

CHATTERTON LECTURE ON POETRY

Edmund Spenser,
Poet of Exile

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W.B. YEATS accounted Spenser ‘the first poet who gave his heart to the State’, the first, that is, to make the poetic service greater than the political god.¹ Or goddess, rather. In so far as she attempted to personify the state, ‘fayre Elisa, Queene of shepherdes all’ appropriated public service to personal cult, patriotism to private devotion.² To serve the country was to serve its Queen. As a result, expressions of frustrated political ambition frequently take the form of amorous pastoral complaint, *The Ocean’s Love to Cynthia* being, perhaps, the most striking example.³ Given his attachment to Raleigh and his exile from the lady they both hoped to serve, albeit in different ways, it is hardly surprising that Spenser’s fictional *alter ego*, Colin Clout, should forever retain the *persona* of unrequited pastoral lover, humbly attributing his persistent failure to the social disparity between himself and his object: ‘Not then to her that scorned thing so base,/ But to my selfe the blame that lookt so hie’ (935–6). In fact, Spenser’s position was a good deal more complex

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¹ W.B. Yeats, ed., *Poems of Spenser* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. xxxiv. All quotations of Spenser’s poetry are from *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, edited by Edwin Greenlaw *et al.*, Variorum Edition, 11 vols (Baltimore, 1932–58), I–VIII. Prose quotations are from *Spenser’s Prose Works*, edited by Rudolf Gottfried, Variorum Edition, IX (1949). Hereafter *Prose*.

² See E.C. Wilson, *England’s Eliza* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939); Roy C. Strong, ‘The Popular Celebration of the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth I’, *JWCI*, 21 (1958), 86–103; *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1977).

³ Donald Davie, ‘A Reading of *The Ocean’s Love to Cynthia*’, in John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, ed., *Elizabethan Poetry*, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 2 (London, 1960), 71–90 (p. 73).

than Yeats allowed. Although commonly remembered as *the* Elizabethan court poet *par excellence*, he spent remarkably little time at the court of 'Gloriana'. All genteel pretensions to the contrary, he was not a courtier but a colonist. The years of his poetic and political maturity were passed not at the centre but on the periphery of the Elizabethan state, not in the city but in the wilderness.⁴ Exile and the conditions of exile preoccupy much of his canon. Paradoxically, one might say that the ardour of Spenser's devotion to the state was born of exclusion from it. That being the case, the subject of the present paper is the effect of Spenser's Irish experience upon the form and content of his poetic work, the degree to which our traditional 'English' Spenser is the product of an Irish environment, the product of mortal conflict between two irreconcilable cultures.

For Spenser, the enterprise of Ireland was as much personal as political. Ireland's 'savagery' was the planter's opportunity. As in the case of the New World, to dismiss the indigenous population as 'savages' was *ipso facto* to legitimize their conquest while at the same time insulating the conqueror from the more disturbing implications of perceived cultural difference.⁵ For second sons, impoverished soldiers and indigent poets, Ireland afforded the otherwise impossible prospect of ascent to the ranks of the landed gentry. While the heroes of *The Faerie Queene* are careful to disclaim all desire for 'meed', the persistent reference to land as 'commodity' in *A Vewe of the Present State of Irelande* puts a somewhat unromantic gloss upon the operations of Gloriana's knights.⁶ 'The drifte of my purpose', remarks Irenius, is 'to settle an eternall peace in that Countrie and allsoe to make it verie *profitable* to her maiestie' (p. 197). The values of the poetry are hereby costed in the prose, sometimes to the last pound. To the more cynical Elizabethan observer, Spenser was one of those pitiable have-nots who 'shifted' to 'the wolvisch westerne isle' choosing to live, in desperate pursuit of fame and fortune, 'among the savage Kernes in sad exile'.⁷ His condemnation of the Celtic clans for their failure to observe the English code of primogeniture is thus richly ironic since many of his

⁴ Pauline Henley, *Spenser in Ireland* (Cork, 1928), pp. 45–70, 168–91.

⁵ David Beers Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), pp. 106–22; A. Bartlett Giamatti, 'Primitivism and the Process of Civility in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', in Fredi Chiapelli, ed., *First Images of America*, 2 vols (Berkeley, 1976), I, 71–82; Nicholas Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World 1560–1800* (Baltimore, 1988), pp. 2, 33, 35.

⁶ *Prose*, pp. 62, 115, 149, 181–3, 185–6; Edwin Greenlaw, 'Spenser and British Imperialism', *MP*, 9 (1911–12), 347–70 (p. 366); Raymond Jenkins, 'Spenser and the Clerkship in Munster', *PMLA*, 47 (1932), 109–21 (pp. 116–17); Alexander Judson, 'Spenser and the Munster Officials', *SP*, 44 (1947), 157–73 (p. 172). Simon Shepherd, *Spenser* (Atlantic Heights, N.J., 1989), pp. 9, 51–5.

⁷ Joseph Hall, *Collected Poems*, edited by Arnold Davenport (Liverpool, 1949), p. 66.

comrades were its refugees, a point not lost upon contemporary Celtic commentators who frequently allude to the low social status of the so-called 'New English'.⁸ In them, Spenser acquired a readership quite distinct from that of the home market, a readership for whom the imperial allegory of *The Faerie Queene* translated all too readily into oppressive colonial policy. By counterpointing their views against those of Spenser—for they were neither 'wild' nor inarticulate—one arrives at a clearer understanding of the complementary relationship between his poetic and political agendas.

The problem was that exile begat exile. The settlement of Elizabethan planters necessitated the dispossession from ancestral lands of people who could by no legitimate standards be described as savage, if only by virtue of the ancient Christianity which sufficiently distinguished them from the denizens of the New World. But popular reformation polemic allowed the appropriation of the term 'Christian' to the Protestant cause while relegating the hosts of Antichrist to that of pagan or 'paynim'. Thus *The Faerie Queene* envisages a world divided between civil Christians and barbarous Infidels, a pattern established in Ariosto and Tasso but ingeniously adapted to a new crusade far closer to home. As both poet and politician, Spenser needed a 'salvage' island—such as might be 'salvaged' by reformers like himself—and duly created one in the strident State Letters written on behalf of Lord Grey, in the harsh political injunctions of *A Vewe of the Present State of Irelande*, and the haunting, hostile landscape of *The Faerie Queene* whose beauty invariably proves inextricable from its peril.⁹ By personifying the land while dehumanising its inhabitants, Spenser transformed poetic allegory into a powerful tool of colonial polemic, facilitating the presentation of violent conquest as civil reclamation.

Through the carefully deployed imagery of pruning and physic the destructive energies of violence are sublimated into charitable duties. We are given to understand that the *Vewe* undertakes no more than the cultivation of an estate gone to seed, the 'cure' of a sick body politic (p. 146), and 'wheare no other remedye maie be dezived nor no hope of recoverie had', violent means 'muste neds . . . be used' (p. 148).¹⁰ The very term 'plantation' suggests the cultivation of previously barren

⁸ *Prose*, pp. 203, 210; Quinn, *Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 39.

⁹ For the State Letters see Raymond Jenkins, 'Newes out of Munster, a Document in Spenser's Hand', *SP*, 32 (1935), 125–30; Raymond Jenkins, 'Spenser with Lord Grey in Ireland', *PMLA*, 52 (1937), 338–53; Raymond Jenkins, 'Spenser: The Uncertain Years 1584–89', *PMLA*, 53 (1938), 350–62.

¹⁰ For a fuller account of these rhetorical strategies see Richard A. McCabe, 'The Fate of Irena: Spenser and Political Violence', in Patricia Coughlan, ed., *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Cork, 1989), pp. 109–25 (p. 114).

soil. Repeatedly in Spenser's usage, the figurative meaning draws moral support from the literal. Husbandry he deemed the 'moste naturall' (p. 216) of all human occupations, but in order to husband the soil one must 'plant' colonies of cultivators, and in order to 'plant' colonists one must 'plant' garrisons to protect them. Thus an agricultural image gradually develops military connotations with the result that dubious policies appear to acquire the validity of natural law: the iron man Talus who represents the force of Elizabethan military might 'scatters' the Irish landscape with the corpses of recalcitrant rebels, 'as thicke as . . . seede after the sowers hand' (V.12.7). By contrast, in one of the most celebrated of all Gaelic exile poems, 'Óm Sceol ar Ardmhagh Fáil' ('At the News from Fál's High Plain'), the Celtic poet and historian Geoffrey Keating inverts Spenser's imagery by comparing the proliferation of colonists to that of cockle in a wheatfield. The sole remaining hope is that a carefully winnowed Celtic harvest may be shipped overseas.¹¹

Spenser ignored such consequences, presenting military conflict as a moral duty and colonisation as its inevitable consequence (p. 85). Thus he claims Ireland by right of ancient conquest—an achievement disclaimed even in Holinshed—while at the same time urging that it be conquered anew by his own contemporaries (pp. 55–6).¹² Despite its illogicality, however, the concept of conquest proved too potent to resist, associated as it was with the martial heroism central to national epic. By representing the possession of his own remote Irish estate as an act of conquest, Spenser afforded himself the somewhat illusory satisfaction of extending his English homeland rather than living in exile from it. Once the great work of 'reformation' was complete, Kilcolman would become an English estate and Edmund Spenser would indeed be 'home againe'. As matters stood, however, Spenser could neither regard Munster as home nor resign it to the 'meare' Irish whose gradual repossession of ancestral territories 'aliened' them from the English crown (p. 118).¹³ His

¹¹ Religion too must be 'planted' in the wake of conquest, *Prose*, p. 221. For similar uses of this imagery see Nicholas Canny, 'Edmund Spenser and the Development of an Anglo-Irish Identity', *YES*, 13(1983), 1–19 (p. 15). For Keating see Seán Ó Tuama, ed., *An Duanair 1600–1900: Poems of the Dispossessed*, translated by Thomas Kinsella (Portlaoise, 1981), pp. 84–7.

¹² 'A conquest draweth . . . to it three things, to wit, law, apparell, and language. For where the countrie is subdued, there the inhabitants ought to be ruled by the same law that the conqueror is governed, to weare the same fashion of attire wherwith the victor is vested, and speake the same language that the vanquisher parleth.' *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols (London, 1808), VI, 5.

¹³ 'Meare' in this context signifies 'pure' or racially unmixed but its pejorative meaning may also operate. 'The Irish generally', remarks Sir John Davies, 'were held and reputed *Aliens*, or rather enemies to the Crowne of *England*; insomuch, as they were not only disabled to bring anie actions, but they were so farre out of the protection of the Lawe, as it was often adjudged no felony to kill a meere Irish-man in the time of peace'. *A Discoverie of the True Causes why Ireland was never Entirely Subdued* (London, 1612), p. 102.

proposal to transplant the Ulster clans to Leinster and their counterparts to Ulster—much as Prince Arthur lifts the emaciated Maleger from the native soil which ‘as his life decayd,/ Did life with usury to him restore’ (II.11.45)—manifests a determination to eradicate the very essence of Gaelic culture of which he ranks as possibly the most acute but certainly the least sympathetic of observers, displaying what one colonial historian has well termed ‘the paradox of the understanding-that-kills’ (pp. 178–9).¹⁴ Since dispersal and dispossession were prime colonial aims, denigration of the Celtic bards, particularly skilled at relating genealogy to place, became a political necessity. Poet was set implacably against poet.

Amongst the most distinguished of Spenser’s Gaelic contemporaries was Tadhg Dall Ó’Huiginn (1550–91) whose eulogy of the Maguire stronghold of Enniskillen, a ‘fairy castle of surpassing treasure . . . full of poets and minstrels, from one bright, shining wall to the other . . . a mighty band of elfin youth . . . such that eye dared not regard them’, paints a splendid portrait of Gaelic culture as remote from Spenser’s ‘salvage nacion’ as well could be. Indeed, the bard’s employment of a fairy mythology strikingly reminiscent of Spenser’s own suggests an underlying similarity his English antagonist would certainly have been loath to admit. A distinguishing factor, however, is the grim premonition that the bard may outlive the culture which alone makes such poetry possible: ‘would I had consumed the end of my days, lest I be longlived when all the rest have gone, it is perilous to survive one’s world’.¹⁵ Weighed against such humane sensitivity, the crude rhetoric of cultural inferiority may be seen to supply even more vital succour to the unconscious psychology of colonialism—to its desperate need for self-justification—than to its conscious politics. Ironically, however, the official prestige enjoyed by the Gaelic bards—to which Spenser attests with obvious discomfort (p. 124)—far exceeded that of their English counterparts as (apparently) did their public influence. The ‘Enniskillen’ poem celebrates a fully integrated society of chieftain, warrior, priest and poet of the sort to which Spenser himself vainly aspired; it was the presumed political efficacy of the Gaelic poets that rendered them so menacing. Thus, Celtic society confronted Spenser with the enticing

¹⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, translated by Richard Howard (New York, 1982), p. 127. For the influence of the Munster Famine upon emaciated personifications such as Maleger see M.M. Gray, ‘The Influence of Spenser’s Irish Experiences on *The Faerie Queene*’, *RES*, 6 (1930), 413–28 (pp. 423–8).

¹⁵ *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó’Huiginn* edited and translated by Eleanor Knott, Irish Texts Society, 2 vols (London, 1984—first pub. 1922–6), I, 73–6, 79; II, 49–50, 52. Hereafter *Bardic Poems*. Occasionally it has proved necessary to revise Knott’s very literal translations in order to capture something of the bard’s poetic quality.

image of his own dearest ambitions and an element of peculiarly demonic wish-fulfilment may have led him to attribute to his Celtic rivals far greater influence than they actually possessed. Apparently it was comforting to believe that somewhere in the world, if only in the wilderness, some poets exercised power, albeit the wrong poets.

Literary historians disagree as to whether the Irish poets of Spenser's day articulated a truly nationalist stance transcending the petty dynastic factionalism of previous centuries. Bardic poetry, it has been argued, is rigidly 'conventional' and conflicting claims of political primacy are made on behalf of numerous chieftains in accordance with the varying demands of individual patronage.¹⁶ Yet context remains the best interpreter of 'convention', as Spenser was quick to recognise. Whatever the intention of the bards, the reception of their work amongst the colonists is a separate issue. Since *The Faerie Queene* itself employs a wide range of stock poetic conventions to promote an urgent political agenda, there was no reason to suppose otherwise of the bards whose work, Spenser concluded, tended 'for the moste parte to the hurte of the Englishe or mayntenaunce of their owne lewd libertie' (p. 125). His own insistence upon English nationalism led him to dichotomise the Irish situation in such a way as to ensure a nationalist reading of the Gaelic poets. Tadhg Dall's accomplished eclogue casting Brian Maguire as a pastoral magus encircling Fermanagh with a fiery wall would have the same topicality for Spenser's contemporaries as the heavily 'conventionalized' eulogy of 'fayre Elisa' in *The Shepheardes Calender*. The poem inciting Brian na Murrtha to unite Gaelic chieftains in a march on Dublin until the Pale ran red with blood would merely confirm such readings.¹⁷

Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne's father was credited by Tadhg Dall with an invincible fairy lance—much like that wielded by Britomart—and magic armour impervious to enemy blades—much like that worn by Arthur and George.¹⁸ Locked in the fastnesses of Glenmalure on the very borders of the Pale, Feagh himself constituted an imminent threat to its continued existence. Yet in a remarkable passage of the *Vewe*,

¹⁶ Brendan Bradshaw, 'Native Reaction to the Westward Enterprise: a Case-Study in Gaelic Ideology', in K. R. Andrews, N.P. Canny and P.E. Hair, *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480–1650* (Liverpool, 1978), pp. 65–80. T.J. Dunne, 'The Gaelic Response to Conquest and Colonisation: The Evidence of the Poetry', in *Studia Hibernica*, 20 (1980) 7–30; Nicholas Canny, 'The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature 1580–1750', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), 91–116.

¹⁷ *Bardic Poems*, I, 86, 118–19; II, 57, 78–9.

¹⁸ *Bardic Poems*, I, 254–5; II, 168. Richard Stanyhurst had compared Irish horsemen to knights of the Round Table and Spenser himself endorses their prowess: *Holinshed*, VI, 68; *Prose*, p. 122.

indicative of a radical ambivalence underlying Spenser's attitudes, he is grudgingly praised for raising himself, 'to that heighte that he nowe dare front Princes And make termes with greate Potentates, the which as it is to him honorable so is to them moste disgracefull to be bearded of suche a base varlet' (p. 172). In this passage, Spenser's instinctive respect for heroic self-fashioning, the very stuff of his own fairy mythology, appears to have extorted a complimentary aside before the mentality of the public official reasserted itself in orthodox condemnation of a 'varlet'. The poets patronised by O'Byrne urged him to abandon factionalism and unite all local clans against the common enemy.¹⁹ The call is doubtless time-honoured and 'conventional' but such was Spenser's regard for the effect of 'sweete invencions' upon 'braue yonge mindes' (pp. 125–6), for what Sir Philip Sidney terms the moral *praxis* of poetic convention, that he discovered in the bards a vitality and relevance frequently missed by modern commentators.²⁰ The very call for their suppression was a bizarre form of aesthetic appreciation.²¹

The Irish context of *The Faerie Queene* is established at the outset by dedicatory sonnets to Lord Arthur Grey, former Lord Deputy, Sir John Norris, Lord President of Munster, the Earl of Ormond, foremost of the Anglo-Norman peers, and Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser's fellow planter. These attest to a desperate sense of artistic isolation in a 'savadge soyle, far from Parnasso mount' (Grey).²² Despite similarities between his own literary career and that of Virgil in their common movement from eclogue to epic, it soon becomes clear that Spenser enjoys the patronage of no Augustus, that his position is, in fact, closer to that of the exiled Ovid. Nor is it merely a question of geographical distance but rather of the

¹⁹ Bradshaw, 'Native Reaction', pp. 75–8. Tadhg Dall Ó'Huiginn remarks on the duty of the poets to give such advice: 'great unfriendliness were it did none of the poets . . . say to the men of *Fódlá* that they should declare war upon the foreigner' (*Bardic Poems*, II, 73).

²⁰ G. Gregory Smith, ed., *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1904), I, 171.

²¹ For the ordinance of 1579 against 'rhymers, bards, harpers or such idle persons' see Henley, p. 106. For Spenser's endorsement of it see *Prose*, p. 219. In *The Faerie Queene* Malfont 'the bold title of a poet bad . . . on himselfe had ta'en, and rayling rhymes had sprad' (V.9.25–6). An Irish association is likely. In *The Romaunt of the Rose* Wikkid-Tunge's predilection for slander 'sat hym well of his lynage,/ For hym an Irish womman bar' (3807–11).

²² His choice of names for his two sons, Sylvanus and Peregrine, points in the same direction. William Camden explains Peregrine as 'Strange, or outlandish' and Sylvanus as 'Woodman, or rather Wood-god', *Remaines Concerning Britaine* (London, 1605), pp. 67, 70. Peregrine and Sylvane figure as speakers in *A Book of the State of Ireland* (1599) apparently written by Spenser's neighbour Hugh Cuffe in imitation of the *Vewe*. See Rudolf B. Gottfried, 'Spenser's View and Essex', *PMLA*, 52 (1937), 645–51 (pp. 647–8).

cultural implications for *The Faerie Queene's* avowed purpose to 'fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'. Courtly 'fashions' rapidly transmute into colonial 'disciplines' when transplanted to an environment 'through long wars left almost waste,/ With brutish barbarisme . . . overspredd' (Ormond). Now it is the Celts who must be 'framed and fashioned' (p. 240) to bring them 'from their delighte of licentious barbarisme unto the love of goodnes and Civilitye' (p. 54), and the quality of the required 'discipline' alters considerably. Spenser has made his own the Roman ideal of cultivating 'savage' peoples, formerly espoused in Ireland by Sir Thomas Smith.²³ Had not Camden lamented the Romans' failure to reach Ireland thereby rendering England's burden all the heavier?²⁴

Spenser's attitude to the cultural duties of conquest is largely responsible for transforming a national epic into a colonial romance. Because of its engagement with current affairs, *The Faerie Queene* functions not merely as a passive reflection of political events but as an active expression of history in the making, an essential document of the imperial ideal fashioned by one of its most articulate exponents. Yet the practice of defining civil ideals by their 'savage' antitheses is hazardous, particularly in the context of military conflict. In such circumstances intended contrasts collapse all too easily into unintentional comparisons, betraying the common heritage of 'civil' and 'savage', the embarrassing kinship of self and other. It may then prove, 'that what were conceived as distinguishing characteristics of the marginal are in fact the defining qualities of the central object of consideration'.²⁵ Throughout *The Faerie Queene* Spenser presents virtue militant rather than achieved, embattled rather than secure, with the result that negative, repressive energies frequently usurp their positive counterparts. In fact, achievement invariably entails suppression. In the poem, cultivation of civil selves necessitates suppression of savage others. In Ireland, the other is identified with the Irish and the quest for civility with a struggle for conquest ironically entailing the employment of 'savage' methods. Ireland resembles the fairy realm in that the further inland one proceeds the

²³ Nicholas Canny, 'The Permissive Frontier: the Problem of Social Control in English Settlements in Ireland and Virginia 1550–1650', in K.R. Andrews, ed., *Westward Enterprise*, pp. 17–44 (pp. 18–19); Walter J. Ong, 'Spenser's *View* and the Tradition of the 'Wild' Irish', *MLQ*, 3 (1942), 561–71 (pp. 564–5, 568).

²⁴ *Britain, or a Chorographical Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland*, translated by Philemon Holland (London, 1610), p. 66. The Irish section is separately paginated.

²⁵ John Sturrock, ed., *Structuralism and Since* (Oxford, 1979), p. 168.

greater, certainly, the possibility of self-discovery, but greater still the risk of self-disclosure.²⁶

Within the poem celebration of national achievement is severely qualified by awareness of inter-racial failure: what might have remained culturally monolithic, if written from the perspective of the court, is fissured with the anxieties of cultural difference. As the poem stands, the wilderness is fully realised while the court remains abstract and remote. Hence one detects a constant sense of disorder and dislocation perceptible from the outset in the divergence between the plan set out in the prefatory 'Letter to Raleigh', centring upon Gloriana's court, and the text which proceeds to defy it. Of particular interest is the Fairy Queen's failure to make a single appearance in the poem that bears her name. She is discussed, desired, idealized, envisioned, fleetingly apprehended in a myriad of male and female surrogates, but never present. She is to the world of the poem what Elizabeth was to Ireland, a remote authority figure acting through deputies and substitutes. In England the 'cult' of Elizabeth was sustained by personal visibility, by progresses, processions, visitations and public speeches, none of which were accessible to her Irish subjects.²⁷ Not surprisingly, Spenser identifies the absence of the monarch (or an 'absolute' Vice Regent) as the single factor most detrimental to the struggle for 'civility' in Ireland (p. 55).²⁸

During the 1580s, owing to the continued popularity of *The Shepheardes Calender*, Spenser was primarily acclaimed as a pastoral poet, yet the topography of *The Faerie Queene* marks a significant divergence from that tradition. The contrast illustrates the degree to which the earlier pastoral, despite its gestures towards rural almanacs, was primarily conceived as an exercise in courtly taste.²⁹ As employed in the 'July' eclogue, for example, the word 'kerne' possesses none of the savage connotations attributed to

²⁶ Ireland was one of the few places where trial by combat, of the sort common in *The Faerie Queene*, was still allowed and where knighthoods were conferred on active service. See Holinshed, VI, 455; Raymond Jenkins, 'Spenser and Ireland', *ELH*, 19 (1952), 131–42 (p. 133).

²⁷ Richard Helgerson, 'The Land Speaks: Cartography, Chorography, and Subversion in Renaissance England', in Stephen Grenblatt, ed., *Representing the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 327–61 (p. 356).

²⁸ Spenser calls for a supreme 'Lorde Liuetennante' (presumably Essex) with 'absolute' powers, *Prose*, pp. 188, 228–9, 428–9. For the absence of the monarch and the limitations of the office of Lord Deputy see Ciaran Brady, 'Court, Castle, and Country: the Framework of Government in Tudor Ireland', in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, ed., *Natives and Newcomers: Essay on the Making of Irish Colonial Society 1534–1641* (Dublin, 1986), pp. 22–49 (pp. 30–4, 38).

²⁹ William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature* (Harmondsworth, 1966—first pub. 1935), pp. 17–18, 22–3, 63; Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes", and the Pastoral of Power', *ELR*, 10 (1980), 153–82; Louis Adrian Montrose, 'Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form', *ELH*, 50 (1983), 415–59.

it in the *Vewe*: ‘cruell and bloddye, full of revenge . . . Comon ravishers of weomen and murderers of Children’ (p. 123).³⁰ In moving to Ireland Spenser transferred from pastoral as literary genre to pastoral as way of life—and despised it. Yeats captured the paradox brilliantly when he observed that, ‘though he dreamed of Virgil’s shepherds he wrote a book to advise . . . the harrying of all that followed flocks upon the hills, and of all the “wandering companies that keep the woods”’.³¹ The quotation from the *Vewe* is particularly apt since its poetic cadence resists its polemic intent. Acting as colonial politician, Spenser determined to destroy what he had previously celebrated: the essential liberty of the pastoral life-style. Since he now contends that husbandry and urban settlement are the essence of ‘civility’, he persistently attacks as vagabonds, in the diction of the Elizabethan Statute Book, figures who might previously have inspired him to idyllic reverie.³²

Not the ‘enamell’d fields’ of Renaissance pastoral but Ireland’s ‘wastfull wilderness’ informs the landscape of *The Faerie Queene* (I.8.50).³³ The hostile topography of Book One, for example, is everywhere redolent of the ‘salvage’ ethos beyond the the Pale with its treacherous forests, isolated cabins, and ‘woodborne’ ‘salvage nation’, ‘a rude, misshapen, monstrous rablement’, remarkably reminiscent of John Derricke’s Irish ‘woodkerne’, who distort religious truth into superstitious idolatry (I.6.8–19).³⁴ ‘Salvage nacion’ is the phrase used of the Irish in the very first sentence of the *Vewe* thereby defining the work’s cultural outlook. Little wonder, then, that Despair exploits a questing knight’s desire to ‘come unto his wished home in haste’ (I.9.39). Religion lies at the heart of the issue since the supreme shepherd of this fallen Arcadia is ‘the greate Pastor Peters successour’ (p. 138). Living ‘downe in a dale, hard by a forests side’, Archimago is the typical caricature of an Irish seminary priest—‘He told of Saintes and Popes, and evermore/ He strowd an *Ave-Mary* after and before’ (I.1.35)—who would have St George ‘drinke of that Cupp of fornicacion with which the Purple Harlot had then made all nacions drunken’ (p. 137).³⁵ Even Spenser’s most daringly Apocalyptic imagery bears specific relation to the one ‘popish’ country he actually knew, the one whose religious reformation was desired for primarily political reasons: fear of imperial

³⁰ E.K. defines ‘kerne’ simply as ‘Churle or Farmer’.

³¹ *Poems*, ed., Yeats, p. xxxiv; See *Prose*, p. 149.

³² *Prose*, pp. 97–8, 128. See Quinn, *Elizabethans and the Irish*, pp. 55, 77, 123, 149.

³³ See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (St Albans, 1975—first pub. 1973), p. 36.

³⁴ *The Image of Irelande with a Discoverie of Woodkarne*, edited in facsimile by John Small (Edinburgh, 1883—first pub. 1581), pp. 31–8, 51–5.

³⁵ ‘They say alwaies both before and after their charmes, a *Pater Noster*, and an *Ave Maria*’. Camden, *Britain*, p. 146.

Spain and promotion of land-hungry planters—twin facets, perhaps, of the same acquisitive mentality (I.8.13–14).

Potentially Ireland was another Eden, ‘a moste bewtifull and swete Countrie as/ anye is under heaven, seamed thoroughe out with manye goodlye rivers . . . sprinckled with manye swete Ilandes and goodlye lakes like little Inlande seas, that will carye even shipps uppon their waters, adorned with goodly woodes fitt for buildinge of howsses and shipps so comodiously as that if some princes in the worlde had them they woulde soone hope to be Lordes of all the seas and ere long of all the worlde’ (p. 62).³⁶ This is an extraordinary passage. Aesthetic appreciation of natural beauty gradually modulates, through plans for its commercial exploitation, into fantasies of world empire as beauty, money and power coalesce. Ideally the countryside should serve the court. As matters stand, however, Ireland’s ‘commodious’ landscape is wasted upon ‘idle’ pastoral inhabitants who choose to leave it, contrary to the English practice, unenclosed and therefore ‘wyld’ and ‘desart’. ‘This Chieflye redoundethe to the good of the whole Comon wealthe’, Spenser remarks, oblivious to the irony implicit in ‘comon’, ‘to have the lande . . . enclosed and well fenced’ (p. 135). Private property inspires his civil aesthetic, well-tilled fields rather than common pasture.³⁷

Uncultivated landscape was all the more perilous because of its seductive beauty: the fascinating forests that dominate so much of the Irish countryside, as also that of *The Faerie Queene*, are places of mortal danger (p. 151).³⁸ The first episode of the poem sees St George plunging unwisely into the ‘Wood of Error’ to shelter from a storm: Spenser’s first experience of the Irish campaign was Lord Grey’s disastrous defeat in the woods of Glenmalure at the hands of the O’Byrnes and O’Tooles whose names, he believed, signified ‘woddye’ and ‘hillye’ (pp. 170–1).³⁹ Thus, through the semantics of cultural imperialism operative alike in poem and policy, etymology ‘reveals’ moral nature and scenic topography shades insensibly into moral topography. The indigenous population partakes of,

³⁶ Apropos ‘little Inlande seas’ and the Irish failure to exploit them, one notes that Phaedria operates in a ‘wide Inland sea, that hight by name/ The *Idle lake*’ (II.6.10).

³⁷ For husbandry, urban development and civility see *Prose*, pp. 216–18. The alternative lifestyle of ‘wilfull want’ in ‘a little cottage, built of stickes and reedes/ In homely wize, and wald with sods around’ represents a caricature of Irish practices (III.7.6).

³⁸ Spenser calls for ‘the Cuttinge downe and openinge of all places thoroughe the wodes so that a wide waye of the space of C. yardes mighte be laide open . . . for the safetie of travellers’. *Prose*, p. 224. See Eileen McCracken, *The Irish Woods since Tudor Times: Distribution and Exploitation* (Newtown Abbot, 1971), pp. 26–9, 45. Gaelic poetry of the latter half of the seventeenth century laments the destruction of the woods.

³⁹ Holinshed, VI, 435–6; McCracken, p. 29; for references to Glenmalure see *Prose*, pp. 57, 171–2, 191.

and contributes to, the wildness of the place and epithets are commonly transferred from one to the other denoting a symbiotic relationship of outlaws and outlands. From the satyrs of Book One to the savages of Book Six, the landscape of *The Faerie Queene* is populated by wild, ill-natured subraces generally impervious to nurture: 'lawlesse people . . . That never used to live by plough nor spade,/ But fed on spoile and booty' (VI.10.39). Outposts of civility, such as the Castle of Alma, are besieged by marauding hoards apparently spawned by the landscape itself, 'as when a swarme of Gnats at eventide/ Out of the fennes of Allan do arise' (II.9.16). The very precision of such detail attests to the pervasive power of the influence behind it.⁴⁰

The result is a poetry of intense suspicion in which every act and thought requires unremitting vigilance. As in Ireland itself, the latent violence of the landscape commonly erupts into savage confrontation: 'the danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,/ Breedes dreadfull doubts' (I.1.12). The landscape of *The Faerie Queene* is not just a backdrop but a component of theme, a party to any incident occurring within it which may at any time annihilate the distinction between person and place through some bizarre stroke of Ovidian metamorphosis. Yet here, at what seems the furthest remove of fantasy, the Irish influence is strongest since the colonists' deepest fear was that of cultural assimilation, a fate that had already befallen many of the Old Norman families according to Irenius's account of the matter in the *Vewe*: 'for the moste parte of them are degenerated and growen allmoste meare Irishe yea and are more malitious to the Englishe then the verye Irishe themselves' (p. 96).⁴¹ The formidable Sir Satyrane, of both 'gentle' and 'brutish' antecedents, 'noursled up in life and manners wilde', 'exilde' from civil justice and subjecting his savage environment to 'a tyrans law' (the charge most often levelled against the Old Normans), well represents their ambivalent cultural status (I.6.21–6). Were the Tudor settlers to suffer an equivalent

⁴⁰ Spenser had a house for several years at New Abbey in Kildare on the borders of the Pale close to the Bog of Allen. The *Vewe* attests to the land's gradual repossession by the native Irish (p. 57). See Jenkins, 'Spenser and the Clerkship in Munster', p. 117. For the nature of Celtic warfare compare *Prose*, pp. 106–7; Gray, 'Influence of Spenser's Irish Experiences', pp. 415–16.

⁴¹ For cultural assimilation see Holinshed, VI, 4; Giamatti, 'Primitivism and the Process of Civility', in Chiapelli, ed., *First Images of America*, I, 74–5. Just as the Old English exploited the myth of the 'wild' Irish to good political effect, their New English rivals found it increasingly expedient to employ the same weapon against themselves, hence the many charges of 'tyranny'. See Nicholas Canny, *The Formation of the Old English Elite in Ireland* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 18–29; Ciaran Brady, 'The Road to the View: On the Decline of Reform Thought in Tudor Ireland', in Coughlan, ed., *Spenser and Ireland*, pp. 25–45 (pp. 32–6).

subversion, the programme of 'reform' would not merely be impeded but reversed.

Confronted by such a daunting prospect, Eudoxus asks in horror, 'is it possible that an Englishman broughte up naturallye in such swete Civilytie as Englande affordes . . . shoulde forgett his owne nature and forgoe his owne nacion? howe maie this be?' (p. 96). A powerful poetic explanation of such 'dangerous *Lethargie*' is endeavoured at the conclusion of Book Two, where young Verdant, his courtly armour cast aside, reclines in the arms of the Circe-like Acrasia (Intemperance) who undoes the 'fashioning' of noble gentlemen by transformation into beasts (p. 115). Intemperance was part of the stock racial profile of the 'meare' Irish (p. 105) whose association with Acrasia may be inferred from Ruddymane's indelibly blood-stained hand, an oblique allusion to the Gaelic war cry, noted in the *Vewe*, 'the Red Hand Forever, that is the bloddie hande which is Oneles badge' (p. 103).⁴² Guyon's failure to clense the child's hand with running water recalls Edmund Campion's allegation that the Irish left 'the right armes of their infants unchristened . . . to the intent it might give a more ungratious and deadlie blow'.⁴³ 'Mantled with greene' (II.12.50), the landscape of Acrasia's bower suggests its subversive nature since the Irish mantle was 'a fitt howsse for an outlawe, a mete bedd for a Rebelle and an Apte cloake for a thefe' while also serving as 'a coverlett' for the 'lewed exercises' of Irish prostitutes (pp. 100–1). According to Camden, defence of the 'Romish religion' was the 'mantle for all rebellion' in Ireland.⁴⁴

Modern commentators have related the poetics of metamorphosis to the sociology of cultural assimilation, particularly in regard to the New World, but Spenser's contemporaries anticipated this development in drawing the same analogy with express reference to Ireland.⁴⁵ In this respect the best gloss upon the political implications of the Acrasia fable is supplied by Sir John Davies, equally concerned with the problem of cultural degeneration in his role of Irish Attorney-General. By adopting

⁴² According to the account of Fr. Good, reproduced in Camden, the Irish were 'most intemperate, by reason of the distemperature of the aire, and the moisture both of the ground, and of their meats; in regard also that all law is exiled'. *Britain*, p. 143. Ruddymane's significance was first noted by John Upton who concluded that 'the rebellion of the Oneals is imaged in this Episode, who drank so deep of the charm and venom of Acrasia.' *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, edited by John Upton, 2 vols (London, 1758), II, 438. See Roland Smith, 'The Irish Background of Spenser's *View*', *JEGP*, 42 (1943), 499–515 (p. 504). A poem entitled 'The Red Hand of Ireland' current in Spenser's time was often attributed to Tadhg Dall. *Bardic Poems*, I, xvii–xviii.

⁴³ Holinshed, VI, 69.

⁴⁴ *Britain*, p. 123 (mispag. p. 111).

⁴⁵ See the valuable discussion in Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 180–8.

Irish customs, he complains, former English colonists, ‘became degenerate and metamorphosed . . . like those who had drunke of *Circes* Cuppe, and were turned into very Beasts, and yet tooke such pleasure in their beastly manner of life, as they would not returne to their shape of men againe’.⁴⁶ Spenser’s fable concludes with the swinish Gryll who resolutely refuses to abandon his new way of life, as did so many of the families castigated for having ‘degenerated from their firste natures’ (p. 114). Prominent amongst them were the MacSweeneys whose name Spenser deliberately degrades into *Macswines* thereby contriving an astonishingly apt accommodation of classical myth to contemporary circumstance (pp. 115–16).⁴⁷ The New World was commonly envisioned as ‘virgin’ territory ripe for the possession of European knights but in the Bowre of Blisse the opposite has occurred, the female has taken possession of the male and all hopes of conquest (symbolised by the rusting armour) perish. The effect is one of cultural ‘depasturing’ (II.12.73).⁴⁸

In the case of *Acrasia*, as so often in Spenser, sexual seduction implies its political equivalent. Lord Grey had complained that the native Irish preferred to ‘wallow in their own sensual government’ rather than live by the moral code of English law and Spenser commonly employs the terms ‘licentious’ and ‘libertie’ in such a manner as to imply that Irish customs merely ratify personal licence.⁴⁹ In point of fact, the majority of the New English planters were hardly the cream of civil English society but single men of low social status whose likely intermarriage with Gaelic families posed the most serious threat of cultural assimilation.⁵⁰ In a very real sense, therefore, sex and politics were intimately related. John Derricke warned colonists to shun bewitchment by Celtic women,

For why should men of Th’englishe pale,
In suche a Crewe delight
Or eke repose suche confidence,
In that unhappie race:
Since mischief lurketh oftentimes
even in the smothest face?⁵¹

⁴⁶ Sir John Davies, *Discoverie of the True Causes*, p. 182.

⁴⁷ See also Derricke, *Image of Irelande*, p. 11. Comparisons of the native Irish to swine are common (pp. 42, 54).

⁴⁸ See Louis A. Montrose, ‘*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form’, in Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, ed., *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 79, 86.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, ‘Spenser with Lord Grey in Ireland’, p. 345.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Canny, ‘Permissive Frontier’, pp. 19–24.

⁵¹ Derricke, *Image of Ireland*, p. 31. The vision of Irish maidens ‘bathynge in their sweete delighes,/ so long thei doe remaine./ Till Cupid toul’th his sacryng bell,/ to enter other Rites’ (p. 28) may well have suggested Guyon’s encounter with bathing ladies (II.12.63–9).

Similarly, Spenser warns against 'licentious conversinge with the Irishe or marrynge and fosteringe with them' (p. 117). 'How cane suche matchinge but bringe forthe an evill race', he asks, 'seinge that Comonlye the Childe takethe moste of his nature of the mother besides speache, manners, inclynacion . . . for by them they are firste *framed and fashioned* soe as what they receive once from them they will hardelye ever after forgoe' (p. 120).⁵² Thus, by usurping the very task Spenser had set himself, Irish Acrasias defeat English Guyons. The coincidence of phrasing reminds us, however, that cultural assimilation was adjudged 'contagion' only when it favoured the Celts (p. 117). What is lamented in the Old Normans is recommended for the 'meare' Irish. It was Spenser's hope that through a rigorous programme of suppression intended to obliterate Irish dress, language, customs, law and life-style, the native population would 'in shorte time learne quite to forgett his Irishe nacion' (p. 215). The Gaelic poets reversed the perspective, praising the Old Normans for their successful integration into Celtic society while sharply criticising their lowly born successors. 'I conceive not whence it is', remarked Geoffrey Keating, himself the scion of an Old Norman family berated by Spenser, 'that they do not contract alliance with the nobles of Ireland, unless it be from disesteem for their own obscurity, so that they do not deem themselves worthy to have such noble Gaels in their kinship'.⁵³ There is nothing 'savage' here except the satire.

But more important than the fact of assimilation were its implications for the fundamental distinction between the 'civil' and the 'savage' by which colonial theorists set such store. Ireland 'bred dreadfull doubts' of a more basic nature than the mere threat of violence since the phenomenon of assimilation betrayed the insecurity of English culture.⁵⁴ Matters were all the worse in that the decline of the Normans mirrored that of the Irish themselves who, in bygone times, had brought literacy to the Saxons. The island merely acts as a catalyst for a degenerative process endemic in the human condition and therefore common to 'self' and 'other'. 'One would not beleeve', remarks Camden, 'in how short a time some English . . . degenerate and grow out of kinde'.⁵⁵ The vision of the courtly Timias (alias Raleigh) deformed by an Irish 'glib', unable to utter his own name

⁵² Derricke regarded the offspring of such marriages as beasts in human guise: 'Transformed now and then:/ From Bores to Beares, and yet sometyme,/ resemblyng honest men.' *Image of Irelande*, p. 29.

⁵³ Keating, *The History of Ireland*, edited and translated by David Comyn, Irish Texts Society, 4 vols (London, 1902–14), I (1902), 35.

⁵⁴ See Hayden White, 'The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea', in Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak, ed., *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburg, 1972), pp. 3–38.

⁵⁵ *Britain*, p. 148.

and unrecognisable to his former companions, represents the ultimate cultural horror, the inevitable effect of alienation from court (IV.8.12).⁵⁶ In attempting to grapple with the problem of how such things 'maye be', Spenser was forced to recognise that not the country but the colonists themselves were at fault: 'as it is the *nature of all men* to love libertye So they become Libertines and fall to all Licentiousnes of the Irishe' (p. 211). Since civility is not innate but imposed the last three words are redundant, there being no necessary association between 'nature' and 'nacion' such as Eudoxus imagines (p. 96). 'It is but even the other daye', Spenser concedes, 'since Englande grewe Civill' (p. 118).

This being so, the great anxiety is that of cultural regression.⁵⁷ In *The Faerie Queene* England first manifests a separate identity when it pulls free of the 'Celticke mayn-land' (II.10.5)—the sole use of the word Celtic in Spenser's verse. Involvement in the enterprise of Ireland reverses that primal segregation, exposing fragile English 'civility' to a vibrant cultural alternative closely akin to its own 'barbarous' origins. The notorious Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne, Spenser notes *en passant*, is of ancient Briton stock—the same, that is, as his own King Arthur (p. 170).⁵⁸ To this extent the battle is internal and the Irish less savage in themselves than scapegoats for a savagery latent in all: the patron of Justice is a 'salvage' knight and Sir Calepine's place is supplied by a 'salvage' man in courtly armour who later proves indispensable to Prince Arthur, the very embodiment of English martial chivalry. Again and again, Spenserian poetry makes coalesce what Spenserian prose struggles to keep separate. The radical insecurity of both is apparent in the manner whereby persistent, intrusive digressions subvert main lines of argument and obsessive repetition of familiar *topoi* produces increasing indeterminacy rather than consolidation. In the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, for example, a fallen Eden is heroically saved by St George of Merry England—apparently the very paradigm of beneficent colonialism; in the second, however, a false Eden must be savagely destroyed in the interests of civil temperance—a disturbing reflection of actual colonial policy in Ireland and elsewhere; in the third book, the resulting struggle between creativity and destruction, metamorphosis and identity, continues interminably in the Gardens of Adonis where, in a reprise of the Bowre of Blisse, another Venereal figure 'possesseth' a young man 'transformed

⁵⁶ H.M. English, 'Spenser's Accommodation of Allegory to History in the Story of Timias and Belpheobe', *JEGP*, 59 (1960), pp. 417–29.

⁵⁷ *Prose*, pp. 56, 60, 117.

⁵⁸ The Trojan myth of origin served to obscure the common Celtic heritage of the two islands. See Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal, 1982), pp. 7–27.

oft, and chaunged diverslie' while the 'wilde Bore' ruts savagely beyond the Pale.⁵⁹

Set in this context *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (1595) may be seen to occupy a pivotal position in Spenser's poetry of exile, indicative of changed moods and shifting attitudes, surveying familiar pastoral landscapes from an entirely unfamiliar perspective.⁶⁰ Symptomatic of this is the reappearance of the solitary, disconsolate Colin Clout, so 'alienate and with drawn' from pastoral contentment even in *The Shepheardes Calender* that he could not perform the eulogy of 'fayre Elisa' composed after the Virgilian model in premature expectation of a new Golden Age.⁶¹ Reread in the light of Spenser's later career, such early work seems rich in proleptic irony. Though native to Arcadia, Colin endures a sort of internal exile in a pastoral setting that might have been the scene of wish-fulfilment but becomes instead an ironic backdrop to wish-frustration.⁶² As month follows month his sense of unrequited love comes to symbolise nothing short of the vanity of human wishes, the inevitable disappointment of all idealistic aspirations whether personal or political.⁶³ By skilfully blending Skelton's satiric *persona* of Colin Clout with that of Clément Marot's elegiac Colin, Spenser 'shadowed' an highly discontented 'selfe'.⁶⁴ As 'October' makes clear, poetry enjoys no official status in Elisa's England nor may patronage

⁵⁹ Despite St George's victory, Spenser recognised that it was the very 'Englishness' of the Protestant cause that rendered it ineffective in Ireland, *Prose*, p. 221. See Alan Ford, 'The Protestant Reformation in Ireland', in Brady and Gillespie, ed., *Natives and Newcomers*, pp. 50–74. The hazardous sea voyage to the morally and culturally enervating Bowre of Blisse (suggestive of the passage from Ireland to England in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*) reminds us that Grey is a 'wise Pilot' in the *Vewe*, *Prose*, p. 63.

⁶⁰ The dedicatory letter is dated 27 December 1591 but internal evidence suggests revisions possibly as late as 1594. See Sam Meyer, *An Interpretation of Edmund Spenser's 'Colin Clout'* (Cork, 1969), p. 150.

⁶¹ For the political implications of Virgil's fourth eclogue see Laurence Lerner, *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry* (London, 1972), pp. 68–70.

⁶² For pastoral as the poetry of wish-fulfilment see Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 1–41. For pastoral as the poetry of experience see Paul Alpers, 'The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral', *College English*, 34 (1972), 352–71; S.K. Heninger, 'The Renaissance Perversion of Pastoral', *JHI*, 22 (1961), 254–61. See also Harry Berger, *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 277–89.

⁶³ For the immediate political context see Paul E. McLane, *Spenser's 'Shepheardes Calender': A Study in Elizabethan Allegory* (Notre Dame, 1961), pp. 13–26, 140–57. See also Helen Cooper, *Pastoral: Mediaeval into Renaissance* (Ipswich, 1977), pp. 157–61.

⁶⁴ See Annabel Patterson, 'Re-opening the Green Cabinet: Clément Marot and Edmund Spenser', *ELR*, 16 (1986), 44–70.

be relied on to supply the deficiency. In eclogue after eclogue shepherds travel 'homeward' but few, if any, seem to arrive, and Colin Clout is not of their number.

The title of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* is all the more arresting, therefore, in its apparent assertion of achieved security, in the implication that not merely epic heroes but epic poets are made in exile. But the *persona* of Colin Clout was far more complex now than in 1579, and the decision to revive it signals Spenser's willingness to explore increasingly problematic aspects of the relationship between fiction and reality, aesthetic ideals and practical necessities. For a start, all elements of anonymity had vanished. *The Shepheardes Calender* had run through four editions and the question, 'who knows not Colin Clout?', had on one level become entirely rhetorical. To a degree hitherto unique in English literature a fictional *persona* had been carefully cultivated into a personal trade-mark. But knowing that Spenser in some sense 'was' Colin Clout implied knowledge of the opposite, and Spenser deftly exploits this dual outlook in order to develop the *persona* both as a medium of self-expression and as a mechanism of self-transcendence. Now native to Ireland, not Arcadia, Colin Clout views Elisa's kingdom through the penetrating eyes of a stranger and returns 'home againe' in disgust. To him, England is 'another world of land . . . floting amid the sea in ieopardie' (272–3), the distant goal of a rough and hazardous sea voyage. But Colin's voyage out is Spenser's voyage home and subtle reminiscences of Ovid's *Tristia* evoke something of the ambivalent emotion the act of composition must inevitably have aroused.⁶⁵ The returning exile adopts the *persona* of an alien to gain clarity of vision. The suspicion that he may actually have become something of an alien in the process is neither endorsed nor refuted.

When first we encounter him, Colin Clout seems relatively contented where he is, 'desart' though the place be and unrequited though his love remains (91). The situation is completely altered, however, by the intrusion of 'the shepheard of the Ocean'—alias his fellow Munster planter, Sir Walter Raleigh—exiled from the court through unrequited love of Cynthia.⁶⁶ The obvious coincidence of circumstances qualifies Spenser's pastoral *persona* since the stranger is allowed to articulate 'Colin's' suppressed anxieties:

He gan to cast great lyking to my lore,
And great dislyking to my lucklesse lot:
That banisht had my selfe, like wight forlore,

⁶⁵ Meyer, pp. 65–6.

⁶⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles* (New Haven, 1973), pp. 60–3.

Into that waste, where I was quite forgot.
The which to leave, thenceforth he counseld mee. (180–4)

The political connotations of ‘banisht’ slyly fuse the fates of these two ambitious expatriates, raising a spectre of public oblivion equally anathema to both. The passage is all the more potent in relation to Spenser’s fear of cultural assimilation to the ‘waste’ world where even noble families lose their names and confound their genealogies, a fear apparent in Colin’s fable of the river Bregog who ‘did lose his name’ through sexual assimilation into the waters of the river Mulla (155).⁶⁷ Spenser was particularly proud of the national heritage encoded in his surname—so much so that, once Colin arrives in England, he violates generic convention to remind us of the ‘noble familie’ of the Spensers of Althorp, ‘of which I meanest boast my selfe to be’ (538).⁶⁸ In this manner the personal pronoun ‘I’ is rendered intriguingly unstable, sometimes signifying Colin, sometimes Spenser, sometimes both, but never the supposed narrator since a pretence of detachment must always be maintained even though the whole exercise centres upon elaborately reflexive strategies of ‘selfe-regard’ (682).⁶⁹ In the present instance the jarring connotations of ‘boast’ and ‘meanest’—almost oxymoronic in their context—bespeak the intensely personal dilemma at the heart of the issue. The ‘Shepherd of the Ocean’ [‘he’] chooses his ground very well in urging ‘Colin’ [‘I’] to accompany him to England and place his ‘oaten quill’ at the service of Cynthia. Raleigh had doubtless lent similar encouragement, but far more important than such factual correspondence is the tangled web of complex, conflicting emotions teased out through the apparently impersonal conventions of pastoral. The poem, I would suggest, is more powerfully autobiographical in its ‘fiction’ than its ‘fact’.

Colin’s first impression of England prompts bitter reassessment of the ‘pastoral’ landscape he has left behind: in England he discovers,

all happie peace and plenteous store
Conspire in one to make contented blisse:
No wayling there nor wretchednesse is heard . . .

⁶⁷ On the importance of names in the poem see Thomas R. Edwards, *Imagination and Power: A Study of Poetry on Public Themes* (London, 1971), pp. 56–7. For the fable of Bregog see John D. Bernard, *Ceremonies of Innocence: Pastoralism in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 128–9.

⁶⁸ Spenser particularly praises the three sisters of this family (536–71) to whom he had previously dedicated three poems from *Complaints: Mother Hubberds Tale* to Anne, Lady Compton and Monteagle; *Muiopotmos* to Elizabeth, Lady Carey; *Teares of the Muses* to Alice, Lady Strange. See also *Prothalamion* 130–1; Muriel Bradbrook, ‘No Room at the Top’, in Brown and Harris, ed., *Elizabethan Poetry*, pp. 91–110 (p. 108).

⁶⁹ Nancy Jo Hoffman, *Spenser’s Pastorals: ‘The Shepherdes Calender’ and ‘Colin Clout’* (Baltimore, 1977), 120–42; Terry Comito, ‘The Lady in a Landscape and the Poetics of Elizabethan Pastoral’, *UTQ*, 41 (1972), 200–18 (p. 204).

No griesly famine, nor no raging sward,
 No nightly bodrags, nor no hue and cries;
 The shepheards there abroad may safely lie,
 On hills and downes, withouten dread or daunger. (310–17)

As the prolonged technique of negative appraisal indicates, a remarkable transformation has overtaken the customary pastoral outlook. The mere act of comparison degrades Ireland completely and the tone of the speaker alters accordingly. The use of the word ‘bodrags’ (raids), unusual except in the Irish State Papers, is a case in point.⁷⁰ The traditional pastoral register gives way to that of the political tract, reminding us that *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* is written, like *A Vewe of the Present State of Irelande*, ‘by waye of a diologue’, being no less engaged in the continuing dialectic of contemporary politics (p. 43). At this point the poem seems poised to defy one of the oldest conventions of pastoral—a perfect example of which is the ‘September’ eclogue—whereby shepherds journey abroad only to discover that true contentment resides at home. Arriving at the court of Cynthia, by contrast, Colin and the Shepherd of the Ocean appear to achieve the sublime goal of *The Faerie Queene*, the elusive nature of which Spenser attempts to capture through the use of increasingly abstract vocabulary and rarified, metaphysical symbolism difficult to relate to any political reality (605–8).⁷¹ The closer one examines Colin’s eulogy of the court, the more remarkable becomes its lack of specificity. Indeed it is precisely at the point of furthest abstraction that Spenser exploits the rhetorical mechanisms of the dialogue form to break the aristocratic spell and return us to mundane issues of salary and survival. Thestylis (alias Lodowick Bryskett, Spenser’s fellow civil servant) abruptly enquires:

Why *Colin*, since thou foundst such grace
 With *Cynthia* and all her noble crew:
 Why didst thou ever leave that happie place,
 In which such wealth might unto thee accrew? (652–5)⁷²

The deliciously ironic possibilities of ‘*Cynthia* and all her noble crew’ are admirably glossed in the appropriately mercenary, flat rhyme on ‘accrew’—easily, and I suspect deliberately, one of the worst in the poem. Described as breaking the prolonged silence arising from the mystical description of Cynthia, this forthright query derives additional

⁷⁰ Also in a Celtic context see, ‘The sundry bodragings/ Of neighbour Scots’ at *Faerie Queene*, II.10.63. The relationship between the Scots and the Irish is discussed in *Prose*, pp. 82–4.

⁷¹ On the quality of the language see Meyer, pp. 103–7.

⁷² Bryskett had himself harboured dreams of pastoral retreat in Ireland. See Jenkins, ‘Spenser and the Clerkship in Munster’, p. 113.

force from its equal application to Colin and his creator.⁷³ It is the inevitable question suggested both by Spenser's career and the fictional manner in which he chose to represent it. Like throwing a stone through a stained-glass window, it shatters the fragile tracery of courtly fable, exposing majestic icons as mere ornament. As the perspective alters, all the apparently trivial qualifications covertly insinuated into Colin's expressions of wonder emerge into sudden prominence. It now appears that the reality betrays the ideal and Colin is forced from stylised panegyric to colloquial retraction: 'for sooth to say' (as though he had not said 'sooth' till now),

it is no sort of life,
For shepheard fit to lead in that same place,
Where each one seeks with malice and with strife,
To thrust downe other into foule disgrace. (688–91)

What is particularly remarkable is that many of the adjectives applied to the courtiers are identical to those applied to the 'wild' Irish: 'foule' (691), 'guilefull' (699), 'ydle' (704), 'wastefull' (762), 'laesie' (766), and even 'lewd and licentious' (787). There exists, it would appear, a sophisticated form of barbarity all the worse for its pretence to the sublime. The best that may be hoped for is the dissociation of Cynthia from her court, but that is like dissociating the spider from its web.⁷⁴ When the praise and the blame of the same institution are both absolute, the impression created is one of wilful dichotomy. Up to this point Spenser seemed personally engaged in the creation of the very myth that entices lowly 'shepherds' to seek out Cynthia's court where, in theory, 'learned arts do flourish in great honor,/ And Poets wits are had in peerlesse price' (320–1). Since such poets 'do their *Cynthia* immortall make', they may now be regarded as victims of their own propaganda (453).⁷⁵ The condition of many is far from reassuring: Harpalus, 'woxen aged/ In faithfull service' (380–1); Corydon, 'meanly waged' though 'ablest' of all (382–3); Alycon, 'bent to mourne' (384); Palemon, 'that sung so long until quite hoarse he grew' (399); Alabaster, 'knowne yet to few' despite epic praise of Cynthia (401), and the Shepherd of the Ocean himself, 'that spends his wit in loves consuming smart' (429). Ominously the catalogue concludes with Sir Philip Sidney now 'dead and

⁷³ For an equivalent effect see, 'with that *Alexis* broke his tale asunder' (352). *Alexis* links praise of the Queen to the poet's elevation of his personal status, asking 'what grace' Cynthia afforded Colin—the central crux of the poem's autobiographical concern.

⁷⁴ For the court as a spider's web see Robert A. Brinkley, 'Spenser's *Muiopotmos* and the Poetics of Metamorphosis', *ELH*, 48 (1981), 668–76. Belpheobe is, however, conspicuously dissociated from the idleness of 'courtly blis' at *Faerie Queene*, II.3.40.

⁷⁵ The poem seems intentionally ambivalent as to whether greatness is innate (333–5) or ascribed, whether monarchs elevate poets or *vice versa*.

gone' (449). *Colin Clouts* was published with *Astrophel*, a pastoral elegy for Sidney with contributions from a variety of poets including Lodowick Bryskett, Spenser's 'Thestylis'. An essential unity may be seen to underlie the collection thus comprised through common concentration upon themes of lost potential and wasted opportunity. The lament for Sidney is really a lament for the England of courtly patronage he had come to symbolise, for his own inimitable version of pastoral. His cultural significance lends public resonance to the private grief of his early death. And Sidney, too, had sought to defend draconian but unsuccessful attempts to 'fashion' a civil Ireland.⁷⁶ Elegy, Spenser notes, invariably finds us 'mourning in others, our owne miseries'.⁷⁷

At the conclusion to his catalogue of poets, Colin admits that Cynthia received him not for his 'skill' but for his patron's sake, thereby revealing the little esteem afforded 'oaten quills' however worthy. It is not in the least surprising, therefore, that Colin Clout 'chooses' to come home again since what Spenser actually 'shadows' under this *persona* is not himself but his poetic ambitions (672). The principal reason Colin comes home is that his creator cannot. Spenser signs the poem's dedication not from his 'home' (as its title seems to demand) but from his 'house' at Kilcolman. Colin is 'home' in Ireland, Spenser merely 'housed' there. Despite the poem's ostensible celebration of 'homecoming', little contentment is evident at the sombre Virgilian close when the company disperses under 'glooming skies'.⁷⁸ This is as it should be since we have heard far too much of Ireland's 'barren soyle' with its 'nightly bodrags' and 'ravenous wolves' to allow of any happier outcome. Colin's 'love' remains as unrequited as ever, much resembling his creator's relationship with his queen: 'So hie her thoughts as she her selfe have place,/ And loath each lowly thing with loftie eie' (937–8).⁷⁹ It would seem that Colin's heart-felt appeal for William Alabaster owes much of its intensity to a deep empathy in disappointment:

O dreaded Dread, do not thy selfe that wrong,
To let thy fame lie so in hidden shade:
But call it forth, *O call him forth to thee,*
To end thy glorie which he had begun. (406–9).

In the *Amoretti* published that same year, Spenser voices the fear that *The Faerie Queene* may never see completion, nor Gloriana ever enjoy poetic apotheosis (XXXIII).

⁷⁶ See the fragmentary *Discourse on Irish Affairs* in *Complete Works*, edited by A. Feuillerat, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1912–26), III, 46–50.

⁷⁷ *Dolefull Lay of Clorinda*, 96.

⁷⁸ The conclusion echoes that of Virgil's tenth eclogue ('gravis cantantibus umbra') but significantly omits the phrase 'ite domum'.

⁷⁹ David R. Shore, *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral: A Study of the World of Colin Clout* (Kingston, 1985), p. 129.

In view of England's presentation in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Ireland's prominence in the second instalment of *The Faerie Queene* (IV–VI), published the following year, was only to be expected. Indeed Spenser seems determined to make an issue of it; his engagement with historical detail grows increasingly explicit and the allegory correspondingly transparent. His sense of alienation was doubtless exacerbated by the poor reception accorded the poem amongst certain sections of the aristocracy, tantamount, in his eyes, to rejection by the very culture he had sought to celebrate.⁸⁰ It therefore becomes equally important to justify the poetry through the politics as the politics through the poetry; *The Faerie Queene* must be seen to be of national consequence. The effect upon the landscape is dramatic: the very terrain seems locked in ceaseless conflict as the vocabularies of polity and topography fuse:

Like as the tide that comes fro th'Ocean mayne,
Flowes up the Shenan with contrarie forse,
And overruling him in his owne rayne,
Drives backe the current of his kindly course,
And makes it seeme to have some other source:
But when the floud is spent, then backe againe
His borrowed waters forst to redisbourse,
He sends the sea his owne with double gaine,
And tribute eke withall, as to his Soveraine. (IV.3.27)

Of particular note is the ambiguity as to the river's true 'source', an effect mirrored in the correspondent political analogies. Thus the ocean tide appears to usurp the Shannon in its 'owne rayne' although the Ocean is actually its true 'Soveraine' and the violent influx of foreign waters—'borrowed' by the river they seemed to oppress—eventually occasions the payment of double tribute, amply rewarding the expenditure of the invading 'floud'. The apparently unnatural effort to 'drive backe the current' of the river's 'kindly course' effects a paradoxical restoration of natural order analogous to the imposition of 'civility' through violence. A very comforting image, this, of the colonial enterprise. Yet latent within the imagery is the nightmare of perpetual recurrence. Several cantos later, inviting the Irish rivers to partake in Marinell's wedding masque, Spenser asks 'why should they not likewise in love agree?',

⁸⁰ Richard Helgerson, 'The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career', *PMLA*, 93 (1978), 893–911 (pp. 896–7, 902–4).

only to answer his own question by summoning the 'balefull Oure, late staind with English blood' (IV.11.40–4).⁸¹ As he describes them, Irish rivers invariably divide, submerge, overflow or run blood red: 'his corps was carried downe along the Lee,/ Whose waters with his filthy bloud it stayned' (V.2.19), the same Lee that 'encloseth Corke with his *devided* flood' (IV.11.44).⁸² During Lord Grey's campaign in 1581 Sir John of Desmond's decapitated corpse was hung 'over the River Lee on the North Gate of Cork' while his 'blasphemous head' was impaled on a spike in Dublin. Pathetic fallacy struggles to accommodate political fact.⁸³

Spenser's dilemma in these books is that he both promotes and deplors violence simultaneously thereby rendering further suspect the prime distinction between 'wild' Irish and 'civil' English—the 'sinister suggestions of Crueltye' attaching to Lord Grey's reputation being merely one case in point (p. 162). Many of the administrators he most admired acted beyond the bounds of English civil law, and his own appeal for the restraint of compassion, commonly regarded as an index of civility, erodes the moral basis of his argument still further (p. 163).⁸⁴ Mercilla enters his poem only to refuse the virtue she personifies, and the fearful paradox of savage knighthood implies submission to the very force it was designed to destroy: the Irish campaign forced Grey to such 'violence' that it 'allmoste Changed his verye naturall disposicion', almost made of him a wild creature of the borderland, a natural exile from court (p. 160).⁸⁵ Though more consistently allegorical than any of his predecessors, Spenser writes with a greater sense of immediacy, having personally experienced the events he records. His authorial voice is not that of Aristotle's detached narrator but

⁸¹ See Jenkins, 'Spenser with Lord Grey in Ireland', pp. 341–2.

⁸² Similar imagery is employed in the *Vewe*: the 'base' Irish have no wish to rebel but are 'carried awaie by the violence of the streame'; Elizabeth's 'compassion' impedes reform by stopping 'the streame of suche violence' as her Lord Deputy deems necessary. *Prose*, pp. 156, 159. See Roland Smith, 'Spenser's Irish River Stories', *PMLA*, 50 (1935), 1047–56.

⁸³ Henley, pp. 139–41.

⁸⁴ Canny, 'Spenser and the Development of an Anglo-Irish Identity', pp. 8–9. See also David J. Baker, "'Some Quirk, Some Subtle Evasion": Legal Subversion in Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*', in Patrick Cullen and Thomas P. Roche Jr., ed., *Spenser Studies*, VI (New York, 1986), pp. 147–63. According to Camden the mercenaries massacred at Smerwick cried out 'Misericordia, Misericordia' and Grey 'shed Tears' for the necessity of their slaughter but ordered it to continue nonetheless, *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth* (London, 1675), p. 243. Throughout the *Vewe* inconsistencies in Elizabeth's Irish policy are tactfully ascribed to excessive 'compassion' although 'greate faintenes in her maiesties withstandinge' the Earl of Tyrone is also recorded. In the *Brief Note*, however, 'compassion' is increasingly linked to political ineptitude. *Prose*, pp. 159, 166–7, 239, 242.

⁸⁵ For the notorious massacre at Smerwick see *Prose*, pp. 524–30. The Munster famine horrified many English observers, *Prose*, pp. 381–2, 396.

of an interested party; poet and planter coalesce.⁸⁶ The quality of violence in Book Five, remarkable even for the epic tradition, attests to the measure of Spenser's personal assimilation into the Irish problem—as though the verse were exploring the poetic implications of alienation from its own 'civil' values. The result is political poetry in the fullest sense; the poetry of man as political animal negotiating expedient strategies of *realpolitik* while at the same time seeking a moral basis for moral compromise.

If the 'Legend of Justice' represents an aberration in the poem's moral temper, it is largely because it also represents a perfect articulation of its historical vision.⁸⁷ In dealing with this problem, Spenser's principal recourse is to prefer motives to methods, to dissociate bloodshed from blood-thirst, but this is to justify means by ends and it soon becomes apparent that he is quite literally attempting to make a virtue of 'necessity'.⁸⁸ The *Ius Politicum*, he informs us, sounding somewhat Machiavellian, 'though it be not of it selfe iuste yeat by applicacion or rather necessitye is made iuste'. In public affairs, 'better is a mischief then an inconvenience' (p. 66).⁸⁹ All too often when 'necessity' dictates a choice between evils, the lesser (as Spenser conceives it) is presented as an absolute good, a process which subjects the poem's moral logic to severe strain. As a result, the 'Legend of Justice' becomes instead an enabling exercise in justification, in appropriating general ideals to particular policies, a procedural flaw latent in the grand distinction between the poem's 'general' and 'particular' intentions. Only through the careful interaction of politicized image and poeticized policy may the blood-soaked landscape of Book Five be presented as a serious instance of moral achievement.⁹⁰ Geoffrey Keating caustically remarks that 'being a poet' Spenser allowed himself, 'a poet's licence . . . framing and fashioning numerous poetic romances sweetly articulated to deceive'. In the original Celtic the phrase both imitates and parodies the rhythmic melody of Spenserian diction: 'do

⁸⁶ Spenser's views broadly correspond to those of his fellow Munster planter Richard Beacon, author of *Solon his Follie*, who presents a defence of Sir Richard Bingham comparable to Spenser's defence of Grey. See Brady, 'The Road to the View' in Coughlan, ed., *Spenser and Ireland*, pp. 37–9; Alexander Judson, 'Spenser and the Munster Officials', *SP*, 44 (1947), 157–73 (pp. 165–8).

⁸⁷ Richard A. McCabe, *The Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 39–47.

⁸⁸ For the principle of moral necessity see *Faerie Queene*, I.12.18–19.

⁸⁹ See Edwin Greenlaw, 'The Influence of Machiavelli on Spenser', *MP*, 7 (1909–10), 187–202; H.S.V. Jones, 'Spenser's Defence of Lord Grey', *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, 5 (1919), 151–219 (pp. 208–18); Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500–1700*, (London, 1964), pp. 61–2.

⁹⁰ Michael O'Connell, *Mirror and Veil: The Historical Dimension of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'* (Chapel Hill, 1977), pp. 156–60.

chumadh agus do chórughadh le briathraibh blasda, do bhreugadh an léaghthóra'.⁹¹

At times one detects in Spenserian allegory a deliberate confusion of tenor and vehicle calculated to obscure as much as it reveals.⁹² Transposed to fairyland the colonial enterprise becomes a fairytale, a struggle between knights and monsters conventionally incapable of resolution except 'by the sworde' (p. 148). The unwary reader is led to forget that, translated back into real terms, such conflicts involve massive human casualties: 'for by the sworde which I named I doe not meane/ The Cuttinge of all that nacion with the sworde, which farr be it from me that ever I shoulde thinke soe desperatlye or wishe so uncharitable . . . for evill people by good ordinaunces and government maye be made good/ but *the evill that is of it selfe evill will never become good*' (p. 148).⁹³ 'O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit', remarks Brutus, 'and not dismember Caesar' (II.1.169–70). Allegory gratifies such impossible aspirations. Abstracted from the daily carnage, actual violence becomes conceptual 'powre' (or 'might'), an integral component of justice (V.4.1) and the concept which most often attracts the epithet 'imperial' in Spenserian poetry—closely followed by that of 'state'. Judging from the effect upon his writing, there can be little doubt that Spenser found violence aesthetically stimulating, evincing considerable imaginative sympathy with what, he knew, should properly be deplored, 'for bloud can nought but sin, and wars but sorrowes yield' (I.10.60). Nevertheless, 'fierce warres' must somehow 'moralize' his song; the solution must be found in the problem (I Proem 1). Artegall's enchanted 'sword' allegorises Lord Grey's 'thorough' policy, and month by month, from 1580 to 1582, his private secretary took toll of the casualties, fully aware of the compromise with 'civility' therein entailed: 'seinge that by no other meanes it is possible to recure them, and that these are not of will but of verye urgente *necessitye*' (p. 163). Moral necessity would thus appear to dispense with humanity and moral allegory to rationalise the dispensation.

Officially, of course, Spenser's policy was not repression but 'reform'. 'Irena', as its name implies, was intended as the Land of Peace (the eirenic land) as well as the Land of Ire, and Spenser's allegory of retributive justice duly gives way to that of civil courtesy, a virtue no less political proceeding from and returning to the court: 'so from the

⁹¹ Keating, *History of Ireland*, I, 30.

⁹² Donald Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in 'The Faerie Queene'* (New Haven, 1966), p. 149.

⁹³ At one stage Spenser complains that Ireland is so 'full of her owne nacion that maye not be roted out' (*Prose*, p. 211). Whether 'maye' indicates moral prohibition or military impracticality remains problematic.

Ocean all rivers spring/ And *tribute* backe repay as to their *King*'—a superb gloss upon the heroic simile of the Shannon (VI Proem, 7).⁹⁴ The Patron of Courtesy is an armed knight inspired by the poetry of Colin Clout whose unexpected reappearance again signals his creator's personal involvement in the quest to restore 'Pastorella' to the gentle class to whom she rightfully belongs. As Calidore dons shepherd's clothing over his armour, romantic pastoralism reveals its imperial nature in the very act of disguise. Hugh O'Donnell complained that soldiers were being sent into his territory, 'under a colour of teaching his people civility', while Tadhg Dall Ó'Huiginn wryly observed that 'warlike men are left in peace but . . . Gaels of civil behaviour can expect no peace from the foreigners'.⁹⁵ The words 'wild' and 'salvage' occur more often in the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene* than any other, and its visions of pastoral tranquillity invariably degenerate into scenes of carnage. So potent is the influence of the Irish landscape that even the sudden emergence of Calidore 'out of the wood' is sufficient to dispel Colin's vision of gracious 'Civility' (VI.10.17). The book's most representative figure is the murdered Meliboeus who takes his name from the dispossessed, patronless exile of the Virgilian eclogue which, more than any other, haunted Spenser's imagination. Precisely because the 'seat' of courtesy is 'deepe within the mynd', the sense of alienation in Book Six is most acutely intimate.

Because of the perceived relationship of rebel and bard Spenser was particularly exercised by the power of the Celtic language, agreeing with Holinshed's *Chronicles* in recognising the indissoluble association of language and manners: 'the speache beinge Irishe the harte muste nedes be Irishe for out of the abundance of the harte the tongue speakethe' (p. 119).⁹⁶ Hence the objection to customs 'never harde of amongst the English' (p. 50), cultural difference being precisely what gets lost in translation. The poet who had bardic verses 'translated'

⁹⁴ For the etymology of *Eire* see *Prose*, p. 417; Camden, *Britain*, p. 61; Roland Smith, 'More Irish Words in Spenser', *MLN*, 59 (1944), 472–7 (pp. 475–6). In Ireland reciprocal courtesy was displaced by reciprocal violence: 'The Irish after blood and murder is drawn and done upon them will never be reconciled, and will revenge with blood if they may'. *Calendar of State Papers Irish* (1588–92), p. 225. Spenser agreed, 'for it is not easie to thinke that they whoe have imbrewed them selves so deeplie in our bloud and inriched them selves with our goods should ever trust us to dwell againe amongste them: or that wee should endure to live amongst those peacable without taking *iuste* revenge of them for all our evils'. *Prose*, p. 242. The concept of justice merely perpetuates the cycle.

⁹⁵ Camden, *Britain*, p. 125 (mispag. 113); *Bardic Poems*, II, 72.

⁹⁶ See Holinshed, VI, 5–6. See Stephen Greenblatt, 'Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century', in Chiapelli, ed., *First Images of America*, II, 561–80 (p. 562); Anne Fogerty, 'The Colonization of Language: Narrative Strategy in *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI', in Coughlan, ed., *Spenser and Ireland*, pp. 75–108.

into English ‘that I might understande them’ subjected all other aspects of Irish culture to similar ‘translation’ thereby precluding all chance of genuine insight.⁹⁷ The adoption of the Irish language, and even Irish surnames, by old Norman families disturbed him perhaps more deeply than anything else: ‘it hathe bene ever the use of the Conquerour’, he complains, ‘to despise the Language of the Conquered and to force him by all meanes to learne his’ (pp. 118–19). Keating replied, ‘he who makes a Christian conquest extinguishes not the language which was before him . . . and it was thus William the Conqueror did as regards the Saxons’.⁹⁸ By establishing English as the language of civil Christianity, however, Spenser represents the extinction of its rival as a Christian duty even though, ‘it is unnaturall that *anye people* shoulde love anothers language more then their owne’ (p. 118). In so far as the ‘unnatural’ becomes the ideal, the resulting paradox undermines the whole colonial enterprise since it now appears that not the savagery but the culture of the Irish resists it. The process would be simpler were they savages indeed. The only alternative was to stigmatise the culture itself as savage through a pseudo-anthropological investigation into its barbarous ‘Scythian’ origins, a far more comforting study for Spenser than that of mutual Briton antecedents.⁹⁹ In the ‘wylde desarts’ of Book Six there dwells ‘a salvage nation . . . usde . . . to eate the flesh of men . . . and straungers to devoure’ (VI.8.35–6)—not realistic description, of course, but a murderous metaphor for the residual savagery allegedly inherent in Celtic society, and allegedly justifying its suppression.¹⁰⁰ The only instances of actual cannibalism Spenser records in Ireland were occasioned by his own policy of famine, ‘in so much as the verye carkasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves’ (p. 158).

The only savage capable of nurture in Book Six ‘cannot expresse his simple minde’ (VI.5.30), just as the Celtic voice is rendered dumb or

⁹⁷ For Spenser’s possible knowledge of Gaelic Chronicles see Roland M. Smith, ‘Spenser, Holinshed, and the *Leabhar Gabhála*’, *JEGP*, 43 (1944), 390–401; Roland M. Smith, ‘Spenser’s Tale of the Two Sons of Milesio’, *MLQ*, 3 (1942), 547–57.

⁹⁸ Keating, *History of Ireland*, I, 37.

⁹⁹ Thus Spenser supplies a perfectly cogent explanation of ‘tanistrye’, involving the avoidance of primogeniture in Celtic society, but then discredits it through spurious association with ‘those Barbarous nacions that overranne the worlde’ in ancient times. *Prose*, pp. 49–51. See Edward D. Snyder, ‘The Wild Irish: A Study of Some English Satires against the Irish, Scots, and Welsh’, *MP*, 17 (1919–20), 687–725. For similar Spanish attitudes to the American Indians see Todorov, *Conquest of America*, pp. 127–45.

¹⁰⁰ Sir Henry Sidney described the O’Byrnes as ‘cannibals’. See *A Commentary of the Services and Charges of William Lord Grey of Wilton . . . by Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton*, edited by Sir Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton, Camden Society (London, 1847), p. 70. For similar instances see Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established 1565–76* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1976), p. 126.

inarticulate throughout the *Vewe* despite its pretence of open dialogue. Only by assimilating the Celts to the image of feral man can Spenser transform them into fit objects of the beneficent, Christian imperialism associated with the various foundlings of Book Six, infants recovered from the wilderness and fostered in civility. These constitute some of the poem's most compelling images of civil reclamation, yet behind them lies a prosaic determination to have the Irish 'compelled to sende their youthe to be disciplined' in English-speaking schools, 'whearby they will in shorte space growe up to that Civill Conversacion that . . . the Children will loathe the former rudenes in which they weare bredd and . . . their parentes . . . perceave the fowlenes of their owne brutishe behaviour' (p. 218).¹⁰¹ Ultimately there would be no 'wicked' Celtic poetry because no Celtic language and the heart would perforce be English. It was even hoped that the imposition of English place-names upon newly created counties and shires would be complemented by the enforced abandonment of Irish surnames (p. 215). By such means the moral topography of self-cultivation, charted by the colonial allegorist, is made to legitimise the imperial cartography of conquest.

Within Spenser's lifetime, however, fortune favoured the 'savage'. The Blatant Beast proved indigenous to the pastoral landscape and like the Irish might not 'be roted out' (p. 211). Instead of celebrating Calidore's achievement, the conclusion to book six rehearses the damage done to its own 'gentle poet' by the malice of fellow countrymen, barbarians of another hue (VI.12.40–1).¹⁰² Describing his situation in the *Prothalamion*, published in 1596, Spenser pens a powerful portrait in dejection, all the more effective for its setting upon the banks of his native Thames. Had he anticipated a better reception for the second instalment of *The Faerie Queene*, he was again to be disappointed since his presentation of Mary Queen of Scots infuriated James I, embarrassed Elizabeth, and caused the banning of the poem in Scotland. The latter mattered little in itself except for the prospect of a Stuart succession, the prospect that Gloriana's successor might regard *The Faerie Queene* as an anti-court poem, the antithesis of everything Spenser intended.¹⁰³ Worse still, many Irish Catholics eagerly anticipated the Stuart accession in the hope of negotiating some measure of religious toleration from the son of the

¹⁰¹ Sir John Davies believed that by forcing Irish children 'to learne the English language' the next generation would 'in tongue and heart, and every way else, becom *English*'. *Discovery*, p. 272.

¹⁰² For the definition of gentility see Montrose, 'Gentlemen and Shepherds', p. 428.

¹⁰³ Richard A. McCabe, 'The Masks of Duessa: Spenser, Mary Queen of Scots, and James VI', *ELR*, 17 (1987), 224–42.

'martyred' Queen Mary.¹⁰⁴ Little wonder, then, that Arlo Hill, located just twenty miles north-east of Kilcolman amidst some of the most treacherous woods in the province, provides the perfect venue for Mutability's challenge to Natural Law.¹⁰⁵

Here, perhaps for the first time, the general and particular intentions of Spenser's allegory perfectly cohere. In so far as the ideal condition of Gloriana's court had always been presented as the earthly equivalent of the New Jerusalem, and she herself as the earthly equivalent of God, estrangement from court is equivalent to estrangement from heaven, and the Neo-Platonic doctrine of souls exiled in a world of matter corresponds to that of courtiers exiled in Ireland's 'salvage' wilderness.¹⁰⁶ The sometime 'holy-Island', now a fallen Eden haunted by the image of its lost potential, has finally come to symbolise the manifold disappointments of national and personal history. Replete with echoes of Spenser's previous works, the cantos expressly recall *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* to introduce what was to prove his final Irish river fable, that of Arlo's daughter, Molanna, whose corruption by the wild god Faunus, patriarch of the woodland breed, led the goddess Diana ('soveraine Queene profest/ Of woods and forrests' though she be) to curse Ireland and abandon it to wolves and thieves, 'which too-too true that lands in-dwellers since have found' (55).¹⁰⁷ The choice of 'in-dwellers' is a masterstroke. In the Coverdale Bible Abraham tells the Canaanites, 'I am a straunger and an indweller amonge you' (Genesis 23:4). The King James version substitutes 'sojourner'.¹⁰⁸ Colin Clout is by no means home and the distance between shepherd and queen is at its greatest: in his final political writings Spenser implores her directly, 'to call us your poore subiectes alltogether away from hence that at least we may die in *our* Countrie' (p. 242). That Elizabeth had effectively abandoned Ireland, despite her 'professions' of sovereignty, by failing to champion her colonists' cause is clearly implied by accusations of 'temporizing' with

¹⁰⁴ Colm Lennon, 'The Counter Reformation in Ireland, 1542–1641', in Brady and Gillespie, ed., *Natives and Newcomers*, pp. 75–92 (p. 87).

¹⁰⁵ Holinshed, VI, 451–2; It is 'fowle Arlo' in *Astrophel* (96). The *Vewe* speaks of the repossession of Arlo [the Glen of Aherlow] by Irish 'outlaws' and calls for the stationing of a garrison close by. *Prose*, pp. 57, 194. See Smith, 'Irish Background of Spenser's *View*', p. 508.

¹⁰⁶ Gloriana's elusiveness has been related to the transcendence of the Christian god. See Jeffrey P. Fruen, "'True Glorious Type": The Place of Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene*', in Patrick Cullen and Thomas P. Roche Jr., ed., *Spenser Studies*, VII (New York, 1987), pp. 147–73.

¹⁰⁷ Early in the *Vewe* Eudoxus refutes the suggestion that Ireland labours under a divine curse, but the more experienced Irenius concludes that it was 'in olde time not Called amisse *Banno* or *sacra Insula* takinge *sacra* for accursed'. *Prose*, pp. 44, 145.

¹⁰⁸ Spenser was, however, still buying property in Munster as late as 1597. Judson, *Life of Spenser* (Baltimore, 1945), pp. 174–5.

the country's problems (p. 242).¹⁰⁹ She is at best a Lucretian goddess—if goddess at all in view of Mutability's effect on 'Cynthia'—shedding 'no one little beame' of her 'large mercie' upon her Irish planters, 'either for unworthnesse of us wreches which no way deserve so great grace, or for that the miserie of our estate is not made knowne unto you' (p. 236). The sour candour of the complaint is new but the sentiment merely confirms the sense of alienation and estrangement evident in *The Shepheardes Calender*, the *Amoretti*, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, and throughout *The Faerie Queene*. The final stanzas of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* repose no trust in earthly goddesses but seek instead an escape from history itself into the 'stedfast rest' of eternity, an end to the underlying spiritual exile of which all others are merely reflections. It is, perhaps, indicative of Spenser's final state of mind that, of the many forms of address available, he invokes the deity as Lord of Hosts (Sabbaoth God) as though heaven itself were a well-garrisoned civil plantation in an otherwise 'salvage' universe.

¹⁰⁹ For the sinister connotations of 'temporize' see *Faerie Queene*, V.11.56.