequately investigated what he judges. He has not interpreted. The Giant is only concerned with repairing, with righting a wrong, not with discovering how or if it is wrong and what the alternative to it might be. Because of this single focus, the giant fails to fully interpret beyond surface appearances, beyond what *he* perceives as a connection between the virtue/vice and the artifact. The Giant’s method of justice starkly contrasts Artegall’s, which relies on expanding the boundaries of evidence to interpret more than things, but to generate things indifferent.

In this passage, could the knowledge Artegall claims the giant lacks allude to divine understanding—possibly a reference to the Golden Age, an age Artegall has known yet the Giant desires to return to? I think reading the Giant’s desires to repair the inequality he perceives as a symptom of his fallen age as a desire to return to the Golden Age, a time when men were closer to divine truth, proves fruitful (V.ii.32).<sup>309</sup> But, Artegall does not question the intentions of the Giant’s desires, only his methods. Artegall faults the giant for exercising justice with a limited amount of knowledge—he faults him for failing to exercise his presumption of understanding. Artegall does not claim that the Giant *cannot* know more about the nature of virtue and vice, simply that he does not know. The information Artegall relays to the giant in their

---

<sup>309</sup> Mark Hazard extends critical connections between the FQ, Book I and the Book of Revelation onto the scene with the Egalitarian Giant. Hazard claims that Spenser alludes to a different apocalyptic work besides the Book of Revelation, that is, 2 Esdras. He views this text as key to understanding Artegall’s authoritarian debate with the Giant. See “The Other Apocalypse: Spenser’s Use of 2 Esdras in the Book of Justice.” *Spenser Studies* 14 (2000): 163-87.

exchange is knowledge that can be known if one interprets and contemplates the connections between man and divine, heavenly and earthly worlds.

For example, Artegall challenges the Giant to:

...take thy ballaunce, if thou be so wise,  
 And weigh the winde, that under heaven doth blow;  
 Or weigh the light, that in the East doth rise;  
 Or weigh the thought, that from a mans mind doth flow.  
 But if the weight of these thou canst not show,  
 Weigh but one word which from thy lips doth fall.  
*For how canst thou those greater secrets know,  
 That doest not know the least thing of them all?*  
 Ill can he rule the great, that cannot reach the small. (V.ii.43)

Here, Artegall directly questions the Giant's method, but he does so with knowledge that the Giant can attain these ideas if he were to test the validity of his own. In other words, the Giant could discover the limitations of trying to weigh, of trying to qualify, the unqualifiable if he knew how to employ reason and contemplation in his analysis. As witnessed in Artegall's rhetorical question, the Giant seems to miss a step in his methodology. He desires to know and control larger concepts before he understands the smaller ones, again illustrating the giant's focus on interpretative results rather than interpretative process.

Not only does Artegall identify what the Giant cannot weigh (wind, thought, and light) to illustrate the limits and impracticality of his methods, but his insistence on what cannot be weighed reveals the complex nature of the concepts at hand. Artegall is trained to consider and value the complexity of justice, but the Giant is not. Challenging the Giant to weigh these immeasurable objects provides the Giant with the opportunity to learn the complexity of these ideas. Artegall, again, seeks to teach the Giant in a way likely to yield the best results—that is, showing rather than telling. Artegall's method

suggests that the concepts at hand, including the idea of justice, are fluid and difficult and need to be investigated closely with many means.

Additionally, through Artegall's questions, it appears Spenser sees the danger in delimiting meaning—an action that ultimately weakens the interpretative process. Resonating in Artegall's words are the concerns Hooker raises about the ramifications of providing one place for meaning. Hooker considers, "In weake and tender mindes we little knowe what mysterye this stricte opinion would breed..." (*LEP*, II.124). Here, Hooker describes the impressionable dangers of a weak mind. The misleading that can come from manipulating a weak mind is what draws Artegall to this situation, for "... [the Giant] mis-led the simple peoples traine,/In sdeignfull wize he drew unto him neare,/And thus unto him spake, without regard or feare" (V.ii.34). Artegall intervenes when he sees how enthralled the crowd is with the Giant's unattainable promise of equality. Artegall takes issue with the Giant's potential for false guidance even more than he does with the Giant's flawed methods of inquiry.

Ironically, this fear of mis-guiding weak minds plays a part in the Giant's drive. After Artegall's doubts are voiced we are presented with an interesting parallel in the giant's agenda. The giant responds to Artegall's request to leave things as they are by questioning, "seest not, how badly all things present bee,/And each estate quite out of order goth?" (V.ii.37). The Giant finds inequality in disorder. The Giant's anger at the disorder of the world, in nature, stems from his anger in the social disorder of man. In this regard, the Giant's misinterpretation truly resides in too easily conflating the laws of

humanity with the laws of nature. While the laws of nature can inform the laws of humanity, there is no reciprocity for the laws of humanity to organize those of nature.<sup>310</sup>

When the Giant claims he can right even the inequality of the natural world, he refers to “Tyrants that make men subject to their law,/ [...] they no more may raine;/ And Lordings curbe, that common over-aw;/ And all the wealth of rich men the poore will draw” (V.ii.38).<sup>311</sup> Here, the Giant again shows the limits of his scope. He automatically reads the disorder of the natural world with the inequality humanity encounters through tyranny and oppression. He never considers that the two are separate, or that the inequality of humanity is caused by humanity, not God. The Giant places the world of humanity at the center of his thought, rather than the world of God. This incorrect alignment skews all of his interpretation.

Also, he fails to consider that the natural world can offer insight into the world of humanity, not solely that the world of humanity informs the natural one. In the Giant’s assertion that he can level and equalize the earthly landscape he moves from leveling manmade objects to leveling divinely created ones. It appears that in this scene Spenser, like Hooker, exhibits an awareness of, and comments upon, the disastrous potentials of using one interpretive tool (as radical Protestantism desires). As Hooker points out, there

---

<sup>310</sup> Importantly, the Giant does identify the organizing principles of justice, though he fails to distinguish between earthly and heavenly justice. Perhaps he cannot see the difference between the two because he cannot entertain multiple possibilities for meaning. His absolutist vision only allows him to see justice, one side, and organization, on the other. That is all. Just as he cannot associate more than one vice with one virtue, he does not distinguish between different sorts of justice or the different attributes of said justice.

<sup>311</sup> In the Giant’s claim that “Tyrants that make men subject to their law,/ I will suppress, that they no more may raine;” to which Artegall questions, “Of things unseene how canst thou deeme aright, . . . / Sith thoh misdeem’st so much of the things in sight?” the literal unwritten (“unseene”) are the tyrants yet to appear. Artegall seems to question the preventative aspects of the giant’s plan. The second issue of the unseen and seen occurs in Hooker’s terms. Essentially, Artegall asks how can you so quickly cast off the unseen (doctrine) or even the unwritten if you misjudge what is seen. . . what is in front of you (Scripture for the Protestants and Catholics)?

are other ways to gain knowledge of truth—the laws of Nature, for example (*LEP* II.99). If you choose one way of practicing how to govern the laws and lives of men, you threaten to level the power and importance of these other methods—an action Hooker sees as a threat.

Furthermore, as Artegall points out, there is a purpose to the organization of Scripture, the world, and so on, and at the center of this organization is God, not humanity. For:

He maketh Kings to sit in sovereignty;  
 He maketh subjects to their powre obay;  
 He pullet downe, he setteth upon on hy;  
 He gives to this, from that he takes away. (V.ii.41)

In this breakdown, Artegall places God at the center of all natural and human structures. All things derive from and are linked to God. The kings and political structures the Giants desires to combat, are created by God, are subjects to the divine. Artegall implies that the corruption of these divinely-made structures is the fault of humanity, not God—possibly from not employing reason effectively. And in this structure, one’s purpose is not to question and level such structure but to figure out how to exist among it. With the understanding that there exists a providential shaping, a positive, just force behind the seen world, one can seek different methods to find different aspects of good in it. Once this unseen, providential force is accepted, one can question and fine-tune interpretation to adjust to vagueness in the world, such as vicissitudes and seemingly inadequate governance.

Ultimately, the giant fails to consider the minds of men in his prognosis. Rather than seeing the tyranny of humanity as an abuse of the mind, a (mis)leading away from

reason, the Giant automatically defaults to seeing the physical world as an extension of this violent and unequal humanity. He reads the inequality in nature as the tyranny of humankind. And while this may be true on some levels, he only sees this one reading. He fails to entertain other possibilities for the events of the physical world. Moreover, the Giant only views humankind as victims of inequality, rather than a group of individuals possessing agency. Reading the actions of the physical world as equitable to human violence and oppression omits an individual's potential to understand the natural world instead of only falling victim to it. Perhaps because he does not use his intellectual skills to their potentials, the Giant does not realize the significant effects that exegetical practice can yield. He only recognizes the effects of physical force.

Again, the Giant does not understand the potentials of the mind, of reason, nor the nature of the divine, nor interpretation. By claiming to right this wrong, perhaps the giant feels he is re-guiding those that are led astray by chaos and inequality. In the Giant's final question in stanza 37, he asks, "Were it not good that wrong were then surceast,/And from the most, that some were given to the least?" (V.ii.37). Here, it can be inferred that the giant believes that reorganizing virtue, or even the physical world, offers each individual an opportunity to achieve their desired ends.

The Giant fails to view reason as a tool that can achieve the same ends, as Artegall earlier notes. The Giant only perceives what he can see, rather than using reason to interrogate the meaning of his sensory perceptions. Artegall asks, "Of things unseen how canst thou deeme aright,/ [...] since thou misdeem'st so much of things in sight?" (V.ii.39). Here, Artegall directly questions the giant's ability to judge the unseen since he has so much trouble judging the seen—his ability to understand the whole if he cannot

understand the parts. He misinterprets his surroundings. He refers to “the sea it selfe doest thou not plainly see/Encroch upon the land there under thee;” (V.ii.37).

The Giant fails to see the order in his natural surroundings. Instead, the giant associates the disorder of the man’s fallen world with the natural world.<sup>312</sup> And he believes he can repair this unbalance, by “[...] throw[ing] downe these mountains hie,/And mak[ing] them level with the lowly plaine:/These towering rocks, which reach unto the skie,/[...] thrust[ing] downe into the deepest maine,” (V.ii.38). The giant can only imagine the re-organizing of nature in a physical capacity, that is, literally moving mountains to level the earth. He does not recognize that justice can metaphorically provide similar results. The process of justice Artegall champions removes the obstacles of the seen in order to open interpretation and judgment to the possibilities of the unseen. Even earthly justice desires to right wrongs by passing verdicts. But the Giant can only entertain the physical possibilities of the seen. He fails to use his mind, to use reason, to consider the potentials of justice beyond what he can see or sense.

In this exchange, Spenser illustrates the ideological, as well as the exegetical, differences between Artegall and the Giant. The Giant assumes that one rule can stand for everything and we can use it to know the purely prospective—that we can know the meaning even though we do not have a text, yet. Artegall, on the other hand, sees the prospective potentials in reason and the employment of reason in the exegetical act. He appears to purport that we can be familiar with an interpretative *process* that can uncover and entertain many truths as one travels to know divine truth. Artegall finds justice in this interpretative process, while the Giant finds justice in the verdict.

---

<sup>312</sup> This is a particularly interesting when considering Artegall’s training in judging and organizing the animals of the woods with Astraea. Artegall is trained so he can execute justice as an organizing principle—that natural law can organize both the natural world and the human world.



In the midst of such an ideological division, we can assume that any of Artegall's answers would be incorrect in the giant's mind unless it emerged on either the side of right or wrong because the giant's moral schema is one of stark dichotomies rather than a conditional or situational one open to multiple possibilities. By the end of this exchange, Artegall appears to realize he has reached an impasse, a place where he cannot agree with or even argue with the giant because they do not possess the same foundations, even of earthly justice. The Giant's absolutist conflation into *all* justice, *all* organization, *all* truth, and so on, keep he and Artegall from effectively communicating. The two are working from different foundations with different inherent truths. For example, Hooker, like other ecclesiastical thinkers, considers the nature of reason and interpretation from a common basis that the Bible contains all the necessary truths for man to spiritually exist by. If he were to work from another foundation, his conclusions would differ. This is the impasse where Artegall and the Giant are now at. They are working from differing foundations of truth, justice, and virtue, as in effect, seeking different ends.

From this moment of questioning in stanza 39 Artegall begins to use his *reason* to evaluate the giant's plan in a new light. This Hooker-latent conception of reason is typified when Artegall says, "For there is nothing lost, that may not be found, if sought" (V.ii.39). Here, Spenser appears to see the variance in potential interpretations through the forgiving ability to become better at seeking. For Hooker, "The testimonies of God are true, the testimonies of God are perfect, the testimonies of God are all sufficient unto that end for which they were given" (*LEP*, III.122). Meaning God would never give man an incomplete method of understanding and this method, though it compels multifarious readings, is never wrong. Or, as Hooker notes, "Therefore accordingly we do receive

them, we do not thinke that God hath omitted any things needful unto his purpose, & left his intent to be accomplished by our divisings” (*LEP*, III.123). Scripture and other aspects of the outside world are encoded and intended to be interpreted. Divine knowledge is never lost, to use Spenser’s term, just unseen at times. And to best discover these hidden, or unseen, divine truths, one must use reason in his search.

But Artegall is in the midst of a debate with an opponent not employing reason to inquire about truth nor work to discover it, for “[...] it was not the right, which he did seeke;/But rather strove extremities to way,/Th'one to diminish, th'other for to eeke” (V.ii.49). The giant does not seek to understand justice, just enforce it.<sup>313</sup> He desires to right wrongs, and, presumably prevent these wrongs from occurring again, since he tries to align them with virtues. Such goals limit the giant's exercise of reason and the scope of his interpretation. His desires and expectations keep him from understanding Artegall's points and also keep the giant from employing reason in a hermeneutically productive manner.

The giant fails to properly employ reason, and, in turn, cannot draw from the same intellectual basis as Artegall. Because of the Giant’s holey knowledge, Artegall appears to change his approach with him. As Arthur does with Ignaro, Artegall is able to interpret his foe, and realize that his initial plan will not succeed. Initially, Artegall attempts to intellectually use reason to debate the Giant and show him the error of his judgment. But when this approach fails, Artegall begins to use a method the Giant will understand by *physically* showing the Giant the error in his methods and conclusions.

After the Giant rebuffs Artegall’s initial proposal to weigh the unseen on his scale, the

---

<sup>313</sup> This mindset aligns him with Talus. Such alignment makes his eventual grapple with Talus even more interesting. While he and Artegall are not equal intellectual opponents, he and Talus are both intellectual and, in some ways, physical equals.

light or thoughts, he claims he can “[...] justly weigh the wrong or right” (V.ii.45).

Artegall challenges the giant to “let it be tride” (V.ii.45).

As the giant places truth on one side of the scale and false on the other, “[...] still it down did slide,/And by no meane could in the weight be stayd./For by no meanes the false will with the truth be wayd” (V.ii.45). Here, rather than telling the giant of his errors, Artgall allows the giant to *see* them and, ultimately, disprove his theory on his own. In some ways, the Giant’s defeat turns into a teaching moment. Instead of slaying him, or ordering Talus to, Artgall seems to desire to show the giant how he has erred, and, possibly correct such error. Artgall can do this because he has learned how the giant learns or interprets. As a result, he encourages the giant to consider and practice a truer sense of measurement with relation to truth. Perhaps because Artgall perceives the Giant's largest threat not as physical but intellectual, as passing false knowledge onto a susceptible crowd, he strives to correct the Giant rather than defeat him. Yet, the giant’s refusal to learn, to even consider Artgall's conceptions of justice, virtue, and vice, may be too much to overcome.

One of the major issues Artgall attempts to correct is the giant’s general understanding of truth and how it pertains to wrongness and falseness. The giant incorrectly translates truth as rightness because he can translate falseness to wrongness. That is, he can find a connection between how something false is also something wrong. But performing the same switch onto truth and rightness is significantly more complicated—a complexity the giant fails, then refuses, to acknowledge. Truth is what is not subject to measurement, while rightness is that form of truth, only in a moral sense, though equally as intangible. It seems the giant views truth as a counterpart to falseness,

rather than a self-standing virtue. In these gestures, the giant illustrates how his one-sided translation of truth is not only incorrect, but unbalanced. He focuses on the weighing of truth instead of the application of truth. Weighing truth is not as felicitous as possessing a truth then applying it in multiple ways to hit upon a fruitful reading.

But while truth cannot be measured in relation to falseness or wrongness, these vices can be weighed in relation to each other. Artegall continues his lesson and instructs the giant to:

...set forth truth and set the right aside,  
For they with wrong or falsehood will not fare;  
And put two wrongs together to be tried,  
Or else two falses, or each equall share;  
And then together doe them both compare.  
For truth is one, and right is ever one. (V.ii.48)

Artegall reveals that one can weigh wrongness against wrongness or falseness against falseness, but not against truth. In such a comparison, rightness sits “[...] in the midst of the beame alone” and balances the verdict, but is never on one side of the scale.

Rightness is the scale itself, weighing two wrongs against each other. It is not the one of the objects measured on one side of the scale, as the giant practices. Rightness, like truth, is immeasurable by these standards.

The giant’s misunderstanding of these principles can further be seen in his continued attempts to fulfill his initial challenge to weigh right and wrong. After he cannot strike a balance, Artegall asks him to take the right and try to counterbalance it with wrongs, “Yet all the wrongs could not a litle right downe way” (V.ii.46). No matter how many wrongs the giant places on the scale, he cannot strike a balance between right and wrong.

Once the giant can *see* the flaws in his thinking, Artegall then tells him why he is wrong. He says:

... Be not upon thy balance wroken:  
 For they doe nought but right or wrong betoken;  
 But in the mind the doome of right must bee;  
 And so likewise of words, the which be spoken,  
 The eare must be the balance, to decree  
 And judge, whether the truth or falsehood they agree. (V.ii.47)

The balance the Giant should rely upon is not a physical one, but a mental one.

According to Artegall, the mind is where the knowledge of truth and right must exist so one can situationally weigh right and wrong on the balance of the mind. In these terms, the giant errs because he relies too much on the physical, the seen, and not enough on the unseen.

In this analysis, Artegall not only reveals the error in the Giant's method, but articulates the precepts for his ideas of justice. For Artegall, justice is found in the act of interpretation, of weighing wrongs against wrongs, with truth and reason acting as constants in such an assessment. Such is a practice Artegall exercises, as in the above episode with Sir Sanglier and the squire. In this scene, Artegall carries the balance of right in his mind, and then weighs both men's stories to arrive at a verdict. But Artegall's understanding of truth and his enactment of justice as interpretation allow him to consider more than the stories alone—he is able to contemplate the unseen as well as the seen.

These foundations are what Artegall apparently desires to teach the Giant. Yet, before this teaching can be completed, Talus, on his own accord, "[...] shouldered him [the Giant] from the higher ground,/And down the rock him throwing, in the sea him dround" (V.ii.49). Though Artegall's agent of justice, this unsolicited action signifies the very discrepancies Artegall has for the Giant's type of justice. Talus, like the Giant,

seems only interested in the execution of justice, rather than the understanding of it.

Earlier, this study posits that Talus' iron make-up aligns him with the men of fallen Iron Age. This connection is again seen here because Talus is distanced from the necessary knowledge needed to understand divine knowledge. In essence, such an action, the quick disseminating of error, is equally as flawed as the Giant's knowledge and methods. The "lewdly minded" Talus, like the Giant, is only eager for action, not understanding.<sup>314</sup>

Moreover, Talus' self-spurred actions illustrate a discrepancy between the process of justice and the execution of justice, between Artegall's desires and Talus'. At the end of this episode, Talus takes on the role of judge because Artegall occupies the one of teacher. By doing so, the reader is provided with another example of the effects of misused and misunderstood justice. With his action, Talus places himself opposite the Giant on the scale judging wrongness in the episode. It provides the reader with an opportunity to enact the reason and truth Artegall teaches the Giant of. They can weigh the wrongness of the Giant's intentions and methods against Talus' impetuous actions.

The example Talus provides in this scene forces the reader to draw comparisons between Talus and the Giant, for though Talus is predominantly an agent of justice, in this scene he is an agent of error, of misinterpretation. In this instance, an agent of good errs because he does not, because he cannot, exercise reason. Such an example is significant because it allows the reader to see error as error, not necessarily sin. While error is something to combat, it is not necessarily a villain, a serpent. It is something that can be overcome with the exercise of reason, with guidance and teaching, as we see in Artegall's interaction with the Giant.

---

<sup>314</sup> Even Talus' method of enforcement resembles the giant's balance. He meets the Giant cheek to cheek, thus placing them in direct opposition or comparison. By pushing him off the cliff, Talus throws the scales off balance and proves superior to the Giant.

In this entire scene with the Egalitarian Giant, particularly in the latter stanzas, Spenser appears to draw upon Hooker's concept of doctrine, or a common belief concerning truth. Like the unbalanced balance, false interpretation cannot exist when truth is present (consider Augustine's charity). This idea of an internal virtue or truth culminates when Artegall speaks, "For they doe nought but right or wrong betoken;/But in the mind the doome of right must bee." In this context, right exists in the mind and one must use reason to judge the external world from an internal place. Reason is the connection between divine principles, in this case truth and justice, and human action. It allows one to consider the gravity of the spoken word, the written word, the speaker, the context, and so on and so forth—reason allows for the interpretation of manmade laws and life within the scope of divine virtue.

Furthermore, as Hooker considers, "Albeit therefore every cause admit no such infalliable evidence of profe as leaveth no possibilitie of doubt or scruple behind it; yet they who claime the generall assent of the whole world unto that which they teach, and doe not feare to give every hard and heavy sentence upon as many as refuse to embrace the same, must have speciall regard that their first foundations may be more then slender probabilities" (*LEP*, II.99). Here, Hooker refers to the complicated practice of reconciling church law with Scriptural content. He claims that there is never a way to entirely be sure of a Scriptural interpretation, no "infalliable evidence" that will securely support a verdict. But, this very doubt, this inability to concretely draw conclusions, is what makes the content of Scripture, of truth, so appealing. It offers the necessary leeway for one to use reason to interpret both Scriptural and secular situations—to read with charity and faith. For Artegall, the process of employing reason to enact judicial

interpretation is the key to understanding virtue and truth. It is the one's ability to truly exercise justice by reconciling divine knowledge with earthly practices.

The people Hooker identifies as “claim[ing] the generall assent of the whole world unto that which they teach” fits the type of thinker the Egalitarian Giant represents. He wants all to accept his reading of truth and his measurements of virtue. Essentially, he wants the members of the eager mass to forfeit their ability to use reason. The giant wants these people to solely accept his conclusions without weighing other possibilities or, later, considering situation.

In many ways, the intentions, as well as the practices, of the Giant mirror the issues Hooker addresses in the *LEP*. The Giant, like the Anglican Church, seeks to repair past wrongs by creating a system of literalness that omits any possibility for interpretative error. In this system, Church thinkers claim that, “...[in] *the Scripture of God it is such sort the rule of humane actions, that simply whatsoever we do, and are not by it directed [by Scripture] thereunto, the same is sinne; we hold it necessarie that the proofes hereof be weighed*” (*LEP*, II.99). These thinkers perceive any action or decision drawn from the interpretation of Scripture, rather than the literal reading of Scripture, as sin.

Hooker, however, sees the limits presented by the use of only Scripture to dictate Church practices. In Hooker's analysis, Scripture contains both the seen and unseen elements of divine knowledge, and to only rely on the seen restrains the potentials of Scriptural understanding and ecclesiastical practice, as witnessed in the Giant's thoughts and actions. If an individual begins with one common truth, with a common foundation, then the methods of practicing such a truth are endless. Artegall exhibits this as he continually enacts his process of justice. His methods do not change, though his subject



matter and situations do. Artegall's ability to interpret and contemplate allows him to continually open outside sources and situations to potential meaning. He does so as an extension of divine knowledge, or at least as an extension of the practice that leads one to divine knowledge.

This scene with Artegall and the Egalitarian Giant represents just one scene in which Spenser employs a Hookerian hermeneutic system. Throughout the *FQ*, Spenser arguably creates a poetic exegetical method heavily influenced by the ideas of Hooker. Important in this scene, however, is Artegall's exercising of reason to overcome misinterpretation. As is his practice, Artegall interrogates a subject, or object, with a series of questions. Not only does Artegall exhibit a highly evolved interpretative method, but, this skill can extend to Spenser's reader. This style of interrogation, expansion, and adaptation is one Spenser desires his ideal reader to exert. As seen through Artegall's actions and questions, choice is present in every stage of interpretation. By embracing choice, rather than denying it, as the giant does, Artegall allows reason to succeed in defeating the giant's one-sided perspective. Such action indicates an awareness of Hooker's ideas and further introduces poetry to the forefront of Protestant exegetical action.

This episode highlights Artegall's exegetical strengths as he interprets his situation and adapts his strategies to best wrangle with the Giant. He adjusts his initial method of reason-based debate to one that centers upon showing the giant how his methods of measuring falseness and truth, right and wrong, are incorrect and misinformed. Importantly, Artegall presents himself more as a teacher than a fighter, in that he desires to teach the giant the tenets of truth and right, rather than merely judge and

punish the giant for his misuses. Such methods and aims illustrate the pedagogical aspect of Artegall's conception of justice as well as the instructive element necessary for progressive interpretative skills.

The interpretative abilities Artegall exhibits in the scene with the Giant are comparable to those of Arthur, as in his scene with Ignaro. Arthur, like Artegall, is able to amend his initial plan after he interprets his surroundings and considers his options for "victory". This link between Arthur and Artegall does not end with interpretation, however. Spenser links these two knights in their conceptions of justice as well as in their encompassing of all virtue.<sup>315</sup> This connection is further solidified when we consider Artegall's name as "Arth-egall" or "equal or peer to Arthur" stemming from the French *egal* or equal.<sup>316</sup> Throughout this study, Arthur has been identified as an ideal knight, a knight able to blend intellectual and physical strengths in his duties.<sup>317</sup>

---

<sup>315</sup> Borris draws a distinction between Arthur and Artegall to suggest that Arthur and his quest mirror Christ's, while Artegall battles the "the general problems of power and reform in human society" as a representative of earthly justice (69). See Kenneth Borris. *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy in "The Faerie Queene" V*. English Literary Studies, 52. Victoria, B.C.: University of Victoria, 1991. For further discussions of the connection between Arthur and Artegall, with regards to justice, see Shelia T. Cavanagh. "Ideal and Practical Justice: Artegall and Arthur in *Faerie Queene Five*." *Renaissance Papers*, 1984, pp. 19-28.

<sup>316</sup> Hamilton V.i.3n.

<sup>317</sup> McCabe argues that Arthur is a vital character to the entirety of the *FQ* and should be treated as more than an allegorical presence or a supporting character. He cites Arthur's "narrative continuity" and interaction with all characters, both male and female, as evidence to the importance of Arthur on the work as a whole. McCabe asserts that "As he proceeds from book to book, Arthur develops and deepens his character" (233). See Richard A. McCabe. "Prince Arthur's 'Vertuous and Gentle Discipline.'" In *Noble and Joyous Histories: English Romances, 1375-1650*, edited by Eilén Ní Cuilleánáin and J.D. Pfeifer. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993. 221-243. Similarly, Jan Karel Kouwenhoven comments on the absence of formal narrative for Arthur to conclude that "If Arthur has no story, Spenser's work, *qua* Arthuriad, cannot be an epic" nor are "the adventures of the titular knights, with which his intersect, [...] stories either" (51-52). For Kouwenhoven, Arthur is central to the story and the structure of the *FQ*. In some ways, he provides meaning and worth for Artegall, and the other knights. See *Apparent Narrative as Thematic Metaphor: The Organization of "The Faerie Queene."* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983. Such readings counter those of, say, Harry Berger, Jr. who accept Arthur as a subordinate character.

Perceiving Arthur and Artegall as equals implies that Artegall embodies these same abilities and intentions, especially within the realm of justice.<sup>318</sup>

When Artegall and Arthur first meet they are both attempting to save Samient from Adicia and her husband. In this scene they accidentally fight each other without knowing both is on the side of the good.<sup>319</sup> In this fight, however, neither can win since they are the same—they are equals in battle and interpretative skills. After their victory over Adicia, Artegall and Arthur continue to travel together. They agree to accompany the damsel to her lady's castle and on this journey learn of Malengin, a "...wicked villain, bold and stout,/Which wonned in a rocke not farre away,/That robbed all the countrie there about,/And brought the pillage home, whence none could get it out" (V.ix.4).

Upon hearing of Malengin, Arthur and Artegall devise a plan using the less-threatening damsel as bait. Importantly, Artegall and Arthur allow the damsel to guide them towards this plan. She "Gan to advize, what best were to be done" (V.ix.8). Both knights can recognize that she is an asset because she knows the terrain and inhabitants better than they do. Such recognition further reveals the selflessness of their

---

<sup>318</sup> Robert J. Mueller distinguishes between the knights of the *FQ* who seek virtue and Arthur who seeks "absolute truth". He claims that by naming specific virtues as the topics of his books, Spenser contributes to a "cultural program of celebrating a power whose nature must be kept carefully concealed" (755). In this schema, Arthur is able to quest for truth, rather than enact virtue, because he is simultaneously outside each book, yet inside, participating in each book. But, maybe Arthur's real importance to the tale lies in what he prompts the other knights to learn and pursue. In Book I, Arthur saves Redcrosse from Orgoglio's dungeon so he can eventually learn how to use reason and interpretation. In Book VI, Arthur demonstrates the physical extent of knightly power with Caldiore. But with Artegall, the closest figure to a peer, their equality allows Artegall to execute his form of justice to the highest degree. He can perform the interpretative acts necessary for his justice because Arthur encourages him to. See "Infinite Desire': Spenser's Arthur and the Representation of Courtly Ambition." *ELH* 58 (Winter 1991):747-771.

<sup>319</sup> Richard F. Hardin notes that the name "Samient" may derive from the Middle English *sam*, or "together." Such derivation suggests Arthur and Artegall are equals, or peers, rather than rivals (*Spenser Encyclopedia* 7).

interpretations and actions—they are concerned, first, for her and her kingdom, not their reputations.

Because of the damsel, the knights can also identify Malegin's threat. Malegin is a villain who steals and hoards his spoils.<sup>320</sup> In many ways, he is the binary opposite of foes like the Egalitarian Giant. Where the Giant desires to share the knowledge of truth, Malegrin desires to keep knowledge and artifacts to himself, hidden from those who could benefit from their uses. The manner in which Malengin works—the way he steals and deceives—suggests he relies upon his target's inability to interpret and choose between reality and falseness, truth and lies. Unlike the Giant, who desires to provide individuals with a working, though limited, method of determining truth, Malengin preys upon his opponent's hermeneutic limitations, as Archimago similarly does.

When the damsel describes the villain's greatest weapon, she refers to his smooth tongue, "That could deceive one looking in his face" (V.ix.5). This description seems a direct challenge to Artegall's interpretative skill set, for he excels at considering more than the words of his opponents. Malengin appears a different sort of opponent than the Giant because he can manipulate both his words and bodily gestures to deceive and defeat. We can witness this falsity when the damsel is confronted by Malengin.

First, his "[...]guileful words her to perswade,/To banish feare, and with  
*Sardonian smyle,/Laughing on her, his false intent to shade,/Gan forth rto lay his bayte*  
her to beguile," (V.ix.12). Malengin is an "ugly creature" on the outside, but he seeks to

---

<sup>320</sup> Elizabeth Heale examines the Malegin episode to suggest that he represents the Catholic priests who worked within England to reinforce Catholicism amongst priests and undermine Anglicanism. She links this reading with the episodes of Souldan and Duessa's judgment to evaluate the structural effects of such an analysis. She concludes that Spenser moves from "the outside inwards, from the external threat of violence [Souldan], through the Malengine episode, imagining more subtle dangers closer to the throne, to the final culminating image of Mercilla/Elizabeth, calmly dispensing justice, a center peace and stable authority, protected by God" (179). See "Spenser's Malengine, Missionary Priests, and the Means of Justice." *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 41 (1990):171-184.

manipulate and hide his appearance with coy words. In essence, he manipulates the seen, that is, his appearance, in an attempt to make it as unseen as his malicious intent. And, in doing so, Malengin seeks to control one's interpretation of him. Though he "fishes for fools" Malengin's methods imply that his interpretative control can affect both weak and strong minds (V.ix.11).

In fact, his methods do overtake a strong mind. The damsel, though armed with the knowledge of Malengin's malicious weapon, still lets her guard down enough to be swiftly taken. For, "...whilst she lent her intentive mind,/He [Malengin] suddenly his net upon her threw'...And snatching her soone up, ere well she knew,/Ran with her fast away unto his mew" (V.ix.15).<sup>321</sup> Once taken, Artegall chases Malengin only to stop when the villain began scaling the dangerous mountain paths, "That deadly danger seem'd in all mens sight,/To tempt such steps, where footing was so ill:/Ne ought avayled for the armed knight,/To *thinke* to follow him, that was so swift and light" (V.ix.15, my italics).

While the ceasing of Artegall's pursuit could be viewed as cowardly or weak, with regards to this analysis, his actions (or lack of action) reveals his awareness of limits. As the highlighted portion suggests, Artegall always thinks before he acts. Just as he knows the extent of his interpretative powers, so, too, does he know the limits of his knightly skill. Such awareness illustrates the extent by which Artegall relies upon his mind when in battle. Again, he uses his mind to assess a situation and rightfully adjust

---

<sup>321</sup> In many ways, Malengin works like a simpler form of Despaire in Book I. He distracts a strong mind away from his presence in order to eventually break such a mind. I say, "simpler form of Despaire" because I do not think Malengin is as cunning or malicious as Despaire. Malengin, instead, uses his deceptive tools to acquire goods, rather than ruin them, as Despaire does. Malengin deceives for gain, while Despaire deceives for pleasure.

his actions. The extent of Artegall's interpretative reliance and reach is the marker of his understanding of justice.

Interestingly, when Talus pursues and captures Malengin he "...forst him to forsake/The hight, and downe descend unto the base" where Malengin was forced "To leave his proper forme, and other shape to take" (V.ix.16). Metaphorically, Talus has pulled the falsity away from Malengin's seen shape—he has aligned his external position with his misshapen, internal one. No longer can Malengin hide his unseen, malicious desires behind his seen, false appearance. Now his intentions and appearance align, thus making it easier for one to perceive his falseness.

What is particularly interesting about this scene is that Talus, though told to pursue the villain, enacts a form of justice fitting for *his* character—a justice solely rooted in action rather than contemplation. Talus embodies the essence of relativism in that he exists in an either/or state, that is, he either acts or he does not, he either pursues or does not. In many ways, this sort of relativism captures the essence of knightly *action* in that it relies upon swift execution and reaction instead of contemplation; a trait we shall see in Calidore. And, yet, while Talus continually illustrates that absolute relativism can only get one so far, in this episode, he presents a situation in which relativism sheds falseness and offers an interpreter concrete information. But this information reveals one answer, rather than the possibility for many.

Arthur and Artegall enter the situation with a basic idea of how harmful Malengin is, thanks to the damsel. But in Talus' pursuit, the interpreter, and the reader, is given concrete, physical proof of his maliciousness when Malengin's shape changes. This knowledge is gained from the enactment of justice, Talus' enactment of justice. Talus

offers proof in something seen. By changing, Talus and the reader can judge Malengin based on his false appearance instead of his false words. This removes doubt, yet also removes the possibility for interpretation and contemplation. Though this method is limited to sensory perception, Talus illustrates one way in which justice can reveal truth.

Throughout Book V, a significant part of Talus' limitation is that he always relies upon the seen, while Artegall excels because he can interpret past the seen—and he does so by using reason and interpretation. This limitation may explain why Talus can only act while Artegall primarily directs. Since Talus only acts upon what he sees, without using his mind, all he literally sees is what lies in front of him. He can only act on instinct, in a pursuit or chase, while Artegall excels when he has time to interrogate a subject or situation, as with the Giant or Sanglier and the squire. This time allows Artegall to plan and make decisions proactively, while Talus exists solely in a reactive state.

In many ways, this distinction is what makes Artegall's form and execution of justice so unique and pure when compared to the more-earthly enactments of justice, as we see with the Giant's scales. It is what separates Artegall and his divine training from a one-sided, often flawed, form of earthly justice. In some ways, Artegall and Talus, together, make the ideal knight because Talus can pick up where Artegall's limits and battle skills end, as seen in Talus' pursuit of Malengin.<sup>322</sup>

However, what we continually see in Artegall's interpretative actions is how engrained these skills are in his practice and person. He is "knightly" because he can merge these intellectual skills with those of physical battle. As suggested earlier, this is a virtue Arthur also possesses. But it seems that Artegall's interpretative skills surpass

---

<sup>322</sup> Greenblatt notes the consequences of having Talus defeat the giant and the mob, positing that "Spenser saves the heroic as genre but at a high cost to the hero himself" (18). Stephen Greenblatt. "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion." *Representations* 1 (February 1983):1-29.

even Arthur's. Such skills are witnessed in the judgment of Duessa at Mercilla's court.<sup>323</sup> Here, Arthur and Artegall hear the arguments of both sides before they consider Duessa's guilt or innocence. During these testimonies, Pittie, Regard, Daunger, Nobilitie, and Griefe argue on behalf of Duessa (V.ix.45). Once complete, Arthur begins to feel pity for Duessa:

With the neare touch whereof in tender hart  
The Briton Prince was sore empassionate,  
And woxe inclined much unto her part,  
Through the sad terror of so dreadfull fate,  
And wretched ruine of so high estate,  
That for great ruth his courage gan relent. (V.ix.46)

Here, Arthur is temporarily swayed by the emotional persuasion of these metaphoric characters.

Interestingly, he is duped by Duessa's appearance, as Redcrosse is.<sup>324</sup> Where Redcrosse was fooled by her physical appearance, Arthur, a more-skilled interpreter than Redcrosse then, is fooled by her *virtuous* appearance. He believes the testimonies of Regard, who highlights her womanhood, and Nobilitie reminding the "jury" of her noble background. These surface appearances play upon his emotions and seek to cancel out rational interpretation, just as Duessa would attempt to do if she were alone with him. And for a moment, these questionable persuasive techniques seem to work, for it appears

---

<sup>323</sup> As Hamilton notes, besides the poems, this is the most overt praise of Elizabeth (pg. 571). This episode is often noted for its overt allegory of Elizabeth's trial of Mary Queen of Scots.

<sup>324</sup> McCabe argues that the overt representation of Duessa as Mary Queen of Scots in Book V recasts her role and actions in Book I. He claims that Duessa's characterization in Book I intentionally evokes the image of Mary created by her Protestant opponents. In this light, when Una lets Duessa go in Book I, it is to expose the propaganda of her release. See Richard A. McCabe "The Masks of Duessa: Spenser, Mary Queen of Scots, and James VI." *English Literary Renaissance* 17 (Spring 1987):22-42.



the fragile balance between mind and heart—a balance that Arthur so often interprets with—is momentarily skewed.<sup>325</sup>

In fact, the team supporting Duessa represent the *exact* tools she wielded when tricking Redcrosse. With Redcrosse, first, she employs false nobility by claiming to be Una and later by crowning herself queen of Orgoglio's castle. Then, she utilizes regard for her physical womanhood when she attempts to seduce Redcrosse and later pity for her and the dangerous position of her parents and kingdom. Next, Duessa plays upon the danger Redcrosse will encounter if he leaves her. And, finally, the tears and emotions of grief are a tool she utilizes at will. And, here, in Mercilla's court, surrounded by agents of truth, Duessa is able to deceive Arthur with the same instruments she did Redcrosse.

But not Artegall, who remains with “constant firm intent/For zeale of Justice was against her [Duessa] bent” (V.ix.49). While Arthur is deceived by Duessa's appearance of false virtue, Artegall remains focused on keeping reason and interpretation in the forefront of his enactment of justice—a justice seemingly considering righteous ends, rather than right ones, necessarily.<sup>326</sup> Arthur's temporary lapse in interpretation further highlights Artegall's superior execution of the justice in the form of interpretation and contemplation. Though Arthur and Artegall are equals in every respect, this moment illustrates a small discrepancy between the two knights. While Arthur may be considered a better *physical* knight because he always participates in his own battles and Artegall often deploys Talus, Artegall proves the better *intellectual* knight. In this scene, Artegall illustrates his heightened interpretative training, skills, and strength. It appears Artegall's

---

<sup>325</sup> Gallagher claims that Spenser deliberately includes contradictions in Duessa's trial in order to reveal the social and political control which ultimately forces the poet to create propaganda. See *Medusa's Gaze: Casuistry and Conscience in the Renaissance*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991.

<sup>326</sup> Artegall's focus is admirable considering his past tendencies to favor women, as when he refuses to fight against Radigund or when he bows to Britomart.

true strengths lie in employing interpretation and keeping reason in the forefront of his idea of justice as righteousness.

Arthur's misinterpretation is brief. Once Zele notices that Arthur's emotions are outbalancing his usually more reason-bound interpretative abilities, he introduces a considerably more serious line of prosecution. To counter the claims of Duessa's womanhood and nobility, Zele "[...] gan t'efforce the evidence anew,/And new accusations to produce in place:" (V.ix.47). Zele helps Arthur remove the emotional blindfold Duessa's advocates have blinded him with. Essentially, Zele performs the interpretative maneuvers that Arthur's emotions keep him from executing. He brings forth new evidence to be interpreted and considered. Without Zele's re-tooled strategy, Arthur would continue to emotionally pity Duessa.

Once Ate, the spirit Duessa called from hell in Book IV, testifies to Duessa's true character, Arthur snaps out of his emotional daze, for "All which when as the Prince had heard and seene,/His former fancies ruth he gan repent" (V.ix.49). Besides illustrating the retrieval of Arthur's emotional and intellectual balance, this return also shows that Arthur knows how to return to the path that leads towards heavenly contemplation. Similarly to Redcrosse being cleansed by Penance, Remorse, and Repentance before he can meet Contemplation, Arthur must also repent for his brief error (I.x.27). Again, we see Arthur and Redcrosse traveling a similar path because of Duessa.<sup>327</sup>

In general, Mercilla's court centers upon the idea of justice, both as a virtue and an organizing principle.<sup>328</sup> She "[...] was about affaires of common wele,/Dealing of

---

<sup>327</sup> Importantly, Arthur knows that he must repent in order to continue towards interpretation and contemplation, whereas Redcrosse had to be instructed.

<sup>328</sup> James W. Broaddus contends that Books III, IV, and V compose a vision of love rooted in the social. This idea of love idealizes subordination within social hierarchy. See *Spenser's Allegory of Love: Social*

Justice with indifferent grace/And hearing the pleas of people mean and base” suggesting that Mercilla uses justice to organize her kingdom and punish those who act against this organization (V.ix.36).<sup>329</sup> While this passage specifically refers to the events of Duessa’s trial, Arthur and Artegall arrive in the middle of, it suggests that the effects of Mercilla’s form of justice, though initially having more immediate ends in a verdict, extend to the very edges of her kingdom.<sup>330</sup> She seems to see the verdict as an organizer in that it keeps these “people mean and base” out of her kingdom.

Interestingly, Mercilla’s concern for the verdict appears to contrast Artegall’s interest in the process of justice—that is, the interpretation and contemplation put into judgment. This discrepancy may arise from a difference in intent. Mercilla employs justice for verdict since it allows her to provide order in her kingdom.<sup>331</sup>

Artegall, on the other hand, seems more interested in the judicial interrogation of each situation. As seen in the episode with the Egalitarian Giant, Artegall desires to show the giant the error of his ways, not necessarily to judge his guilt. This pedagogical tendency is Artegall’s way of providing social order. Teaching the giant of his error would allow Artegall to keep the mob of onlookers from being deceived with false

---

*Vision in Books III, IV, and V of The Faerie Queene*. Madison and Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1995). Such subordination unites the state and implies that love and justice are both based upon social harmony. Michael F.N. Dixon also sees justice as a social organizer (*The Politicke Courtier: Spenser's "The Faerie Queene" As a Rhetoric of Justice*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

<sup>329</sup> Broaddus posits that in Spenser’s schema, true justice cannot be separated from the suppression of disorder. This idea counters the perception that true justice can be seen in the symbolism of equity and mercy between Isis Church Mercilla’s Palace. See *Spenser's Allegory of Love*.

<sup>330</sup> Stump expands the critical argument that Spenser twice kills Mary Stuart in Book V—once when Britomart defeats Redigund and again in Mercilla’s verdict against Duessa. Stump asserts that the episode with Britomart and Radigund illustrates Elizabeth’s early encounters with Mary. See “The Two Deaths of Mary Stuart: Historical Allegory in Spenser’s Book of Justice.” *Spenser Studies* 9 (1991):81-105.

<sup>331</sup> Headlam Wells identifies Astraea and Mercilla as examples of Elizabeth’s “types”. This link explains why Mercilla must firmly sentence Duessa, for “it must be remembered that Duessa is not merely Mary Queen of Scots, but a personification of evil itself” (126). In this analysis, Duessa becomes emblematic of the fallen world Mercilla/Astraea/Elizabeth must rule and the type of justice that must be enacted in an attempt to restore natural law. See *Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and the Cult of Elizabeth*, 178.

knowledge. Ultimately, Mercilla and Artegall perceive the organizing principles of justice, but Artegall's method focuses on the interpretative process which leads one to consider the possibilities of judicial ends, while Mercilla seems only concerned with the ends of judgment, the verdict.

Yet, while Mercilla may focus on the verdict, she is attended by both earthly and virtuous characters of justice. By her side sits "goodly" Temperance and Reverence, who is "yborne of heavenly strene" (V.ix.32). The presence of Temperance suggests that mercy will be part of her verdict while Reverence links Mercilla's court to the heavenly example purported on the Mt. of Heavenly Contemplation. In Book I, Reverence embodies truth in language as he speaks the "simple trew, and eke unfained sweet" (I.x.7). He guides Redcrosse in his first steps towards Heavenly Contemplation. His prominent presence in Mercilla's court suggests that truth, possibly in the form of true reverence or humility, can lead one towards remorse and repentance, which, learning from Redcrosse, are important stops on the journey towards contemplation and divine understanding. For Mercilla, this truth in reverence pertains to justice, possibly urging those on trial to speak truthfully. But Reverence's link to heavenly action further suggests that though Mercilla immediately seeks a verdict, her larger basis for justice is rooted in more-divine origins, as is Artegall's.<sup>332</sup>

Furthermore, the presence of Reverence serves as a stark contrast to Vanitie, the usher of the House of Pride.<sup>333</sup> His truth and simplicity spans all areas of Mercilla's court, implying that her court is genuine. This idea of genuineness extends to the

---

<sup>332</sup> It is interesting that we meet Duessa beginning a journey of justice with the same character Redcrosse began his travels to contemplation. Perhaps this connection between justice and contemplation touches more than Artegall and his interpretative actions?

<sup>333</sup> Hamilton I.x.7n

exegete, for when in Mercilla's court, the interpreter does not read to see past deception or falsity, as with Lucifera or even Malengin, but perhaps reads for meaning and interprets to gain understanding. But, if we consider Reverence as urging truthful testimony from those on trial, then the judge reads for guilt or innocence of the crime, instead of falseness of testimony.

These dual-roles of reverence and truth seem to offer the possibility for both Artegall's interpretative judicial process and Mercilla's organizing verdict by stressing a distinction between private and public justice, divine and earthly justice. It would seem that the *process* of justice serves the individual and his quest for knowledge, thus linking this form of justice to more divine strands that urge contemplation, interpretation, and repentance. On the other hand, the ends of justice, the verdicts, as we have seen, inform public forms of justice in that they organize the earthly world through judgment. Moreover, the private, interpretative processes of justice open the possibilities of meaning as well as the just boundaries of where meaning can exist. The public, end-seeking forms of justice, must delimit meaning in order to determine between guilt and innocence, reality or falsity, correctness and incorrectness.

Throughout Book V, Artegall has proven himself to employ both forms of justice, sometimes in a single episode. He is a figure who can strike a balance between interpretation and judgment. For example, in the episode with the Giant, Artegall can identify the Giant's public threat of misinforming the masses. But he first identifies the private, interpretative threat in the Giant's misunderstanding of justice and truth. While Artegall is a character whose predominant drive is to enact the righteousness of divine justice, it appears he can still perceive the importance of rightness in an earthly realm.

This ability to perceive the full extent of justice comes from Artegall's training and understanding of justice as a method of interrogation and interpretation. In general, these abilities are what separate Artegall from other knight's, such as Redcrosse and Calidore, because they are skills and knowledge he begins with, not ones he must learn to exercise throughout his journey.

Mercilla also reveals herself to be a figure who can perceive the importance of both spheres of justice.<sup>334</sup> She, like Arthur, is initially "touch[ed] wherof in tender hart" and pities Duessa, but she knows she must serve her public obligation for justice. For "[...] she [Mercilla] whose Princely breast was touched nere/With piteous ruth of her so wretched plight,/Though plaine she saw by all, that she did heare,/That she of death was guiltie found by right" (V.ix.50). Though she publically, and predominantly, seeks a judicial verdict, privately she pities Duessa.<sup>335</sup> She does so because she can interpret and contemplate the various testimonies and discern more than Duessa's falseness or guilt.

Though Mercilla and Artegall appear to desire different ends, the common root of heavenly justice unites seemingly contrary desires. Just as Artegall can perceive the

---

<sup>334</sup> Susan Cyndia Clegg examines Elizabethan practices of censorship and argues that the scene in Mercilla's court does not qualify/represent an opposition to Elizabethan political rule. Instead, this episode allegorizes events that most threatened the domestic justice of Elizabeth's nation. Clegg also asserts that Elizabeth and her government censored considerably less than often thought. See "Justice and Press Censorship in Book V of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *Studies in Philology* 95, no. 3 (Summer 1998):237-262. Similarly, John D. Staine argues that Spenser uses the government issued political propaganda which defends the execution of Mary. When analyzing such propaganda, Staines focuses on the rhetorical nature of politics, to conclude that the ideal of justice Book V seeks to establish can only be an ideal, not a reality. See "Elizabeth, Mercilla, and the Rhetoric of Propaganda in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2001):283-312.

<sup>335</sup> Looking at this scene how it is predominantly read, as equating Mercilla with Elizabeth and Duessa with Mary, Queen of Scots during her trial for treason, critics like Walter S.H. Lim suggest that Elizabeth had to choose justice (the public) in order to keep her regal authority, especially with regards to Ireland. See "Figuring Justice: Imperial Ideology and the Discourse of Colonization in Book V of *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland*" *Renaissance and Reformation* 19:45-70). Taking a more philosophical approach, James E. Phillips distinguishes between mercy and pity in this Mercilla's decision. See "Renaissance Concepts of Justice and the Structure of *The Faerie Queene*, Book V" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 33:103-120). David Lee Miller addresses Spenser's allegorical treatment of the distinctions between the private and public Elizabeth. See *The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 'Faerie Queene'*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

importance of public justice, so, too, does Mercilla value the pursuit of divine justice, though in more private, internal ways. Additionally, in this trial scene, Fowler claims that Mercilla appears as Astraea with Arthur and Artegall on each side of her, like the scales of justice, or their representative virtues *justitia* and *clementia*.<sup>336</sup> Since Artegall was taught justice from Astraea herself, this identification further links Artegall and Mercilla in a common understanding of justice—an understanding that diverges when met with differing obligations.<sup>337</sup> Mercilla is obligated to use justice to provide order in her commonwealth while Artegall’s obligations lie in the exaction of divine principles onto an earthly landscape.

Artegall is a knight who enters his journey with the knowledge and experience to effectively enact his form of justice—a justice rooted in interpretation and contemplation. Artegall shows the reader how a strong mind is not necessarily a closed one. He is able to maintain the integrity of his exegetical method and teaching while continually considering the many places where truth can exist. His strength of mind allows him to organize both the natural world and the human one.

---

<sup>336</sup> Alastair Fowler. *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964, 197. Along similar lines, William Keach notes the significance in Artegall’s education by the hands of Astraea to claim that Spenser intentionally does not make the claim that Astraea has returned to earth in the form of Elizabeth, the virgin queen. He continues to link Spenser’s use of Astraea with Beaumont’s, who employs Astraea as a satirizing agent of Elizabeth’s form of justice. See William Keach. *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and their Contemporaries*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1977.

<sup>337</sup> Stump refutes the critically accepted idea that the Temple of Isis is the primary place for the instruction of allegory while the Palace of Mercilla is secondary to claim that Mercilla’s Christian palace, rather than Isis’ pagan temple, represents Spenser’s ideal of justice. In this light, Mercilla’s reign is symbolic of a return to the ideal justice of Astraea. Duessa’s trial is a moment of public equity while Mercilla’s private tears at the end are a moment of mercy. See Donald V. Stump. “Isis Versus Mercilla: The Allegorical Shrines in Spenser’s Legend of Justice.” *Spenser Studies* 3 (1982):87-98.

CHAPTER FIVE  
CALIDORE: FAME VERSUS FAVOR

Throughout this analysis of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's interest in hermeneutics is traced in the actions of Redcrosse, Artegall, and, here, Calidore, Spenser's Knight of Courtesy. Spenser's attention to teaching and exegetical practice suggests that this is more than a casual interest to the poet. As before, Spenser's hermeneutic task seems to take root in teaching an interpretative schema that encourages opening the possibilities of meaning, rather than limiting them. By encouraging this sort of exegetical practice in his characters, Spenser seeks to urge the reader to simultaneously practice these discourses. As the characters try to read, we, the readers, are invited to consider the ways they might read and, so, we, too, are hitting upon viable readings.<sup>338</sup>

One way that Spenser repeatedly confronts these hermeneutic issues in both the reader and his characters is to consider the limitations of earthly interpretation. In the proem to Book VI Spenser evokes an image of travel or journeying:

The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde,  
In this delightfull land of Faery,  
Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,  
And sprinckled with such sweet variety,  
Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,

---

<sup>338</sup> Debra Belt suggests that the allusions and examples of courtesy throughout Book VI generate a "courteous reader" that interacts with the poet. See "Hostile Audiences and the Courteous Reader in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI." *Spenser Studies* 9 (1991):107-135. To further consider how this poetic aim affects the reader, see Gaile Cohee. "'To Fashion a Noble Person': Spenser's Readers and the Politics of Gender." *Spenser Studies* 14 (2000): 83-105. For more general discussions considering Spenser and the reader, see Lowell Gallagher. *Medusa's Gaze: Casuistry and Conscience in the Renaissance*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1991; Russell J. Meyer *The Faerie Queene: Educating the Reader*. Boston: Twayne, 1991; Harry Berger, Jr. "Narrative as Rhetoric in *The Faerie Queene*." *English Literary Renaissance* 21 (Winter 1991):3-48; A.C. Hamilton. "Closure in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*." In *Craft and Tradition: Essays in Honour of William Blissett*, Eds. H.B. de Groot and Alexander Leggatt. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990, pp. 13-32.



That I nigh ravish with rare thoughts delight,  
 My tedious travel doe forget thereby;  
 And when I gin to feele decay of might,  
 It strength to me supplies, and chears my dulled spright. (VI.Proem.1)

Spenser's reference to the "weary steps" and "tedious travel" may refer to the mission/efforts of the poet, but this image can also refer to the responsibilities/tasks of the reader. The "weary steps" and "tedious travel" Spenser depicts may refer to the deliberate, and often methodical, nature of contemplation—the intentionally slow steps of interpretation. The "sweet variety" of these delightful "rare thoughts" are the multifarious results of contemplation. And these possibilities for meaning open a variety of potentials, some of which are not always apparent. In this light, being "ravis[h]" with these "rare thoughts" juxtaposes the benefits and pleasures of intellectual action with that of the traditional, though limited, emotional kind.

This exercise of "tedious travel", or interpretation and contemplation, provides the reader with exegetical strength, rather than weakness or weariness, because the contemplative action of considering potentials develops the mind through practice to consider such potentials. Just as one's muscles become progressively stronger as he walks a path, so, too, do the skills of the exegete strengthen with exercise and practice as he travels the interpretative path. This idea of training one's exegetical skills to generate a multiplicity of potential meanings reappears as Spenser continues to use the proem to consider and distinguish what affects the minds of men. He considers how "...all wordly riches farre excel,/Into the minds of mortall men doe well,/And goodly fury into them infuse;" (VI.Proem.2). Here, Spenser describes how the minds of humans are plagued by their desires for earthly ends, rather than intellectual or spiritual ones. Such earthly

desires, like wealth, fame, or love, limit the possibilities of meaning to the physical and to the self. In essence, it keeps meaning confined to earthly emotions and senses, rather than opening it to potentials beyond appearances and corporality. In some ways, these earthly, sensory desires are what is “pleasant...to eare or eye” (VI.proem.1).

These limitations of interpretation for earthly ends are exemplified in the knight Calidore, who refuses to deviate from his reliance upon sensory perception and reaction as his primary method of interpretation. As the following analysis will illustrate, even after Calidore is exposed to Spenser’s ideal form of interpretation in the pasture through the teachings of Meliboe, Colin, and Coridon, he still fails to employ reason to do more than suppress emotion. These lessons encourage the use of reason to strike a balance between emotional reaction and intellectual action, thus prompting multifarious potentials for meaning—potentials derived from interpretation and contemplation. Instead, Calidore continually defers to his one-track method of analysis, which focuses on the *goals* of interpretation and action, rather than the *process* of exegesis.

Furthermore, Calidore’s default method of interpretation relies on sensory perception, that is, skills such as seeing, hearing, and smelling, which exclusively keeps him grounded in earthly appearances. With this skill-set alone, Calidore cannot move past these sensory appearances because he does not know how to—in fact, he almost refuses to—use his mind to employ contemplation to consider more than what he may see, or hear, or smell. Remaining in the earthly, the sensory, Calidore is destined to only generate either/or choices—is something true or false, real or fake, good or bad? These sorts of choices ultimately limit the potentials of contemplation, the potentials of meaning, and keep Calidore rooted in his earthly senses, rather than his mind. By

remaining satisfied with these either/or decisions, even after he is shown how interpretation can consider multiple possibilities generated by interpretation and contemplation, Calidore becomes a negative example of Spenser's hermeneutics.

In addition to directly reading Calidore's limited interpretative actions, the reader can also determine that Calidore is a weak interpreter because he/she can compare him to Arthur, who is present in a several episodes earlier in Book VI. In these episodes, Arthur illustrates how courtesy and contemplation can both be used to yield charitable action. Throughout this study, Arthur has been an example of the ideal knight—a knight whose physical accomplishments are often the results of equally sharp interpretative skills. As Arthur has shown throughout the *FQ*, interpretation must be used in knightly action, like combat, just as it is in reading, because it allows one to understand the situation and consider more than one possible outcome. Interpretation generates multiple potential meanings for one to choose from. This choice is central to the acquisition of knowledge in that it requires one to entertain all possibilities for meaning, not just a few. In conflicts, it allows the knight to do more than react to battle, that is, choice allows him to use his mind and his body to defeat a foe.

In one of these episodes, the one with Mirabella, Arthur illustrates the importance of choice in both generating interpretative options and in engaging in knightly action. Mirabella is a woman punished by Eros, who must endlessly repent for the “wrongfull smarts” she inflicted on countless suitors while being guarded, guided, and abused by Disdaine and Scorne. Arthur hears of her and her squire's fate when he meets a knight along the road and vows to free both (VI.viii.6). Arthur overcomes Disdaine and binds him, but as he is about to finish Scorne, Mirabella intervenes, “Stay stay, Sir Knight, for

love of God abstaine,” begging for his mercy (VI.viii.17). It is here that she tells him of her fate, the bottomless jar of her tears of contrition, and Scorn’s cruel mocking (VI.viii.22-24).

Once Arthur knows of this, “. . .being checkt, he did abstaine [from slaying Disdaine and Scorn] straight away” (VI.viii.29). Arthur changes his course of action from defeating Disdaine and Scorn to offering Mirabella the chance for freedom. He asks, “Now Lady sith your fortunes thus dispose,/That if ye list liberty, ye may,/Unto your selfe I freely leave to chose,/Whether I shall you leave, or from these villaines lose” (VI.viii.29). He asks her to choose her fate, and, in doing so, illustrates both his understanding of choice and repentance. If he were to just kill Disdaine and Scorn, he would have immediately saved her but possibly harmed her soul in the long run. Arthur allows Mirabella to choose her fate, and, in turn, his actions.

This episode illustrates how interpretation and contemplation can offer more than one possible action or outcome. Arthur listens to Mirabella’s story, interprets it, and uses the knowledge he gains from it to adjust his understanding of the situation. Before he arrives, he knows that she is in danger. But once he hears the whole story, he realizes that her greatest danger exists not in the immediate threats, but in her not repenting and fulfilling her punishment. Essentially, Arthur gives Mirabella the choice between earthly life or a heavenly one. Arthur’s actions are righteous, though not necessarily right in the eyes of courtesy. He allows Mirabella to save herself, but must leave her with Disdaine and Scorn. He chooses what is best for her, but does not eradicate the immediate threat. Choice, in this instance, opens the episode to many possible meanings, instead of exposing it only to the ones dictated by traditional courtesy.

But, this importance of choice and the need for interpretation are notions that Calidore does not entertain. Perhaps, Calidore never truly exercises the knowledge gained from his exegetical lessons because they are provided by shepherds, not knights. Perhaps Calidore's problem lies in his inability to apply what he has learned, not necessarily in his inability to understand it. Maybe if he had directly interacted with Arthur, as Redcrosse and Artegall have, he would be able to apply interpretation and contemplation to his knightly action. Yet, even after these example-driven lessons from Meliboe and Colin, Calidore ultimately misuses, and misunderstands, the idea of choice, in that his choice does not open meaning, but instead closes it. While Meliboe, for instance, prescribes multiple ways of reading, Calidore only knows how to commit himself to one. For example, he commits to the values of the pasture by totally leaving his courtly values. And as the book progresses, he leaves his pastoral values to return to his courtly ones. Calidore's ability to only engage in one way of reading, to commit to one meaning, keeps him from employing the lessons he receives throughout the latter part of Book VI.

This desire to embody something completely and exclusively represents Calidore's idea of knowledge. As a goal-oriented knight, trained to receive a mission, then fulfill it, Calidore perceives knowing as knowing what he is *told* to do, whether by sight, or sound, or assigned task. Being told the meaning, rather than *shown* how to seek a meaning, does not encourage him to practice interpretation and contemplation. And while Calidore is an effective knight in the immediate context because he can focus on the individual task at-hand, being told does not encourage him to generate more than one

possible meaning. This, in turn, does not encourage him to fully understand himself or his surroundings.

For example, the scene on Mt. Acidale is traditionally read to illustrate the shortcomings of desiring knowledge and understanding grace, instead of simply experiencing it. However, as this chapter will argue, when Calidore interrupts Colin on Mt. Acidale he barges in without caring what the consequences are, although he knows the Graces will flee. He is only concerned with action that will immediately benefit him, in this case, knowing what he sees. Yes, it is good that he questions Colin about the origin and nature of what he saw, that he *desires* to know, but his interruption illustrates a failure to interpret. In essence, he sees the display of the Graces, but never considers in-depth *for himself* what this sight could mean. Instead, he stares for awhile then interrupts and asks, “what does this mean?” He does not use reason, but rather relies on his actions to generate meaning. This desire keeps him—will always keep him—in the earthly realm.

Moreover, as illustrated in this example, part of Calidore’s inability to enact multiple possibilities of meaning also comes from his need for physical action—physical action derived from sensory perception rather than deeper interpretation. As discussed throughout this study, fruitful exegetical action should direct one to the action of contemplation, not necessarily physical action. Though this idea appears to deviate from the accepted humanist belief that knowledge should prompt *praxis* (practice) over *gnosis* (theory), Calidore’s desire to know only prompts physical *reaction* instead of the charitable action thinkers such as Sidney envisioned.<sup>339</sup> When Calidore is confronted

---

<sup>339</sup> Though these ideas about how knowledge impacts action relate to *gnosis* and *praxis*, they also echo Augustine’s ideas about things enjoyed (*frui*) and things used (*uti*) from *De Magistro*. For Augustine, *frui* is passive while *uti* is transitive, the former is what conduces *cupiditas*, while the latter, *caritas*. In either case, Augustine’s or Spenser’s, good actions must come from the ability to move past desire.

with a task or a learning moment, he only sees and reads what is physically in front of him—he reacts to his sensory perception, as in the scene on Mt. Acidale. Yes, such reaction often prompts action, but it is not derived from interpretation or contemplation, just a desire to address the immediate.

*Praxis*, however, results in well-doing, or, as John N. Wall suggests, in “...engaging in charitable action, and not in the form of verbal formulas or *gnosis*” (102).<sup>340</sup> Wall’s idea of *praxis* centers upon charitable actions, and the implication in Sidney, is that these actions are sparked by virtuous lessons or situations (83-84).<sup>341</sup> Yet, while Calidore does encounter these situations and lessons, his actions are not necessarily charitable. Instead, Calidore’s actions first serve him, then others. For example, Calidore interrupts Colin because he desires to know, or interrupts his task to catch the Blatant Beast because he desires Pastorell, or, later, he searches for Pastorell because he desires to redeem himself because he was not there to save her. These actions benefit Calidore because they are the result of his reaction to a situation or lesson, not his understanding of it. In essence, Calidore’s actions are limited because his desires for knowledge are limited.

Calidore struggles to employ interpretation to inform both his physical actions or prompt contemplative ones after such physical actions. Ultimately, interpretation can open several possibilities for action or meaning. As this chapter shall show, Calidore struggles because he does not desire to be taught how to interpret. Instead, Calidore is only interested in executing the first action *his* reaction sparks, rather than considering what others could be. He is not concerned with the various lessons presented to him. In

---

<sup>340</sup> John N. Wall. *Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, and Vaughn*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

*An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney poses the question, “For who will be taught, if he not moved with desire to be taught?” only to answer “And what so much good doth that teaching bring forth...as that it moveth one to do that which it doth teach” (82-83).<sup>342</sup> Calidore serves as an example of someone who is *not* interested in being taught, in employing the lessons he is confronted with, nor is he interested in contemplating the significance of his actions.

Calidore’s interpretative shortcomings stem from his inability, or his refusal, to exercise the principles of the interpretative lessons he receives from Meliboe, Colin, and even young Coridon. Through the lessons executed by these characters, Spenser illustrates both his ideal teaching method and exegetical schema. Spenser provides Calidore with opportunities to learn these methods, but, ultimately, he fails. The fault lies in Calidore, not the methods. At last, as this chapter shall show, Calidore’s inability to consider multiple possibilities of meaning initially does not affect his ability to find considerable success as a knight—he saves Pastorell, reunites her with her biological parents, and suppresses the Blatant Beast. Yet, Calidore’s problem lies in these very feats. He experiences successes, but they are short-term.

Such brief successes limit him as a knight, and as a reader, because he does not perceive these successes as parts to a whole. Instead, he views each feat as its own, contained achievement. This perception continually allows Calidore to perceive objects and situations in a limited, one-sided manner—as successful or unsuccessful, good or bad. Ultimately, these self-imposed and self-generated limits prevent him from understanding anything with much wholeness or clarity.

---

<sup>342</sup> Sir Philip Sidney. *An Apology for Poetry and Astrophil and Stella: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. Peter C. Herman. Glen Allen, VA: College Publishing. 2001.



But Calidore's inability to entertain more than one possible meaning, to use choice to enact meaning, rather than limit it, forces him to choose between his desire for fame and his desire for Gloriana's favor. Instead of using contemplation to consider how these options could both be achieved, Calidore chooses to pursue fame. This pursuit of fame leads to his defaming. Calidore's fate could have been avoided, had he employed the exegetical principles he received from Meliboe, Colin, and Coridon.

Calidore's introduction to these exegetical tenets begins when he enters the pasture in canto ix.<sup>343</sup> This canto opens with Spenser speaking to his swain, yet alluding

---

<sup>343</sup> A central topic of Book VI discussions is Spenser's return to the pastoral. Pertaining to Calidore and the significance of his recess in the pastoral, critics can be divided into two major camps: those who examine Book VI for its generic expectations, reading Book VI as a tale conflating pastoral and epic values, while others believe that the pastoral provides the necessary growth for Calidore to achieve his quest. As pertaining to the former, Alpers suggests that the reasons for Spenser's return to pastoral can be considered better by exclusively examining Book VI as a pastoral. From this perspective, Meliboe and Colin offer two alternative versions of life at court and can be considered pastoral authorities. But these alternatives can never completely withdrawal from courtly life, for pastoral is "of the country, but by and for the city" (806). Therefore, the pastoral authorities in the *FQ* have some link to courtly life, whereas the truly rustic characters, like Coridon, are never taken seriously by Calidore or the poet. See "Spenser's Late Pastorals." *English Literary History* 56 (Winter 1989):797-816; As a whole, Alpers argues that this pastoral episode "reveals not only the nature and resources of pastoral representation, but a limitation of some of its forms" (190). *What is Pastoral?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; Andrew V. Ettin generally claims that pastoral attitudes and images have invaded all forms of literature in order to argue that pastoral as a form is not dead. *Literature and the Pastoral*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. With regards to the latter critical camp, M.M. Beard claims that Calidore's time in the pasture is not a diversion, but instead helps him in his later quest for the Blatant Beast. In Book VI of the *FQ*, "Spenser has revealed that there is no essential dichotomy between contemplation and action...action requires knowledge, and knowledge is essentially sterile unless it leads to action" (91). Beard refers to Calidore's physical action while this study posits that contemplation is the action that should come from knowledge. See M.M. Beard "Pastoralism as a Statement of Value: *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI." *English Studies in Africa* 27, no. 2 (1984):77-92; Donald M. Rosenberg examines each book of the *FQ*, arguing that Spenser's idea of virtue, heroic virtue, "is in large measure explored and defined through his use of the pastoral. The pastoral allows him to examine the consciousness and inward experience of each hero and, thereby, interpret the meaning of his quest" (93). With regards to Calidore, Rosenberg asserts that this scene is tricky for the reader, as he must decide if Calidore's recess is an error or a lesson (or perhaps both). Seeing no irony in Meliboe's words, Rosenberg concludes that this episode is necessary to Calidore's development and that his experience "with Meliboe and Colin Clout was not in the last analysis a dereliction of duty, for Arcadia provided him, as it provided Aeneas, with a personal involvement in the pastoral and a greater understanding of a paradise within, so that the meaning and value of his quest are illuminated" (127). See Donald M. Rosenberg. *Oaten Reeds and Trumpets: Pastoral and Epic in Virgil, Spenser, and Milton*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981; Haruhiko Fujii sees Calidore's sojourn as a necessary part of the knight's tale that teaches him the necessary "meaning of virtue" he should embody (176). Haruhiko Fujii. *Time, Landscape and the Ideal Life: Studies in the Pastoral Poetry of Spenser and Milton*. Kyoto: Apollon-sha, 1974.

to his reader (as he does in the last stanza of Book VI). Here, Spenser, as the narrator, addresses the fact that he has returned to the pasture. He says, “Now turne againe *my* teme thou jolly Swayne,/Backe to the furrow which *I* lately left;” (VI.ix.1, my italics). Perhaps, as the emphasized parts of this passage suggest, the narrator is Spenser referring to the poetry and poetic intent he enacts in the latter cantos of Book VI. But while plowing is not a traditional pastoral conceit, the furrow he refers to is the tilled ground of the pasture which he “lately left” possibly referencing his latest return to the pastoral genre in *CCCHA*, between Books III and IV.<sup>344</sup>

Extending this reading, the narrator continues, “I lately left a furrow, one or twayne/Unplough’d, the which my coulter hath not cleft:/Yet, seem’d the soyle both fayre and fruteful eft,/As I it past, that were too great a shame,/That so rich frute should be from us bereft;” (VI.ix.1). In the latter part of this stanza, the narrator refers to the rich soil which produces such fruit that would be “a shame” to keep from the reader. In poetic terms, Spenser sees the value that can occur in the space of pastoral (or the pasture) and cannot pass up the opportunity to plow the fields once again.<sup>345</sup> Again, while this motion of plowing seems to contrast traditional pastoral *otium*, perhaps Spenser’s reference to it suggests the work of the poet. It implies that the poet must work to create so the swain can relax and enjoy. Moreover, he takes on the responsibility of plowing the field for the benefit of the reader, who would benefit from the “rich frute” of the pasture.

---

<sup>344</sup> Though the plowing immediately evokes Georgic images, images that can possibly allude to Spenser’s more directly political content of this Book. Yet, I think this image can be extended to allude to the pastoral genre, the poetic ideas Spenser has erected in his pastoral works, and, ultimately, arguments of Spenser’s poetic career.

<sup>345</sup> This passage is read by Hamilton to wittily play with the Georgic *topos* of conclusion and turn it into an energetic beginning. In his analysis, he claims that the ploughboy guides the muses, while the poet guides the plough.

The pastoral imagery concluded with the reference to Calidore's position marks the initial place where pastoral and epic meet. This meeting is particularly important for this chapter in that it illustrates Spenser's comfort with the pastoral as a form. As this study has often argued, Spenser views the pasture as a place where the intellectual issues often discussed in the epic can be introduced with the same interpretative potentials they would meet in the epic. As Spenser suggests in the first part of the stanza, it would be a shame for him and the reader to pass up a place that yields such rich poetic fruit.<sup>346</sup>

Spenser's proclivity for the pastoral, as a form in which he poetically feels most comfortable, appears to be further strengthened when Calidore meets the old shepherd, Meliboe. Here, Meliboe is a figure who was raised in the pasture, left it to live at court, and then returned to the pastures with a newfound respect for the simplicity of pastoral life.<sup>347</sup> As we shall see in the episode where Calidore first meets Pastorell's surrogate father, Meliboe represents all that is pure and virtuous in the pastoral life—he lacks earthly desires, appreciates his flock, and lives a peaceful life.<sup>348</sup>

This link to the ideal shepherd can initially be seen when Calidore, who “did excel/In courtisie” began “...to commend the happie life,/Which Shepherds lead, without debate or bitter strife” (VI.ix.18).<sup>349</sup> In this flattering gesture, Calidore says,

---

<sup>346</sup> Spenser also creates a farming image, depicting the poet as the farmer, who plants the seeds, while the ploughing and sowing refers to the interpretative process, and letting the seed grow refers to the act of contemplation. With such imagery, Spenser suggests that the job of the reader, the interpretation and contemplation, is equally as important as the poet's.

<sup>347</sup> Harry Rushe argues that Calidore's lesson from Meliboe is not that one can or should withdraw from the outside world. Like Colin on Mt. Acidale, the reader must learn that one can never fully inhabit the green space of art. Harry Rusche. “The Lesson of Calidore's Truancy.” *Studies in Philology* 76 (1979):149-161.

<sup>348</sup> Headlam Wells suggests that Calidore must undergo a process of self-awareness and self-control. His exchange with Meliboe suggests that the elevated perception of pastoral life is a false one and the subsequent cantos are tests for Calidore. Robin Headlam Wells. “Spenser and the Courtesy Tradition: Form and Meaning in the Sixth Book of *The Faerie Queene*.” *English Studies* 58 (1977):221-229.

<sup>349</sup> Scott Brennan examines the relationship between language and action. He asserts that Calidore uses language to create a “façade” shielding Meliboe from his real intentions of courting Pastorell. By the close of the Book, “speech and action have become so disassociated that the former can no longer be taken as an

“How much (sayd he) more happie is the state,/In which ye father here doe dwell at ease,/Leading a life so free and fortunate,/From all the tempest of these wordly seas,/Which tosse the rest in dangerous disease?” (VI.ix.19). Calidore’s words erect a contrast between the simplicity of the pasture and the corruption of the outside world, which in this case is courtly life, which Calidore emblemizes as the Knight of Courtesy.<sup>350</sup>

But the manner in which Calidore “...draw[s] thence his speech another way,” illustrates his rhetorical training; training that would urge him to praise Meliboe’s lifestyle (VI.ix.18). Yet, Calidore’s code-shifting from thanks to praise suggests more flattery than earnestness. Calidore is first and foremost trying to woo Pastorell, a process that begins with wooing her father.

Furthermore, Calidore’s flattery suggests both a distance from and, eventually, a longing for such a simple pastoral life—perhaps a life without such tasks or burdens as his. However, this want does not occur until *after* Meliboe educates him of the logic of the pasture in the subsequent stanzas. Early in this exchange between Meliboe and Calidore, Calidore praises what he *sees* in the pasture, he “...highly to commend the happie life,/Which Shepherds lead, without debate or bitter strife” (VI.ix.18). Though Calidore can see the tranquility of the pasture, Meliboe explains why this peace occurs. That is, Meliboe teaches Calidore the mentality and values of the pasture. Yet, in the

---

indication of the latter, which spells the doom of Courtesy” (8). See Scott Brennan. “Notes on the Role of Speech in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI: *Courtesie*.” *Georgetown Journal of Languages and Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (1990):1-12.

<sup>350</sup> Arguably, in this passage, Calidore also reveals his preoccupation with catching the Blatant Beast, a figure who propels this courtly wickedness. Calidore, as the knight of Courtesy, should oppose the Blatant Beast’s offenses more than other knights. Calidore’s awareness of this courtly state indicates he has not lost all awareness of his task for the Faerie Queene.

above passage, Calidore's words are empty because they merely reiterate the initial impression one would have of the pasture—quiet, simple, and carefree.

A familiar teaching episode arises as he and Meliboe continue their exchange. Much as Colin teaches his shepherd peers how to interpret their surroundings in *CCCHA*, so, too, does Meliboe teach Calidore to understand the pasture. Meliboe teaches Calidore that the pasture can sustain the individual physically and spiritually. He teaches Calidore what simplicity can yield. Ultimately, Meliboe supplements Calidore's initial sensory understanding of the pasture with a fuller awareness of pastoral ideals and goals. By the end of Meliboe's tale Calidore sits with a "greedy eare/Hong still upon his melting mouth attent" echoing the actions of Colin's shepherd peers in *CCCHA* who listen to Colin's song with "greedie listfull eares" (VI.ix.26-27).

Besides remaining in the pasture, Calidore attempts to employ his newfound understanding. Where he initially appears to rely upon the empty language of flattery in this early passage, as the exchange progresses, he begins to question and comment out of a genuine desire to know and relate. At one point he directly relates his life to that of the shepherds as he comments, "Now surely syre, I find,/That all this *worlds gay showes*, which we admire,/Be but vaine shadowes to this safe retyre/Of life..." (VI.ix.27, my italics). In this reply, Calidore appears to begin to understand the complexity of the simplicity that Meliboe speaks of. Where he initially praised the pasture, here, Calidore uses his knowledge of the pasture to evaluate the courtly world he comes from. He appears to shift his scope and applies the pastoral principles onto a courtly existence, possibly in an attempt to question the worth of outward appearances.

Also, in this passage, Calidore uses Meliboe's language. When beginning his story of leaving the pasture, Meliboe describes "that list, the *worlds gay shows*, I leave" (VI.ix.22, my italics). While using Meliboe's language to respond may be viewed as a rhetorical move, linking Calidore's response to courtesy, I believe the nature of what he repeats seems too important for mere flattery. To discuss the outward shows of the earthly world implies an ability to move past physical objects as well as beyond the physical appearances of such objects. To move beyond surface appearances opens the possibilities for meaning and the places where one can begin the interpretative journey. Ultimately, to see beyond the "worlds gay shows" is an interpretative choice to move away from the earthly traps of error and into the spiritual freedom and multivalence associated with contemplation. But this is a choice Calidore does not intellectually travel far enough into—he mimics instead of executes.

This idea of choice pervades most of Meliboe's story. In his initial response to Calidore, we learn that this pastoral lifestyle is a choice for simplicity rather than a birthright. He says, "Surely my sonne (then answer'd he againe)/If happie, then it is in this intent,/That having small, yet doe I not complaine of want, ne wish for more to augment,/But doe my selfe, with that I have, content;" (VI.ix.20). Here, Meliboe suggests that his simple life is one of choice, of "intent". Meliboe chooses *not* to desire more than he has. In essence, Meliboe chooses to want and see simplicity around him. Instead of viewing simplicity as deficit, Meliboe perceives the richness of simplicity—a richness that opens his vision to include many possible meanings behind the earthly, "gay shows". Moreover, Meliboe's ability to make this choice comes from his time away from the pasture, that is, his time gardening, or toiling, at court.

His choice to find simplicity in his life in the pasture marks a method of perception or reading encompassed in many choices—he interpretatively chooses to view his surroundings unadorned.<sup>351</sup> These many choices parallel the effects of making one choice and dealing with the effects of such a choice. Hermeneutically, Meliboe’s perception delineates a process of choices that propel him away from earthly distractions and towards understanding. These choices distance him from material wants and keep him in a state of simplicity, not necessarily stupidity. In fact, as suggested above, this method of interpreting his surroundings appears to bring him closer to true knowledge and virtue.

Meliboe’s perspective is further outlined as he claims he wants nothing more than what the pasture provides for him. He desires little more than what is “taught of nature, which do litle need/Of forreine helps to lifes due nourishment:/The fields my food, my flocke my rayement breed;/No better doe I weare, no better doe I feed” (VI.ix.20). On one level, this passage refers to Meliboe living off the land, but the essence of the passage echoes the sensibility of Contemplation in Book I, whose “...every sinew seene through long fast:/For nought he car’d his carcass long unfed;/Hi smind was full of spirituall repast,/And pyn’d his flesh, to keepe his body low and chast” (I.x.48). Contemplation staves off the physicality of the outside world in the form of fasting, and so, too, does Meliboe in a sort of possession-fasting. That is, he denies the frivolity of any possession that would hinder his spiritual connection to nature. In both instances, each man values

---

<sup>351</sup> Also, these choices can occur because Meliboe has gained wisdom as he has aged. Perhaps aligned with the type of wisdom Thenot employs when discussing age and youth with Cuddie in the *Februarie* eclogue of the *SC*.

simplicity as a path connecting one to a world beyond the earthly plane, as well as a force which allows the individual to understand these unseen meanings.<sup>352</sup>

Beyond being linked to Contemplation with a lack of earthly need, Meliboe insists that all he needs to survive, *he* possesses. He does not want, for he can “doe *my selfe*, with that I have...” (VI.ix.20, my italics). Though this can refer to his ability to know and live off the land, perhaps, hermeneutically, these possessions are intellectual, not physical. They are the interpretative tools that allow Meliboe to perceive the unseen benefits and worth the pasture provides. Contemplation delivers a similar sentiment as he poses the question, “Who better can the way to heaven aread,/Then thou *thy selfe*, that was both borne and bred/In heavenly throne, where thousand Angels shine?” (I.x.51, my italics). Both cases emphasize that the tools for understanding are self-contained and left to choice—that is, choosing to utilize them. Specifically, these tools are held in the mind, both in its ability to consciously ward off earthly temptation and in its ability to move one away from these earthly traps.

Later in the exchange with Calidore, Meliboe further encourages that this faith in the mind can contribute to pleasure and satisfaction, directly stating that “It is the mynd that maketh good or ill” (VI.ix.30). Here, Meliboe exhibits the power the mind has over one’s situation. He overtly implies that one’s *perceptions* of his surroundings ultimately dictate their significance. For example, a rich man never believes he has enough wealth while the poor man is grateful for all that he has. But, from a hermeneutic perspective,

---

<sup>352</sup> James Nohrnberg draws many connections between Book I and Book VI, including between Contemplation and Meliboe and the self. For further discussion of these connections see *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, 659-666.



Meliboe suggests that the mind possesses the power to overcome false, earthly perceptions—the perceptions that keep the rich man from fulfillment.<sup>353</sup>

For Meliboe, interpretation and perception interrelate, with the former referring to the intellectual cause of the latter's spiritual affect, that is, awareness. By interpreting one's surroundings, one enters a state of awareness—an awareness that unmask earthy artifacts and unlocks emotional prisons. We see an example of this prison in Redcrosse when he feels shame. It is not until Redcrosse learns how to shed this feeling of shame that separates him from both his destiny and his ability to move towards an understanding beyond the physical. Interestingly, though, we see a similar event happening in a simple shepherd, not a knight.

As Meliboe details his youthful choice to leave the pasture and go to court, he describes how he "...did sell my selfe for yearely hire,/And in the Princes gardin daily wrought:/There I beheld such vainnesse, as I never thought./With sight whereof soone cloyd, and long deluded,/With idle hopes, which them doe entertaine," (VI.ix.24-25).<sup>354</sup> In this passage, Meliboe vaguely describes the events that informed his rediscovered love and perception of the pasture.<sup>355</sup> As suggested above, Meliboe's experience at court

---

<sup>353</sup> Meliboe's phrase seems incomplete, as though it should include a "rather" at the end, like "It is the mynd that maketh good or ill, [rather than...]" . Maybe the mind determines good or ill, rather than emotion? Earthly pleasure? What? Perhaps this lack of comparison marks this as a place where Calidore could begin to exercise his interpretative faculties and consider what the mind may compare to.

<sup>354</sup> It is interesting that Meliboe's experience at court was that of a worker rather than a courtier. As he states, he was a gardener. One cannot help but wonder if this vanity was in the manicured gardens or the people.

<sup>355</sup> Meliboe's story is often linked to Virgil's eclogues. Julia Lupton claims that in Meliboe's tale, Spenser rewrites Virgil's narrative of exile into one of return ("Home-Making in Ireland: Virgil's Eclogue I and Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*." *Spenser Studies* 8 (1990):119-145). Anderson agrees with critics like Alpers who claim Virgil's eclogues influenced Spenser's Meliboe, but she complicates this influence by considering how Chaucer's Melibee and Prudence tie into these connections. Though Alpers argues Melibee and Colin have a literary authority, Anderson perceives that the moral aspect of this Chaucerian influence limits Meliboe's authority. Spenser does not idealize Calidore's pastoral retreat. He instead uses this space to show necessary ways to attain virtue. She concludes that "the pastoral cantos of Book VI both reaffirm the recreative powers of pastoral and renounce pastoral innocence" (38). From "Prudence and Her

informs his perception and appreciation of the pasture. While at court, Meliboe toiled in the gardens. One cannot help but wonder if this toil made him appreciate the simplicity of the pasture—the unattended sustenance of the fields and the unsolicited friendship between shepherds. Perhaps the “vainenesse[s]” he encountered were the manicured gardens which reflected the superficial values of many at court. And it is such vanity, in either case, that drove him back to the pasture—that encouraged him to consciously *choose* simplicity over vanity. For Meliboe, it seems that the simplicity of the pasture can provide more riches, more “fruit”, than the earthly shows of courtly life.

What distinguishes Meliboe’s story from, say, Redcrosse’s is that he did not experience these vain traps first-hand. Rather, he observed these instances and was able to interpret their significance. This ability to interpret the significance of these instances of earthly abuse illustrates a connection to his surroundings that is deeper than to that of his own actions. By observing these abuses, contemplating their significance, then employing the knowledge gained from contemplation, Meliboe was able to “...have learn’d to love more deare/This lowly quiet life, which I inherit here” (VI.ix.25).<sup>356</sup>

In many ways, this process of moving from an interpretative state to one of altered perception marks an ideal blending of intellectual practice for spiritual ends in that it takes the interpreter away from earthly traps and opens the multiple possibilities for meaning, by rooting one in simplicity. Meliboe describes his younger self as too married to one life at a time. In part, he initially misread the pastoral by framing it as the

---

Silence: Spenser's Use of Chaucer's Melibee” *English Literary History* 62 (1995):29-46). For more discussions concerning Meliboe and Virgil see Paul Alpers. *What is Pastoral?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>356</sup> Meliboe’s style of narrative echoes that of Augustine’s in the *Confessions*. Like Augustine, he perceives then uses the events of his past as examples of righted misinterpretation. He uses his past to inform his present and his future.

antithesis of the court. He only perceived the pasture in relation to the court, rather than as its own, self-standing entity. We have seen this sort of interpretative error in Archimago's perception of virtue as existing solely in relation to vice (I.ii.9-10). Meliboe, like Archimago, limited his understanding to an either/or choice—courtly or pastoral, virtue or vice. Once Meliboe was able to consider the pasture in the context of the pasture, rather than the court, he began to generate and apply more than one meaning onto the significance of the pasture and pastoral life.

Moreover, Meliboe's praise for simplicity erects a foundational idea to Spenser's interpretative schema suggesting that what glitters is worthless and tranquility is priceless. Once this idea is accepted, as Meliboe has done, one can deal with many different possibilities in different surroundings. This drive for simplicity is built upon an interpretative ideal that disrobes earthly shows to reveal their true nature. Uncloaking the earthly brings one out of the traps of sensory perception and allows the interpreter to begin considering the significance of these shows, rather than perceiving the shows as truth. Furthermore, this idea of simplicity transcends location. It does not matter if one is in the pasture or the woods or at court, for he/she can interpret beyond appearances. As we shall see with Calidore, this ability to move beyond earthly confines and appearances is a shortcoming that plagues him in every location, not just the pasture.

Returning to his suggestion that the mind, rather than emotions like desire or envy, should guide us in our interpretative decisions, Meliboe continues to erect this image as he says, "[it is the mind] that maketh wretch or happie, rich or poore:/...For wisdom is most riches; fooles therefore/They are, which fortunes doe by vowes devize,/Sith each unto himself his life may fortunize" (VI.ix.30). Hamilton notes that

these last lines read as those who “scheme to make their fortune by their own will” are fools (VI.ix.30, 8n). Hamilton’s interpretation suggests that one is foolish if he/she makes a vow, say, to be rich and goes after it, for this individual can “fortunize” with his/her mind.

Yet, this study argues that faith and charity, in addition to the interpretative powers of the mind, are needed to reap the profits of interpretation. Meliboe’s earlier suggestion that “each has his fortune in his brest” appears to imply that the heart, in addition to the mind, aids one in “fortuniz[ing]”. This reference to the “fortune in [the] brest” suggests a necessary balance between the pure heart and mind. Such a balance between heart and mind in contemplation echoes Augustine’s exegetical model and, perhaps, further purports Spenser’s belief that the simplicity of the pasture is a place where one can begin and enact the exegetical journey. In this journey, richness equates to a richness of thought, that is, the multiple righteous ideas that continually stimulate the mind.

During Meliboe’s discussion, Calidore must immediately employ these teachings as Meliboe’s “...sensemfull words empiriest his hart so neare,/That he was rapt with double ravishment,/Both of his speach that wrought him with great content,/And also of the object of his view [Pastorell]” (VI.ix.26). Here, Calidore intellectually desires to hear more of Meliboe’s teachings, but physically desires Pastorell, and, in turn, places his earthly desires for Pastorell before his quest for knowledge. In this scene, Calidore must suppress his earthly lust in order to contemplate Meliboe’s words. He must *choose* “to worke his mind,/And to insinuate his harts desire” in order to derive meaning from Meliboe’s words.

Ultimately, Calidore chooses the simplicity of the pasture. Calling upon the earlier discussion of teaching, this moment when Calidore seems to understand, or at least accept, Meliboe's teachings, he says, "Since then each mans self (said *Calidore*)/It is to fashion his owne lyfes estate,/Give leave awhile, good father, in this shore/To rest my baracke, which hath bene beaten late" (VI.ix.31). Here, Calidore reiterates Meliboe's idea that choice—an individual's choices—can inform both his perceptions and fashion the self. This self-fashioning marks the ultimate teaching moment for Meliboe in that his student, his audience, appears to make the correct choice and opts for the simplicity of the pastures.<sup>357</sup>

But this choice, though it is a sound choice, is not arrived at soundly.<sup>358</sup> It is too exclusive of other options and, ultimately, too bound up in the immediate (Calidore's desire of Pastorell). Yes, Calidore chooses to remain in the pasture, but he does so without truly contemplating Meliboe's words or lesson. He simply reiterates what he has heard and quickly chooses in favor of his earthly desire for Pastorell, rather than an

---

<sup>357</sup> This idea of self-fashioning would be one Calidore is somewhat familiar with due to his time at court. For further readings about Renaissance self-fashioning, see Stephen Greenblatt. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; Linda Gregerson. *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic*. *Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Kent A. Heatt. "The Alleged Early Modern Origin of the Self and History: Terminate or Regroup?" *Spenser Studies* 10 (1992): 1-36; Louis Adrian Montrose. "The Elizabethan Subject and The Spenserian Text." *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*. Eds. Patricia Parker and David Quint. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, 303-340; Michael Schoenfeldt. *Bodies and Selves in Renaissance England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton*. *Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. For discussions concerning Spenser as a self-fashioned poet see Richard Helgerson. *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

<sup>358</sup> Shore claims that "Both Calidore and Spenser are attracted by an ideal of pastoral harmony which can only be sought through a turning away from the heroic world to which each is in his own way committed" (137). From this, Calidore's vacation from the world of heroic, epic action allows him to experience the vision at Mt. Acidale. This vision represents the break between poetry and action—Calidore cannot experience the vision with Colin and Colin cannot help him track the Blatant Beast. Shore claims that eventually Spenser leaves the epic to write the *Vewe of the Present State of Ireland*, a move from the ideal world to the temporal one of politics and public policy (159). David R. Shore. *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral: A Study of the World of Colin Clout*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985.

intellectual desire to truly understand and attain the simplicity Meliboe describes.

Ultimately, it is not Calidore's choice of love that limits him, but his choice of earthly emotion over intellectual gain that keeps him only existing in the pasture, rather than truly understanding it.

Momentarily ignoring the earthly motivations for Calidore's choice, this moment of self-fashioning is not only a first for Calidore, but marks divergence from his initial ideas concerning one's fate. During Meliboe's tale, Calidore comments, "Now loath great Lordship and ambition;/And wish th'heavens so much had graced mee,/As graunt me live in like condition;" (VI.ix.28). In this passage, Calidore alludes to the predetermined path that dictates his life—a path written by fate.<sup>359</sup> This mentality of fate stands in sharp contrast to the one of choice underlying Meliboe's story. Yet, by the end of the old shepherd's words, Calidore chooses to live what he perceives as a self-fashioned life, rather than one dictated by fate or obligation.

In fact, it is not until canto x that we learn that the Faerie Queene has assigned Calidore his task to defeat the Blatant Beast (VI.x.1). Up until this point, it is assumed that Calidore chases him primarily out of knightly desire not this desire in addition to courtly obligation. This deference to the Faerie Queene's desires, rather than just his own, makes his opting for a self-fashioned life based on his choices even more significant because he denies both his perceived fate and his obligation.<sup>360</sup>

---

<sup>359</sup> This idea of fate contrasts Redcrosse's experience with fate, in that for Redcrosse fate relies on enacting choice. His choices allow him to attain his fate, but for Calidore his *actions* allows him to attain his fate. Calidore never truly understands the connection between interpretative choice and action—a lesson Redcrosse receives from Arthur's example.

<sup>360</sup> Stephen Greenblatt posits that Book VI of the *FQ* speaks to the shortcomings of the self-fashioned man. He claims that physical events are reflections of the psychological phenomena being examined. As an example, Greenblatt cites Calidore's overly-courteous behavior towards Coridon, that is, he is overly kind to him as he steals Pastorell from him. Almost immediately after the events with the tiger (Calidore's most immediate act of false courtesy) the Brigants break into the pasture and physically torment and capture the

What is interesting in Calidore's choice to shun his knightly fate is that his knightly skills are what make him stand out in the pasture. He attempts to use "all king courtesies" to woo Pastorell, but she prefers the songs of Colin Clout (VI.ix.34).<sup>361</sup> Later, it is his strength and ability to defeat Coridon in a wrestling match that temporarily wins him Pastorell's attention (VI.ix.43). And, while he treats the other shepherds with courtesy, he, almost smotheringly, attends to Coridon, implying that Calidore competes with Coridon for Pastorell's affection. Though he cannot challenge Coridon to a more chivalric competition, like a duel, he can reveal the shepherd's faults by out-courtesying him. That is, he can show Pastorell his courteous nature and simultaneously prey upon Coridon's simple nature.<sup>362</sup> Eventually, Calidore wins Pastorell's favor when he protects her from a tiger, while Coridon runs in fear (VI.x.35). In each of these instances, it is his knightly instinct, not his shepherdly one, that distinguishes him from others in Pastorell's eyes.

Ironically, the simplicity of his pastoral service made for the best sort of courtesy. For "So well he woo'd her, and so well he wrought her,/With *humble service*, and with *daily sute*,/That at last unto his will he brought her;" (VI.x.38, my italics). By being forced to drop the *shows* of courtesy in his choice to live in the pastures he was able to

---

shepherds. For Greenblatt, this moment links the "covert malice" Calidore has treated Coridon with to brigandry. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 167-188.

<sup>361</sup> For Michael Schoenfeldt, Book VI represents Spenser's use of the "language of courtesy to mystify but not to erase the violence that sustains social hierarchy," (156). He claims that Calidore's actions in the pasture do not differ from his courtly ones. Specifically, the way he gains authority over Pastorell illustrates the "aggressive undercurrents of courtly submission" (161). Michael Schoenfeldt. "The Poetry of Conduct: Accommodation and Transgression in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI." In *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, edited by Richard Burt and John Michael Archer. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, 151-169. Also examining the manner in which Calidore enacts courtesy to woo Pastorell, John Rooks concludes that Spenser "draw[s] a version of the pastoral romance as it is, rather than as it pretends to be" (175). John Rooks. *Love's Courtly Ethic in "The Faerie Queene": From Garden to Wilderness*. University of Kansas Humanistic Studies, 58. New York: Peter Lang, 1992.

<sup>362</sup> See Greenblatt. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

return to the *service* of courtesy, and win her affections. Though he never ceased his desire for Pastorell, he seems to adapt to the daily life of the pasture, and yet apply courtesy to it.

Essentially, Calidore blended Meliboe's ideals of pastoral life—the simplicity and the humility—with the courage and action of an epic ideal. In effect, his self-fashioning allows him to become the ideal Knight of Courtesy, because all of his choices revolve around courteous actions, rather than contemplative ones. Calidore believes he acts upon the lessons Meliboe taught him, but his desire is still the earthly favor of Pastorell, not the hermeneutic ends of interpretation and contemplation. So, while he believes his choices reflect self-fashioning, his earthly ends still reflect the courtly ideals of favor and service.<sup>363</sup> It would seem that he perceives his actions as self-fashioned because he has assigned himself his task of winning Pastorell, rather than being assigned one by Gloriana or his courtly obligation. But these are just perceptions, misperceptions, on Calidore's part.

This idea of self-fashioning seems to echo Spenser's intentions in the Letter to Raleigh in which he sets forth "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline" (*LTR* 8). Could this moment in the pasture, guided by a simple shepherd, be the enactment of this sentiment? If we accept that the basic principle behind Meliboe's self-fashioning—a principle which roots itself in moving beyond the confines of earthly appearances and emotions in order to consider the importance of simplicity and a more spiritual desire for knowledge—then we must entertain the idea that Spenser's

---

<sup>363</sup> Stanley Stewart disputes the claim that closure in the *FQ* is found in the "circular imagery" in Book VI. Instead, he views Book VI as disjunctive. Specifically looking at Calidore's want of Pastorell, Stewart argues that, "the disjunction between his courteous manners and self-seeking aims fits the occasional, disjunctive features of Book VI" (79). "Sir Calidore and 'Closure'." *Studies in English Literature* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1984):69-86.



conception of an ideal gentleman would embody someone who could enact similar principles. That is, a knight who can blend the earthly skills and desires of courtly obligation with the intellectual skills that generate interpretative gain—a knight such as Arthur.

To entertain how the ideal knightly notions Arthur exemplifies affect Calidore, it is important to consider the limitations Calidore's execution of courtesy places upon interpretation. Calidore is the Knight of Courtesie, yet, his actions, though seemingly self-fashioned, are always rooted in earthly ends and reactions, rather than in the contemplative action that can move him beyond earthly appearances and aims. He resists the notion of choice—choice of interpretative possibilities in both battle and contemplation—a notion that Arthur repeatedly proves to be a necessary part of his knightly skill and success. Instead, Calidore is content to react to his sensory perceptions rather than consider possible actions or options for meaning that exist in the unseen.

This need for interpretation and choice in a knight return us again to Meliboe and his pastoral principles. Meliboe's principles are what the letter says we should strive for.<sup>364</sup> But these principles are never fully enacted by Calidore. Though Meliboe offers Calidore the necessary guidance to begin to truly self-fashion himself away from the confines of earthly appearance, Calidore never entirely grasps them all. Instead, he ends up enacting courtly principles in a pastoral setting, which initially may seem like an understanding of Meliboe's ideas, but, in actuality, are quite distant from them.

---

<sup>364</sup> Zailig Pollack considers the larger aims of the *FQ* as the animation and enactment of virtue viewing Calidore's pursuit of the Blatant Beast and his entrance into the pastoral from the heroic/epic as an instance where the hero, poet, and reader are asked to consider virtue in the context of outward actions and appearances, both textual and real. These considerations shall put the reader on the path towards virtue. Zailig Pollock. *The Sacred Nursery of Virtue: The Pastoral Book of Courtesy and the Unity of "The Faerie Queene."* Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1977.

Just as Meliboe's youthful error came from only perceiving the pasture in relation to court, so, too, does Calidore's inability to enact Meliboe's principles derive from the same error. While the pastoral setting is a necessary place for Calidore to receive these lessons because the immersion in the location offers him the best potential to experience and perform them, he can never separate his courtly ideals from the pastoral ones offered by Meliboe. Just as he can only choose between court and pasture because he only conceives of the two in relation, or opposition, to each other, Calidore can only exist in the pasture by adapting his courtly actions to what he *perceives* as pastoral ones. He can only conceive of one way to act—courteously. And because of this singular conception of ideals and action, Calidore never truly accepts and enacts Meliboe's lessons because he cannot, does not, view them as principles that can stand alone, not in comparison to courtesy.

But, this link to the pastoral setting and the ideals Meliboe comes to discover may suggest another favorable connection for Spenser to pastoral. By remaining in the pasture, Spenser forces the reader to consider epic issues and action within a pastoral setting.<sup>365</sup> Where the woods were once the primary place of epic setting, now the pastures and all the simplicity and purity associated with them are the setting for the latter episodes of Book VI. Though ultimately misperceived, Calidore's acceptance of pastoral principles in this exchange with Meliboe suggests that this patchwork of pastoral and epic genres is meant to enlarge the scope of pastoral, not necessarily that of the epic. Such an

---

<sup>365</sup> Andrew D. Weiner considers the Elizabethan meaning of pastoral in Sidney's account that pastoral can illuminate the worthlessness of earthly glory. Weiner suggests that Calidore's vision of the dancing women on Mount Acidale neither depends upon his prior or later actions since it is granted him by the graces. Instead, the vision urges the reader to expand the pastoral ideals Meliboe sets forth. See "Spenser and the Myth of Pastoral." In Clark Hulse, Andrew D. Weiner, and Richard Strier. "Spenser: Myth, Politics, Poetry." *Studies in Philology* 85 (Summer 1988):390-406.

enlargement would strengthen the idea that Spenser considered pastoral as a place containing equal potentials to begin an interpretative journey. Essentially, all of Meliboe's references to the mind and the potentials of the mind can now be applied to the pastoral as a genre, as well as a place.

In fact, at the beginning of canto x, the narrator observes, and slightly judges, Calidore's decision to leave the epic action and reside in the pasture, "Ne certes mote to greatly blamed be,/From so high step to stoupe unto so low," only to conclude "For had tasted once (as he oft did he)/The happy peace, which there doth overflow?" (VI.x.3). Initially, the narrator faults Calidore for "stoupe[ing]" to such a low position, but in the very next line concedes the peaceful lure of the pasture. In terms of Spenser and his poetic desires, this concession opens the door for Spenser to expand the traditional scope of pastoral as a place to encourage the interpretative potentials often associated with the epic. Furthermore, this concession allows Spenser to work within a form, that his past literary actions suggests, he feels comfortable in and likes to use to discuss his own poetic purposes.<sup>366</sup>

Moreover, within this extended scope of pastoral, can we consider Meliboe a representative of both the ideals of the pasture and the ideal pastoral? Arguably, this pastoral setting begins and ends with Meliboe. It begins in Meliboe's exchange with Calidore in which he sets forth a model for Calidore to follow. And this ideal pastoral world ends with Meliboe's death at the hands of the Brigants. Upon Meliboe's death, Calidore returns to his fated, knightly obligations to save the maiden, avenge the old shepherd's death, and seek fame by combating the Blatant Beast. But until this moment,

---

<sup>366</sup> Gary M. Bouchard contends that by the time Spenser writes Book VI he has mastered the pastoral form and returns because he can. See *Colin's Campus: Cambridge Life and the English Eclogue*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2000.

Calidore's primary desires are to win the love of Pastorell and discover knowledge in the pasture.

Importantly, Calidore seems to desire pastoral knowledge, but the issue becomes, does he desire to learn *how* to gain this knowledge? Throughout these latter scenes of Book VI, Calidore exhibits a desire to act, not necessarily learn. For Calidore, knowledge derives from physical action, not necessarily contemplative action. One such example of this physically rooted desire to know occurs when Calidore stumbles upon Colin Clout ("for who does not know Colin Clout?") playing for the Graces on Mt. Acidale. First, Calidore hears the "merry sound/Of a shrill pipe he playing heard on hight,/And many feete fast thumping th'hollow ground,/And through the woods their Echo did rebound" (VI.x.10). Initially, Calidore's senses lure him to the clearing like a hunter tracking his prey. They literally guide him through the woods to this sacred place.

As he has been through most of the journey, Calidore travels alone and uses his senses to guide him. And in this instance, just as in past ones, this reliance on sensory guidance puts him in a situation where he must *physically* act, or react, rather. For example, before Calidore arrives in the pasture, he uses his senses to track the Blatant Beast. His tracking abilities move him closer to the physical capture of the Blatant Beast, not necessarily to understanding what capturing the Blatant Beast may mean. In other words, Calidore's senses have long aided him in his knightly feats, but as insinuated in Meliboe's discussions of the mind, now they must be used to prompt interpretation and contemplative action in order to move him past the bounds of sensory perception. And as we shall see throughout these discussions of Book VI, Calidore struggles to move past earthly action towards the acts of interpretation and contemplation.

In many ways, Calidore's senses contrast Redcrosse's instincts. For Calidore, his senses keep him focused on earthly appearances because they rely on these appearances to consider truth. For example, Calidore sees the graces dancing and wants to understand what he *sees*, not necessarily the significance of what he sees.<sup>367</sup> Or, he identifies the peacefulness of the pasture, but fails to grasp the reasoning behind this simplicity. His senses are a tool that he relies upon and trusts to spur his actions. Redcrosse similarly relies on his senses to perceive truth. But along with these senses, Redcrosse possesses an instinct that urges him to question what he sensitively perceives. His instincts spur him to question what he sees, though initially he does not know how to interpret past his senses. Calidore does not possess this instinct. Instead, he repels the lessons Meliboe and Colin provide him with—lessons that urge him to look past his initial sensory perception to consider more than one possible meaning. In effect, Redcrosse's instinct highlights his potential to learn—his instinct marks his teachability. Calidore's reliance on sensory perceptions is the barrier between his learning and his actions. It is the bridge between earthly perception and multifarious possibility that he cannot pass.

While Calidore relies upon his senses to guide him to the clearing on Mt. Acidale, he exhibits a desire to know about what he has stumbled upon, but this desire is always limited to an earthly understanding. He, “nigher drew, to weete what mote it be;” indicating that he wants to understand what he observes, not merely watch the dance of the Graces (VI.x.10).<sup>368</sup> Originally, he is rapt by the vision of the dancing ladies, which

---

<sup>367</sup> Gary Waller examines the life and works of Spenser. At one point he claims that Spenser better relates to Redcrosse than Calidore (84). He goes on to suggest that Book VI is full of contradictions, which Calidore's interruption at Mt. Acidale represents the kinds of contradictions Spenser himself experienced at court. See *Edmund Spenser: A Literary Life*. Literary Lives. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

<sup>368</sup> Interestingly, in this scene it is the Graces that provoke his desire to know. This relates to what Augustine purports, that is, that interpretation aided by grace or faith or charity best moves the mind towards heavenly contemplation and understanding. The nature of the Graces practically cries out for

“pleased much his sight,/That even he him selfe his eyes envyde” (VI.x.11). He basks more in the same senses that bring him to the clearing—first sound, then vision. But as he continues to watch the scene, the pleasure he experiences from watching—the sensory, earthly pleasure—prompts a desire to know. At first glance, it would seem that Calidore has begun to take Meliboe’s words to heart as he desires knowledge over pleasure, but as we shall see, this is not the case.<sup>369</sup>

Finally, he:

... rapt with pleasuance, wist not what to weene;  
 Whether it were the traine of beauties Queene,  
 Or Nymphes, or Faeries, or enchanted show,  
 With which *his eyes mote have deluded beene*,  
 Therefore resolving, what it was, to know,  
 Out of the wood he rose, and toward them did go. (VI.x.17, my italics)

However, as the highlighted portion of this passage suggests, Calidore only decides to interrupt the scene when he can no longer trust his senses.<sup>370</sup> Possibly because of the rareness of the characters, “whose like before his eye had never seene,” or his inexperience with the pastoral setting he views from, Calidore looks at the scene and

---

multiple interpretations, thus representing a significant invitation, for Calidore and the reader, to interpret beyond the senses alone. Neo-Platonically, Spenser’s reference to the Graces links to Continental thinkers like Ficino, Correggio, and Pico della Mirandola, see Edgar Wind. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968. See also Elizabeth J. Bellamy whose Neo-Platonic argument of Spenser’s scene on Mt. Acidale is three-pronged: Mt. Acidale location is the source of poetic inspiration, Colin is a mediator between sensory and intellectual perception, and Spenser’s fourth grace is a hybrid Venus figure. Elizabeth J. Bellamy. “Colin and Orphic Interpretation: Reading Neoplatonically on Spenser’s Acidale.” *Comparative Literature Studies* 27, no. 3 (1990):172-192.

<sup>369</sup> David O. Frantz considers how the auditory and visual experiences in the scene with Florimell and Marinell prepare the reader for others, like Calidore’s episode with Colin on Mt. Acidale. David O. Frantz. “The Union of Florimell and Marinell: The Triumph of Hearing.” *Spenser Studies* 6 (1985):115-127. For further considerations concerning the significance of Calidore’s gaze, see Theresa M. Krier *Gazing on Secret Sights: Spenser, Classical Imitation, and the Decorums of Vision*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990 or Jonathan Z. Kamholtz. “Spenser and Perspective.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39 (1980):59-66.

<sup>370</sup> With relation to Calidore and his senses, Frances McNeely Leonard examines Calidore’s interruption scene on Mt. Acidale and identifies Calidore as a Peeping Tom, which would suggest that Calidore is only driven by his senses. Frances McNeely Leonard. *Laughter in the Courts of Love: Comedy in Allegory from Chaucer to Spenser*. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1981.

*must* know what it means because his senses and points of reference have failed him, “have deluded beene”, not necessarily because he realizes that this is a place to enact interpretation and contemplation (VI.x.17). Hermeneutically, he seems to be missing the opportunity to recognize this scene as an interpretative starting point.

But never does Calidore take his realization that he does not know what he views and attempt to contemplate who these images or characters are or what they could possibly mean. Essentially, he never uses his mind to consider the many possible meanings contained in the scene. Instead, he, again, reverts to one method of gaining understanding—that is, physical, participatory reaction. Calidore’s interruption illustrates an inability to interpret, an inability to move from initial sensory perception to contemplation.<sup>371</sup> Much like Redcrosse possesses instinct in the Error episode, yet lacks the interpretative skills to move into contemplation then action, Calidore, too, relies on his senses to guide him, but cannot move past his physical senses to employ intellectual and spiritual “senses”. In this light, it seems that Calidore’s senses fail him because he observes spiritual rituals and actions with an earthly eye and mind.

But this inability to interpret and contemplate multiple meanings does not stop him from looking to Colin Clout for answers, for “he [Colin] the truth of all by him mote learne” (VI.x.18). When observing the scene, Calidore’s keen sensory skills highlight Colin’s central role in the events as “he pypt apace, whilst they him danust about”

---

<sup>371</sup> In Michael F.N. Dixon’s rhetorical analysis of the *FQ*, he argues that Calidore’s interruption and encounter with Colin further reflects his distance from the civility he is supposed to represent. Instead of reflecting courtesy, Calidore becomes an “agent of fortune” (171). Michael F.N. Dixon. *The Politicke Courtier: Spenser’s “The Faerie Queene” As a Rhetoric of Justice*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996. For further considerations of how fortune actors into the scene with Calidore and Colin see Kenneth Borris. “Fortune, Occasion, and the Allegory of the Quest in Book Six of *The Faerie Queene*.” *Spenser Studies* 7 (1987):123-125.

(VI.x.16).<sup>372</sup> Once he interrupts the scene and scatters the participants, he turns to Colin for knowledge, asking, “Tell me, what mote these dainty Damzels be,/Which here with thee doe make their pleasant playes?/Right happy thou, that mayst them freely see:/But why when I them saw, fled they away from me?” (VI.x.19).<sup>373</sup>

While Calidore’s questioning suggests a positive move towards the intellectual action of contemplation, the nature of his questions demonstrates his distance from these exegetical skills. His first question, which seeks to know the identity of these dancing damsels, still reflects a limited scope of potential knowledge. All he wants to know is who they were—not why they danced, how they arrived, where they are from, or what they were doing in the clearing. He only demands one answer because he only considers one answer. The second question, which asks why these unknown ladies left once he arrived, illustrates a self-centered basis for his knowledge. Just as his first question lacks the potential for many possible answers, so, too, does this second question bring the answer back to one source—him. These questions indicate a misuse, or underuse, of interpretative tools. While questioning is a necessary part of the exegetical process in that it allows one to move past surface meaning into the many possible meanings

---

<sup>372</sup> Suzanne Woods examines how the divine grace of Book I bookends with the secular grace of Book VI. This echoing allows the reader to progressively read and identify the closure occurring in Book VI. In this light, Calidore becomes the courtier-reader and Colin the poet-teacher. Their interaction in canto ix is Spenser’s attempt to contextualize the entire work. See “Closure in *The Faerie Queene*.” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 76 (1977):195-216.

<sup>373</sup> Hadfield claims that Spenser’s character of Colin is an opponent of the court. He views Calidore as a courtly apologist and Colin as a courtly critic, yet he claims that Colin, not Calidore, is the true voice of courtesy. He goes on to consider that Calidore is a product of Colin’s teachings. See *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Along similar lines, Gary Waller views Calidore and Colin as dichotomous sides of the courtly poet, or Spenser—one being the apologist and the other the critic. See *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Longman, 1986. For further discussions surrounding the relationship between Colin and the poet/poetry see Derek B. Alwes who considers that because of the events in Book VI, Spenser perceived the relationship between poet and patron as one that could be constructive, rather than subservient. In this light, Spenser was more of a civic poet than a courtly one. See “‘Who knowes not Colin Clout?’ Spenser’s Self-Advertisement in *The Faerie Queene*, Book 6.” *Modern Philology* 88 (August 1990):26-42.



contained in an image or passage, Calidore's questions exclusively center on the scene's surface meaning. The result of this surface inquiry is that Calidore only remains in the earthly, unable to navigate past sensory perception and appearances.

This second question is also problematic because it insinuates that Calidore did not know that his interruption would cause the Damzels to flee.<sup>374</sup> Instead, as he tells Colin, later, it was his "ill fortune" (VI.x.20). But as Calidore initially watches the scene from behind the woods he "durst not enter into th'open greene,/For dread of them unawares to be descryde,/For breaking of their daunce, if he were seene;" (VI.x.11). In this earlier scene, Calidore shows that he knows the consequences of his actions, but does not truly consider the extent of these consequences. His desire to know surpasses both his instincts and his knowledge of social protocols that he is supposed to champion. Again, the earthly limitations of his vision and his inability to interpret on his own keep him from observing and contemplating the scene. Instead, he becomes overwhelmed by what he sees and *must* know what he views, at any cost.<sup>375</sup>

Additionally, because Calidore never considers the meaning of the scene nor its importance, he fails to consider how his interruption will affect anyone but himself, especially Colin.<sup>376</sup> In fact, he enters the clearing "though no less sory wight,/For that

---

<sup>374</sup> Nor that interrupting would seemingly contradict his understanding of courtesy.

<sup>375</sup> John C. Ulreich, Jr. posits that "poetry does not merely affirm, it *creates* truth" (369). He continually seeks to prove this statement by looking at the interaction of fictions and dreams in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Spenser's *FQ*. Specifically looking at Calidore's scene with Colin Clout, Ulreich claims that in Calidore, Spenser provides instructions for his reader. Colin offers Calidore (his reader) a dream that he initially misreads by perceiving the graces as solely erotic. After this misinterpretation, he learns how to interpret "visionary experience" from Colin and then uses this vision as a model for his action (365). In this sense, Calidore is an "ideal reader" (366). See John C. Ulreich, Jr. "Making Dreams Truth, and Fables Histories: Spenser and Milton on the Nature of Fiction." *Studies in Philology* 87 (Summer 1990):363-377.

<sup>376</sup> Marshall Grossman examines the seemingly dissident relationship between the *FQ*'s narrative, which seems to open the text to meaning, and allegory, which suppresses the "mimesis of historical action" (127). In this light, Grossman perceives Calidore's interruption of Colin Clout on Mt. Acidale as one of three moments that can constitute as an ending representative of the fulfillment scene in Gloriana's court (115). In this scene, Spenser shifts from a Christian focus to a historical one, thus illustrating his inability to

mishap[the interruption], yet seeing him [Colin] to mourne,/Drew neare...” suggesting that his only regret comes from seeing Colin displeased, not necessarily from the inappropriateness of the interrupting action itself (VI.x.18). This reaction not only illustrates Calidore’s distance from courtesy but also reveals Calidore’s myopic vision—he wants only to know the cause of his pleasure. While his desire for knowledge is admirable, his reliance on sensory methods keep him from knowing more than one possible meaning.

Colin’s response to Calidore’s interruption and his questions reveals the shepherd’s frustration with the events of this episode.<sup>377</sup> Colin initially answers Calidore’s second question by scolding him, stating, “Not I so happy.../As thou unhappy, which them thence did chace,/Whom by no meanes thou canst recall againe,/For being gone, none can them bring in place,/But whom they of them selves list so to grace” (VI.x.20). This tone peppers Colin’s response to Calidore’s first question as Colin describes the role of the Graces to teach one how to be kind, “to friends, to foes, which skill men call Civility” (VI.x.23). Ironically, Colin, though in a teaching-role, subtly insults Calidore’s knowledge and practice of civility, which would comprise a significant part of his courteous understanding.<sup>378</sup>

But while Colin may be unhappy with Calidore’s interruptive actions, he still offers a learning moment for Calidore as he continues, first, to describe the role of the

---

“unify England and its destiny by speaking its national voice” (132). See Marshall Grossman. *The Story of All Things: Writing the Self in English Renaissance Narrative Poetry*. Post-Contemporary Interventions series. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998.

<sup>377</sup> Maureen Quilligan analyzes the scene on Mt. Acidale, specifically Colin’s frustration and the breaking of his reed, to support her claim that, “allegory reflects not so much the dominant assumptions about value prevailing in any cultural epoch, but rather the culture’s assumptions about the ability of language to state or reveal value” (221). Maureen Quilligan. *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979.

<sup>378</sup> For further consideration of Colin as a poet-teacher see Suzanne Woods. “Closure in The Faerie Queene.” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 76 (1977):195-216.

Graces, and, second, the effects they have on men. The Graces “...on men all gracious gifts bestow,/Which decke the body and adorne the mynde,/...*They teach us* how to each degree and kynde/We should our selves demeane, to low, to hie,” (VI.x.23, my italics). On one level, Colin describes how the Graces are the “compliments of curtesie”, but from a hermeneutic perspective, Colin depicts a very Augustinian method of interpretation in which grace is central to the process of knowing.<sup>379</sup>

In essence, grace teaches one how to blend the physical and the intellectual in order to know how to interpret different situations and texts, both low, like the pastoral, and high, like the epic or Scripture. Grace teaches and guides the interpreter as he employs reason to move from earthly perception to an ideal contemplative balance between emotion and mind. The Graces symbolize another form of reason, or faith, or charity. And, like other protective agents of interpretation, such as charity, faith, or reason, the Graces act as a safety-net for the exegete as he traverses the path from earthly appearances to an interpretation that unlocks the multiple potentials of meaning via contemplation.

As Colin describes the effects of the Graces on men, he alludes to the aid of grace in freeing men from the earthly prisons of error or misinterpretation by providing them with the goodness necessary to see past appearances. When detailing the dancing of the Graces, Colin says:

Therefore they always smoothly to smile,  
That we likewise should mylde and gentle be,  
And also naked are, that without guile  
Or false dissemblance all them plaine may see,

---

<sup>379</sup> Colin’s link between the graces and courtesy suggests that Calidore, too, can be affected by the graces suggesting that courtesy and contemplation *could* simultaneously exist, but Calidore never makes the connection. Furthermore, Colin’s idea that the graces are “compliments of courtesie” may also be a wink and a nudge to Calidore’s shortcomings as an interpreter.

Simple and true from covert malice free:  
 And eeke them selves so in their daunce they bore,  
 That two of them still forward seem'd to bee,  
 But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore;  
 That good should from us gow, then come in greater store. (VI.x.24)

Here, Colin does not merely *tell* Calidore what the role of grace is, but instead interprets their dance to *show* him how to gain knowledge by contemplation. By interpreting the allegory for Calidore, Colin provides an active example of the kind of interpretation Calidore should have read the scene with, but did not. Colin's gesture reveals more than one, terminal possibility for the effects of the Graces on men.

Colin's interpretation begins with a description of the Graces' physical features, then a brief commentary on the effects of such features. Essentially, his analysis begins with the physical, then, assumingly through exercising contemplation, moves past the physical into the intellectual and spiritual effects. For example, in the first line he describes the quick smiles of the Graces, and then interprets that men should follow in these footsteps and share a mild and gentle demeanor. He gains this interpretation by considering the effects of these physical qualities. In another example later in the stanza, Colin acknowledges the nudity of the Graces as they dance, only to posit that this represents how they perceive—without shame and without the cloak of falseness. They can see past the earthly because they are not trapped in its confines.

Finally, Colin describes the physicality of their dance, with two moving forward and one possibly facing away from the others. He interprets this movement to mirror how their goodness grows from mens'; goodness must originate in the individual, move to the Graces, then flow from the Graces back to the individual in greater amounts. Hermeneutically, this description echoes Augustine and Hooker, who both delineate that

grace, or charity, or reason, aids the interpreter who reads with a pure heart and good intentions. On the other hand, the interpreter who reads the surface alone, who thinks he understands when his initial questions elicit simple answers, is destined for misinterpretation, or one-sided ends, as Calidore illustrates.

Historically, the positioning of the Graces varies as does the significance of this variety. Without straying too far into Neo-Platonic discussions, Spenser's choice of having the two Graces face forward while one faces away would be a significant distinction for his reader. As Edgar Wind notes, the traditional asymmetrical positioning of the Graces, a positioning often purported by Italian Neo-Platonists like Pico della Mirandola, would have one "...full-face[d], another straight from the back, and the third in profile;" (45).<sup>380</sup> Neo-Platonically, this positioning symbolizes the giving, receiving, and returning of Graceful benefits. The Grace with the full, open face represents the offering, the second with her back to us, the enraptured, or converted, and the third in profile, is returning (45).<sup>381</sup>

Another well-known depiction of the Graces is the more symmetrical image, like Correggio's Camera di San Paolo at Parma, which presents the first and third Graces—that of giving and receiving—as both facing forward, while the returning Grace still has her back turned away (33).<sup>382</sup> As Wind comments, "Turning her face frontward, she [the receiving Grace] balances the receptive Grace on the left by fully exhibiting the benefit obtained;" (33).<sup>383</sup> In this Stoic imagery, the giving Grace is the most majestic, for

---

<sup>380</sup> Edgar Wind. *Pagan Mysteries*. See also Lila Gellar. "The Acidalian Vision: Spenser's Graces in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*" *Review of English Studies* 23: 267-277.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

“there is a higher dignity in the one that gives”, while the receiving Grace is dependent, and the returning Grace is “deliberate” (33).<sup>384</sup>

If Spenser’s intention is to stress the significance of this image to reiterate his focus on interpretation and contemplation, as I believe it is, then his choice to depict the third Grace as facing forward instead of profiled, as Correggio’s Grace does, suggests that Spenser’s interest lies in the giving, rather than the returning. Spenser’s exegetical schema does not stress a return to the earthly. Instead, to face forward, as the first Grace of offering does, suggests that once contemplation is accepted and practiced as a necessary part of the exegetical process, the exegete can attain a harmony between the confines of earthly appearances and desires and the inquiry that elicits many possibilities of meaning.<sup>385</sup> This harmony shown by the Graces can serve as an example of the desired harmony between mind and heart, the exegete strives for, both as an interpretative practitioner and teacher. For, as Wind describes, in the majesty of the giving Grace “there is a higher dignity in the one that gives” (33).<sup>386</sup> This dignity translates into Spenser’s exegetical practice by stressing the role of the teacher or guide who encourages the exegete towards interpretation and contemplation.<sup>387</sup>

In either depiction, Neo-Platonic or Stoic, the importance of the middle Grace, facing away, whose “...conversion or rapture consists in turning away from the world in

---

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> As Wind surmises from Marsilio Ficino’s doctrine of love, “Only by looking towards the Beyond as the true goal of ecstasy can man become balanced in the present. Balance depends upon ecstasy” (48). This implies a balance between earthly appearance and pleasure and intellectual inquiry.

<sup>386</sup> Wind. *Pagan Mysteries*.

<sup>387</sup> Moreover, this variance on the position of the Graces, or at least his reluctance to overtly depict the Graces in their traditional three manners (“That two of them still forward *seem’d* to bee”), would be a place his reader would identify and contemplate the myriad of potential meanings—a place that could open textual meaning.

which we are, so as to rejoin the spirit beckoning from Beyond” is apparent (45).<sup>388</sup>

From a Christian exegetical perspective, this Grace is the one who has turned away from the earthly, from appearances, to face the “beckoning” of divine contemplation. The image of the converted Grace with her back to the other two brings us back to Colin’s original answer to Calidore’s inquiry, in that it shows our blindness to grace’s presence. As Colin suggests, one cannot seek out grace, but instead is followed and protected by grace.

In this light, Colin’s interpretation further illustrates his evolved interpretative abilities.<sup>389</sup> And, by answering Calidore’s questions, though reluctantly, he occupies the role of teacher. For, if Colin cannot seek the Graces out, as he has told Calidore, we can assume that he has little, if no, experience with the Graces in this form until Calidore stumbles upon him in the clearing. So, his interpretation is truly based on contemplation—of what he saw, what he has considered about their nature, and what he has learned from his interaction with them.

Colin does what Calidore cannot. He uses his initial earthly perception—what he sees—to expand early perception into an interpretation resulting in many possible meanings, such as how the Graces help men, the relation between perception, goodness

---

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Rufus Wood determines that the transition from the visual metaphorical experience with the dancers on Mt. Acidale to the verbal explanation of it is an instance where the poem cannot be protected from misinterpretation. But, rather than seeing this as a negative, Wood, rather optimistically concludes that this scene forces the reader to meditate on the meaning of the metaphor, for “this is the metaphoric act of faith demanded of the reader by *The Faerie Queene*: a belief in metaphor as metaphor, free from the idolatry that seeks to transform symbolic presence into real presence” (177-78). See *Metaphor and Belief in "The Faerie Queene."* London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1997. For other, more general, iconographic readings, see John G. Demaray who traces the iconographic imagery of wheels and circles in the dancing graces. He links the image with those like Merlin’s globe or the Garden of Adonis. *Cosmos and Epic Representation: Dante, Spenser Milton and the Transformation of Renaissance Heroic Poetry*. Duquesne Studies in Language and Literature, 11. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1991; Mark A. Archer. “The Meaning of 'Grace' and 'Courtesy': Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*.” *Studies in English Literature* 27 (Winter 1987):17-34.

and the mind, or the general nature of grace. But as seen in Calidore's urgent interruption of the scene, he cannot move past his earthly vision and pleasure, past earthly action, to consider such effects. Instead, he uses one tool, his senses, to perceive one meaning, the outward truth of what he sees, or hears, or smells.<sup>390</sup> Moreover, Colin has, in effect, become the exegete Spenser's image of the Graces appears to purport—that is, his role as teacher is the “higher dignity” associated with the Grace of giving.<sup>391</sup>

This positioning of the Graces is significant not only because of the many meanings, but because it offers the opportunity for the reader to consider these possibilities.<sup>392</sup> A Neo-Platonic reading, or a Stoic reading, or a Christian exegetical reading, are just a few possibilities among many. With this image, Spenser emphatically invites the reader to consider many interpretations. And, as long as the reader has a foundation in reason, he can factor out the array of possibilities the image *cannot* mean, then hash out the lines of interpretation and inquiry that allow him to intellectually explore what the image *could* mean.

In addition to this interpretation of the Graces, Colin continues to exhibit his growing interpretative abilities by questioning and discussing the nature of the fourth maid at the center of the Graces' dancing, then offering several possibilities as potential answers. Colin asks, “But that fourth Mayd, which there amidst them traced,/Who can aread what creature mote she bee,/Whether a creature, or a goddess graced/With heavenly

---

<sup>390</sup> Even the manner in which Calidore arrives at this sacred place might have been done better and is subject to speculation. Yes, his senses guide him to this overt place of meaning rather easily, and he does recognize its uniqueness, but he gets there too quick.

<sup>391</sup> And, perhaps, Neo-Platonic allegory is brought down to earth to express how virtue works. And, with regards to this study, this virtue involves virtue-in-reading.

<sup>392</sup> Of course, a more traditional reading of this scene notes that Spenser's wife Elizabeth is at the center of the three dancing Graces. She is the “Divine resemblance, beauty souveraine rare” that the Colin asks Gloriana to “Pardon thy shepherd, mongst so many layes,/...To make one minime of thy poore handmaid” (VI.x.28). When considering the personal nature of such a reading, the interruption by Courtesy (Calidore) suggests an interruption of Spenser's and his wife's life by the misuse/abuse of courtesy at court.



gifts from heaven first enraced?" (VI.x.25). Here, he questions her nature, but rather than arriving at one possible answer, he shows Calidore how to generate multiple potential meanings.

From these many possibilities, Colin continues to contemplate her significance as he interprets her nature based on the Graces' interaction with her. He considers her, "Above all other lasses beare the bell,/Ne less in virtue that beseemes her well,/Doth she exceed the rest of all her race,/ [The Graces] Have for more honor brought her to this place,/And graced her so much to be another grace" (VI.x.26). Continuing to interpret the significance of her interaction with the Graces, Colin considers that they recognize her beauty and her virtue. Therefore, so, too, does Colin. In some ways, Colin interprets the actions of the Graces as much as he does the nature of the central figure. This sort of vision and consideration illustrates Colin's gained interpretative skills. Through the encouragement of the Graces, he can begin with earthly perceptions and consider the larger significances stemming from these initial impressions.

Finally, after these considerations, Colin is able to perceive her physical beauty in a divine context. He concludes his considerations of the fourth maid, stating, "Another Grace she well deserves to be,/...Divine resemblaunce, beauty souveraine so rare,/Firme Chastity, that spight ne blemish dare;/All which she with such courtesie doth grace,/That all her peres cannot with her compare" (VI.x.27). In this final description, Colin perceives her beauty based on her graceful nature. Her outward appearance derives from inward beauty and virtue. He is able to perceive this because he can consider how what he sees can be informed by what he does not see. In this respect, Colin depicts himself as

an advanced interpreter and shows Calidore how to interpret what he has seen rather than merely detailing a list of characters by name and history.

In some ways, Colin's interpretation of the Graces seems to align closest with Spenser's poetic ideals, in that he moves past the historical obligations of the poet ("the poet historical" of his Letter to Raleigh) and is able to generate content and meanings based on his perceptions and contemplation, rather than the concreteness of the past. In this scene, Colin has interpreted the historical significance of the Graces, rather than recited it. I argue that this sort of interpretation embraces what Spenser desires in his poetry, that is, to move beyond expectations. Generically, allowing the epic to enter the place of pastoral—Calidore meeting with and learning from Meliboe and Colin while traversing the countryside—continues to signify Spenser's belief that the content of low pastoral cannot only compete with that of high epic, but can train a reader to interpret the text in a way that will expose a reading to many possible meanings.<sup>393</sup> In effect, a reader's lessons begin in the pasture.

Potentially, Colin's interpretative evolution represents the ideal interpretative journey from earthly despair to the exercising of heightened interpretative and contemplative potentials. This may be why he was so frustrated when interrupted by Calidore. He was finally chosen to play for the Graces, to interact with the unseen divine, only to be interrupted. For Colin, piping for the Graces seems to represent a culmination of his quest beginning in the *SC*, returning in *CCCHA*, then re-emerging again, here, in Book VI of the *FQ*. For example, in the *SC*, Colin is trapped in earthly

---

<sup>393</sup> Richard Helgerson contends that Spenser, like Milton and Jonson, is a poet who must compromise between what society expects from the poet and what the poet expects from poetry. From this perspective, Helgerson views Colin as a character whose pastoral values seem to oppose the heroic ones of the *FQ*'s patrons. Such a consideration suggests that Spenser's abiding effort to unite these genres is more self-motivated than poetically. See *Self-Crowned Laureates*.

pain, loverlorn from his loss of Rosalind.<sup>394</sup> In *CCCHA*, he has moved past this pain by physically leaving the pasture and playing for Cynthia and her court, only to realize the superficiality of courtly life prompting him to return to the pasture with a broadened perspective of and respect for pastoral life. Finally, in this scene on Mt. Acidale, Colin plays for the dancing Graces, who, as discovered in Colin's response to Calidore, grace one with their presence as they deem fit.

In Colin's journey, each of these locations is a place where Colin has been able to learn how to better interpret by turning self-reflection into a larger, contemplative act which allows him to perceive both himself and his surroundings. The hermeneutic encouragement Colin experiences in these situations allows him to truly consider the extent of teaching and how poetry can aid one in exegetical practice. I believe a lot of this understanding and contemplation occurs in Colin's interaction with his audience. Consistently, through each of these works, Colin has been in the unique position of teacher *and* student. In *CCCHA*, he teaches his peers how to interpret his song only because he has been taught these interpretative skills by the Shepherd of the Ocean. This dual-position of student and teacher, receiver and giver of knowledge, again, echoes the position of the Graces as they dance on Mt. Acidale. In this scene with Calidore, he interrupts Colin interacting with and learning from the Graces, only eventually to see Colin switch roles from student to teacher of the knight.

While this analysis has traced the interpretative evolutions of three knights in the *FQ*, Colin's journey seems to be one that illustrates the most successful interpretative progress because eventually Colin is able to teach and encourage others to exercise

---

<sup>394</sup> Donald Cheney considers Spenser as an Odysseus figure, as he examines the returns of Spenser's pastoral personas, both Colin and Rosalind. See "Colin Clout's Homecoming: The Imaginative Travels of Edmund Spenser." *Connotations* 7, no. 2 (1997/98):146-158.

charity and reason in the exegetical process. He is able to do so because he constantly learns and expands his reach of knowledge and his potentials for meaning. Essentially, he is able to encourage both from his experiences and his songs. Perhaps, this evolution speaks, again, to the interpretative potentials of pastoral simplicity and values.

Moreover, interaction with his audience, both physical and intellectual, is how Colin both teaches and learns. As suggested above, Colin learns from the Graces by interacting with them then contemplating their nature based on his experiences. And, as a teacher, Colin eventually settles into a dialectic with Calidore, in which:

...the Knight him selfe did much content,  
 And with delight his greedy fancy fed,  
 Both of his words, which he with *reason red*;  
 And also of the place, whose pleasure rare,  
 With such regard his *senses ravished*,  
 That thence, he had no will to fare,  
 But wisht, that with that shepherd he mote dwelling share.  
 (VI.x.30, my italics)

In this exchange, Calidore seems to strike a balance between the exercise of reason and the experience of emotion. Unlike the solely sensory experience he underwent while viewing the Graces, Calidore is now able to employ reason to understand Colin's words while still experiencing the emotional response to his rather sacred surroundings.

Because of this newfound ability to begin to employ a reason-based interpretation, Calidore's experience with Colin on Mt. Acidale mirrors that of Redcrosse on the Mt. of Heavenly Contemplation. Similarly to Redcrosse, Calidore can begin to exercise his intellectual faculties when interpreting and contemplating.

However, one glaring difference between the lessons of the two knights is the personal status of each knight when receiving his exegetical guidance. When Redcrosse

was on the Mt. of Heavenly Contemplation, he was stripped to his lowest emotional and physical state—he was in a sensory vacuum, open to the spiritual. Calidore, on the other hand, is at the height of his sensory perception when he meets Colin. After all, it was his senses that led him to this sacred clearing. This difference of starting position may be one of the reasons why Calidore can begin to show improvement in this episode, but quickly revert back to his one-sided sensory method of analysis once Pastorell is kidnapped. In the final exchange with Colin, Calidore seems to strike a balance between reason and emotion. Yet, when he immediately encounters a situation that calls for him to exercise this balance in his actions, that is, Pastorell’s abduction, he reverts back to his self-centered, prideful reactions when he blames himself for her disappearance, all the while teetering on the emotional edge.

But whatever the reason for Calidore’s reversion to earthly, sensory perception, in this episode with Colin he is for the first time able to incorporate reason into his interpretative practice. This is a feat he was unable to experience in his exchange with Meliboe, where he was “...rapt with *double ravishment*,/Both of his [Meliboe’s] speech that wrought him great content,/And also on the object of his view [Pastorell]” (VI.ix.26, my italics). In his exchange with Meliboe, Calidore only experiences an emotional response to both Meliboe’s words and the sight of Pastorell. But, in the above exchange with Colin, he uses reason to hear Colin’s words, and emotion to feel and experience his surroundings.<sup>395</sup>

While Meliboe’s and Colin’s teaching episodes with Calidore do not fully succeed, each is sound in terms of Spenserian teaching. In fact, when considering the

---

<sup>395</sup> It is interesting that in both of these teaching episodes, Calidore’s interpretative experience is described as “ravishment”. This may suggest that while Calidore employs reason with Colin, he still does so under the context of an emotional response.

two episodes together we can gain a better understanding of the relationship between teaching and interpretation.<sup>396</sup> On one hand, Meliboe's episode provides Calidore (and the reader) with the desired results—the content—of fruitful contemplation and action. He shows Calidore what sort of complex simplicity is both necessary for and produced by the interpretative process. This content seems to set the informative base for Calidore's later interpretative lessons.

On the other hand, the teaching episode with Colin, especially the scene cited above, omits the content of the exchange between Colin and Calidore. Much like in the House of Holiness, it focuses on the method of inquiry—the how. Moreover, Colin's teaching episode *shows* Calidore how to exercise reason, and, in turn, encourages him to do so in the eventual dialectic.<sup>397</sup> In Colin's scene, the reader is supposed to focus on the method, not solely on the content. These teaching episodes together prepare Calidore for his exegetical endeavors—Meliboe's erects an ideal contemplative state while Colin's shows the knight how to attain such a state.<sup>398</sup>

Though Calidore is presented with a sound example of teaching and appears to begin employing reason in his interpretative process, these strides never seem to take him far down the interpretative path. After his dialectic with Colin, Calidore returns his myopic gaze to one target—Pastorell. While Calidore “had no will away to fare” and

---

<sup>396</sup> Alpers claims that Meliboe and Colin Clout enact two versions of pastoral, *agrestis* and *silvestris*, in Virgil's first eclogue. Alpers argues that Calidore's response in I.ix.31 is not a misunderstanding, but shows an awareness that self-knowledge is inseparable from knowing one's circumstances. See *What is Pastoral?*.

<sup>397</sup> Interestingly, perhaps the omission of physical, sexual distraction in this scene with Colin allows Calidore to truly learn. That is, he does not listen so he can be near his love or find ways to woo her. Instead, he listens for the sake of learning, not loving—at least in the immediacy of the moment.

<sup>398</sup> But, in addition to teaching roles, what is interesting between Meliboe and Colin is how similar their tales are. Both are born in the pasture, unhappy with their existence so they leave for court. Both are disillusioned with court and return to the pasture with a new appreciation for the simple pasture as well as a heightened interpretative skill set. And both reveal a predilection to teach their fellow shepherds—a desire derived from and centered upon experience. What seems to distinguish the tales of the two is poetry. Colin's tales seems to be the poetic version of Meliboe's tale.

seems content to stay with Colin and learn, the “...poysnous point deepe fixed in his hart/Had left, now gan afresh to rankle sore,/And to renue the rigor of smart;” (VI.x.30-31).<sup>399</sup> Even after Calidore briefly experiences the interpretative possibilities of using reason to balance earthly emotion and intellectual contemplation, Calidore still recoils his vision back to the singular focus of gaining Pastorell’s favor.

In fact, what Calidore seems to take from Colin’s lessons is to clear his mind so he can more diligently serve Pastorell. Once he returns from Mt. Acidale, “He daily did apply him selfe to donne,/All dewfull service *voide of thoughts impure*;/Ne any paines ne peril did he shone,/By which he might to his love allure” (VI.x.32, my italics). The emphasized portion of this passage reveals that Calidore attempts to use his mind to control his lustful emotions for Pastorell.

In some ways this is a positive step, but not an interpretative one that employs what Colin shows him—he still reveals that a pure one-track mind is still a one-track mind. But, his intentions do not align with his practice. He uses his mind not to generate multiple possibilities for meaning, but, instead, to focus on his singular task of wooing Pastorell. He now pursues Pastorell with the same vigor he once chased the Blatant Beast. It is as though his singular focus has never changed, but the object of his gaze has. Moreover, he perverts his teachings because he does not desire to generate meanings, but instead he uses reason for his own gains of what is immediately before him as a physical presence.

Furthermore, in this passage, we see that Calidore reverts to his old, knightly ways as he relies on physical action. In his brief battle scene with the Tiger, Calidore

---

<sup>399</sup> The image of love’s wound as an actual wound implies Calidore has little choice in his desire for Pastorell. But this lack of choice and this continuing trend to remain in earthly emotion further illustrates Calidore’s distance from the exegetical instruction he has endured.

exhibits a small amount of interpretation that informs his action in that he manages to slay the beast with “...no weapon, but his shepherds hooke,/To serve the vengeance of his wrathfull will,” (VI.x.36). Because he does not have his sword or shield, he must interpret the situation to decide his course of action. But while he does not have his usual weapon, he does have his usual will, focus, and knightly reaction, which are what truly guide him through battle, not his mind. Calidore’s action in this scene does not differ from any other knightly situation he encounters. He solely relies on his physical skills, rather than supplementing them with interpretation and contemplation.

Once Calidore slays the Tiger and saves Pastorell’s life, he wins her favor, for “from that day forth she gan him to affect,/...So well he woo’d her, and so well he wrought her,/With humble service, and with daily sute,/That at last unto his will he brought her;” (VI.x.37-38). Again, his knightly skills—his physical strength and chivalric persistence—help him to win her. And though Calidore has exhibited glimpses of interpretative skills, he never fully embraces the multifarious nature necessary for a heightened exegesis. But it seems Calidore’s interpretative promise occurs in the pasture because of the pastoral setting. Here, through teaching episodes with Meliboe and Colin, he has been exposed to the necessary skills needed to progress towards an interpretation and contemplation that will move him past earthly appearances and action—that will move him out of his sensory comfort zone. But what happens when the pastoral setting is no longer there? What happens when Pastorell is kidnapped and taken from him?<sup>400</sup>

---

<sup>400</sup> As cited earlier, Greenblatt argues that the physical events in Book VI are reflections of the psychological phenomena occurring in the characters (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning*). Applying this basic idea to the abduction of Pastorell would suggest that these events are reflections of the corrupted interpretative state of Calidore’s mind. His inability to balance emotion and reason causes intellectual chaos and this chaos has permeated into the tranquil pasture with the Brigants.



Arguably, as Calidore tracks Pastorell, he squelches any spark of interpretative potential and completely reverts to his one-track vision, first to save Pastorell, and then to capture the Blatant Beast. Calidore deals with the situation, in that he eventually finds her, but he could have acted more virtuously had he employed reason and faith in his actions and reactions—he *deals* with the situation well, but he could have *done* it well.<sup>401</sup> When Calidore realizes Pastorell is taken, he becomes “halfe enraged” and almost goes mad, “His owne flesh he readie was to teare,/He chaufft, he griev’d, he fretted, and he sight,” (VI.xi.25). Upon discovering she has disappeared, Calidore does not use his mind to assess the situation and plan a course of action. Instead, he falls into this emotional frenzy, passing through a series of emotions, including anger, grief, and worry—a frenzy that further distances him from exercising his intellectual, interpretative abilities.

After grieving he leaves the cottage and begins to wander the pasture searching for someone who could help, “. . .to whom he might complaine,/ . . .to whom he might inquire” but realizes he is alone in the pasture (VI.xi.26). Though the immediate situation is quite different than stumbling upon the Graces, the opportunity for interpretation and contemplation to consider the significance of the events is the same. Just as Calidore was overwhelmed with vision and pleasure on Mt. Acidale, overwhelmed by emotion, so, too, does he struggle in this scene. And when he is emotionally drowning, he does not look to his mind to help understand what he feels and sees. Instead, he looks for someone to tell him what he has seen—to tell him what is significant. He does the same here. When he does not know what happened to Pastorell

---

<sup>401</sup> Belt examines the scene where Calidore interrupts Colin at Mt. Acidale and concludes that these allusions point towards what Calidore does *not* do on Mt. Acidale. Belt posits that Spenser’s goal in Book VI is to give the reader examples of correct and incorrect ways to respond to varying situations in the narrative in order to consider what the consequences of mis-action can carry. Debra Belt. “Hostile Audiences and the Courteous Reader in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI.” *Spenser Studies* 9 (1991):107-135.

and becomes overcome with emotion, he seeks out someone to inquire to, to tell him what has occurred.

In this scene, Calidore desperately searches for his love. He is frantic and scared that she may be dead. Such emotion pervades his actions and interactions in the scene. Yet, within this expected emotional response lies the faults in Calidore's interpretative skills. In this scene, Calidore allows his emotions to cloud his interpretative abilities because his fear for Pastorell keeps his vision singly focused on her. Let us consider this scene from a hermeneutic perspective.

Calidore continues to have "rome(d) up and downe" the pasture alone. Being alone without a guide is not a new occurrence for Calidore. He begins the quest for the Blatant Beast alone, comes to the pasture alone, and wanders to Mt. Acidale alone. He has never needed a guide, only an informer.<sup>402</sup> But it seems this roaming, this solitude, has calmed his initial frenzy and as he approaches a tattered Coridon, Calidore, "...mote perceive by signes, which he did fynd,/That Coridon it was, the silly shepherds hynd" (VI.xi.27). Here, Calidore is able to use some interpretative skills to recognize Coridon. But he still uses them to identify, not interpret. His perception of signs is still sensory. And while this is a perfectly acceptable place to begin the exegetical practice, Calidore's weakness is that he cannot move past identification and into interpretation and contemplation—he *could* interpret, but he does not, at least, not fully.

This difficulty to move past identification contributes to Calidore's inability to consider more than one possible meaning or focus. Calidore's myopic perspective continues once he finds Coridon. Upon seeing the frightened shepherd, Calidore asks,

---

<sup>402</sup> It seems that when Calidore is given a task, like capturing the Blatant Beast, he does not need a guide, but when he creates his own quest, like this one, he wanders.

“...where were the rest; Where *Pastorell*?...” and when Coridon is overcome and words fail him, Calidore asks again, “Where was his Pastorell? Where were all the other crew?” (VI.xi.28). The order in which Calidore questions Coridon reveals his real aim. In the first question, Calidore initially asks about the other shepherds, then quickly follows by asking about Pastorell. When Coridon is unable to respond, Calidore’s inquiry returns to “his” Pastorell, and then to the others. Asking about Pastorell back-to-back reveals both his preoccupation with her and his urgency to find her. It also reveals his one-tracked vision.

When Coridon collects himself, he tells Calidore that Pastorell is dead. Once he learns of this, Calidore demands Coridon, “...*read* thou shepherd, *read* what destiny,/Or other dyrefull hap from heaven or hell/Hath wrought this wicked deed, doe feare away, and *tell*” (VI.xi.29, my italics). In this passage, Calidore first asks Coridon to “read” the tale only later to request him to “tell” what occurred, implying that the two actions are the same. Calidore’s choice of language in this request is quite suggestive and further illustrates Calidore’s misunderstanding of the exegetical principles he has been shown. Here “read” equates to the bottom line which contrasts to the reading we should be engaged with. In Spenser’s interpretative schema, reading is the whole process that leads to the intellectual actions of interpretation and, eventually, contemplation.

But in this passage, Calidore equates reading with telling, not interpreting. The interchangeableness of these differing concepts shows what Calidore values in the acquisition of knowledge—telling versus self-discovery. Interchanging “read” with “tell” exhibits Calidore’s tunneled vision in that he does not understand that there are different

ways to acquire knowledge, let alone different possibilities of meaning.<sup>403</sup> For Calidore, understanding is very black or white. There is either knowing or not knowing. No in-between. This belief may be why Calidore is so quick to default to his sensory understanding—his abilities to see, hear, and smell. These senses support an either/or manner of knowing centered on identification rather than interpretation. Essentially, when Calidore sees something, he knows what it is, not necessarily what it may mean. Moreover, he does not seem to desire to find meaning in his sensory perceptions.

Calidore's inability to perceive of an interpretative "grey area" which contains an array of potential meanings beyond the strictly sensory again emerges as Coridon fulfills the knight's request to know. To begin, Coridon asks:

... Where shall I then commence  
 This woefull tale? Or how those *Brigants* vyle,  
 With cruell rage and dreadfull violence  
 Spoyld all our cots, and carried us from hence?  
 Or how faire Pastorell should have bene sold  
 To merchants, but was sav'd with strong defence?  
 Or how those theeves, whilst one sought her to hold,  
 Fell at ods, and fought through fury fierce and bold. (VI.xi.30)

In the beginning of his retelling, Coridon introduces several possible places to begin his tale—with the Brigants nature, or how they took them from their beds, or how Pastorell was treated, or how she dies. By offering these possibilities, Coridon presents Calidore with a choice. Essentially, he asks, where would you like to direct your focus and attention? What would you like to know?

But, as we see in his response, Calidore has little concern to know his opponents nature, or dwell on what happened to the other shepherds. He is only concerned with

---

<sup>403</sup> Though the etymological link for read and tell is rich, this interchanging reveals *Calidore's* misunderstanding of interpretation.

Pastorell. His response to Coridon's entire story culminates in feelings of regret as he muses, "To her, whose name he so often did repeat;/And wishing oft, that he were present there,/When she was slaine, or had bene to her succor nere" (VI.xi.33). After listening to, after being told, Coridon's tale, Calidore is focused on Pastorell, but largely as it pertains to him. In this passage, he does not lament her death as much as he laments not being there. The effect of his response is limited not only because it is emotional, but also because it is self-centered. As has been the case with Calidore in episodes throughout Book VI, at the center of his interpretative scope is Calidore, not truth. And meaning seems to only extend as far as it relates to him.

In many ways, this sort of perspective is prideful in that depicts the self not only as the center of truth, but as the sole dictator of what that truth may mean. Calidore's perception limits meaning to what the self senses, rather than opens it to the multifarious potentials of meaning. In other words, rather than entertaining the possibility that many paths can exist and lead one to truth, Calidore only sees one path to truth—the one he travels.

This self-centered<sup>404</sup> interpretative perspective continues as Calidore uses reason to create a plan. He, "Began to mitigate the swelling souse,/And in his mind with *better reason* cast,/How he might save her life, if life did last;" (VI.xi.34, my italics). Here, Calidore, as he has in the past, uses reason to calm his frenzied emotional state, but once calm, does not use it to continue towards contemplation in order to consider more than one path of action. Again, Calidore exhibits a black and white, either/or perception of both his situation and the actions he can exercise to participate in his surroundings.

---

<sup>404</sup>I mean this literally, the self as center. My intention is not to imply the loaded contemporary use or connotation.

Pastorell is either dead or alive. And he must either save her or avenge her death. He chooses between two, not many.

Furthermore, his form of reason, his “better reason”, only extends to his senses. In this scene, reason is related more to probability rather than possibility. Because he has not seen Pastorell dead, it seems irrational for him to accept that she is. And because he places himself as the center of truth, he can only verify truth with his own senses, not Coridon’s. In this case, Calidore’s instinct is warranted since Pastorell is alive. But Calidore’s past actions do not depict him as a skeptical interpreter, or an interpreter at all—that is, he never questions his senses, what he sees or what he hears. Instead, his one-track focus keeps him from believing anything that is not verified by his senses and/or another’s telling.

Essentially, Calidore believes that what *he* sees, or hears, or smells, is fact, is truth. Not only does he not consider another’s sensory perceptions as valid, but he fails to consider possible meanings beyond the factual. If he sees something, it is real. It is final. He never considers the nature of the meaning, or what else the object could be or could mean. We see this when he views the Graces. He only sees them as dancing, naked women. And because he never considers what else they could be, he only experiences them erotically, or physically. He cannot perceive them by anything but their physicality, which restricts their potentials and their spiritual power. In some regards, this restriction is similar to the interpretative limitations Redcrosse experiences. The difference, though, is that Redcrosse experiences these limitations because he has not received the instruction to move past these earthly perceptions. Calidore has. And he

still chooses to remain within the safe bounds of the sensory, instead of expanding these boundaries to consider more than one meaning.

In Pastorell's death, Calidore's emotions of grief and regret that he was not there to defend her seem to fuel his actions, not his employment of "better" reason. Calidore's past actions, his continuous role, as a non-skeptic, or non-interpreter, is reinforced when he does not question any other part of Coridon's tale, not even the slaying of Meliboe and his wife. His disbelief in Pastorell's death derives more from his myopic focus on her, than his keen senses of interpretation.

Briefly returning to Coridon's retelling, his method is unique, yet its essence is somewhat familiar. Questioning is central to his method. He begins by asking Calidore where he should begin. With this initial question, Coridon looks to Calidore, his audience, to guide the direction of his story. We see a similar event occurring with Colin and his audience in *CCCHA*. Though Colin does not directly ask his audience where they want him to begin, he does encourage them to guide the story by asking questions. For Coridon, his questioning urges Calidore to exercise choice and, maybe eventually, interpretation.

Coridon's method of retelling reveals his shepherdly predilection to guide and protect—a *topos* Spenser draws upon, develops, and expands throughout these scenes and his pastorals. This shepherdly instinct may be why Spenser uses the pastoral setting to employ a teaching model emphasizing the abilities of the mind. Initially, we meet Meliboe who teaches Calidore that "It is the mynde, that maketh good or ill" (VI.ix.30). Then there is Colin who teaches Calidore his understanding of the Graces' ability to "adorn the mynd" (VI.x.23). Even Pastorell uses her mind to save her from the advances

of the Brigant captain, for “her constant mynd could not a whit remove,/Nor draw the lure of his lewd lay” (VI.xi.5). And finally, in this scene, we see Coridon exhibit a similar teaching foundation/basis rooted in using the mind to interpret and generate possible meanings. Furthermore, it can be assumed that Coridon’s teaching methods will continue to develop as he takes over the late Meliboe’s lost flock (VI.xi.37).

Spenser’s strong emphasis on teaching the importance of the mind and interpretation serves to do more than expose Calidore’s hermeneutic weaknesses. Instead, it seems to emphasize a two-pronged type of guidance necessary to travel the exegetical path. One part is the protection, the virtue, which keeps the exegete from misinterpretation and encourages contemplation to consider more than one meaning. We see this in Una. The other is guidance in the form of teaching via showing. While Meliboe, or Colin, or Coridon may be virtuous, though not emblematic of virtue, each teaches the exegete by showing him how to interpret, usually by example. Thus, the interpreter is encouraged by these examples of successful, or fruitful, interpretation. These characters guide the interpreter by providing him with a hermeneutic method.

Both of these parts, the virtue and the guidance by example, are necessary for fruitful exegesis. Moreover, by emphasizing one part in the epic and another in the pastoral Spenser seems to imply that either of these places, high or low, can both be acceptable places to be exposed to good, or beneficial, or successful, exegetical skills and content, as well as serve as acceptable places to begin the interpretative journey.

Coridon’s practice of guiding by showing, not telling, can be seen in the method of delivery and content of his narrative. In it, his questions are more complex than merely asking about plot or storyline. Within his questions, he shows that he has begun



to interpret and contemplate his own story. Traces of his interpretation can be seen in his description and details of the events. For example, he describes the Brigants as “vyle” with “cruell rage” and “dreadfull violence”. His descriptions reflect consideration and, ultimately, judgment. Coridon has both experienced the events and contemplated what they may mean. This sort of consideration implies that Coridon, though experiencing emotional responses to the events, not only finds relief in exercising reason, but that he extends this reason into contemplation. In these contemplative actions, Coridon is able to consider the meanings associated both with these events and the actions and natures of all the participants, both victims and victimizers. Unlike, Calidore, he can look past how these events effect him to consider possible meanings.<sup>405</sup>

In another example, Coridon depicts the Captain of the Brigants that kidnapped them, but he only tells of his efforts to save Pastorell, not his violent or “vyle” actions. He eventually poses the rather sympathetic question, “But what could he [the Captain] gainst all them doe alone?” (VI.xi.32).<sup>406</sup> By omitting his initial judgments on the Captain, Coridon has interpreted him in a different manner than solely by his appearances as a “vyle” Brigant. Essentially, he has interpreted beyond the Captain’s surface appearance as a cruel pillager to consider the possible meanings associated with his rather valiant actions.

Coridon may not know as much about the story as the reader, however. The reader knows that the Captain most likely saved Pastorell out of selfish reasons, rather than virtuous ones, because the reader was exposed to his advances while Coridon was

---

<sup>405</sup> In many ways, Coridon’s method of interpretation mirrors Artegall’s, who also considers more than the seen when enacting justice or judgment.

<sup>406</sup> This question may contribute to Calidore’s regret that he was not there to save her. Because of his absence, not only did she have to rely on inferior protection, but this protection was at the hands of her captor.

not. But after being exposed to Coridon's practice and Meliboe's and Colin's teaching, the reader can take his/her textual knowledge and begin to contemplate what these discrepancies may mean or find previously unknown connections within the text. Basically, the reader can open both this scene and the larger text to more than one possible meaning because he/she has been hermeneutically taught along with the characters.

For example, the reader has seen the actual events of the riot unfold and heard Coridon's retelling of it. From here, the reader may look at what really happened and what Coridon says happened. They may also perceive that the efforts to save Pastorell were valiant. But they may contemplate the scene further and perceive the Captain's seemingly chivalric, but ultimately selfish, actions in saving Pastorell then possibly question Calidore's seemingly similar motivations. Like the Captain, Calidore desires to save Pastorell for himself. From here, the reader could ask questions like "If there is one, what is the difference?" or "Is this connection intentional? Why would Spenser include it?" and so on. But the point is not necessarily *what* the reader asks, but that they have been encouraged throughout the work to ask. These teaching episodes like Coridon's, or Colin's, or Una's earlier ones, show and encourage the reader how to interrogate the text in order to consider meanings beyond the ones overtly offered.

These abilities are starkly contrasted when Coridon and Calidore disguise themselves as shepherds so Coridon can lead Calidore to the scene of the crime. As they travel back to the site, they encounter Meliboe's flock wandering the countryside, loosely guarded by sleeping thieves. Encouraging Coridon to suppress his fear, Calidore wakes the thieves to inquire about Pastorell. The thieves question who they are and Calidore

answers that they are, "...poore heardgroomes, the which whylere/Had from their maisters fled, and now sought hyre elsewhere" (VI.xi.39). Once they hear this, the thieves become excited and offer to hire Calidore and Coridon, for, "...they themselves [the thieves] were evill groomes, they sayd,/Unwont with heards to watch, or pasture sheepe,/But to foray the land, or scoure the deepe" (VI.xi.40).

Hermeneutically, these thieves sharply contrast the shepherdly teachings encountered thus far. They are the anti-teachers, the anti-shepherds. Unlike the good shepherd who thrives on protecting his flock and guiding them to safety, these thieves see no benefit in this guidance, this patience. Like the interpreter who does not want to take the time to contemplate possible meanings, these thieves do not want to take the time to earn their spoils by cultivating and protecting their flock. Instead, they desire the instant gratification, the quick spoils, gained from pillaging. They are content to take someone else's spoils, just as the weak interpreter is content to take someone else's interpretation as truth, or settle for one-sided surface appearances as the sole meaning of an object.

For example, they see Coridon and Calidore as shepherds-for-hire and never question any other possibility than what they see. Moreover, these thieves represent the interpreter who reads solely for his own gains. Because they do not interrogate the appearances of Coridon and Calidore, they believe what they see and hire them to serve their own benefits. They hire them so they can stop watching the flock and roam looking for better, quicker spoils.

Interestingly, these "shepherds" perform the same sort of sensory interpretation that Calidore so often defaults to. Yet, they, not Calidore, experience the consequences of solely relying on surface interpretation, instead of questioning their initial sensory

perception. This moment represents another potential learning occasion that Calidore does not see. He could view the actions and motivations of these “shepherds” and employ what he has been taught by contemplating the effects of their actions, or even by relating what he has learned in a basic comparison and contrasting. But he does not. Instead, his tunnel-vision for Pastorell keeps him from considering other meanings, methods, or situations.

Calidore’s *actions* in this scene are also of particular interest. Once he turns his myopic gaze onto saving Pastorell, his actions shift from shepherdly to knightly. By moving away from the ideals of the pasture to the ideals of the successful knight, Calidore’s actions and methods seem to make a bit more sense. While one-tracked vision detains him from contemplative action, it benefits him in knightly action. By keeping his focus on Pastorell, he is able to persevere and not becomes sidetracked from the task at hand. From a knightly perspective, Calidore’s single focus drives him to his desired ends, that is, finding out if Pastorell lives then saving her. His single focus also helps him keep his emotions under control. For example, when he and Coridon discover the sleeping thieves, he does not let his anger or grief dictate his actions. Instead, he questions them, rather than slays them. He employs his either/or conception of choice (should he question them or kill them?) and seems to choose favorably.

Later in the same scene, he, again, is placed in a situation where he could rashly act, fueled by emotion. When the thieves question their identity, Calidore does not succumb to emotionally dictated actions, like fearing being discovered, and slaying them. Instead, he seems to read the possibilities of the situation and chooses to remain in character. While this interpretative action is limited to using reason to suppress emotion,

rather than generating hermeneutic possibilities, it works for Calidore's knightly purposes—purposes that exclusively work to yield courtly, earthly ends.

Calidore's type of interpretation—an interpretation that never leaves the sensory and seeks to use reason to generate only earthly action—forces one to consider how courtesy relates to contemplation. Does courtesy contrast contemplation rather than encourage it? As Spenser has shown with Calidore's myopic actions, the earthly ends, the earthly desires of courtesy, such as flattery, or courting a maid's favor, or avenging false flattery by slaying the Blatant Beast, are one-sided and always rooted in earthly appearances, whether perceived or desired. These one-sided earthly desires and ends starkly contrast the multiplicity encouraged in contemplation. This seems to be why Calidore struggles to enact the exegetical teachings he receives in the pasture. His prior training, his single, goal-oriented knightly training, counters the teaching he experiences in the pasture.

Calidore's inability, and reluctance, to move past the single-sided vision associated with courtesy suggests that the problem with courtesy is that it just does not allow for full interpretation. Calidore goes as far as he can, specifically in the scene with Colin on Mt. Acidale. Importantly, Spenser prescribes a form of reading that encourages multifarious possibilities for meaning and a variety of places to enact these reading skills, but he depicts a knight who categorically cannot follow the prescription. He is a student beyond guidance because he does not desire to expand his sensory perception into an interpretation and contemplation that offers many possible choices of meaning. Though he has been exposed to a sound exegetical schema, he chooses to remain in the earthly—

to remain in his comfort zone and exercise an interpretative method he is most familiar with.

One cannot help but wonder, if Calidore had spent more time in the pasture, more time exposed to the interpretative practices that encourage multitudinous possibilities for meaning, possibilities beyond the sensory, would he have adopted more of these sensibilities? Would he have accepted more of the teachings? Instead, shortly after he returned from his teaching episode with Colin, Pastorell was captured and he had to shift back into knight mode. I do not suggest that this “knight mode” is necessarily negative, but it only encourages earthly results and purports earthly desires like fame and favor. These are limited, prideful, ends to meaning, rather than expanded potential-filled ones. Calidore’s shortcoming is his limited scope. He comes to identify his time in the pasture as his time with Pastorell, rather than with the lessons and examples of teaching he encountered. Just as virtue does not exclude contemplation, the knightly does not exclude the pastoral. But for, Calidore, his courteous ideas of virtue do not need contemplation, and his idea of knightliness does not need the pasture.

For Calidore, since he never truly descends to a position making him more susceptible to contemplation until the very end of the Book, he never truly desires to change his interpretative process. As we see in his exchange with Meliboe, Calidore chooses to remain in the pasture primarily because he desires Pastorell, rather than an understanding of pastoral life and interpretation. Calidore’s inadequacy, and the cause of his eventual downfall, is that he believes he does not need interpretation to be a better knight. He is content pursuing the earthly spoils of fame, favor, and flattery. But, as we

shall see, these limited desires ultimately cause him to lose the Blatant Beast and leave him with nothing—no fame, no favor, rampant flattery.

Interestingly, however, Calidore has a teaching moment which offers the opportunity to expose what he does possess an understanding of—emotion. When he and Coridon come upon Meliboe’s flock and the sleeping thieves, Coridon first grieves the sheep he lost then experiences fear towards the thieves. But when he wants to retreat, Calidore “...recomforting[s] his grieffe,/Though not his feare: for nought may feare disswade;” (VI.xi.38). Here, Calidore exhibits an understanding of emotion, both the nature of emotion and how to combat it. Though he does not encourage Coridon to interpret and contemplate his fear, which is a long-term interpretative investment, he does encourage him to temporarily suppress his emotion in order to move forward. Calidore also exhibits a sound understanding of the specific qualities of certain emotions, like the difference between grief and fear. Such an understanding suggests that while Calidore’s interpretative skills are far from sophisticated, they are functional for the immediate suppression/understanding of emotion.

Moreover, as Coridon and Colin introduce their teaching and interpretative ideas through enacting them, so, too, does Calidore serve as an example of knightly behavior and action. As an example of courtesy, Calidore is a knight that exists somewhere in between the “outward shows” of courtesy Spenser critiques and ideal courtesy, rooted in divine love and understanding—courtesy that leads one to charitable action, not emotional reaction.

But while these teachings are somewhat positive in that they help Coridon *temporarily* overcome his emotions, his fear, Calidore teaches for his benefit, not

Coridon's. Calidore's motivations are, as always, single-tracked. Calidore needs Coridon to guide him to the place of Pastorell's alleged death. And when he firsts asks the frightened shepherd to take him, "...he [Coridon], whose hart through feare was late fordonne,/Would not for ought be drawne to former drede," (VI.xi.35). Coridon does not want to take Calidore to the place of the massacre, not necessarily because he currently feels fear, as seen in the narrator's choice of the past tense "*was late fordonne*", but because he does not want to experience these emotions again.

Coridon's earlier depiction of the events suggests that he has already used these emotions to prompt an interpretation of the events. He has used his emotions as a starting point for his interpretative journey and does not desire to return to these emotional beginnings.<sup>407</sup> Calidore does not understand this process because he does not truly understand the complexity of an exegetical schema that purports using emotion balanced with reason to generate multiple possibilities for meaning. Instead, as illustrated, Calidore works off of an interpretative schema that uses reason to suppress and repress emotion.

But when Coridon initially refuses to return to the place of the Pastorell's alleged death, Calidore, "so well him wrought with meed,/And faire bespoke with words, that he at last agreed" (VI.xi.35). Here, Calidore uses his eloquence to persuade Coridon to guide him. Again, his single-tracked focus of Pastorell, his desire to know what happened to her, fuels his actions. Calidore's guidance, which urges Coridon to suppress his grief, is more self-motivated than charitable. At this point Calidore is fully focused on his knightly task of saving Pastorell, at whatever cost.

---

<sup>407</sup> This reluctance to return to the earthly reminds us of Spenser's positioning of the Graces.



In many ways Calidore's shift from shepherdly desires to knightly ones return him to his original task to defeat the Blatant Beast. Though he is still physically in the pastures, intellectually he has returned to the epic action. This transition back to knightly ideals and actions, as well as setting, becomes complete after Calidore saves Pastorell and takes her to the castle of Bellamoure and Claribell. When back in the courtly setting, Calidore begins to consider his original task assigned by Gloriana. Thinking of this task, with which he has long delayed, he becomes "Asham'd to thinke, how he that enterprise,/The which the Faery Queene had so long afore/Bequeth'd to him, forslacked had so sore;/...Besides the losse of so much loos and fame,/As through the world thereby should glorifie his name" (VI.xii.12). Here, Calidore not only remembers his assigned task, but starts to worry about what not completing it may entail—that is, both losing the reputation he possesses and never gaining the fame he desires.

Calidore views his time in the pasture as a delay, thus placing the epic at odds with the pastoral, though it does not have to be. *Calidore* places the pastoral, the shepherdly, at odds with the epic, with the knightly, not necessarily Spenser or the reader. Calidore's most egregious error comes from losing sight of the epic while he was in the pastoral, and then forgetting his lessons from the pastoral when he returns to epic action.<sup>408</sup> Not seeing the mutual exclusivity in genres or modes may be what Colin and Meliboe ultimately tried to tell Calidore. Calidore's inability to perceive the two modes

---

<sup>408</sup> Catherine Bates considers Calidore's return to court after his recess in the pasture as representative of the motifs of return and circularity that sharply contrast with those of fragmentation and disruption. She comments, "...images of return (the return of words to meanings, of children to parents, of Calidore to court) conflict with a relentless centrifugal movement away from the center" (156). Moreover, "the cyclic structure of the poem as a whole (veering toward closure as it attempts to return to its pastoral origins) is flawed by the open-endedness created by the Blatant Beast" (169). See *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

together, as well as their lessons and virtues in consideration of each other, causes the disjunction often associated with Book VI.<sup>409</sup>

Again, this generic disunity is caused by Calidore's perception, not necessarily Spenser's or the reader's. In fact, the developing student-reader will be able to perceive the unity in the epic and pastoral genres, though Calidore cannot. In this regard, Spenser uses Calidore as a negative example of his teaching schema to better train his reader to both identify these places of error and read not as Calidore does. Essentially, Calidore, much like the courtesy he champions, is likeable, but limited.

Hermeneutically, Spenser's phrasing in the above passage considering Calidore's postponement of Gloriana's task is interesting in that he says that Calidore was "asham'd to think" when it actually seems as though he was ashamed to *feel* the regret. Spenser's implication that Calidore is ashamed to think returns us back to hermeneutic issues and Calidore's inability to exercise an exegetical practice that encourages thinking in the form of interpretation and contemplation. Again, Spenser seems to use Calidore to illustrate a contrasting type of interpretation. This contrasting example highlights the importance of a reason-based interpretative model, centered upon questioning and contemplation, to open the possibilities of meaning beyond a single one.

---

<sup>409</sup>Tracing Orphic imagery and characterization, James Neil Brown considers the pastoral reach of Colin's presence in Book VI to claim that Books I-V are a whole but Book VI unites Spenser's collection of work with his earlier pastorals. Pollock argues that part of the unity in the *FQ* comes from the reader's understanding and tracing of Spenser's shift from the "high heroic" to the pastoral. By the time the reader reaches Book VI, he knows how to contrast the heroic actions of Book I with the pastoral ones of Book VI. See James Neil Brown. "The Unity of *The Faerie Queene*, Books I-V." *Southern Review* (Australia) 10 (1977):3-21. Also see Zailig Pollock. *The Sacred Nursery of Virtue: The Pastoral Book of Courtesy and the Unity of "The Faerie Queene."* Norwood, PA.: Norwood Editions, 1977. For further discussions on the unity of Book VI and the *FQ* see Suzanne Woods. "Closure in *The Faerie Queene*." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 76 (1977):195-216; Stewart, Stanley. "Sir Calidore and 'Closure'." *Studies in English Literature* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1984):69-86.

The narrator's initial comments surrounding Caldiore's arrival at Bellamoure and Claribell's castle speak to Calidore's single-focus in a rather positive manner, as he re-focuses his attention on capturing the Blatant Beast. Using the image of a ship traversing the seas, the narrator comments:

Like as a ship, that through the Ocean wyde  
 Directs her course unto one certain cost,  
 Is met of many a counter winde and tyde,  
 With which her winged speed is let and crost,  
 ... Yet making many a borde, and many a bay,  
 Still winneth way, ne hath her compasse lost:  
 Right so fare it fares with me in this long way,  
 Where course is often stayd, yet never is astray. (VI.xii.1)

In this extended nautical image, the narrator suggests that the ship fighting strong winds and tides must sail side-to-side in order to forwardly travel towards the desired destination. This zigzagging practice would seem to suggest that the ship does not have a path or a destination. But a compass keeps the ship working towards its desired port. The ship is never astray, though it may seem like it.

Interestingly, this image could represent both the exegetical practices encouraged by the shepherds or the single-tracked method Caldiore has exercised throughout this tale. On one hand, the exegetical skills illustrated in the pasture urge one to consider many possible paths to truth and many possible meanings. Just like the ship that only *appears* to be lost, this multiplicity does not imply random wandering. Instead, it encourages exploring many possible directions and meanings to arrive at many possibilities for truth, rather than one. In this schema, the exegete's compass is reason, or faith, or charity. Here, it seems the compass and the skills to read it are more important than the port.

On the other hand, Calidore's interpretative practices are famously one-tracked. While he did change his destination, his goal, from defeating the Blatant Beast to wooing Pastorell, he never changed his method of transportation. For Calidore, his compass is courtesy, but his focus is always the destination. What makes him zigzag is changing his destinations, not his course. Any actions he employs on the journey are solely with his destination in mind. Therefore, as detailed throughout this analysis, considering many possibilities for meaning, many paths to his goal, does not benefit Calidore's goal-oriented methods. Instead, the single destination is all that concerns him, not the process of getting there.

But while this passage can be applied to both exegetical practices, the knightly and the shepherdly, the thread linking the pastoral teachings with those of the rest of the *FQ*, suggest that Spenser focuses on poetic practices as well as heroic ones. As Hamilton suggests in his reading of this passage, Spenser's poetic journey and the knight's are the same. And while Calidore's tale may "hath long delayed" it "hath not bene mis-sayd" (VI.xii.2). The same is true for Spenser's poetic task, as well. Though Calidore has been in the pasture, his courteous practices and actions have never changed, therefore keeping Spenser's commentary on courtesy in tact.

Hermeneutically, this keeping of outward courteous practices seems to be Calidore's shortcoming—that is, he has not successfully exercised the interpretative skills he encountered in the pasture. And this inability, or unwillingness, to consider multiple possibilities, multiple paths, towards meaning may eventually cost Calidore his reputation and Gloriana's favor.

This loss of reputation and favor, with regards to his pursuit of the Blatant Beast, could occur when Calidore's individual goals, his desire for fame, and his assigned ones, defeating the beast, seem to combat. This clashing is ultimately what allows the Blatant Beast to escape.

While these desires may seem one in the same because they are interrelated, they actually have different ends. To extend the nautical metaphor one last time, they may be the same voyage, the same route, but are ultimately different ports. Defeating the Blatant Beast will finally fulfill his promise to Gloriana. Defeating the Blatant Beast will *also* restore Calidore's reputation at Gloriana's court, and, ultimately, gain him the reputation and fame he desires. But as we shall see, Calidore's desire for fame causes him to lose the Blatant Beast and not fulfill his promise to Gloriana. True to form, he can only focus on one goal. And this is his ultimate flaw which undoes him by allowing a reputation for error to replace his past courteous actions.

Calidore's desire for fame is an extension of his limited interpretative skills, for the desire for fame can be a simplifying impulse, a simplified focus. And anything that is simplifying is suspicious. All knights desire fame. It is a natural part of courtesy, but it is a vexed concept; one that is troubled, yet worth troubling for. Even Arthur has a fame instinct, a praise desire, as seen in the episode in Alma's castle. But Arthur does not allow this praise desire to override his other knightly instincts nor his interpretative abilities. Calidore, does, however, seem to let his desire for a renewed reputation affect his knightly actions and desires.

Comparatively, favor seems to have purer motives. That is, favor suggests the desire for the good regard of someone in authority. Someone whose regard a knight

should be seeking. For Calidore, the favor of Gloriana is a praise desire the very nature of courtesy dictates he should seek. Yet, he appears to choose bolstering his reputation in the land of Faerie over repairing his reputation at court. His desire for fame ultimately compromises his knightly desires, the desires he champions as a knight of Courtesy.

As suggested, because Calidore does not utilize the exegetical skills he has been taught, his interpretative skills remain as simplified as his impulses and desires. Calidore's tactics for pursuing the Blatant Beast allow him to continue to rely on his skills of sensory perception. As he tracks the Blatant Beast he follows the visual trail of the Beast, the "...tract of his outrageous spoile" (VI.xii.22). Because everything concerning the Blatant Beast is outward and public—his insults, his method of attack, and his need for an audience—Calidore is able to employ his sensory skills to pursue him. Calidore does not have to employ any contemplative interpretative skills because it seems that nothing about the Blatant Beast is inward, let alone rational. Every action the Beast performs or any word he utters is for no one else's benefit but his own love of destruction.<sup>410</sup>

This implies that there is no meaning behind his actions, but there is one intention—to defame. The outward falsities of the Blatant Beast's words almost repel any sort of fruitful contemplation because no truth lies at the center of his words or

---

<sup>410</sup> Anne Forgarty claims that the Spenser cannot separate his roles as poet and colonizer. Examining the *Viewe of the Present State of Ireland* and Book VI of the *FQ* she claims that Spenser's politics represent themselves in a colonization of Ireland while his poetics show a colonization of language. In this schema, Calidore desires to subdue the "anarchic forces of language" illustrated in the Blatant Beast. See "The Colonization of Language: Narrative Strategy in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI." In *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, edited by Patricia Coughlan. Cork: Cork University Press, 1989, 75-108.

actions.<sup>411</sup> In this respect, the Blatant Beast is Calidore's ideal opponent because the Beast only encourages an either/or sort of interpretation—do you believe his words, or not.

Calidore discovers the Beast and attempts to do what no one has—control him.<sup>412</sup> Calidore can grapple with the “thousand tongues” of the Beast because he “no whit afrayd” (VI.xii.27,29). Most of the Beast's tongues “were tongues of mortall men,/ Which spake reproachfully, not caring where or when” suggesting that at the heart of the Beast's words is falsity, which is the greatest threat to a reputation (VI.xii.27). As he continues to battle the Beast, Calidore soon realizes that though he may not be able to slay the Beast, he can suppress him, by “mastering so with might” (VI.xii.31).<sup>413</sup> Just as Calidore suppresses emotions to avoid rash actions, so, too, does he use suppression to battle the Blatant Beast. He uses force, rather than reason, to suppress the Beast.

In some ways, Calidore's inability to reason with the Blatant Beast mirrors Artegall's episode with the Egalitarian Giant, whose logic defies rational discussion. And just as Calidore must employ action, here in the form of force, so, too, does Artegall use action, in that he has the Giant try to enact his false logic. But the difference between these two episodes, however, is that Artegall comes to this place of action because *he* uses reason to interpret the situation and switch his plan of attack. Calidore, on the other hand, physically reacts to the Beast's strength, realizing that he cannot defeat the Beast,

---

<sup>411</sup> Because of its reference to rumors and whispering slander, Gross identifies the Blatant Beast as an enemy of Spenser's epic. In fact, Spenser directly claims himself a victim of the Blatant Beast. Kenneth Gross. "Reflections on the Blatant Beast." *Spenser Studies* 13 (1999):101-124.

<sup>412</sup> Daniel Javitch identifies Colin's vision on Mt. Acidale, (“a poem in the making”), as Spenser's way of transforming Calidore “into a fully recognized agent of courtesy” which allows him to face and subdue the Blatant Beast (148). See *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

<sup>413</sup> Patrick J. Cook connects Calidore's capturing of the Blatant Beast with Hercules' bringing Cerberus into the upper world. *Milton, Spenser, and the Epic Tradition*. Aldershot: Scolar, 1996.

but he can cripple and suppress him. Artegall outsmarts the Giant, while Calidore outfights the Beast.

While it is the temporary way to contain the Blatant Beast, it is not the best way to defeat him. Hermeneutically, the use of force relates to an interpreter who reads for his own benefit and gain—he forces an interpretation to benefit himself, not necessarily work towards an understanding that generates many possible potentials for a passage or situation. Calidore’s use of force to suppress the Beast, generates an outcome that is eventually fruitful for his reputation, but not for the good of Gloriana, her court, or Faeryland.<sup>414</sup>

Eventually Calidore, “...tooke a muzzell strong/Of surest yron, made with many a lincke;/Therwith he mured up his mouth along,/And therein shut up his blasphemous tong,” (VI.xii.34). Calidore is able to successfully suppress and control the Blatant Beast.<sup>415</sup> But instead of delivering the Beast to Gloriana, Calidore, perhaps concerned with his reputation and fame, decides to parade him through Faeryland.<sup>416</sup> As he does so, “...All such persons, as he [the Blatant Beast] earst did wrong,/Rejoyced much to see his captive plight,/And much admyr’d the Beast, *but more admyr’d the Knight*” (VI.xii.37, *my italics*). It seems that Calidore’s one-sided campaign for fame is successful as his

---

<sup>414</sup> Hadfield considers the “fear of disunification and fragmentation” of English identity (587). In this analysis, he views the presence of the Blatant Beast as an appeal to the archaic idea of Britain to unite the peoples of the British Isles. See “Spenser, Drayton, and the Question of Britain.” *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 51 (2000):582-599.

<sup>415</sup> Thomas Francis Bulger argues that Calidore conditionally attains “historical self-awareness” when he captures the Blatant Beast. See *The Historical Changes and Exchanges as Depicted by Spenser in "The Faerie Queene."* Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993.

<sup>416</sup> Harry Berger considers Calidore’s capture of the Blatant Beast as “wish-fulfillment” and the temporary defeat of the Beast as “the most ridiculous of all Elfin homecomings” (43). See Berger “A Secret Discipline: *The Faerie Queene* Book VI” from *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*. Ed. William Nelson. New York: Columbia University, 1961, 35-75.



reputation is both mended and bolstered. Calidore has momentarily fulfilled his fame desire.

Unfortunately, this fame eventually becomes for negative reasons, for, “...whether wicked fate so framed,/Or fault of men, he [the Blatant Beast] broke his yron chaine,/And got into the world at liberty againe” (VI.xii.38). Calidore’s desire for self-benefitting, earthly fame instead of charitable action or favor overshadowed both his knightly instincts and his desire to please Gloriana. While Calidore was not afraid of the Beast’s words or tongues, he was concerned with his reputation. And it is this concern for his reputation that causes Calidore to act solely out of personal desire, out of emotion, rather than for the general social betterment.

However, losing the Blatant Beast stems from a larger issue than weak chain links or even fate. Throughout his journey, Calidore makes two choices that force him to decide between one goal and another and that, as a result, directly affect his reputation. The first is his decision to stay in the pasture, to pursue Pastorell rather than pursue the Blatant Beast. The second choice is between fame or favor. Bringing the Beast to Gloriana’s court would allow her to show that the beast was wrong, that the slander was untrue. But Calidore takes this responsibility upon himself. He decides to parade the Blatant Beast around the countryside instead of return the Beast to Gloriana as instructed. Overtly, this accomplishes the same ends as if Gloriana would have possessed the chained Beast. But Calidore’s motivations in this choice are questionable. Perhaps Calidore desires to renew his public reputation by parading the Blatant Beast around Faeryland rather than repair his courtly reputation with Gloriana by either slaying the beast or bringing him to court.

Both of these decisions ultimately affect his reputation and relate to Gloriana. By choosing to remain in the pasture, Calidore suspends his promise to Gloriana, thus possibly risking falling out of favor with the Queen. By choosing to parade the Beast rather than return it, Calidore chooses fame over favor. Ultimately, Calidore repels the courtesy he is supposed to champion—he thinks of himself rather than his Queen—leading to a tarnished reputation.<sup>417</sup> But had Calidore employed contemplation, he could have understood the consequences of his choices.

These choices relate to the ones Arthur had to make in the Mirabella episode discussed earlier. In this episode, Arthur could have slain Disdaine and Scorn and enhanced his reputation, but it would only have benefitted him. Instead, he chose to let Mirabella make the choice that would best benefit her. Calidore does not seem to consider the many options or effects of his actions. Instead, he, again, only employs an either/or vision onto both the Beast itself and the effects of catching him. It seems he perceives the power of his opponent, but not the complexity.

Each of Calidore's choices reflect a myopic perception—one focused on himself. He stays in the pasture because *he* desires Pastorell. He travels with the Blatant Beast because *he* desires fame. In this light, his delays do not ruin his reputation, his repelling of courtesy for his own desires does. Calidore's demise *does* come from employing a one-track perception, but not necessarily solely in contrast to generating multiple possibilities. Instead, Calidore cannot balance his courteous desires and his personal ones. It becomes an issue of choosing between possible goals, not methods or meanings. In this regard, Calidore never truly grasps what he was exposed to in the pasture because he can never entertain more than one meaning, more than one goal.

---

<sup>417</sup> Ironically, the Blatant Beast is able to defame Calidore without ever saying a word.

Had he heeded any of the lessons he experienced in the pasture, perhaps he could have used contemplation to understand that his quest for favor and his quest for fame were really one in the same, for with contemplation, seemingly opposed modes can be reconciled. His quest for favor and his quest for fame are both possible interpretive results, or potentials, of his assigned quest. Basically, he did not have to choose between Gloriana's favor and his own fame. He could have chosen to not choose between the two and attained both. Yet, his myopic vision, his either/or interpretation, kept him from perceiving this. While this choice may not have been an option in his first decision to stay in the pasture versus continuing to pursue the Blatant Beast because he had not yet been exposed to the teachings of the shepherds.

However, in his second decision to pursue fame rather than favor, Calidore could have employed some of the exegetical principles he encountered in the pasture, in order to expand his vision beyond one possibility, beyond one choice. In effect, Calidore's failure to perceive choice as an opportunity to generate multiple potentials rather than choose between two options results in his enactment of non-courteous principles. This enactment of self-centered actions leads to his defaming and, possibly, his disfavor.

Calidore's inability to employ interpretation and contemplation to widen his scope of meaning to include more than sensory appearances proves his ultimate shortcoming and the cause of his error. His reluctance to generate more than an either/or choice becomes reflected in these hermeneutic inadequacies. Spenser provides him with ample teaching opportunities and examples to encourage him away from his myopic vision, yet Calidore refuses to consider how these lessons from the pasture can beneficially effect his actions in the epic. Calidore's refusal makes him a negative example of knightliness and

the ultimate teaching tool for Spenser's ever-evolving reader. By offering a sound teaching schema, Spenser uses Calidore and his shortcomings to teach his reader how to correctly and incorrectly react and interpret a myriad of situations.

Compared to Spenser's other knights, like Redcrosse, who eventually turns his exegetical weaknesses into strengths, or Artegall, who, rather self-sufficiently, continually uses reason to combat error, Calidore is an example of a knight whose deficiencies remain deficiencies. Ultimately, these limits associated with Calidore reflect the limits Spenser perceives with the sole pursuit of the courtesy. Courtesy without virtue, just like sensory interpretation without reason, will always remain bound to the earthly confines of emotion and pride.