

INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted you will find a target note listing the pages in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB RD., ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

8129406

RUSSELL, DAVID ROGER

THE UNITY OF EDMUND SPENSER'S "FOWRE HYMNES"

The University of Oklahoma

PH.D. 1981

University
Microfilms
International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1981

by

Russell, David Roger

All Rights Reserved

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE UNITY OF EDMUND SPENSER'S FOWRE HYMNES

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
DAVID ROGER RUSSELL
Norman, Oklahoma
1981

THE UNITY OF SPENSER'S FOWRE HYMNES

APPROVED BY

Guenn Davis
James Mack
Horton Dill
John Cullen
Lawrence Higgins

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

ABSTRACT

Interpretations of Fowre Hymnes have generally focused on Spenser's attitudes toward love and beauty, his religious views, or his debt to Platonism. This study is an attempt to view the poem as a highly unified work of art which reflects the most basic assumptions of Elizabethan culture, the "common knowledge" of Spenser's age, rather than as an exposition of Spenser's specific ethical, religious, or philosophical views.

Spenser uses several techniques to achieve this unity in a poem which contains diverse subjects and themes. Its genre, the hymn, incorporates secular and sacred, classical and Christian elements, and thus becomes a very flexible instrument for decorously expressing a wide range of ideas and emotions within a single structure. Spenser's persona unifies the poem as he undergoes a profound change from young Petrarchan lover to mature Christian devotee, a change which reflects Elizabethan ideas of the typical pattern of a man's intellectual and spiritual growth. To represent this change Spenser borrows the conventions of Petrarchan verse and literary Platonism in the "earthly" hymns, and the conventions of the sermon and the popular devotional manuals in the "heavenly" hymns. The two pairs of hymns are further unified in

that their structure mirrors the structure of the Elizabethan cosmos; earth below, heaven above, with man operating between these cosmological and theological poles. The repetition of images and topoi links the individual hymns in ways that reflect the Elizabethan concept of the universe as divine order. The hymns also reflect the typical Elizabethan aesthetic theory (best expressed in Sidney's Defence) that poetry has both a mimetic and a didactic function. The two pairs "imitate" what A. S. P. Wodehouse terms the order of nature and the order of grace, the two levels of experience posited by Renaissance thinkers. Moreover, the hymns teach man's proper response to love and beauty, first on a "natural" or ethical level, then on a "celestial" or spiritual level.

When viewed as a thoroughly Elizabethan poem, rather than a specifically Platonic one, Fowre Hymnes resembles many of Spenser's more widely studied works in its capacity to include a wide range of human experience within the limits of decorum which his age imposed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION: COMMON KNOWLEDGE AND THE UNCOMMON	
POET	1
Chapter	
I. GENRE.	26
II. PERSONA	52
III. THE LINKS BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN	93
IV. AESTHETICS	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY	155

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to the University of Oklahoma English Department for an award which helped finance my research, to Dr. Ruggiers and Dr. Diehl for their extremely valuable suggestions, and to Dr. Gwenn Davis, who guided me through this work with her patience and good humor, as well as her insightful scholarship. Most of all I thank Joyce Markes Russell for the many hours of editing, proofreading, and typing which she cheerfully contributed. To her and to our son John Gregory I dedicate this little study.

INTRODUCTION

COMMON KNOWLEDGE AND THE COMMON POET

The volume of critical commentary on Fowre Hymnes is extremely large, as the amount of space devoted to it in the Variorum indicates. The editors include almost twice as much critical comment on the hymns as they do on Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, a poem of comparable date, subject, and length; and, unlike Colin Clout, the hymns even rate an appendix which is almost as long as the one for The Shepheardes Calender. Yet one immediately notices how little of the criticism in the appendix (two pages only) treats cardinal literary aspects of the poem, its theme, imagery, structure and style. The rest of the appendix is primarily devoted to the poem's date and Spenser's alleged retraction (five pages), and the poem's sources (20 pages), including, under the heading "Form," a five page summary of the debate over Spenser's presumed use of one kind of source, the Neoplatonic scala. For the most part the criticism written since the Variorum was published also emphasizes sources, analogues, and biographical problems relating to the retraction.

However, amid the complex debates over the poem's origins there has been a good deal of critical discussion of

the question of the poem's unity. Are the hymns one unified poem in four parts; or are they merely two pairs of poems which bear little relation to one another, grouped together because they have similar subjects? Since the present study attempts to find unity in the poem's structure, it will be helpful to briefly review similar attempts by others to whom this new interpretation is of course indebted. The successes of earlier critics have provided an invaluable base of scholarship upon which to build, and their failures have suggested new methods of inquiry. In particular three issues, all of them still unresolved, have vexed almost every attempt to see the poem as a unified structure: the poem's date, Spenser's attitude toward love, and his debt to Neoplatonic thought.

All early commentators (before 1862) and a few more recent ones take Spenser literally when he says he wrote the two earthly hymns in his youth and the second pair much later "by way of retraction to reform them."¹ Consequently these critics find no important relation between the two pairs because they are, as Collier says, "productions of two distinct periods of his life."² Saurat (1930) echoed several earlier critics when he called the first pair "apprentice work," unworthy of comparisons with later productions. The first pair he takes to be insincere, merely Neoplatonic "rhetorical exercises" of Spenser's youth which, "prompted by a fine spirit of contradiction, he had printed with the

last two hymns."³ Twentieth-century critics are split as to whether or not the dedication is a literal account of the hymns' composition, some favoring widely separate dates of composition, others arguing that the dedication is a conventional device not meant to be taken as autobiographical fact, and that the hymns were written (or thoroughly rewritten) at about the same time and can therefore be unified.⁴

The question of the date, however, is only a minor skirmish in the larger battle over whether or not Spenser displays a consistent attitude toward love and beauty in the two pairs. Some feel that the "earthly" love in the first pair cannot be reconciled with the spiritual love in the second pair. In this view the comments in the dedication and the first stanzas of An Hymne of Heavenly Love (the "Palinode") are taken to indicate that Spenser repudiated the first two hymns and therefore intended no unity between the pairs.

Critics who argue for unity in the poem generally overcome this objection by claiming that the dedication and palinode are a "trick of fine art," as Palgrave puts it, a mere convention of humility, and therefore cannot be taken as a serious indictment of the views on love expressed in the first pair.⁵ Numerous critics point out that Spenser printed the earthly hymns next to the heavenly ones--remarkable if he were truly condemning them--and, more importantly, that nothing in the first pair could shock even "the most

extravagant of prudes."⁶ Palgrave, for example, finds nothing offensive in the first pair, but rather a theme of spiritual love common in both pairs. The heavenly hymns "leave all that he had sung of human love intact, while carrying the theme into higher and greater regions."⁷ Fletcher agrees, claiming that the earthly hymns, "far from running counter to religious love, lead to not a retraction so much as a sequel and a compliment."⁸ Padelford remarks that among "decent minded" people human love is thought of as ennobling, but he says that Spenser nevertheless went on to write the heavenly hymns to "safeguard" the earthly ones from being misinterpreted by "loose wits."⁹ Ellrodt, too, sees no contradiction on moral grounds between the two pairs, "God is love, and all pure love proceeds from God and is approved by him. Even physical love is the result of his injunction 'Be fruitful and multiply.'"¹⁰ Nelson agrees that there is an essential unity in Spenser's attitude toward love and beauty: "It is evident that the two latter hymns are designed to gain meaning and strength from the two former."¹¹ Although the three most recent critics disagree over the relation between the attitudes toward love Spenser expresses in the two pairs, Wellsford, Rollinson and Purvis all agree that there is no fundamental contradiction.¹²

The most intense disagreement is over Spenser's debt to Platonism. Are the first two hymns Platonic and the second two Christian? If so, is the poem unified? Are both

pairs Platonic? If so, what Platonic concepts unify them? If not, what role if any do the Platonic elements play in the structure? These questions are complex, and the critical commentary on them is so voluminous that it can not be briefly summarized. One can, however, get the gist of the various arguments by examining one major aspect of the issue, the question of whether or not the poem is structured around the Platonic scala or "ladder of love."

Every critic since Fletcher (1911) has argued that the hymns either do or do not follow some version of the scala, on which Renaissance Neoplatonic philosophers charted the growth of love from pure physical desire for a woman to pure mystical union with God. Bennett, the most consistent of the advocates of a Neoplatonic structural unity, finds all seven of the stages of love outlined by the Italian Neoplatonist Pico Della Mirandola, each in its proper order, from the first hymn to the last.¹³ Bhattacharje agrees, and even finds the stages "more clearly marked and more sharply delineated from one another than in the speech of Diotima (Symposium)." Fletcher, less convinced, finds only six of the stages (one through five in the earthly hymns and six in Hymne of Heavenly Beauty) and asserts that Spenser is "less austere systematic than Pico."¹⁵ Padelford distinguishes only four stages, all of them in the earthly hymns, and in different places than Fletcher and Bennett find them. The later hymns, he argues, are Calvinistic, a repudiation of a

youthful Platonism, prompted by a desire to put away "any faith in earthly love as an aid to soul development."¹⁶ Lee says Spenser "carries the ascent to the second stage" in Hymne of Love, following Castiglione, and hints at a third.¹⁷ Renwick and Bush are each able to discover only two stages, both in the earthly hymns.¹⁸ And Renwick, along with Jones, discounts any Platonic unity, except to say that earthly beauty "shows the mark of its divine origin" in Spenser's spiritualized treatment of it.¹⁹

Other critics also find fault with the Platonic ladder as a structuring device. Spens flatly states, "In his Hymns Spenser does not ascend this ladder."²⁰ Nelson, more cautious, finds a general resemblance in the hymns to the ascent of the soul charted by Plotinus and his Renaissance followers, but sees no evidence that Spenser had any plan of philosophical development in mind to unify the poem. "Examined as a logical construct, it [Spenser's system of love] disintegrates at once into a conglomeration of inconsistencies and even absurdities," but Nelson does argue for another kind of structural unity which will be examined in Chapter III.²¹ Robert Ellrodt's book Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser is by far the most thorough examination of Spenser's debt to Platonism in the hymns. He concludes that there are Neoplatonic elements in both pairs, but these are not used to structure the poem around any version of the scala. There is, he argues, "a clear break between the two

pairs, love of a woman and the love of God being thoroughly contrasted."²² Ellrodt's conclusions parallel C. S. Lewis's opinion: "If we speak of the Platonic colorings at all we have to do so at some length because they are difficult, not because they are of immense importance."²³

The failure of critics to reach even a modicum of agreement is due perhaps to the complexity of the question. The editor of the Variorum states the problem well in his introduction to the discussion of sources:

The opinions of scholars concerning "sources" of the Hymns as represented here and in the Commentary are by reason of the subject matter, inconclusive. Plato, Ficino, Pico, Benivieni, Bruno, Castiglione are variously put forward, blending with the Bible, the Apocrypha, and Calvin. This is inevitable in matter so interfluctuating as Platonism, whose ideas and poetic imagery--for example, the mirror--are highly infectious.²⁴

Thirty-eight years later we can add to his list of proposed sources Plotinus, Augustine, Boethius, Dante, Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," Le Roi, La Brodiere, Leone Ebreo, Anibale Romei, Ronsard, and Hooker. As these lists indicate, the threads of Platonic thought were very tightly woven into the whole fabric of Renaissance culture, as well as the medieval and classical cultures which preceded it. It is even possible to argue Platonic influence in the writings of Saint John, Saint Paul, and Hebrew Wisdom literature.²⁵ Moreover, from at least the time of Saint Augustine the influence on Christian culture is conscious and pronounced. With the Platonic influence so pervasive and diverse, the attempt to

firmly establish specific sources clearly becomes an exercise in futility.

Yet despite these difficulties our understanding of Spenser's poetry and his whole culture has nevertheless been enriched in several important ways by these inquiries into the poem's date and sources. Attempts to date the hymns on the basis of internal evidence have led to a close analysis of the diction and prosody of the hymns in relation to Spenser's other works. Attempts to define the Platonic elements have resulted in several very difficult passages being clarified through comparison with numerous analogues from several literatures. Attempts to find a unity of philosophical presentation between the pairs have revealed many significant verbal and rhetorical parallels and contrasts. Most importantly, the wide ranging scholarship necessary to wage the critical battles over sources has made Renaissance Platonism immensely more accessible to the student of Elizabethan literature.

The issues which have thus far dominated critical comment have certainly not exhausted the possible approaches to the poem's structure. Most critics have attempted to see in the poem evidence that Spenser held or did not hold certain specific views on various issues--philosophical, religious, moral. Thus, their primary aim is often not so much to analyze the structure of the poem as to draw conclusions about the poet's opinions. "Spenser's thought" or "frame of mind"

often becomes the final object of critical inquiry. For example, Wystanley argues that similarities between the hymns and the dialogues of Plato demonstrate that Spenser's thought is truly Platonic.²⁶ Others contend that Spenser belonged to some school of sixteenth century Neoplatonic thought. According to Fletcher, Benivienni supplied for him "a poetic, yet exact compendium of doctrine."²⁷ Padelford says that the young Spenser of the earthly hymns found in Castiglione a doctrine which, "pre-supposing an inborn excellence in humanity, accepting and even exalting the senses as aids to the spirit and recognizing a natural progression in the attainment of the divine life, is strictly Catholic."²⁸ Ellrodt forcefully argues that what sixteenth century Neoplatonic materials Spenser does include in the hymns show his sympathy with the more conservative "psychological" school of Neoplatonism represented by Ficino, while Bennett emphasizes Spenser's affinity with the more radical "metaphysical" Neoplatonism of Pico.²⁹

Similarly, critics who discount the importance of Plato in Spenser's thought generally do so in order to argue that he is expounding some other particular philosophical or theological system. Padelford analyzes the heavenly hymns by finding parallels with the Institutes, and concludes that in middle age Spenser was a Calvinist.³⁰ Saurat and Albright see the hymns as evidence of a dichotomy in Spenser's mind between reason and faith. According to Albright the first

pair approaches love and beauty through rational means, the second pair "by the aid of emotion or inspiration rather than by pure reason." In Saurat's words, "Spenser had that kind of mind. . . . The normal condition of his soul was Paganism, sensual and more than half sceptical; religion came to him in irresistible but infrequent outbursts," one of which was the heavenly hymns.³¹ And Ellrodt's long study of the Platonic elements is at bottom an attempt to reveal in the hymns Spenser's "frame of mind" which he argues is "still mainly Medieval." Spenser "undoubtedly was among the most conservative spirits of his age." Not Renaissance Neoplatonic pantheism, "but the Christian naturalism of the middle ages evoked the richest and fullest response of his religious sensibility." Ellrodt's goal is to "enable us to gain a clearer insight into Spenser's own mind and discover his individual bent and bias."³³

The present study has a less ambitious goal. It is not concerned primarily with Spenser's thought, his opinions on Neoplatonic philosophy or medieval mysticism, the religious or political party to which he belonged, or his conservative or liberal bias. Rather, I assume that Spenser's particular religious and philosophical opinions are not crucial to our understanding or enjoyment of the poem, since the work is clearly not polemical in character. In any case the wide divergence of critical opinion indicates that Spenser's personal views are not at all obvious, which suggests that he

was not much concerned with making the kinds of precise and systematic distinctions which have occupied many critics.

However, the lack of any clearly discernible philosophical structure does not preclude there being clear rhetorical and aesthetic structures. Osgood writes in the Variorum:

The differing views [of the use of the Platonic scala] presented in these extracts seem to point conclusively to the fact that Spenser was not following a pre-conceived plan of philosophical presentation. . . . In attempting to pierce through to a complete understanding of Spenser it is well to keep in mind that we are working with a piece of Renaissance art, not a philosophical treatise.³⁴

It is fair to say that Spenser offered the poem first as a work of art, not as an exposition of his personal opinions. This study is therefore an attempt to find the rhetorical and aesthetic structures which unify the four hymns into a coherent whole, not according to any specific system of philosophical ideas, but according to the norms and decorum of Elizabethan court poetry and society.

This is not to say that Spenser was not interested in ideas, but his interest differed from that of many modern philosophers or critics. C. S. Lewis explains the difference.

He is, like nearly all of his contemporaries, a syncretist. He never dreamed of expounding something he could call "his" philosophy. His business was to embody in moving images the common wisdom. It is this that may easily arouse distrust of him in a modern reader. We feel that the man who could weld together, or think that he had welded together, so many diverse elements, Protestant, chivalric, Platonic, Ovidian, Lucretian, and pastoral, must have been very vague and shallow

in each. [Yet]. . . . He assumed at the outset the truth about the universe was knowable and in fact known. If that were so, then of course you would expect agreements between the great teachers of all ages just as you expect agreements between the reports of different explorers. . . . What some call his philosophy he would have called common knowledge.³⁶

Spenser is perfectly content to state and even celebrate the obvious, for what is most obvious is, for him, what is most true--the great center of wisdom, immune to the conflicts which rage on the periphery. Though this may seem a dangerously naive assumption to our skeptical, scientific age, it is nevertheless a safe position from which to begin an interpretation of a Renaissance poem.

Although Spenser's ideas are, for all we can tell, "common knowledge," he was not therefore a common poet, judging by the reactions of his contemporaries. His readers, like him, were not on the whole much concerned with original ideas in poetry, for the very originality of an idea made it suspect to an age which looked to authorities, classical, biblical, and medieval, for the truth. Instead, his readers were interested in the way he embodied these eternal truths--that "common knowledge"--in poetic forms, forms which were themselves also borrowed from the past. That a dozen poets had written vaguely Platonic sonnet sequences praising a mistress was no reason why Spenser should not write another; on the contrary, the previous sequences challenged the poet to apply his skill to writing a better one. This attitude toward knowledge and originality suggests that when an

Elizabethan reader picked up a new poem he was not so much concerned with subtle nuances of the author's philosophical or religious ideas. Rather, he was intrigued with the author's rhetorical skill, with the verbal structure which communicated the idea--or, as Sidney put it, "imitated" the "Idea or fore-conceit." As one might expect, the Renaissance commentaries on specific poems and Renaissance books on how to write poems mainly consist of remarks about "technical" matters, the use of this image or that figure or rhetoric, the kind of diction or the genre the poet employs, a comparison of one poet's description of a scene with that of a classical or contemporary poet. When philosophical ideas are mentioned, it is generally to call attention to their agreement with the ancients, their commonality. (E. K.'s glosses are an excellent case in point.)

If these aesthetic and rhetorical structures were generally most interesting to Spenser's contemporary readers, then one valid modern approach to the poem might be to attempt to see it as his readers did. In other words, instead of asking what Spenser's views on this or that issue were, I will ask what his Elizabethan readers might have noticed and applauded in the poem itself. What expectations did his readers bring to the poem, and how does the poem meet them? Of course it is impossible for a twentieth century reader to experience the poem just as an Elizabethan reader did, any more than it is possible to know with

certainly Spenser's own religious or philosophical positions. But just as the attempts to go through the poem into Spenser's "thought" and "frame of mind" have yielded valuable insights into the poem, this attempt to go through the poem into the experience of his contemporary readers may in some ways enrich our experience of it as modern readers.

My method, then, is fundamentally historical, drawing upon two kinds of history. First I rely upon the history of literature, particularly in the analysis of Elizabethan generic expectations, literary conventions, rhetorical figures, and topoi with which Spenser and his readers were familiar. Second, I rely on what has often been called "the history of ideas" without which a modern reader cannot understand the intellectual setting in which Spenser and his readers moved. Pioneering works in the field such as Tillyard's Elizabethan World Picture and Wind's Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance have shown us how very difficult it is to see in a Renaissance poem or painting the things which were most important and interesting to Renaissance men and women. Their world was in many respects very different from ours. To some modern readers Spenser's world is merely curious; Elizabethan psychological theories may seem hopelessly naive, its moralizing trite, its philosophy and theology quaint or even superstitious. But if there is some congruence between Spenser's world and our own, some points of contact which the hymns reveal, then the historical method is best suited

to discovering them. If one can, in some limited way, hear Spenser's song as his contemporaries heard it, one may also find some delight or even perhaps instruction in it, as they did.

Two analogies from the performing arts may help clarify. It is much easier to play a Renaissance fanfare on a modern trombone than on an unwieldy, inflexible sixteenth-century sackbut, but one may hear nuances when the piece is played on the "primitive" instrument that are denied its sophisticated descendent. Similarly, it is simpler to perform Lear in a modern theatre than to construct a replica of the Globe according to bits of historical evidence and many educated guesses based on readings of Renaissance play scripts. No one assumes that attending a performance mounted in one of these replicas is exactly like attending a performance of Lear in the seventeenth-century Globe. And there may very well be better productions of Lear in modern theatres. But the "historical" Lear is at least one valid way of producing the play, and the experience may enrich one's response to other productions of Shakespeare, just as a modern dress production of Lear might bring out themes which a production done in period costumes might ignore.

The dedication is a logical place to begin our interpretation of Fowre Hymnes from the point of view of Spenser's contemporary readers, for here the poet speaks directly to two of them, Lady Margaret of Cumberland and her sister,

Lady Marie Countess of Warwick. One quickly becomes aware that this poem was written for an aristocratic audience.

Fowre Hymnes is dated Greenwich, September 1, 1596, and is the only poem which Spenser dated. On this date Elizabeth's court was residing at Greenwich, and Spenser was most probably back in England for a brief stay, perhaps at court, before returning to Ireland for the last, tragic time. The two sisters were likely at court then also, for they were of the inner circle which attended Gloriana on her frequent progresses from one great house to another.

The courtly audience to whom the poem is immediately addressed is small and contained. Spenser almost certainly knew the sisters personally since they were a part of the Bedford (Sidney's) family, whom Spenser knew from his earliest years at court. He praised the Countess of Warwick as the "paragon of all fame" and "the faire flower of chastity" in Ruines of Time, a work "specially intended to the renowning of that noble race," the Bedford family (Ded. p. 472). Later, in Colin Clout, he called her

. . . the well of bounty and brave mind
 Excelling most in glorie and great light;
 She is the ornament of womankind,
 And courts chief garlond with all vertues dight.
 (ll. 496-98)

Rosemond Tuve discovered a possible autograph of Spenser in an edition of Gower belonging to the Countess, an autograph which contains a clever paraphrase of a line from Ovid's Fasti to the effect that friends are only plentiful when

fortune smiles.³⁷ This is perhaps an in-joke, Tuve suggests, referring to Spenser's difficulty in finding patrons at court. But he never lacked friends among the Bedford family, even at the end of his life. Anne Clifford, Lady Margaret's daughter, had his monument erected.

Thus, when Spenser says in the dedication that he "was moved by one of you two most excellent ladies to call in the same" (youthful love poems), he might be telling the literal truth, for he was closely tied to the family, and one of the sisters might have asked him to withdraw a poem from circulation. But he might also have been fibbing, making an in-joke by pretending that he and one of the ladies were offended by some early poems, when in fact they both realized there was nothing offensive about them to anyone with a sophisticated understanding of poetry. Perhaps Spenser is really teasing the kind of unsophisticated Puritan (still with us today) who takes offense at nudes in classical paintings. I make this suggestion only to show that one cannot necessarily infer the moral attitudes of Spenser or of the ladies from the remarks in the dedication since the relationship between poet and patronesses might well have been as close and complex as the relationship between friends who have read and discussed poems together for years.

The most important aspect of the dedication is not, as many critics have assumed, the bit of highly suspect information it gives on Spenser's biography or moral philosophy.

The most important thing is the series of clues Spenser gives for interpreting the poem. In the dedication he is directing the reader's attention to some cardinal aspects of the poem's structure, aspects which he considered important or he presumably would not have included them in the printed dedication. For each of the four chapters of this study I will take as my point of departure some question which is raised by the dedication and analyze the hymn's structure with that question in mind.

In the first chapter I begin with the question of genre. Spenser says he has written two kinds of hymns, secular and sacred. How did his readers understand the term 'hymn' in both senses, and, consequently, what generic expectations did they bring to this poem which contains both kinds? I examine the poem in light of the hymn tradition and the comments of Renaissance critics on the genre, and discuss the ways in which Spenser meets and at times modifies the expectations of his readers by combining the two kinds of hymns.

The second chapter begins with the question of Spenser's "retraction," not in relation to Spenser's own biography, but in the context of the poem's structure. The dedication shows the poet's concern with the psychology of youth and, by implication, the attitudes proper to maturity. He says he wrote hymns "in the greener times of my youth," that "too much pleased those of like age and disposition." Then he says that, having matured, he wrote new hymns "by way of retraction to reforme them." Is Spenser suggesting that the

hymns are structured around the difference between youth and maturity? An analysis of the hymns in light of commonplace Renaissance notions of the character of men at different ages reveals that the poem represents a decorous response to love and beauty of first a young man and then a mature man.

The third chapter first examines the Elizabethan understanding of the distinction Spenser carefully draws in the dedication between two kinds of love and beauty: "earthly and naturall . . . heavenly and celestiall." Then follows a close analysis of the imagery and rhetoric to show how the poem reflects both the opposition and the unity which Renaissance man saw between "earthly" and "heavenly" things.

The last chapter is an attempt to place the hymns in the context of Renaissance aesthetic theory, especially that branch which is best represented in England by Sidney's Defence. The dedication shows a great concern with the effect of poetry on its readers, especially the young who "do rather suck out poyson to their strong passion than honey to their honest delight." How might Spenser's Elizabethan readers have understood the purpose, or, as Sidney puts it, the "end" of this poem, in light of current ideas about the role of poetry, especially religious poetry, in the social order and the eternal order?

Before answering these questions raised by the dedication, I must sketch something of the literary climate which

surrounded Spenser and his readers in the Fall of 1596.

Fowre Hymnes was published in the midst of a widespread call for an "English David," a return to religious subjects in poetry. The Puritan attacks on the dominant Petrarchan love poetry, and the staleness of the tradition itself, had begun to be felt by poets as diverse as the Jesuit Southwell and the aristocratic Protestant Sidney. In The English Lyric From Wyatt to Donne, Douglas Peterson sums up the situation:

"It is clear that the religious lyric which emerges toward the end of the sixteenth century developed quite specifically out of the awareness that the conventional attitudes toward love in the verse of the English Petrarchans made English poetry vulnerable to charges of vacuity and liscentiousness."³⁸ The year before the hymns' publication, Nicholas Breton, in "A Solemn Passion of the Soul's Love," repeats the familiar call in terms reminiscent of Spenser's comparison of earthly and heavenly love:

Come poets yee that fill the world with fansie
Whose faining Muses shew but madding fits,
Which all too soone doo fall into those frenzies,
That are begotten by mistaking wits.
Lay down your loves, compare your love with mine,
And say whose virtue is the true divine.³⁹

Earlier Sidney had defended poetry while condemning sensual poets who debase it. In his Defence of Poesie he deplores "that lyriccal kind of Songs and Sonnets" and wishes English poets would turn their talents to "singing the praises of the immortall beauty and immortall goodness of God."⁴⁰ In 1596 Southwell writes in Saint Peter's Complaint:⁴¹ "Still

finest wits are 'stilling Venus' rose; / In Paynim toyes the sweetest vaines are spent / To Christian works few have their talents lent" (ll. 16-18). He then composes a series of devotional poems to correct error, theological as well as poetic. At the same time Chapman exemplifies the tendency to elevate love poetry by giving it philosophical implications as well as by emphasizing its religious side. In "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy" (1595) he contrasts lust with spiritualized love, in Neoplatonic terms, and "Hymn to Our Savior on the Cross" is a meditation on divine love as manifested in the crucifixion (1596).

Continental models abounded. The sonnet vogue in France had led to a new kind, the religious sonnet, which was becoming ever more popular in England as well as France.⁴² Most importantly, in Sylvester's translations of DuBartas's Divine Weeks and Urania English poets found a model for religious verse in the grand style. Encyclopedic in its concerns, yet firmly rooted in scripture and dogma, DuBartas' poetry presents a sustaining cosmic vision that appealed first to Sidney and then to a host of others looking for a Christian poet who would elevate modern poetry to a position above philosophy, history, the classics--even theology.⁴³

In this climate Spenser published Fowre Hymnes, a poem in high style and in rhyme royal, the form considered since Chaucer most suited to weighty subjects. With its two pairs of hymns, the heavenly "reforming" the earthly, it is a kind

of paradigm of the change which many poets and critics hoped lyric verse would undergo, from muse charnelle to muse eternelle. In other words, it is a thoroughly Elizabethan poem. If Spenser's ideas are "common knowledge," his conformity to current poetic fashion, at least in this poem, is no less conventional. But, paradoxically, it is this very commonality, this sense of what is most central in his culture, that gives Spenser's verse so much power; for he writes out of a sense of security, intellectual, artistic, and religious, which was, in large measure, lost to those in the next century. The poet and his readers for the most part shared a common vision of the world and of man's place in it, a vision which a poet of genius could comfortably celebrate, confident in the knowledge that things truly worth knowing were already known by him and his readers, and the task of the poet was therefore to renew that truth, to "reform" it by giving it new embodiments. Tillyard's final comment on Spenser in The Elizabethan World Picture is especially appropriate to Fowre Hymnes: "That truth is illustrated that the poet is most individual when most orthodox and of his age--ipsissimus cum minime ipse." From the anonymous "Immerito" of his first major poem, Shepheardes Calendar, to the mature and celebrated devotional poet of what is probably his last poem, Fowre Hymnes, Spenser is most himself when least himself.

NOTES

¹All references to Spenser's works are from Poetical Works, ed., J. C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912).

²Quoted in The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. Edwin A. Greenlaw et al., vol. 7 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932-49), p. 657.

³Denis Saurat, Literature and the Occult Tradition, trans. Dorothy Bolton (London: MacVeagh, 1930), p. 164. See also W. J. Courthorpe, "The Poetry of Spenser." University of California Publications in Modern Philology, No. 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1917), pp. 43-44.

⁴See especially the various arguments of the opposing views in the Variorum, pp. 658-662.

⁵Francis T. Palgrave, "Essays on the Minor Poems of Spenser," in Complete Works, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London: Privately Printed, 1882-84), Vol. 4, p. xcix. Quoted in Variorum, p. 586.

⁶B. E. Neil Dodge, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908), pp. 741-2. Quoted in the Variorum, p. 658.

⁷Palgrave, p. xc.

⁸Jefferson B. Fletcher, "A Study in Renaissance Mysticism: Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," PMLA, 26 (1911), no 452.

⁹F. M. Padelford, "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes: A Resurvey," Studies in Philology, 29 (1932), 214.

¹⁰Robert Ellrodt, Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, No. 35 (Geneva: E. Droz, 1960), p. 148.

¹¹William Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 99.

¹²Enid Wellsford, ed. Spenser: Fowre Hymnes and Epithalamion (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), Phillip Bruce Rollinson, "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes and the Tradition of the Literary Hymn," (Diss. University of Virginia, 1968), and Dale Purvis, "A Study of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," (Diss. University of Tennessee, 1976).

¹³Josephine Waters Bennett, "The Theme of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," Studies in Philology, 28 (1931), 49.

¹⁴Mohinimohan Bhattacharje, Platonic Ideas--Spenser (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), pp. 29-30.

¹⁵"Benivienne's 'Ode of Love' and Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," Modern Philology, 8 (1911), 547.

¹⁶Padelford, pp. 423-4.

¹⁷R. W. Lee, "Castiglione's Influence on Spenser's Early Hymns," Philological Quarterly, 7 (1928), quoted in Variorum, p. 678.

¹⁸W. L. Renwick, ed., Daphnaida and Other Poems (London: Scholartis Press, 1929), pp. 210-211; Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (New York: Norton, 1932), p. 121.

¹⁹Renwick, p. 679: see also H. S. V. Jones, A Spenser Handbook (New York: F. S. Crofts, 1930), p. 67.

²⁰Janet Spens, Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation (New York: J. Russell and Russell, 1934), p. 111.

²¹Nelson, p. 115.

²²Ellrodt, p. 140.

²³C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 376.

²⁴Variorum, p. 662.

²⁵The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, ed. Charles C. Laymon (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 547, 710a, 899a.

²⁶Lillian Winstanley, ed., The Fowre Hymnes (Cambridge: University Press, 1907), pp. ixff.

²⁷Quoted in Variorum, p. 666.

²⁸Padelford, quoted in Variorum, p. 667.

²⁹Ellrodt, pp. 130-40 and Bennett, pp. 42-3.

³⁰Padelford, JEGP, pp. 429-33.

³¹Saurat, pp. 218-21 and Evelyn Albright, "Spenser's Cosmic Philosophy and His Religion," PMLA, 44 (1929), 725 quoted in Purvis, p. 8.

³²Joseph B. Collins, Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), pp. 190-301.

³³Ellrodt, pp. 215-6 and 12.

³⁴Variorum, p. 681.

³⁵Lewis, p. 387.

³⁶E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York: Macmillan, 1944); Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in The Renaissance (New York: Norton, 1969).

³⁷Rosemond Tuve, "Spenserus," in Essays By Rosemond Tuve: Spenser, Herbert, Milton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 139-66, especially pp. 152, 156.

³⁸The Elizabethan Lyric From Wyatt to Donne (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 175.

³⁹Quoted in Peterson, The Elizabethan Lyric, p. 174.

⁴⁰The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, Albert Feuillerat, ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 41.

⁴¹The Complete Poems, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London: Robson and Sons, 1872), p. 9.

⁴²For the French devotional sonnet see Terence C. Cave, Devotional Poetry in France c. 1570-1630 (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 135-146.

⁴³For the influence of DuBartas see Anne Lake Prescott, French Poets and the English Renaissance: Studies in Fame and Transformation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

⁴⁴Tillyard, p. 110.

CHAPTER I

GENRE

The Renaissance approach to literature was fundamentally generic. Poets imitated the "kinds" (the Elizabethan word for genres) written by classical, medieval, and contemporary authors--pastoral, epic, lyric, sonnet, elegy, and (among many others) hymn. Poets compared their works with those of their predecessors and contemporaries, attempting to "overgo" one another and the ancients in each kind. They established lists of genres, formulated rules and debated them, searched Aristotle, Cicero and a host of others for clues to ancient practice.¹ In the twentieth century this approach may seem antiquated and rigid, but when we as modern readers study the hymns something of this approach is necessary for there are some basic questions which cannot be answered adequately except in terms of Renaissance generic theory. Indeed, it is hard to get past the title without contradictions. The hymns do not seem to be hymns at all, at least not in the usual modern sense. Spenser's poem is obviously not a liturgical hymn, meant to be sung or chanted as part of a public religious observance; yet a brief look at a typical Elizabethan "how to" poetry book such as Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie reveals that the poem is in fact a literary

hymn, an important (though not common) classical and Renaissance poetic genre.² As its length and metrical pattern indicate (iambic pentameter, rhyme royal), the poem was meant to be read or recited in more secular contexts and, generally, less public places than the liturgical hymns we know today.

Having made this necessary distinction one is faced with another question a few lines into Hymne of Love: how can one poem treat both religious matters (as we expect a hymn to) and the matter of sexual love (a highly unusual subject for a modern hymn)? The answer lies in the Renaissance understanding of hymn as a recognized genre and in the Renaissance appreciation of experimentation with genres. For Spenser's contemporaries, there were several different kinds of hymn. Moreover, these could be combined to create new effects, without violating decorum or destroying a poem's unity.

In her pioneering study of Renaissance genre theory Rosalie Colie outlines an approach which illuminates Spenser's practice in Fowre Hymnes. Genre performed several functions in the age: it allowed poets to make sense out of a huge variety of literature, to link their culture with classical culture through imitation of earlier models in each kind, and to experiment with new forms by combining old ones. Further, genre gave the poet criteria by which to select materials (from life or other works of art) and structures for shaping those materials (appropriate themes, verse

forms, topoi). According to Colie, certain critics were entirely prescriptive in approach, defining each genre by excluding things from it, and dictating that certain appropriate materials (and no others) be structured in highly conventional ways. Petrarch, for one, "insisted that the forms (of classical poetry) be restored in their purity."³ In pastoral, for example, only shepherds could appear, and only the "low" style could be used. "Exclusionists" such as Petrarch would have the literary hymn treat only the subjects which classical poets used and only in the high style of the classical poets. In some ways Spenser follows the "rules" and does a good "imitation" of the classical literary hymns. He praises classical deities in the high style, using rhyme royal, the accepted prosodic form for serious subjects, and avoiding the antiquarian diction he used in Shepheardes Calender and Faerie Queene.

Yet the exclusionist approach to genres was too narrow to contain the variety of Renaissance literature and its far ranging experiments. In Spenser's day, Colie says, most critics (Scalinger, Puttenham, Sidney, to name but three) were "inclusionists."⁴ They allowed for "genera mista," combinations of kinds in one poem. As Sidney said of the kinds, "If several they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful."⁵ Polonius's description of plays "tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" applies to Shakespeare's own practice, and Spenser's "pastoral epic" is another example of the freedom with which

Renaissance artists drew on one genre to compliment another. Though some "rugged foreheads" might complain when "lovers' deare debate" (a lyric form) becomes the subject of an epic, which should properly "weld kingdoms causes, and affaires of state" (FQ IV. pr. 2), most Renaissance poets and critics found such combinations felicitous. Colie suggests that the mingling of genres is the result of the Renaissance passion to "get everything in," the love of copi. Only several genres could render "all there is in heaven and on earth" and satisfy the desire for order and harmony so characteristic of the age. "Misti poemi" are valuable in that they allow the poet to produce "a larger collective vision," to give a fuller commentary upon the poet's culture than could be achieved by staying within strict generic boundaries. In Fowre Hymnes, as elsewhere, Spenser is an inclusionist, borrowing extensively from other genres besides hymn (notably the love lyric). In this very process of mixing genres Spenser joins the experience which Renaissance lyric treats, the love of a man and a woman, with the religious experience traditionally treated by the hymn.

A complex history lies behind the several varieties of hymns. Consequently, an Elizabethan reader might have expected a wide variety of elements in a hymn. Philip Rollinson has painstakingly traced the history of the genre, so we may briefly summarize his findings.⁶ Literary hymns were first written in late classical times. Following the model of Callimachus, the cataloguer of the great library at

Alexandria, these poems were relatively long epideictic exercises in the high style meant to display the poet's rhetorical skill rather than to honor the gods, whom sophisticated Romans had long since allegorized out of existence. Their subjects, then, never specifically religious, were natural forces, philosophical principles, mythological and historical heroes. Deities were praised only as symbols of abstract ideas, as, for example, in a hymn to Apollo as wisdom. In the early Christian era the literary hymn died out, except for a brief time when Prudentius (fourth century) wrote hymns in the high style praising saints, martyrs, and the Christian virtues. Beginning with Ambrose of Milan (fourth century) the liturgical hymn, written in plain style, was introduced, partly as a reaction against the supposed rhetorical excesses of pagan authors, partly in imitation of the psalms which were always important to Christian liturgy. Between the death of Prudentius and the advent of the Renaissance, the only hymns written were liturgical hymns. This tradition was (and is) carried on in the Catholic church, and in the Protestant churches the liturgical hymn became a major element of worship. Following Luther's lead, poets wrote new hymns and translated Latin liturgical hymns into vernaculars.

In the early sixteenth century some Italian humanists (of a Neoplatonic bent) began to imitate the classical literary hymn. This revival is best seen as a small part of

the movement to revive the late classical age in art, born of the same impetus that produced Ciceronian prose, domed palaces, and grotesque ceilings. In Florence, one of Ficino's students, Marullus, wrote a series of hymns imitating the rhetorical pyrotechnics of the pagans, praising pagan deities, Amor and Jove, as well as natural phenomena such as death and light. In Naples another Neoplatonist philosopher, Pontano, wrote similar hymns to Urania and Night, poems Spenser might well have known since Pontano was required reading when he was at Cambridge. With the popularity of Italian literary forms and Neoplatonic philosophy, the literary hymn quickly spread north and entered the vernaculars. In 1553 Ronsard published Les Hymnes, a volume of literary hymns dedicated to Francis II. None of these poems has an explicitly Christian or even religious subject. Instead Ronsard praises gold, death, philosophy, and, of course, his royal patron, the subject of the first hymn.

One year before Spenser published Fowre Hymnes Chapman's "Hymnus in Noctum" appeared, the first literary hymn to appear in England. Like the hymns of Ronsard and the Neoplatonists, it is more philosophical than religious. Chapman uses the hymn for satiric purposes, ironically praising night because it hides foolish and dangerous ideas which cannot stand the clear light of reason. Furthermore, its rhetorical complexity--some would say obscurity--places it in the classical hymn tradition. By the time Spenser wrote Fowre Hymnes the

genre had found a small but important place in Renaissance literature, not as religious poetry, but as a medium for using elaborate epideictic rhetoric to discuss philosophical ideas in verse. The literary hymn appealed to poets who were attempting to revive classical rhetoric because it gave them a classical model of serious non-narrative poetry in the high style to imitate. A body of critical commentary appeared which attempted to define the genre by providing rules for writing a hymn. For example, the highly influential Italian critic Scaliger devotes a long section of his Poetics to an analysis of the hymn. Citing the ancients, Menander, Proclus, and pseudo-Horace, he says a hymn should contain a genealogy of the god, or the psychological force (love) or thing (gold) or hero (Henri II), a history of his deeds, praise of his power among men, an invocation, and descriptions of his worship.

Thus, by the 1530's the literary hymn had become a recognized literary genre. However, at mid-century some poets and critics reacted against the exclusively secular uses to which the genre had been put. In the heated religious atmosphere during and after the Council of Trent a few Italian Catholic reformers invented a "subgenre" of the literary hymn which Rollinson calls the Christian literary hymn as opposed to the classical literary hymn. Very few poets wrote in the subgenre though the importance of these poets suggests that Spenser knew them. For example, Vida,

an early fifteenth century Italian theologian and poet, attempted to counteract the "pagan" influence of Marullus' Neoplatonic hymns by writing three hymns of his own. His subjects are, as one might expect, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Scalinger took up his cause, writing his own literary hymns addressed exclusively to the Christian god. More importantly, he furnishes a critical defense of his practice in the Poetics, acknowledging that the pagans wrote hymns in honor of heavenly bodies, elements, men, animals, and even plants (Rollinson, p. 88), but arguing that in the present age, "God is the only truly worthy object of praise."

By the time Spenser wrote Fowre Hymnes, then, there were three major types of hymns: 1) the classical literary hymn, with its subgenre 2) the Christian literary hymn, and 3) the liturgical hymns of both Catholic and Protestant churches which were not classed as a literary genre by poets and critics. Given this variety of traditions and conventions associated with the hymn, the resources of the genre are very great. The first and most obvious resource of the genre is its capacity for combining secular and sacred materials. As Rollinson convincingly argues (pp. 134-35), the use of sacred and secular subjects in the hymn conforms to the pattern laid down in the sixteenth century revival of the classical literary hymn:

The first pair follow that part of the Renaissance tradition which had chosen to imitate and modify

the classical objects of praise as well as to adopt the conventions of the classical form. The heavenly hymns imitate the other neo-Latin school of Vida and Scalinger which updated the objects of praise in accordance with the values of contemporary Christian culture (p. 154).

Spenser was the only Renaissance poet in any language to combine both kinds of literary hymn into one poem, or even into one collection of poems. Ronsard's Les Hymnes, for example, contains only classical literary hymns. Chapman wrote both kinds of hymn, but published them separately. Spenser alone saw in the tradition of the hymn the potential for fusing the classical, humanist approach to his subjects with the specifically Christian or theological approach.

But Rollinson's excellent study of Spenser's debt to the literary hymn tradition must be supplemented with an examination of the ways other literary genres, and, more importantly, non-literary genres such as the liturgical hymn modify Spenser's use of the literary hymn. Spenser not only combines the literary hymn traditions but introduces elements of the Christian liturgical tradition which do not have their roots in classical literary hymn. This variety of traditions gave Spenser the capacity to juxtapose and fuse the two central approaches to truth of his culture, the study of the classics and the study of theology. In his article, "The Two Matters: Classical and Christian in the Renaissance," Arnold Miller remarks, "Probably the most notable fact about the English Renaissance is that in England the New Learning and the Protestant revolt coincided." The

result, he goes on to say, is that "the classics and theology were the two chief matters of Renaissance culture."⁷

Spenser's decorous combining of classical and Christian ideas of love and beauty, Cupid and Christ, Venus and Sapience, is possible because the hymn was central to both classical and Christian culture. The hymn (or psalm) was not only a Hebrew genre before it was a classical genre, but also an important vehicle for expressing matters of faith in Christian culture from Ambrose through the high middle ages.⁸ In consequence Spenser could draw equally on both secular (i.e., classical) and sacred (i.e., Christian liturgical) generic expectations, thus combining the two "matters" in one poem. From a generic as well as a structural point of view, then, the Christian elements in Fowre Hymnes are on an equal footing with the classical elements. For example, the recurring theme of contemptus mundi of the heavenly hymns is not the addition of a Christian theme to a classical framework; it is a very natural part of a Christian liturgical hymn, familiar in dozens of Latin and vernacular examples. Similarly, the confession which begins the heavenly hymns is a recognizable topos of Church Latin (and Hebrew) hymnody rather than the introduction of an emotion alien to classical hymn (humility) injected incongruously into a genre in which the poet was never expected to repent before praising the deity.⁹

A second resource of the genre is related to the first. While some Renaissance critics (of the exclusionist sort)

tried to pin down the requirements of the literary hymn, the task proved impossible since, as we have noted, the hymn came from two different and generally independent sources. The fact that the hymn, in broad terms, is biblical and liturgical as well as classical and philosophical worked against a precise definition of the genre. In fact the only real requirement for calling a poem a hymn is that it be a poem of praise. The object of praise and the methods of praising it may vary widely, as is evidenced by the looseness with which Renaissance poets use the term. The hymn is not only broad enough to include secular and sacred, classical and Christian, as we have seen, but also can easily embrace a whole range of literary traditions and conventions from other genres. Thus the hymn is well suited to the sort of generic experimentation (inclusionism) whereby poets inserted aspects of one "kind" into the overall structure of another.

Spenser is an excellent case in point. He does indeed use the term to refer to a Christian liturgical hymn, the most common modern meaning, but he uses it this way only once (FQ V. ix. 29, 5). Three times Spenser uses the term to refer to something which might be called a "classical" hymn, a song in praise of a pagan deity, a hero or sacred locality--Pan, Arthur, and Mount Acidale, respectively. (Shakespeare also repeatedly uses the word hymn in this sense.)¹⁰ But for both Spenser and Shakespeare the term

most frequently does not mean the praise of God, a god, a hero, natural forces or a sacred locale--any of the objects of praise employed in either classical or Christian hymns. Spenser (and Shakespeare) most frequently use the term to refer to praise of a lady (six times outside the Hymnes for Spenser). Hymn is, in this sense, synonymous with the love lyric. For example, in Astrophel Spenser says (in a clear reference to the famous sonnet sequence) that for Stella Sidney "made hymnes of immortal praise" (Astrophel, l. 63). In Shepheardes Calender the term is used twice to refer to a poem in praise of a lady, as it is in Colin Clout and Daphnaide, where Colin says he has "deified" Eliza with "heavenly hymnes."

That Spenser so often refers to a love poem as a hymn not only shows that he is an inclusionist in matters of genre, but also indicates the direction he takes in Hymne of Love and Hymne of Beauty. The conventions for praising a lady, handed down through the fin amor and Petrarchan tradition, become legitimate material for inclusion in a hymn due to the latitude of Renaissance expectations for the genre. It is therefore entirely decorous to introduce into a hymn conceits from sonnets, the elaborate fiction of the lover suing for the favor of his lady, even a blazon (HB 246-60). Similarly, Spenser may have included the Neoplatonic materials in the first two hymns because they had become so much a part of the fashionable courtly lyrics in praise of a mistress.

Rollinson suggests the Platonism of the first pair can be explained by the presence of similar themes in the Latin and Italian literary hymns of the Neapolitan and Florentine Platonists who reintroduced the classical literary hymn on which the first pair is based.¹² A more direct source can be found in the literary Platonism with which Elizabethan court poetry was infected in the late eighties and nineties. Since the love lyric was, in practice, associated with the hymn, the conventions of one are available to the other. Thus Spenser makes use of a number of the then fashionable philosophical strategies for praising a lady--e.g., she is a mirror of Platonic form; her image is planted on the soul of the lover, the more beautiful she is the more virtuous, and so on.

Turning to the heavenly hymns one finds Spenser is essentially writing Christian literary hymns on the model of Vida, Scaliger and Chapman, but he also borrows elements from literary forms which were not accepted poetic genres in the Renaissance, such as the sermon, the liturgical hymn, and the prose devotional manual.¹³ A demonstration of the specific ways the hymns employ techniques of these related forms must await the detailed analysis of the poem's speaker in the next chapter, but we can suggest a few similarities here. For example, one expects to hear biblical paraphrase in a liturgical hymn, a meditation manual, or sermon. In Spenser's second two hymns there is an abundance of biblical echo and

paraphrase--at least eighty instances have been cited by critics, almost one per stanza.¹⁴ The praise of God in a hymn will, moreover, often include conventional responses found in these other forms of religious literature. Spenser introduces a number of these into the poem. There are passages which deal with repentance, the vanity of worldly things, allusions to scriptural characters and stories. There is in each heavenly hymn the invocation or bidding prayer and exordium to the faithful. In Spenser's hands the Christian literary hymn is not merely a classical hymn with a biblical figure standing in for a classical deity, as it was to a large extent for Vida and Scalinger. Rather, Spenser summons the resources of a wide range of Christian literature to shape the second pair of hymns. The Christian literary hymn was a rather insignificant subgenre, a brief reaction to the alleged excesses of Italian humanists. But by mixing elements of quasi-literary forms Spenser makes out of the Christian literary hymn a poem which is part of the mainstream of western Christian poetry, a poem of elevated religious vision in the tradition of Saint Francis's "Cantic of the Sun," Dante's Paradiso, and, in his own century, DuBartas' Divine Weeks.

A third resource of the genre which Spenser draws on is its capacity for a multiplicity of rhetorical situations. A convention of the hymn is that it has two audiences. The poet is speaking directly to the deity, praising the god and

imploring his favor; and yet the poet is also speaking to his fellow worshippers, attempting to lead them in honoring the god in a public ceremony. The poet is simultaneously speaking to the deity (as in a prayer) and to a public audience (as in an oration). This complex relationship (which exists in every hymn, classical or Christian, literary or liturgical) requires the poet to incorporate different tones to suit the different audiences. The tone is at one moment quiet and meditative, at another trumpeting and hortative.

The most obvious way to see these interpenetrating rhetorical situations in the poem is to examine the topos, common in the Renaissance, of the poem as an offering from the poet to the one who is the object of praise. Of course almost every poem of the age was in one sense an offering since the patronage system was so important to literature. Almost every poet offered his poems to a lord or lady, but the "topic of dedication," as Curtius calls it, is absolutely central to the hymn, since a hymn is fundamentally an offering of praise to a deity (though other objects are frequently praised, as we have noted).¹⁵ Renaissance authors of literary hymns were well aware of the classical heritage of the hymn as an offering to the gods, a part of a cultic ritual. As Rollinson points out, the topos of the hymn as an offering to the gods appears in the neolatin hymns of Callimachus, Prudentius, and Pontano, authors of "classical" literary hymns which Spenser might well have known (p. 146).

Spenser follows this convention in his hymns. He offers the entire poem to two noble ladies in the dedication, as one might expect of any Renaissance poem, thanking them for "the great graces and honorable favors which ye daily show to me." The poem is a token of his gratitude to them, a "testimony of my thankful mind and dutiful devotion," as he says. The same theme is picked up at the conclusion of Hymne of Love: the hymn is an offering to Cupid. "Dread lord, vouchsafe to take of me / This simple song, thus framed in praise of thee." The poet is giving the god a gift in exchange for favors he hopes to receive from him in his courtship of the lady.

As part of the same convention authors often described the poet leading a ceremonial worship of the deity being praised. Rollinson cites a number of late classical and neolation hymns in which the poet leads a group of worshippers in a ceremony or procession honoring the god, at which the poet's own hymn is sung (p. 138-39). Spenser does the same in the earthly hymns. In Hymne of Love the poet calls upon lovers and ladies to "march amongst his (Cupid's) host / And all the way this sacred hymn do sing / Made in the honor of your soverign king" (ll. 40-43). The same convention appears at the end of Hymne of Beauty. The poet leads a chorus of nymphs in Venus's triumph:

Then Iö triumph, O great beauty's queen,
Advance the banner of thy conquests high
That all this world, the which thy vassals beene,

May draw to thee and with due fealty
 Adore the power of thy great majesty
 Singing this hymn in honor of thy name,
 Compiled by me which thy poor leigeman am.
 (11.267-73)

The convention of the hymn being sung in a public triumph of the god is related to the medieval and Petrarchan commonplace of the "Triumph of Love," ultimately derived from Ovid's Amores, in which the lover in a procession of captives praises the power of his conquering mistress.¹⁶ The poet in the earthly hymns is thus simultaneously a "leigeman" or devout admirer of the lady, indicating a private emotion, and the leader of the praise of the deity in a public ceremony.

Spenser's heavenly hymns are even more indebted (and in more subtle and serious ways) to the convention of hymn as offering in public worship. In a general sense, Christian artists often thought of their works as offerings to God. According to Curtius the "topic of dedication" is a favorite in late medieval and Renaissance literature. "Christian authors like to present their works to God," he says, and goes on to cite numerous examples (p. 86). Renaissance critics were well aware of the idea, especially as it applied to hymns. In his exhaustive treatment of the major genres, Scalinger says, "The hymn to God is a gift in which the poet, a maker, imitates God the creator."¹⁷ Since the poet is making an offering to God by singing a hymn, he is in fact performing a religious function, and, moreover, the function of a priest or minister, who publicly offers the praise to

God. In the influential Arte of English Poesie, George Puttenham sees this ritual function of the poet in the very origin of the genre. The first hymns, he explains, "were sung by the poets as priests and by the whole congregation, as we sing in our churches the psalms of David" (p. 23).

The poet of the heavenly hymns is aware of his public liturgical role. For example, he gives moral instruction to the worshippers, often speaking directly to them. At other times he performs his liturgical function by merely pointing out the proper response of his fellow worshippers to the events he describes. For instance, after describing the crucifixion he enjoins his hearers: "Then let thy flinty heart that feels no paine, / Empeirced be with pitiful remorse, / And let thy bowels bleede in every vaine" (246-49). In the liturgical tradition which Spenser draws on for the tone of this literary hymn, the genre is of course extremely public, designed to draw together the community of the faithful to share the most important beliefs in song and affirm them in an offering of praise.¹⁸ As we shall see in the next chapter, this traditional liturgical role of the hymn allows Spenser to incorporate the rhetorical techniques of other liturgical forms such as sermon and ritual confession, and the important imagery of baptism and communion.

This topos of the hymn as a gift to a deity makes a unique demand of the genre. The object of praise is so exalted that the poet has great difficulty finding fit words to offer. On the one hand the subject is deserving of all

praise, yet that praise must be properly offered. The poem must be "orthodox" in the etymological sense of the word, "right praise." Puttenham states the requirement in his discussion of the genre.

To Him we cannot exhibit overmuch praise, nor belye him any wayes, unless it be in abusing his excellencie by scarcitie of praise, or by misconceaving his divine nature, weening to praise him, if we impute to Him such vaine delights and peevish affectation, as commonly the frailest men are reprov'd for, Namely to make him ambitious of honor, jealous and difficult in his worships, terrible, angrie, vindictive, a lover, a hater, a pitier, and indigent of man's worships: finally so passionate as in effect he should be Anthropomathis (p. 44).

There is great freedom in a Christian hymn in that God cannot be praised too much since He is, as Puttenham says earlier, "everlasting, and in every respect selfe suffizent (autharcos), reposed in all perfect rest and soverign bliss, not needing or exacting any foreine help or good." Yet God is so great, so deserving of praise, that a poet cannot hope to offer him an acceptable gift. Spenser responds to this problem by affecting extreme humility, a typical convention of much epidectic poetry. This humility comes out most strongly in the use of the "topic of inexpressibility" which Curtius defines as "emphasis upon inability to cope with the subject" (p. 103). In Spenser's earthly hymns there is a suggestion of the topic. The author fears that "my witts, enfeebled late . . . should faint, and words should fail me to relate / The wondrous triumph of the great Godheat" (HL 15-17). But in the heavenly hymns the topic is pervasive.

The poet says, "I faine to tell the things that I behold, / But feele my witts to faile, and tongue to fold" (HHB 6-7). And later, after glimpsing Sapience he asks, "How then dare I, the novice of his (the poet's) art / Presume to picture so divine a wight" (HHB 225-26, see also HHB 204-06, HHL 40-43).

Although the topic is familiar in hundreds of medieval and Renaissance poems (most notably Dante's Paradiso), its implications for the hymn are particularly important. The theme of the lack of fit words is particularly appropriate to the hymn not only because the subject is so grand and so far removed from the categories of mundane experience, but, more importantly, because the subject of the poem, God, is also its audience. The poet must at the same time sing about God and to God. In many love lyrics this is also true: the lover praises his lady while speaking directly to her. But in a Christian hymn the stakes are infinitely greater. Instead of attempting to establish a sexual relationship between himself and the subject of his poem, the speaker attempts to establish, or at least articulate, an external relationship between himself and the creator of the universe, the judge of all human actions--and words. In this generic context the humility and reverence of the speaker in Fowre Hymnes--especially Hymne of Heavenly Love and Hymne of Heavenly Beautie--are perfectly fitting. The decorum of a hymn demands these expressions of humility and piety, which might sound hollow and exaggerated in a love lyric, where

the subject is important, but not infinitely so.

Thus, like Spenser's earthly hymns, the heavenly hymns are not only public, they are also intensely personal, since the poet is attempting to speak directly to God, to come into the presence of the divine, just as the poet/lover of the earthly hymns is simultaneously leading a public praise of the god (and goddess) and trying to arrive at intimacy with his mistress. Since the poet in the heavenly hymns is addressing God directly it is perfectly fitting that he examine his own conscience (HHL 1-28), search his own soul (HHB 288-301), or question his own ability to find fit words to offer, even though the hymn is at the same time a public poem.

Finally, Spenser takes advantage of that principle of Renaissance generic theory which held that a hymn was the highest gift a poet could offer to the deity. In an age which delighted in ranking almost everything in a hierarchy, the "kinds" or genres of poetry were no exception, and the hymn was universally accorded the honor of being the highest kind of poem.¹⁹ There are two reasons for this, the first historical and cultural. The psalms, considered to be hymns, were universally acknowledged by commentators to be the oldest and best poetry. The Vulgate calls them "hymnes sung by David" and David himself was considered the model of poetic excellence, the first and greatest poet. Sidney's first example of "the chief kind" (of poem) is "such as were sung

by David in his Psalms." And he adds, "Against these will none speak that hath the Holy Ghost in due holy reverence" (p. 18). As Sidney's attitude indicates, Renaissance critics and literate people all over the western world attached great importance to psalms and (by extension) sacred hymns. Undoubtedly the most widely read part of scripture, the psalms were extremely important in Elizabethan society, both in a public and a private capacity. Men and women rose in the morning and went to sleep at night reading psalms in the divine office and the books of the hours. Psalms and hymns were the major aid to private devotion as well as being a part of almost every public worship service. Among Protestants the psalms became the basis for vernacular hymnody. Dozens of poets translated psalms, including Donne, Fletcher, Bacon, and Surrey. Considering the place of psalms in their culture, it is not surprising that Renaissance literary men granted hymns the crowning place in the generic hierarchy.

The second reason for the exalted position of the hymn is theoretical. Renaissance critics based their ranking of genres on the capacity of each to teach virtue. In each genre the poet "imitates" or represents a different class of persons. According to the theory, expressed most typically in Sidney's Defense, men became better by hearing models of virtue praised. Critics, including Sidney, even found support for their theory in Plato. Although he is hostile to poets, banishing them and "lute players" from his Republic,

he nevertheless allows hymns and praises of famous men because they teach young people virtue through example. As the theory developed (primarily from remarks on tragedy in Aristotle's poetics), pastoral and comedy were low on the generic scale since they imitated the lower classes of society, shepherds and farmers. Tragedy and epic imitate kings and princes, the "better than average" men Aristotle discusses as the highest subjects of poetry. Renaissance critics extended Aristotle's scale to include hymn. Sidney says, "The chief (kind of poem) both in antiquity and excellency, were those that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God" (p. 18). Given the theory of differentia in the imitator's object, the high place of the hymn is logical. By "imitating" or presenting God to his readers, the poet is able to teach the highest truth, encourage the greatest virtues.

The expectation that the hymn will teach the highest things perhaps lies behind the many passages in the hymns where there is a distinctly hortative rather than a purely epideictic rhetorical purpose. In the earthly hymns there is a theme of raising the lover out of base thoughts by admiring the lady (HL 162-89). The reader is warned against "dunghill thoughts," "Loathly sinful lust," and lying in the earth "like a moldwarpe" (a mole). In Of Beauty the ladies, as well as their lovers, are admonished ("Loathe that foul blot, that hellish firebrand, / Disloyal lust,") and cautioned

to choose lovers like themselves (HB 190-96), in order to imitate Venus. In the heavenly hymns the theme recurs with Christ as the object. The reader is enjoined to "lift up to him thy heavy clouded eyne" and "Lift up thy mind to th' author of thy weale" (HHL 222-56). In Hymne of Heavenly Beautie the poet says he is composing the hymn "that I may show / Some little beames to mortal eyes below, / Of thine Eternal beauty," so that men "may lift themselves up hyer / And learn to love with zealous humble dewty / Th'eternal fountain of that heavenly beauty" (ll. 8-13). We shall examine the aesthetic implications of this theme in the last chapter, but it is important to point out here that the hortative tone and the theme of moral and spiritual elevation are first of all present in the poem because of generic expectations based on the theory of differentia and the hymn's crowning place on the generic hierarchy.

NOTES

¹For discussions of Renaissance genre theory see O. B. Hardison, The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); and Rosalie Colie, Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance (Berkeley University of California Press, 1973), pp. 8-18.

²George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie (1589), (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1906), pp. 22-24 and 42-44 hereafter cited in the text.

³Colie, p. 14 ff.

⁴For a discussion of "inclusionist" and "exclusionist" critics see Colie, pp. 19-31, especially page 21.

⁵Sidney, pp. 41-2, hereafter cited in the text.

⁶Phillip Bruce Rollinson, Spenser's "Fowre Hymnes" and the Tradition of the Literary Hymn, DA, 29 (1969), 3586A (University of Virginia), hereafter cited in the text.

⁷Studies in Philology, 38 (1941), pp. 58 and 64.

⁸For a survey of the development of the liturgical hymn in the West see The Catholic Encyclopedia (1966), "Hymnody" and "Hymns."

⁹See Ernst Robert Curtius' appendix "Devotional Formulae and Humility," in European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages tr. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953), pp. 407-14.

¹⁰See F.Q. III viii 42 8, V ii 12 7, VII vi 36 9, and for Shakespeare Midsummer Night's Dream I i 78, Merchant of Venice V i 66, Sonnet 102.

¹¹See also CCCHA 86, SC F. 62, and Daph. 230. For Shakespeare Much Ado V iii 11, Sonnet 85.

¹²Rollinson, pp. 135-36.

¹³Colie, p. 79 et passim.

¹⁴Grace W. Landrum lists 109 allusions in her article "Spenser's Use of the Bible and His Alleged Puritanism," PMLA, 41 (1926), 539-44.

¹⁵Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, tr. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953), p. 86, hereafter cited in the text.

¹⁶Robert Kellog and Oliver Steele, eds., Books I and II of the Faerie Queene, The Mutability Cantos and Selections from the Minor Poetry (New York: Odyssey Press, Inc., 1965), p. 487n.

¹⁷Quoted in Rollinson, p. 89.

¹⁸For an excellent discussion of the theology of hymn and its role in worship see Evelyn Underhill, Worship (New York: Harper and Row, 1937), pp. 103-08.

¹⁹In the following two paragraphs I rely heavily on Hardison's discussion of the role of psalms in Renaissance literature, pp. 68-71, and Underhill, pp. 104-06.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSONA

In arguing for the structural unity of the poem, we are immediately faced with a problem in the dedication. Spenser says the two pairs of hymns were composed at separate times, the early hymns "in the greener times of my youth," the heavenly hymns apparently some time close to their publication date in 1596 when Spenser was a mature and successful poet. Three theories have been proposed to account for the dedication.¹ The first and least satisfactory takes the dedication as a literal biographical account of the composition of the hymns and Spenser's attitude toward them. In the dedication Spenser implies that the earthly hymns produced bad results in young readers, so much so that he tried unsuccessfully to remove them from circulation:

Having in the green times of my youth composed these former two hymns in the praise of love and beauty, and finding that the same too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which, being too vehemently carried with that kind of affection, to rather such out poison to their strong passion than honey to their honest delight, I was moved by the one of you two most excellent ladies to call in the same. But being unable so to do, by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad, I resolved to at least to amend and, by way of retraction, to reform them . . .

If the dedication is a literal account of their composition,

why would Spenser print right next to the heavenly hymns the two objectionable hymns that he had tried to "call in?"

If Spenser did in fact consider the early hymns "lewd lays" as he seems to say of them in the first two stanzas of Hymne of Heavenly Love, then it is very difficult to understand not only why he includes them, but why he dedicates them to the ladies whom he describes as "most excellent and rare ornaments of all true love and beauty both in the one and the other kind" (italics mine). If the earthly hymns as they appear are in fact frivolous products of his youth then it would be extremely difficult to argue for the structural unity of the whole poem.

A second theory considers the dedication pure fiction. The earthly hymns, it is argued, were composed at about the same time as the heavenly ones (around 1596). The dedication then becomes a purely conventional retraction, a fictional device used merely to introduce the structure of the hymns (earth vs. heaven), not to give a serious account of the chronology of their composition. This theory raises questions of its own. Why would Spenser invent "lewd lays" for his youth? Moreover, why would he claim that one of his patronesses asked non-existent poems to be called in? Enid Welsford states the difficulty succinctly: "I find it hard, indeed, to believe that Spenser would have dared to publish a completely false statement about the attitude and behavior of the noble ladies to whom his work was dedicated . . ."
(p. 47).

A third theory resolves the problem of sincerity by taking Spenser's account of the early composition of the earthly hymns literally, but assumes that he rewrote them extensively before publication to remove any objectionable features. There is some evidence of this in the text. When he says that he was unable to call in the earthly hymns but "resolved at least to amend, and by way of retraction to reform them," he may be referring to a rewrite. The allusion in the palinode to "many lewd lays . . . I have in the 'heat of youth made heretofore, / That in light wits did loose affection move" may be taken to refer to either lost poems or an earlier version of the earthly hymns. This interpretation overcomes the objection that Spenser is recanting the earthly hymns as we now have them, which present an idealistic and perfectly chaste conception of love that would surely not have offended his patronesses (to whom he has, after all, dedicated both pairs).

Yet if we accept this last theory (and it is the one which most logically reconciles the dedication with the presence of the earthly hymns), then we must still ask why Spenser decided to rewrite his earlier work. It seems clear that he must have seen something valuable in it, and, more importantly, something which would benefit from the addition of the heavenly hymns. Furthermore, he must have felt that the heavenly hymns were strengthened by the inclusion of the earthly ones (although "reformed"); otherwise he would have

published the two pairs separately. And even if we assume that the whole work is pure fiction (the second theory) we must ask why Spenser devised the story he tells in the dedication.

In this chapter I suggest that Spenser included both pairs and introduced them with the autobiographical "frame" of the dedication (whether factual or fictitious) to show the pattern of growth from youth to maturity as it was understood in the Christian humanist tradition. The two pairs of hymns present two crucial moments on a man's (and mankind's) journey toward God--first, the awakening of the power of human love, and, second, the revelation of the love of God. The idea of a journey, even a spiritual or intellectual quest, was treated by Spenser earlier in the Faerie Queene in conventional narrative form. Several fictional (and allegorical) characters change as they make the universal journey from youth to maturity, most notably Redcross, Britomart, and Artegall.² But in Fowre Hymnes Spenser uses a very different method for representing that transformation. In Fowre Hymnes it is not the characters who change but the speaker who changes, growing from youthful exuberance to mature devotion. It is this change in the speaker, over the course of years, that the dedication suggests and the poems develop.

In order to appreciate the change we must look to the ways poets represent themselves in poetry, to what has often been called persona. If the poem represents the journey of

a man from unrequited sexual love to a beatific vision, and if the change in the man is what unifies the poem, then we may legitimately ask what kind of man is making the journey. For an answer we must turn to a theory of persona first outlined by Wimsatt and Beardsley and later applied briefly to Fowre Hymnes by Enid Welsford.³ Welsford argues that it would be oversimplifying to assume that the man is Spenser himself and that Spenser is offering us in the hymns his spiritual autobiography. Without sufficient evidence on which to base an argument, Spenser's "sincerity" must remain a matter of speculation. Consequently, even though there may be much of the autobiographical Spenser in the hymns, we nevertheless must distinguish the historical Spenser from his persona.

In The Verbal Icon Wimsatt and Beardsley describe the process by which we as readers distinguish the poet from his representation of himself:

The actual reader of a poem is something like a reader over another reader's shoulder; he reads through the dramatic reader, the person to whom the full tone of the poem is addressed in the fictional situation. . . . Even a short lyric poem is dramatic, the response of a speaker (no matter how abstractly conceived) to a situation (no matter how universalized). We ought to impute the thoughts and attitudes of the poem immediately to the dramatic speaker, and if to the author at all, only by an act of biographical inference.⁴

Each pair of hymns has a dramatic situation and an immediate audience. In the first pair a young man has fallen in love and sings two hymns (to Cupid and Venus respectively) in

order to convince them to give him success in love. In the second pair a mature Christian repents of his youthful excesses and engages in a penitential meditation on the life of Christ, followed by a meditation on the beauty of God and His creation, each addressed to God. As readers we are watching this drama in two acts unfold. The plot is that most familiar Christian story of a man's progress toward a vision of God, the movement of the Divine Comedy, the Pilgrim's Progress.

Spenser might have told that story in narrative, in allegory, as he had done before with Redcross in Book One; instead he adopted the method of the sonnet sequence for his sequence of hymns.⁵ Just as the immediate audience of the sonnet sequence, the lady, is also the stated subject, so each of the hymns is both addressed to and about a deity. Like the lady in a sonnet sequence, the deities in Fowre Hymnes almost always remain idealized and conventional. They are even, at times, abstractions, as in Drayton's Idea. The real subject is the poet lover, his internal state, his reaction to the deities (or the lady) and to the emotions, frustrations, and contradictions he feels because of them (or her). As in the sonnet sequence, much of the interest in Fowre Hymnes lies in the poet, in his reaction to the object of his desire, in the effect of the deity on his thoughts, fears, hopes--his spirit. For a full response to the poem, understanding the man becomes as important as understanding the deities he praises.

And just as the audience of the sonnet sequence is not simply the lady, so the audience of each hymn is not solely the deity to whom it is addressed. We, the readers of the published poems, are the real audience, a public audience. Yet, like the reader of a sonnet sequence, we can grasp the narrative links, the stages on this man's journey, only by inference, only by being "a reader over another reader's shoulder." And even with the help supplied by the dedication the story of Fowre Hymnes remains sketchy (deliberately I suspect) when compared with, for example, Amoretti, in which strategically placed sonnets allow the careful reader to construct a partial (and tenuous) chronology.⁶ If the speaker's biography in Fowre Hymnes is sketchy or the situation unclear, if we do not know the color of the lady's hair or whether the Christian is Catholic, Anglican, or Presbyterian, it is because we are overhearing, not hearing, the poet, to paraphrase J. S. Hill's famous comment about poetry.⁷ We become privy to his innermost thoughts and fears because, as the convention has it, he is really not speaking to us, but to Cupid or Venus or Christ, or, in the final moments, his own soul. Our response to the poem, then, largely depends upon our response to the speaker; consequently, we must try to delineate his character as accurately as possible to achieve a more complete reading of this last long poem of Spenser's career.

At this point I must make a clear distinction between the personae of the sonnet sequence and of Fowre Hymnes,

and the persona Spenser invented, named, and used in most of his poems, Colin Clout. Important similarities exist between Colin and the persona of Fowre Hymnes and as we might expect, since each is a way of representing Spenser himself. In both the speaker is humble, a lover, a poet. In neither persona does Spenser reveal many, if any, autobiographical details, in keeping with the conventions of his age. However, even beyond the obvious generic differences (Colin is a shepherd, the speaker in Fowre Hymnes isn't; Colin uses "rustic" speech, Fowre Hymnes doesn't), there is a profound difference in method: Colin does not change; the speaker in Fowre Hymnes does. Colin is essentially the same man--shepherd, poet, lover, satirist of courtly life and of religious excess--in Shepherd's Calender as in Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, written twenty years later. Colin never ages. That would violate our expectations. A radical spiritual or intellectual transformation would be unthinkable given the continuity Spenser established and maintained. We can go so far as to say that Colin is a persona in the Greek sense of the term, the prosopon, an external mask, a set of fixed and familiar postures.

On the other hand, the speaker in Fowre Hymnes changes radically in the course of time. He grows and matures, experiencing a conversion. He is a persona in the Boethian sense, a man who attains a wider vision of himself and his place in the cosmos, in response to an intellectual and emotional encounter with a higher being.⁸ Like Dame Philosophy

in the Consolation, the four deities in the hymns are static, eternally secure. They serve to bring about the increasing insight of the persona into the intellectual and spiritual truths they represent. Although the speaker in Fowre Hymnes (like the typical lover in the sonnet sequence) hopes to influence his immediate audience (to enlist Cupid's aid in getting the girl), the opposite unexpectedly happens. Turning to God, the persona, not the deity (or the lady), is changed, becoming more responsive to the ideals he has chosen. Of course, the ameliorating and ennobling effects of love upon the speaker himself are often illustrated in sonnet sequences. Perhaps the best example is Spenser's own sequence in which the persona becomes worthy of marrying the lady.⁹ And on a more cosmic scale the same is true of Dante in Vita Nuova or Petrarch in the Rima. As we might expect, love is edifying for the speaker in the Fowre Hymnes; he moves toward a wider spiritual vision after experiencing the power of earthly (and therefore limited) love and beauty.

We can see, then, that in its capacity to represent change the Boethian persona is more flexible than the Greek persona, and in this sense more fully reflects the experience of human beings, who have a disarming tendency to suddenly quit acting the roles we have assigned them and change in totally unpredictable ways. Indeed, Spenser's choice of the Boethian persona allows him to tell the Christian story of man's journey toward God in a way unusual for the sixteenth

century. Spenser attempts to render it as an inward journey, a journey of thought. And we, as readers, follow not an allegorical fiction (the most common medieval and Renaissance method of representing mental processes) but the intellectual and emotional development of a poet's sensibility from one approach to reality to another, from human to divine love and beauty.

To understand this change, we must first understand the psychology of the young lover. Perhaps the clearest and least anachronistic method is to borrow Aristotle's analysis of character types as outlined in the Rhetoric and Ethics, works which had profoundly influenced the thought of Spenser's age and works which Spenser had probably read.¹⁰ In Book Twelve of the Rhetoric Aristotle analyzes the psychology of young men, mature men, and old men to determine what will influence them.¹¹ Young men are (1) "changeable and fickle in their desires, which are violent while they last, but quickly over," and (2) given to strong passions, especially sexual, at the expense of reason. But this same lack of reason and moderation gives them some admirable qualities too. They are (3) idealistic, and (4) courageous. In the dedication Spenser intimates that the speaker of the earthly hymns has some of these qualities when he characterizes "the greener times of my youth" and young people in general ("those of like age and disposition"). They are "too vehemently carried with that kind of affection," in other words,

changeable in their violent desire (presumably sexual). And they "do suck out poison to their strong passion than honey to their honest delight."

If we apply Aristotle's analysis to Spenser's young lover, we find he is not a bad man (the dedication never implies this), merely a young man, speaking and acting as such men naturally do.¹² Dante states the convention, a kind of chronological double standard, succinctly: "It is meet to both speak and act differently at different ages."

In Shepheardes Calender Colin plays on the same theme:

And I, whilst youth, and course of careless yeares
Did let me walke withouten lincts of love,
In such delights did joy amongst my peeres:
But tryper age such pleasures doth reprove,
My fancy eke from former follies move
To stayed steps . . . (Note ¹³)

According to convention, the young lover should be forgiven his youthful excesses as long as he leaves them in middle age, when they would be indecorous. Accordingly, the palinode at the beginning of the heavenly hymns echoes a recurrent Old Testament theme expressed in Psalm 25: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions."¹⁴

Aristotle not only lists the qualities of youth, but also provides (in the Ethics) a theory of personality to explain them. This theory, widely accepted in the sixteenth century, posited three "souls" in man: the rational, the sensible, and the vegetative.¹⁵ The first two are most important to Fowre Hymnes. The rational soul, containing the will and the reason, should direct the whole personality

by harmonizing all three. The sensible soul, the seat of the emotions, contains two "powers," the concupiscible (desire, pleasure, displeasure) and the irascible (anger and fear). When these are held in balance (tempered) by reason and will, a man will not be prey to, for instance, excessive sexual desire, which could cripple his reason and keep him from realizing his potential in other areas of his personality. In Aristotle's terms, the basic problem of the young lover (and the key to his character) is that his reason is not in control--because of his youth, and also because of his overpowering desire for the lady. Spenser makes this apparent from the invocation where the young lover complains his "wits" were "enfeebled late" by the force of love.

In the young man's use of poetic conventions we can see several of the traits of youth Aristotle mentions. For example, the young man's fickleness is especially apparent in the complex mythological portrayal of Cupid. The young lover conceives of Cupid in all the ways which the Renaissance inherited from classical and medieval poetry.¹⁶ He begins with an invocation to the Ovidian Cupid, the tryant lover who leads away his captives in triumph. The pageant of Cupid's conquests (22-42) is based on Amores I, ii:

Young men and women shalt thou lead as thrall,
So will thy triumph seem magnificent/ . . .
Thee all shall fear, and worship as a king,
Fo' triumphe shall thy people sing.¹⁷

Cupid as victorious tyrant is an object of fear, the irascible

power. But this immediately gives way to Cupid as a cosmic metaphysical force, a concept ultimately deriving from Hesiod's Theogeny. Cupid is the organizing principle of the universe, "tempering" the elements to create life in generation (43-119). The young lover cannot decide whether Cupid is a creator to be desired or a destroyer to be feared.

The account of the birth of the deity, a traditional part of the classical literary hymn, further illustrates the young persona's confusion as he conflates--and at times confuses--several versions of the myth. The stanza on his birth (50-57) fuses the traditional version of Cupid's birth as Venus's son with the three conflicting accounts given by various characters in the Symposium. He is (1) the offspring of Resource and Poverty, (2) the eldest of the gods, and (3) the youngest of the gods. Spenser is often syncretic in his use of different versions of myths, as are Renaissance poets in general, but in having his persona juxtapose four conflicting accounts in one stanza Spenser seems to be emphasizing the young man's confusion, his inability to define his experience of love. And this is a natural result of his "enfeebled wits," the impairment of reason by passion.

Though the young man, caught in the throes of love, cannot understand the cause--the limitations his youth places on his reason--we readers do, since we have been warned in the dedication to expect a man "in the greener times" of youth, "too much moved by that kind of affection." His

fickleness, his confusion, are therefore decorous, and we sense that Spenser is engaging in irony at his young persona's expense. A young poet with a mind loaded with fashionable love doctrine and mythology might carelessly unload it in one gasping stanza.

At line 120 there is another abrupt shift in the young persona's conception of Cupid--again illustrating his confusion--but this time the shift reveals another trait of young men: the ease with which they are given over to strong passions. Here the Petrarchan conventions come to the fore. Cupid becomes "that imperious boy" who wields a bow and arrow with deadly accuracy. The persona is now drawing on another conception of Cupid: the blind boy invented by the Alexandrian school and popularized by Anchreon. This tradition became the most important of the three in Renaissance poetry, in large part because of its use in Petrarch's verse. Predictably, the young lover's hymn takes on a Petrarchan tone. Love is the "gentle destroyer" of the Rima Sparsa, and the poet/lover suffers from the conventional symptoms of "love's wound." He "grieves and groans," unable to sleep or eat; he thinks on no one but his love, who has an "enmarbled heart"; the flames of love destroy his body; the more he submits to love the crueller Cupid becomes.¹⁸

In Aristotelian psychological terms, the concupiscible power has given way to the irascible. The earlier praise and adoration of Cupid, the pleasure at Cupid's deeds and

desire for Cupid's favor dissolve, and the irascible power abruptly takes over. The young poet shows his fear of the god by singing a "complaint to Cupid," (141ff) a time honored convention in Petrarchan (and earlier) poetry.¹⁹ The unalloyed praise of Cupid in the early part of the hynn is inadequate to express his ambiguous attitude toward love, so he marshals the whole stock of conventions of Petrarchan verse. By line 150 the lover is completely given over to the irascible power. The imagery seethes with anger and fear. Cupid "tyrranizes" with "furious fervor" which "afflicts" the lover, who "despises" love's law.

Yet the young man does not stop with the conventions of love poetry but invades the philosopher's territory as well, in an attempt to understand his predicament. In the involuted Neoplatonic arguments on the nature of love (169-175), he shows another typical quality of youth, idealism, borrowing from Ficino (or one of his followers) an analysis of the ennobling power of love in order to show that, since divine things (the lady) are least influenced by passions they are more worthy of the love of "steadfast" minds.²⁰ Ironically, he himself is so overcome by passion that his own mind is anything but steadfast. The heart-wrenching complaints give way to cool philosophical analysis. Young men, says Aristotle, are high-minded, but "they think they know everything." In fact the poet lover has much to learn, but he forges on, with the confidence of youth, unaware that his philosophical

arguments cannot bring him out of his predicament. He hopes to find relief by using rational arguments that can never adequately explain love. The sententious "things hard gotten men more dearly deem" (168) explains why Cupid tyrannizes the lover, why the lady's heart is "enmarbled." But this idealism, ironically, has not relieved the pain of the experience.

The next stanza is another idealistic attempt to explain the hardness of the lady, again in Neoplatonic terms. The closer to heavenly light a woman is, he argues, the less she is swayed by passion and the more she is to be admired. This stanza and the following four somewhat confusedly explain the high-minded Neoplatonic theory of the process by which the lover idealizes the lady:²¹

Such is the power of that sweet passion
That it all sordid baseness doth expel,
And the refined mind doth newly fashion
Unto a fairer form, which now doth dwell
In his high thought, that would itself excel;
Which he beholding still with constant sight,
Admires the mirror of so heavenly light.

The young poet-lover is doing his best to be high-minded about the lady, as is decorous. And he is, moreover, expounding the latest in continental philosophy--Ficino. Yet in his youthful passion he cannot rest content with intellectual solutions to an emotional dilemma. He finds no consolation in philosophy (neither did Boethius at first). Quite appropriately, the young persona compares a lover to Tantalus (200) whose "infinite desire" is never satisfied--

even, we must conclude, by philosophy.

In fact, the much-debated Platonic philosophy in Hymne of Love and Hymne of Beauty makes sense only in terms of the persona who expounds it. William Nelson reflects the opinion of most recent critics when he writes: "Examined as a logical construct, it (the Platonism) degenerates at once into a conglomeration of inconsistencies and even absurdities."²² But if the Platonic arguments are viewed as another of the young man's strategies for dealing with the complexity of his experience then they help round out Spenser's portrait of a young Renaissance poet in love. The portrait is both serious and ironic: the idealism of young love is genuinely admirable; human love is ennobling. But when we view the young man with mature eyes, the confused Neoplatonic explanations only serve to show how limited human love and reason are, and how far the persona has to go to achieve a complete vision of love and beauty.

Having seen the young lover's confusion, his passionate lack of reason, his idealism, we see in his use of yet another set of poetic conventions the last of the qualities Aristotle assigns to youth, courage--bordering on foolishness. Having marshalled the conventions of mythology, Petrarchan verse, and Neoplatonism to assault the lady's defenses and free himself from Cupid's bondage, the young persona now turns to chivalric romance to define the experience of love and illustrate the lover's brand of courage.

Near the end of Hymne of Love (218), the poet/lover launches into a description of the courage lovers gain from pursuing a lady. The idea has a long history, from Plato's Symposium to Castiglione's Courtier.²³ But the imagery in the passage derives from medieval romance. Love is a "brave exploit," a "puissant conquest," "adventurous pain." The lover goes "through seas, through flames, through thousand swords and spears." Philosophical speculation gives way to the tone of the martial epic, and the hyperbole in the accumulation of parallel adjectives emphasizes the shift. The young man's naive conception of love is taken from story books, greatly exaggerated--and highly conventional--accounts of love's effects. This is decorous for a young man and admirable. "They love honor," says Aristotle, "and they love victory even more."²⁴

But there is subtle irony at work here, too. The list of heroic lovers which follows (231) is meant to demonstrate that Cupid is so powerful that "both through heaven and hell thou makest way / To win them worship which to thee obey" (236-37). But the persona's choice of examples makes another point. All were destroyed--or almost destroyed--by excessive desire or anger. Aeneas risks the "trojan fire" only to find his wife dead. Her ghost tells Aeneas to pursue political and military goals which eventually result in his leaving Dido, hardly an argument for romantic love. Achilles "pressing through the Phrygian glaives" is motivated by wrath, not by romantic love. His desire for Bryseus actually keeps him

from attacking the Trojans. And Orpheus "provoked the ire of damned feinds" only to lose his love through a foolish--and fatal--desire to look on her face. The persona, a poet/lover like Orpheus, also wants to gaze on his beloved: in his naivete, he, like Orpheus, ignores the consequences of letting desire cripple reason. The irony, I suspect, would not have been lost on a Renaissance reader who had been warned in the dedication not to take the young man's "affection" too seriously.

The final irony is that, for all the young poet's erudition, for all his poetic analysis of love and beauty, the experience of love still leaves him in torment. Whatever intellectual understanding he has gained--or thinks he has gained--from studying love lore and poetry is useless in the face of the overwhelming experience of love. "Thou that has never loved," he complains, "canst not believe / Least part of th'evil which poor lovers grieve" (257-58). The young lover does not achieve the goal in the earthly hymns, but he is nevertheless always hopeful, as Aristotle says young men typically are:

So thou thy folk, through paines of Purgatorie
Dost beare unto thy blisse, and heaven's glorie. . . .
Ay me, deare Lord, that ever I might hope,
For all the paines and woes that I endure
To come at length unto the wished scope
Of my desire; or might my selfe assure,
That happie port for ever to recure.
Then would I think these pains no paines at all
And all my woes to be but pennance small.
(HL 278-79; 294-300)

He must, as he says of all love's "folk," pass "through pains of purgatory" in order to enter love's heaven and find "joyous happy rest" beyond the suffering that human love brings. He hopes to arrive at "a paradise of all delight," the locus amoenus he describes at line 280.

But the classical garden of earthly delights, presided over by classical deities, is not his final destination. Though he does not realize this, we do. The earthly paradise which he can only imagine--not experience--adumbrates his final goal, the Christian heaven, but as a young man blinded by desire he cannot see that far. And in case the reader missed the irony, Spenser concludes Hymne of Love with a broad hint of things to come. His young persona promises that if love will get him the girl, "Then would I sing thine immortal praise / An heavenly hymn such as the angels sing:" (HL 301-02). Of course we know from the dedication that he will sing a heavenly hymn, but it will not be the result of his getting the girl. Rather, it will be the consequence of a fuller understanding of love and beauty than his youth will allow. Before he can sing that hymn, or find the longed-for rest from the pain of desire, he must mature; he must find a wider context from which to view his situation. But this requires Spenser to adopt a new way of representing himself, a new vision, a change in the persona.

Thus far, we have traced the first step of the spiritual

journey of thought: the young man's experience of human love and beauty, which he expresses through the conventions of secular, courtly poetry and the commonplaces of fashionable Neoplatonic philosophy. Throughout, Aristotle's psychological analysis of youth provides a framework for understanding Spenser's youthful persona. One might logically expect that in the heavenly hymns Spenser would modify his persona to conform to Aristotle's portrait of a mature man, and present himself as a poet with a thoroughly balanced view of love and beauty, completely in control of his emotions as he exercises his reason to come to a final understanding of his subjects. In short, we might expect Spenser to represent himself as what Aristotle calls "a man in his prime." Aristotle distinguishes this character type from both the young man and the old man: "To put it generally, all the valuable qualities that youth and age divide between them are united in the prime of life, while all their excesses or defects are replaced by moderation and fitness."²⁶ Yet this description does not suit the speaker of the divine hymns very well. He is a man of ecstatic visions, of "ravished thought," of breast-beating penitence, of scathing denunciations of the things of this world. Clearly the Aristotelian categories do not apply. We must go so far as to say that Spenser has given the persona a whole new sensibility and introduced a whole new mode of experience. From the opening lines of Hymne of Heavenly Love one realizes that the change in the

speaker goes far beyond a mere chronological development, a simple emotional, intellectual, or artistic maturing; we see that, on the contrary, a radical conversion has taken place. We are now fully and abruptly in a religious context. In many ways the mature poet is the same man as the young lover--idealistic, passionate, a skillful poet--but the old Petrarchan pose will not suit his new experience of love. In its place we have a mature Christian praising love and beauty in an overtly Christian framework.

Before I proceed to analyze how Spenser represents this conversion, we must, in order to understand the possibilities available to Spenser, briefly examine some of the ways Christian thought had modified Aristotle's psychological theory. What kind of man can decorously address the Christian God? In the presence of the God he now addresses (his immediate audience), the speaker cannot merely be more rational than the young man, more sober. The Christian persona must have faith as well as reason. He must be more than Aristotle's "man in his prime," rationally contemplating the physical world and human society, for in Spenser's Christian society man is defined as much more than "the social animal," whose highest end, as Aristotle had taught, is an orderly society and his own happiness. The Christian persona must be the devout, the penitent, the pilgrim. Moreover, in Christian thought the very power of reason itself was called into question. Orthodox theologians held that reason could bring man

only so far on his journey toward truth; faith had to make up for the limitations of reason in a fallen world. Hence, Spenser appropriately introduces the religious sensibility into his persona, who continues his praise of love and beauty at a new level of awareness. To decorously praise the love and beauty of the Christian God, a man must have faith to supply what is deficient in his reason. Just as Dante's persona in the Comedy must leave Virgil, representative of all that is best in the culture and thought of the pagan world, before he can continue his journey with Beatrice and Bernard to a vision of God, so Spenser's persona in Fowre Hymnes must leave the pagan gods (along with his unsuccessful attempt to understand love and beauty solely through rational systems) and embrace faith as his guide to the final vision of beatitude.²⁷

Of course the problem for Spenser (or Dante, or any other religious poet) is how to represent, through language, this conversion, this inner spiritual journey of a man, an extraordinarily subjective experience. For the most part Dante's solution is allegory, converting emotions and abstract ideas into flesh and blood characters who make what is on the surface at least a literal journey. In Fowre Hymnes, however, Spenser adopts a different technique, though the result is quite similar since both poems represent essentially the same pattern of spiritual development. As we noted, Spenser represents the workings of the soul through the persona itself, as

Boethius had done centuries earlier, but with still another fundamental difference, for Boethius used a dialogue to portray the change in the mind of his speaker. Spenser has the words of one speaker only with which to show the ascent of the soul, from the palinode that opens Hymne of Heavenly Love to the final beatific vision at the climax of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie. Without allegory, dialogue, and/or narrative, how does one represent religious conversion, spiritual development, an inner journey of the most subjective sort?

Essentially, in place of these traditional methods for representing religious conversion, Spenser draws on literary forms other than the hymn to reveal the changing consciousness of the Christian persona, just as he draws on the conventions of Petrarchan verse, chivalric romance, and Platonic philosophy in the first two hymns. In the heavenly hymns Spenser uses conventions from two common forms of late sixteenth century religious literature: (1) the popular guides to meditation, and (2) devotional poetry. Spenser portrays himself in the last two hymns as a man engaged in private meditation and, simultaneously, the penitent devotee of so much religious verse, a divine prophet crying in the wilderness, calling the faithful to repentance and illumination. The combination of these two tones, one inward and reflective, the other public and declamatory, defines Spenser's persona in the heavenly hymns.

In his pioneering study of the influence of meditation manuals on metaphysical poetry, Louis Martz shows that these popular guides to private devotion form a very large and important part of sixteenth century prose. The most famous example is Ignatius Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, but there were many examples before and after the Exercises, both Catholic and Protestant. (Queen Elizabeth herself translated one, Le Mirror de l'Ame Pechereus.) Martz explains the practice of daily meditation for which these manuals provide step by step instruction:

Meditation, then, cultivates the basic, the lower levels of spiritual life; it is not, properly speaking, a mystical activity, but part of the duties of every man in daily life. It is not performed under the operations of special grace, but is available to every man through the workings of ordinary grace.²⁸

In this context, the "mysticism" which Collins and others have claimed to find in Fowre Hymnes is actually nothing strange or occult.²⁹ Meditation was primarily a means of achieving spiritual growth, a duty of every Christian, not just the ascetic. Spenser's Christian persona would, I suspect, have been easily recognized by educated Elizabethans as a man in meditation, or contemplation, as it was sometimes called. In fact, the speaker clearly states what he is doing. He is attempting to come closer to God "through meditation of his endless merit" (HHL 225), "through contemplation of these goodly sights" (HHB 2), and "through heavenly contemplation"

(HHB 136). By representing himself as a Christian in meditation Spenser creates a decorous relationship between the speaker and both his immediate audience (God) and his implied audience (fellow Christians). More importantly, through the persona of the Christian in Meditation, Spenser represents spiritual change and development since the whole point of the meditation manuals was to initiate and guide, in an orderly way, this inward journey that structures the poem.

The persona of the Christian in meditation is, moreover, particularly suited to showing the change from the young poet/lover of the first pair of hymns to the mature devotee of the second pair of hymns. Proper meditation, it was believed, could aid the Christian in overcoming the very difficulties which keep the young man from fully realizing love and beauty. The structure of meditation, as it was presented in the late sixteenth century manuals, was designed to put man in touch with God through all the resources of the human personality, physical, emotional, and intellectual. The incomplete nature of the experience of love without the religious sensibility, which the first persona so fully illustrates, contrasts with the fullness of love experienced by the man in meditation. The most difficult problem the first persona faces is the disparity between what seems to be a thorough intellectual understanding of love and beauty which he draws from the classical world, and his profoundly chaotic emotional reaction to the actual experience of love. The aesthetic

significance of the meditation, as Martz points out, lies in its ability to simultaneously order thought and emotion into a meaningful whole.³⁰ Meditation gives a relevant sequence to thought, from the first step to the last, lending clarity and simplicity to the search for love and beauty which, for the young man, had been a chaos of conflicting attitudes, ideas, and emotions.

A look at a representative meditation manual will illustrate this process. The typical pattern of meditation derives from the Renaissance psychological analysis of the highest of Aristotle's "three souls." The rational soul is divided into three "powers," memory, understanding, and will, which the meditator exercises from lowest to highest. Fuente's Meditations, a typical manual, outlines them:

1. With the memory . . . to be mindful of the mystery that is to be meditated, passing through the memory, with clearness, and distinction, that which is to be the matter of the meditation.
2. With the understanding to make several discourses and considerations about that mystery, inquiring, and searching out the verities comprehended therein . . . to embrace those truths it hath meditated . . .
3. With the freedom of the will to draw forth sundry affections or vertuous Actes, conformable to that which the Understanding hath meditated . . .³¹

For the Christian persona, the glimpse of heavenly rest at the climax of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie does not come suddenly, in a blinding flash. It is arrived at gradually, step by step. The persona follows this pattern in the heavenly hymns; each of the three stages are included in

each hymn.

The pattern is particularly clear in Hymne of Heavenly Love. First, after the introductory palinode the speaker uses the memory to recall the details "with clarity and distinction" of the mystery to be meditated upon. The mystery in this instance is the Incarnation, perfectly appropriate for a hymn to Christ's divine love. From lines 22 to 154 the devot calls to mind, successively, the "begetting" of Christ in heaven, the creation of the cosmos through love, the creation and fall of the angels, the creation of man, man's fall, and, finally, the birth of Christ and his death on the cross. Next, the speaker applies the second "power of the soul," the understanding, to analyze and embrace the truths contained in the mystery through "several discourses and considerations." From lines 155 to 217 he considers such questions as the meaning of the wounds and the blood, man's freedom and God's love, and man's obligation to God as expressed in the great commandment. Another writer of a popular meditation guide, Luis de Granda, outlines what should be included in the second phase of a typical meditation on the crucifixion; Spenser's persona includes each point in the same order:

To understand thereby what a passinge great love
he bare unto thee (cf. HHL 155-62), and what great
benefit he did unto thee in bying thee with so
deare a price (cf. HHL 175) and how much thou are
bound to do for him who hath done and suffered so
much for thee (cf. HHL 182).³²

Of course it is impossible to know whether Spenser had Granada in mind, but the parallel does clearly point up a consistency in method which Fowre Hymnes and the meditation guides share; a theological understanding is united with a highly personal reaction to the truths. The devotee not only makes "considerations" about the mystery, but also attempts to "embrace those truths which it hath meditated."

In the final part of the meditation, the application of the will, the emotions ("affections") are fully brought to bear on the mystery in order to move the devotee to virtuous action. The speaker recommends, as Granada and others do, that the readers "imagine everie one of these things whereon they meditate passeth within their own heart."

Then let thy flinty heart that feels no pain
Empeirced be with pitiful remorse
And let thy bowels bleed in every vein
At sight of his most sacred heavenly corse.
(HHL 246-49)

One's heart is "empeirced" as Christ's body was. One's "bowels bleede in every veine" as did Christ's wounded side. The very violence of the details arouses not only an emotional but an almost physical bond between Christ and the meditator through imaginative participation in and identification with the subject of the meditation. Here, after the preparatory theological development, the full emotional force of the meaning of the crucifixion lands on the penitent Christian: "And let thy soul whose sins his sorrows wrought, / Melt into tears and groan in grieved thought" (251-52). In

"grieved thought" Spenser found the phrase which perfectly expresses the fusion of thought and feeling which is the goal of meditation.

In the last stanzas of this the final section of the meditation (and the poem), the speaker moves from the violent details of the crucifixion to a tone of loving persuasion.

"With all thy hart, with all thy soule and mind,/Thou must him love, and his beheasts embrace" (260-61). The devout has visualized the crucifixion in graphic detail, understood its theological implications, and felt the complex of emotions that the imagination and intellect have aroused--awe, pity, a desire for union with complete love. Now the soul of the devout is ready for the task of love and obedience to the Great Commandment.

We see this controlled development of thought and emotion not only in the overall structure of Hymne of Heavenly Love but also in the very texture of the rhetoric. In the mature poet Spenser reveals a mind which fuses thought and feeling in carefully wrought conceits. For example, the speaker begins the exercise of the understanding with an emotional outburst of pity for Christ's pain: "O huge and most unspeakeable impression / Of loves deepe wound, that pierst the piteous hart / Of that deare Lord with so entyre affection" (HHL 155-58). But the emotional dimension of the image is not enough; the speaker draws out the theological import latent in the image of the wound: "Whose bleeding source

their streams yet never staunch, / But still do flow and freshly still redound" (HHL 164-65). The wounds have become the source of an eternally flowing river, reminiscent of the river of life in Revelation.³³ Christ's death is not simply an event in history, discreet, contained; it has eternal effects which the Christian is experiencing now. The river becomes an image of baptism: "To heale the sores of sinfull soules unsound, / And clense the guilt of that infected cryme, / Which was enrooted in all fleshly slyme" (HHL 166-68). In baptism man participates, sacramentally, in the historical death and resurrection of Christ. The water, like Christ's blood, "heals" and "cleanses" man of original sin, the "fleshly slime" in which each generation is "rooted." Thus, there is extraordinary theological as well as emotional depth and resonance. An intellectual understanding of the theological implications lies behind the emotional imagery. The peculiar decorum of the heavenly hymns, their melding of scripture, theology, careful physical description, and highly emotional apostrophes is possible because of the persona Spenser creates: a mature Christian employing all the powers of the soul in a carefully structured meditation.

In these techniques of meditation--the orderly method of development, the conceits which operate simultaneously on emotional and intellectual levels--we can see the extraordinary change Spenser has wrought in his persona. Throughout, the Christian in meditation moves toward the final apotheosis,

the final vision of wisdom. Fittingly, the speaker begins Hymne of Heavenly Beautie by describing his state at the conclusion of the "meditation" which is Hymne of Heavenly Love: "Rapt with the rage of mine own ravished thought / Through contemplation of those goodly sights / In heaven above." Like "grieved thought," the phrase "ravished thought" accurately describes the end of meditation. Thought and emotion are fused, working harmoniously to receive the grace of divine illumination. Yet for all its concern with the inner state of the persona, for all Spenser's care in representing the psychology of a man journeying toward God, the poem remains a hymn, a public poem, often addressed directly to the community of the faithful. The mature persona, consequently, has a public side and wears the mask of the religious poet, the prophet, proclaiming the great themes of devotional and penitential verse and employing its conventions.

The mature persona's public dimension is first evident in the palinode which begins Hymne of Heavenly Love. After the brief invocation in the first stanza he establishes his role as a public penitent, even asking the readers of his earlier poems to forgive him, "quench my blame." Moreover, the passage is a formal, ritual confession embodying many of the elements of the sacrament of penance. He confesses his error (8-11); he turns away from his error in repentance (11); he resolves to lead a new life, symbolized by retuning the harp which has earlier offended (12); he asks forgiveness of

those he has wronged (15-18); he receives absolution by having his error shrouded in ashes (19); and finally he warns others not to fall into the same error (20-21).

At the same time Spenser, through his persona, identifies himself with other poets who chronicled their conversions in palinodes and versified confessions. One thinks immediately of Petrarch and Chaucer, two of Spenser's acknowledged masters. Each, toward the close of his career, concluded a series of predominantly secular works with an overtly religious work, the Parson's sermon on penance, Petrarch's Canzone to the Virgin which concludes the Rima. Furthermore, each attached a personal statement of retraction and confession (Chaucer's "Retraction," Petrarch's "Tennemi Amor"). Following in their path, Spenser now casts himself in the role of the humble penitent poet just as, years earlier, he had cast himself in the role of the pastoral and epic poet.

This mantle of the public religious poet qualifies the speaker to be not only a pilgrim in the road to the vision of heaven, but also a prophet along the way. The introspective, meditative tone we noted earlier is intertwined with injunctions to the faithful, such as the dramatic apostrophe in Hymne of Heavenly Love: "Then rouse thyself, O earth, out of thy soil, / In which thou wallowest like to filthy swine, / And dost thy mind in dirty pleasures moil, / Unmindful of that dearest Lord of thine" (218-20). Much of both heavenly hymns is in the second person and the imperative mood, with

an unabashedly hortative tone. This dual role of the speaker, private and public, lends itself to the decorum of the hymn, which has, as we noted in the last chapter, a dual audience; God himself and the fellow worshipers. The young persona has a similar dual role: on the one hand he is himself a thrall of love, and, on the other, he confidently gives advice to others on love's ways, advice which has obviously done him little good considering the state of his suit. In ironic contrast, the mature persona simultaneously preaches and experiences the love of God which is, unlike the young man's love, thoroughly requited in the final beatific vision.

When the speaker trades laurel on the brow for ashes on the forehead, we might logically expect his persona's verse to resemble a preacher's. Several critics have noted in the heavenly hymns resemblances to Renaissance sermons. Renwick (and later Ellrodt) commented on the ladder of creation section in Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, and Renwick says, "This is the method of the preacher not of the philosopher."³⁴ Although Renwick and Ellrodt do not develop the idea, they suggest that the rhetoric of the hymns is influenced by the method or "schemata" of the preachers. Examples can easily be found. The passage Renwick refers to depends for its effect upon gradatio, a favorite method of the preachers discussed at length in the Ramist Rhetorica of Talon, a popular handbook for Puritan preachers:³⁵ "Fair is the heaven.

Yet far more fair. . . . These thus in fair each other far
excelling. . . . Yet is that highest far beyond all tell-
ing. . . ." (HHB 78, 85, 92, 99). Anaphora, another favorite
device of the preachers, is evident in Hymne of Heavenly Love:
"His humble carriage, his unfaulty ways, / His cancered foes,
his fights, his toils, his strife, / His pains, his poverty,
his sharp assays" (233-35). The concise three-stanza account
of Christ's life which contains these lines is itself care-
fully arranged around a chronological schemata; each stanza
starts with a command: "Begin from first, where he encradled
was"; "From thence read on the story of his life"; "And look
at last how of most wretched wights / He taken was. . . ."
Through the persistent rhetoric of the sermon we come to rea-
lize that we are in the presence of a man preaching the gos-
pel as well as meditating on it. And in fact the second two
hymns, like so many Renaissance sermons, are a pastiche of
biblical quotation, paraphrase, and allusion.³⁶

If the man in meditation attempts to fuse thought and
feeling in his own soul, the preacher attempts to instill in
his auditors both knowledge of doctrine and devotion to it,
teaching dogma and morals while simultaneously arousing and
directing the emotions of the faithful. We can perhaps see
the preacher's method best in a kind of sermon in minature
which the persona preaches on the great commandment (HHL 169-
217). A theological analysis of man's proper response to
God's love begins with an emotional apostrophe to the names

of Christ, common in Renaissance sermons:

O blessed well of love, o floure of grace,
O glorious Morning starre, o lampe of light,
Most lively image of thy fathers face,
Eternall King of glorie, Lord of might,
Meeke lambe of God before all worlds behight,
How can we thee requite for all this good?
Or what can prize that thy most precious blood?
(HHL 169-75)

Man's proper response is to obey the new law of love, summed up in the paraphrase of the great commandment: "Him first to love that us so dearly bought / And next our brethren in his image wrought" (198-99). In the following stanzas (190-217) these two lines are explicated one at a time, in the manner of a preacher. God's gift of life came through the historical event of Christ's death and is continually present ("which now we have") in the Eucharist ("the food of life / Even himself in his dear sacrament"). For the first time in the hymn the poet begins to use the first person plural: "Our life," "us wretches," "we fared amiss." This is indeed the tone of the preacher, not the philosopher: he is leading the Christian to an emotional as well as intellectual participation. This tone persists throughout the "sermon" on the great commandment.

From the sacramental "communion" in the Eucharist he logically proceeds in his explication to the Christian's obligations to the whole human community, the second part of the great commandment: "Then next to love our brethren." He picks up the penitential themes announced earlier and develops them as reasons for serving one another regardless of

social station: all men are made in God's image, and all men will die (197-203). The next two stanzas elaborate the Christological implications of aiding the poor: "We should them love and with their needs partake / Knowing that whatsoever to them we give / We give to Him, by whom we all do live." Christ died "Showing us mercy--miserable crew-- / That we the like should to the wretches shew / And love our brethren, thereby to approve / How much himself that loved us we love." Christ's death, the preacher points out, overcomes death for all men, uniting all men to Him in a common bond of humanity. The crucifixion is the ultimate sign ("ensample") of the union expressed in Matthew 25, which Spenser paraphrases: "Whatsoever ye do to the least of my brothers, that ye do unto me." Like a preacher, the speaker of the heavenly hymns employs a carefully organized theological explication of a Scripture text, subtly interwoven with other texts to raise the faithful to greater love.

We have seen that Spenser adopts for his mature persona the conventions of the devout in meditation, the penitent, the preacher. Thus, the great themes of the heavenly hymns become thoroughly decorous responses to the dramatic situation of the poem: a repentant man facing God and his fellow Christians. Consequently, the recurrence of the contemptus mundi theme need not be seen as the result of Spenser's Puritanism, as Renwick suggests.³⁷ It is simply one of the great themes common to almost all penitential verse, Protestant and Catholic,

and to countless sermons. Moreover, when Spenser's persona speaks of "this vile world:" and its "dirte and drosse" he is always showing how far he has come from his earlier understanding. He is not condemning the things of this world in and of themselves, but only in comparison to the perfection of heaven. Such comparisons, it seems, owe more to the rhetorical conventions of sermons and devotional verse than to sectarian theological discussion. At the peroration of a sermon on penitence, or at the end of a meditation on the perfection of divine wisdom, it is perfectly natural to say that "the love of God . . . loathing brings / Of this vile world" (HHB 298-99). Decorum is the key. As we have seen, understanding Spenser's persona is essential to understanding that decorum and, more importantly, the change in decorum from one pair of hymns to the next.

NOTES

¹Among the many studies of the problem see Variorum, pp. 657-62; Ellrodt, pp. 118-20; and Welsford, pp. 36-38.

²For excellent discussions of character change in the Faerie Queene see Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 126 ff.; and Ronald A. Horton, The Unity of the Faerie Queene (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), p. 124 ff.

³William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954); and Welsford, pp. 59-60.

⁴Wimsatt, Preface, xv, p. 5.

⁵For Spenser's use of persona in the sonnet sequence, see Don M. Ricks, "Persona and Process in Spenser's 'Amoretti'," Ariel, 3 (1972), 5-15.

⁶See Don M. Ricks, "Convention and Structure in Edmund Spenser's Amoretti," Proceedings of the Utah Academy, 2, 44, (1968), 438-50.

⁷Wimsatt, Preface, xv.

⁸For the distinction between the Greek and the Boethian persona see Harry Berger, Jr., "The Prospect of the Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry," Studies in English Literature, 1 (1961), 109-10.

⁹Ricks, "Persona and Process," 7-14.

¹⁰See Variorum VIII, p. 22.

¹¹Aristotle, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, tr. Lane Cooper (New York: D. Appleton, Inc., 1932), pp. 132-34.

¹²Kellog and Steele briefly discuss Aristotle's possible influence in their introduction to the hymns, p. 485.

¹³Shepherd's Calendar, June, 11. 33-38.

¹⁴Also see Isaiah 55:4, Job 13:26, Job 20:11, and Jeremiah 31:19.

¹⁵For an explanation of the theory and Spenser's use of it in FQ Bk II, see Kellogg, pp. 48-53.

¹⁶Henry Gibbens Lotspeich, Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), pp. 48-50.

¹⁷Ovid, Amores, tr. Christopher Marlowe, in The Works of Christopher Marlowe, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).

¹⁸For an excellent discussion of Spenser's use of these and other conventions of Medieval and Petrarchan love poetry see Kellogg, pp. 489-495.

¹⁹Kellogg, p. 492n.

²⁰Kellogg, p. 493n.

²¹Welsford, p. 151 notes 1 and 5.

²²Nelson, p. 115.

²³Kellogg, p. 494n.

²⁴Aristotle, Rhetoric, p. 133.

²⁵See Petrarch's Rima, numbers 234 and 235, although the same conceits can be found in many English and continental poets.

²⁶Aristotle, pp. 136-37.

²⁷For a brief explanation of the conventional interpretation see John Addington Symonds, An Introduction to the Study of Dante (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899), pp. 129-33.

²⁸The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

²⁹Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 16.

³⁰Martz, pp. 75-90.

³¹Quoted in Martz, p. 34.

³²Quoted in Martz, p. 76.

³³See the gloss on the stanza in Kellogg's edition, p. 511.

³⁴Renwick, Daphnaida, p. 211, quoted in Ellrodt, p. 161.

³⁵J. M. Blench, Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: A Study of English Sermons 1450-c. 1600 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), p. 170.

³⁶See Variorum, pp. 542-548 for a partial list of biblical allusions. For a more complete, but by no means exhaustive list see Grace W. Landrum, "Spenser's Use of the Bible and his Alleged Puritanism," PMLA, 41 (1926), pp. 517-44.

³⁷W. L. Renwick, Daphnaida, p. 216.

CHAPTER III

THE LINKS BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN

The structure of Fowre Hymnes mirrors the structure of the Elizabethan cosmos: earth below, heaven above, with man operating between these two cosmological and theological coordinates. Spenser clearly indicates the cosmological basis of the poem's structure in the dedication when he says he has made "two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestiaall." In this chapter I suggest that the relationship between the earthly and heavenly hymns resembles the relationship between heaven and earth posited by Spenser's age. This provides yet another means of unifying the hymns. While the spiritual journey of the speaker imitates the order of the microcosm, the pattern of the life of man, on another level the poem's structure imitates the harmonious order of the macrocosm, the universe in which man's journey takes place.

In both the world of the poem and the Elizabethan world view, the relationship between the earthly and heavenly realms is characterized by two tendencies: opposition and union. Beginning in the dedication and continuing to the last stanza of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, earth is aligned in opposition to heaven. Earth is incomplete, finite, a place of suffering

and desire, full of "deceitful shadows." Heaven is the reverse: perfect, infinite, a place of joy and fulfillment, a realm of light and peace. Yet the poem, like the cosmology it imitates, upholds the unity of the two coordinates just as emphatically as it recognizes their opposition. Elizabethans found an elaborate system of correspondences between the two realms since earth is a reflection, however dim, of heaven, according to the Platonic notions which had come to be incorporated into Christian thought since the patristic age. Similarly, in the poem there is a complex system of parallels. The earthly hymns mirror the heavenly ones: on the most basic level each pair has a hymn to love and a hymn to beauty in the same order, each has a male and a female figure. In one sense each pair is independent of the other, but there is an overreaching network of correspondences which crosses the formal division between the pairs and links them into a unified framework.

These correspondences consist of both parallels and contrasts: the interplay of the two tendencies (one toward unity, the other toward opposition) creates a tension which is maintained throughout.¹ When an element from an earthly hymn reappears in a heavenly hymn--an image, a theme, a rhetorical conceit--the difference between the two versions of love and beauty inevitably modifies one's perception of the likenesses. By repeating elements in such a way as to simultaneously reveal their similarity and dissimilarity, Spenser is able to

analyze the relationship between the two orders with precision and amplitude. Through these parallels and contrasts a kind of dialectic is set up, on both a cosmological and theological level, between the secular embodiments of love and beauty and their sacred counterparts. And the relationship between the two pairs is emphatically dialectical, not inimical: one never destroys or supplants the other, but rather they exist in a dynamic tension, each lending meaning to the other.

Before we analyze this dialectic, we must outline the kinds of opposition which Spenser explores through the broad categories "earthly or naturall" and "heavenly or celestiall." First, heaven and earth are (quite literally for the Elizabethans) the two parts of the physical universe. Heaven (or the heavens) includes everything above the sphere of the moon, earth everything below it. For example, the references in the first two hymns to "heavenly fire" (HL 108) and "heavens life-giving fire" (HL 65) derive from the belief that fire, the lightest of the four elements, is dominant in the heavenly realm above the earth. In the same way, the reference to "heavy earth" from which the lover mounts has the cosmological meaning behind it: earth is the heaviest of the elements and therefore tends to sink.

Second, the terms heaven and earth denote a theological opposition: imperfection versus perfection, the finite versus the infinite. Earth is the temporary home of man, a place

of testing and preparation for his eternal home in heaven (or hell, as the preachers cautioned). Heaven is the home of God, and as such a place of eternal perfection. In Hymne of Heavenly Love, for example, the speaker tells how man "fell from the hope of promist heavenly place / Into the mouth of death, to sinners dew, / And all his offspring into thralldom threw" (121-23). Here the theological meaning dominates. Heaven is the condition of sinless perfection before the fall, earth the state of sinfulness to which man condemned himself through disobedience.

Within the context of the poem the dichotomy between earth and heaven comes to represent the opposition between pagan and Christian thought. "Naturall" love and beauty are associated with pagan deities and, through them, the pagan philosophy of Plato. In contrast, "celestiall" love and beauty are specifically Christian. The portrait of Cupid in the first hymn, for instance, is drawn in large part from Plato's description of Eros, and Spenser's Venus is in certain important respects the Venus Urania of the Neoplatonists. Christ and Sapience are of course drawn from biblical accounts and exegetical tradition. Thus, Spenser is able to compare and contrast ideas of love and beauty from classical civilization with those of Christian theology within the overreaching framework of "natural" and "celestiall."

Finally, the differences between "earthly" and "heavenly" reflect the differences between secular and sacred

verse in Elizabethan society. The earthly hymns draw upon the conventions of secular love poetry, techniques of the sonnet and the courtly love lyric. These hymns are what Southwell called "Paynim Toyes," poems which are designed to entertain a worldly court audience. As we saw in the last chapter, the second pair of hymns are essentially devotional poems, what Sidney calls "heavenly poesie," designed to edify the faithful.

With such a broad range of meanings to call upon, it is not surprising that there are a great many parallels and contrasts between the heavenly and earthly pairs, so many in fact that it is convenient to select three general kinds and give a few examples of each: 1) the links between the heavenly and earthly figures, Cupid and Christ, Venus and Sapience; 2) certain parallels and contrasts in the imagery of secular love poetry and devotional verse; and 3) the pervasive imagery of ascent and descent.

In Elizabethan cosmology the difference between earth and heaven is the difference between the finite and the infinite. It is helpful to keep in mind the Elizabethan picture of the cosmos. The earth is in the center, surrounded in ascending order by the seven planets, the sphere of the fixed stars, the great crystal sphere of the primum mobile, the nine angelic orders, and finally God, who both surrounds and pervades the entire universe. Everything under the sphere of the moon is mutable, subject to sin,

decay, and imperfection; everything above it is in perfect harmony, complete, eternal. The difference between earth and heaven, then, is the difference between the finite and the infinite, lack and completeness.

The contrasts in the births of Cupid and Christ illustrate the opposition between the finite earthly realm and the infinite celestial realm. Cupid is born of the union of opposites: he is the offspring of Venus, who includes both male and female as the androgynous daughter of the sea foam; as we noted earlier, he is "Begot of Plenty and Penury"; he is both oldest and youngest of the gods. Tension created by the conflict of opposites defines Cupid. He is, consequently, firmly rooted in the mutable, sub-lunar realm, which is composed of warring elements in continual flux. The description of Christ's birth emphasizes just the reverse. The unitary nature of God "begets" Christ:

That high eternall powre, which now doth moue
In all these things, mou'd in it selfe by loue.

It loved it selfe, because it selfe was faire;
(For faire is lou'd) and of it selfe begot
Like to it selfe his eldest sonne and heire,
Eternall, pure, and voide of sinfull blot. . . .
(HHL 27-32)

Likesss-not opposition--characterizes the heavenly realm.

The descriptions of creation which immediately follow illustrate this same contrast. Cupid creates "the world that was not till he did it make" out of the chaos of primordial elements by "tempring goodly well / Their contrary

dislikes with loved means." Hence Cupid creates by ordering a pre-existing supply of finite and contrary elements: "Ayre hated earth, and water hated fire, / Till love relented their rebellious ire." Like man, Cupid can only "create" by giving new form to old elements. Christ, on the other hand, does not need matter with which to work; He creates out of the overflowing fullness of His love: "Yet being pregnant still with powerful grace, / And ful of fruitful love, that loves to get / Things like himself" (HHL 49-51), he creates the angels and, later, the creatures which fill the void, the "waste and empty space / in his wide Pallace" (HHL 101). Cupid's creation grows out of an attempt to supply a deficiency of love or harmony in the finite world; Christ's creation springs from an infinite oversupply of love. Christ is an "eternal spring of grace and wisdom" (HHL 44), an "eternal fount of love and grace" (HHL 100); Cupid is merely a "tyrant" who does his best to "compell" the elements "to keep themselves within their sundry raines" (HL 88).

The female figures also reflect this cosmological distinction between the finite and the infinite. In some ways Venus and Sapience are clearly paralleled: both are queens, both rule the earth in majesty from above, both are described in terms of light. But Sapience is clearly superior to Venus. As C. S. Lewis suggests, Spenser has the astrological Venus in mind in his description.² Her domain is confined to the area below her native planet from which her

"influence streams." Sapience, however, rules from the very bosom of God, above all creation, and her realm includes but is by no means limited to earth: "Both heaven and earth obey unto her will, / And all the creatures which they both containe: / For of her fulnesse which the world doth fill, / They all partake, and do in state remaine . . ." (HHB 197-201).

In this image of the divine beauty of Sapience surrounding and filling the earthly, limited beauty which Venus represents, we see the fundamental unity of the Elizabethan cosmos, a unity which counterbalances the opposition between the finite and the infinite. The infinite reaches of heaven literally embrace the finite earth. Both are a part of one cosmic dance, even though the earth, because of sin, is temporarily out of step. The poem's structure is thus a paradigm of what Kathleen Williams describes as the most central commonplace of Elizabethan cosmology: "The fluctuating, sublunar realm, depending on stress and equilibrium, rests, in the last resort, on the eternal stability of bright heaven."³

This unity in opposition of the heavenly and earthly figures is perhaps best seen not in cosmological but in theological terms. For an Elizabethan the relationship between heaven and earth was not only cosmological but theological. According to the orthodox formulation, God in his infinite love reconciled the world to himself--that is, united earth and heaven--by sending his son to earth. The

incarnation of Christ is of course the subject of the third hymn. Heaven and earth are further united in that the beauty of the earth is included in the beauty of God, expressed in Hymne of Heavenly Beautie by the image of the ladder extending from earth to Sapience who sits in the bosom of God.

The earthly figures also have theological as well as cosmological significance within the context of the poem, for the difference between earth and heaven is in one sense the difference between pagan and Christian. Cupid and Venus are, after all, pagan deities which were traditionally associated with the philosophy of Plato. Christian humanists of Spenser's age recognized the profound opposition between pagan conceptions of love and beauty and the Christian conception, yet these thinkers had such respect for the contributions of the classical philosophers that they found ways to unify the two by including pagan thought in the Christian theological framework. Essentially, Christian humanists saw pagan philosophy as a dim, though nevertheless highly admirable, foreshadowing of the complete revelation of the Bible. Likewise, the Greek and Roman gods were thought to prefigure the Christian God. For example, Apollo became a type of Christ to the extent that he poetically represented qualities of the second person of the trinity. In Deorum Genealogica Boccaccio sums up a common Renaissance humanist attitude when he argues that pagan fictions can be "employed in the service of catholic truth."⁴

Spenser's use of Venus and Cupid conforms to the Renaissance humanist understanding of the relationship between pagan and Christian thought. For example, Venus is the Platonic version of beauty. She represents Platonic form. She is "that wondrous pattern . . . Perfect beauty which all men adore, / Whose face and feature doth so much excell / All mortal sense that none the same may tell" (HB 36-42). Spenser places Venus, and the Platonic forms she represents, within the Christian order of the heavenly hymns, but they are clearly subordinate. For example, Spenser sets "those intelligences Plato so admired" high in the ladder of being, above the empereyn (HHB 84-86). As Tillyard and others have commented, the inclusion of Platonic "pure Ideas" in a description of the orders of angels is extremely unusual.⁵ However, in the Christian heaven the Platonic ideas are clearly lower than even the lowest order of angels, though Spenser does place "pure intelligences" above the primum mobile, i.e., outside the physical universe. That Spenser found it important to include Plato's ideal forms in the Christian scheme is a mark of the profound respect he had for classical philosophy, but that he put them in a subordinate position shows his estimation of their relative value.

Spenser explicitly contrasts Venus and Sapience in two stanzas of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie:

Ne could that painter, had he lived yet,
Which pictured Venus with so curious quill
That all posterity admired it,

Have portrayed this (Sapience) for all his master-
 ing skill;
 Ne she herself, had she remained still
 And were as fair as fabling wits do feign,
 Could once come near this beauty sovereign.

But had those wits, the wonders of their days,
 Or that sweet Tiean poet which did spend
 His plenteous vein in setting forth her praise,
 Seen but a glimpse of that which I pretend,
 How wondrously would he her face commend
 Above that Idol of his feigning thought,
 That all the world should with his rhymes be
 fraught.

Venus is here described as inferior to Sapience in beauty, but also, in a wider sense, the pagan goddess has an entirely different ontological status. She is an "idol" of the poet's "fayning thought," a product of the imagination of "fabling wits." She is finally an artistic and philosophical representation of beauty. As Boccaccio and other Christian humanists insisted, Venus (and the entire pantheon) are extremely limited (though admirable) attempts to understand the one true God which pale into insignificance when compared to God's infinite beauty.

Just as Venus appears in the Hymne of Heavenly Beautie as a "shadow" of Sapience, Cupid appears in the Hymne of Heavenly Love as a precursor of Christ. At the beginning of the heavenly hymns there is a kind of bridge between the earthly and heavenly pairs, which affirms the unity between the two kinds of love and beauty. Cupid makes a brief appearance and, in effect, introduces Christ: "Love lift me up upon thy golden wings / From the base world into thy heaven's height / That I thereof an heavenly hymn may sing / Unto the

God of love high heaven's king." Clearly two "loves" are distinguished here: the one addressed (Cupid), and the "God of love" (Christ). They are by no means on the same level; one is superior, "high heaven's king." Yet Cupid clearly prepares the lover (and the reader) for the experience of the higher love by lifting up the mind. If Spenser had merely wished to contrast Platonic and Christian love, he presumably would not have pictured Cupid raising the mind of the lover to Christ, but here Cupid foreshadows Christ, and in a wider sense Spenser implies that the Platonic understanding of love can lead one to a thoroughly Christian view. Nevertheless, when a place is found for Cupid in the Christian order, it is a subordinate place, for "high heaven's king" goes beyond the earlier formulation. Cupid can introduce the heavenly hymns, but after the first stanza he must leave the stage. Thus, Spenser bridges the gap between the two pairs of hymns in much the same way so many earlier thinkers had come to terms with the pagan world--by recognizing its value in dignifying the human will and sense of moral worth, but at the same time warning that whatever is valuable in it is contained in the much wider universe of Christianity.

As we noted in the introduction, Fowre Hymnes is part of the general revival of interest in religious verse which took place in both France and England in the 1580's and 90's. The major cause of this revival was disenchantment with

secular love poetry, which was being criticized more and more as licentious and stupid. Poetry which had the love of God as its subject could not be criticized on grounds of immorality or triviality.

But without a vernacular tradition of religious verse in the high style, poets had to search out techniques to accomplish their end: to raise Christian poetry to a grandeur not reached by pagan authors, who praised imaginary gods rather than the one true God. Spenser is one of many poets who took seriously Dubartas's call for poetry which would show "Judith greater than Juno, David than Orpheus, Christ than Apollo."⁶ Yet poets soon learned that piety alone does not make good poetry; one needs appropriate vocabulary, poetic forms, rhetorical structures. Ironically, poets heeded Dubartas's call by adapting the familiar techniques of secular love lyric, the very genre which, because of its alleged abuses, provoked the move toward devotional poetry. In France and England devotional sonnets came into vogue, often rather crude parodies of their secular Petrarchan counterparts, though the fashion eventually culminated in the sophistication of Donne's Holy Sonnets. Poets not only borrowed the prosodic forms, but, more importantly, the diction and rhetoric of the Petrarchan mode. In "What Joy to Love" Southwell quite deliberately parodies one of the most famous Petrarchan sonnets, "Pace Non Trovo," in order to capture the mood of a penitent: "I wage no war, yet peace I none

enjoy; / I hope, I feare, I fry in freesing colde; / All wealth is want where chefest wishes fayle, / Yea life is loathed where love may not prevaile." Here Southwell uses the rhetorical figure of the "contrarieties," so popular with the English Petrarchans, to express conflict within the sinner's mind. Peterson describes the process in his book The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne:

The courtly conventions of praising a mistress, of asking that she offer or allow the petitioner some cause to hope that his love may be satisfied, or of describing the paradoxical feelings of unrequited love (despair, hope, sorrow, and happiness, fear and assurance) which in the beginning had been introduced into the religion of love by the deliberate parody of religious experience are now, some three-and-a-half centuries later, reintroduced as ways of ordering thought and feeling within the very areas of experience from which they originally derived.⁷

This is precisely Spenser's method--only on a much more sophisticated level--as he reconverts Petrarchan imagery and rhetoric into the Christian context from which they were originally derived by the troubadours of twelfth century Provence. Thus, in a curious double reversal in literary history, the parallels and contrasts Spenser sets up in the imagery of the two pairs of hymns not only make the heavenly hymns a kind of parody of the earthly ones, since they share the poetic conventions of the troubadours' "religion of love," but the opposite is also true: the earthly hymns parody the heavenly ones by employing the language of Christianity to describe secular love. The most obvious result of this

shared imagery and rhetoric is a remarkable unity of style, but in a deeper sense the poem reconciles two modes of experience while still preserving the distinction between the "religion of love" and "true religion." Spenser alone, among all the devotional poets, does not separate his poetry into "muse charnelle et muse eternell," as DuBellay did, but retains both in tension.⁸ Each gives a new range of meaning to its counterpart: through parallels and contrasts one mode of experience comments upon the other, modifying, correcting, explaining. The poem is in fact a tour de force display of rhetorical skill put to the task of bridging what was in the late Renaissance an ever widening gap between secular and sacred uses of language.

From among many parallels we will select a few of the more obvious to illustrate the links between the two pairs of hymns. We may begin with the contrast between earthly love as desire and heavenly love as fulfillment, communicated through the imagery of slavery and freedom. In typical fashion Cupid has "subdued" the lover's "poor captived heart" and with usual Petrarchan cruelty "doest tyrannize in every weaker part." The lovers "lie languishing like thralls" in the chains of love (HL 136) and the poet sings his hymn in order to "ease" the "bitter smart" of his captivity. Hymne of Heavenly Love employs the same imagery but with an entirely different purpose: Christian love, in contrast, is freedom, not slavery:

But he our life hath left unto us free,
 Free that was thrall, and blessed that was band;
 Ne ought damaunds, but that we louing bee
 As he himselfe hath lou'd vs afore hand,
 And bound therto with an eternall band,
 Him first to loue, that us so dearely bought,
 And next, our brethren to his image wrought.
 (HHL 183-89)

In the Christian context, the "eternal band" is not, finally, the victorious tyrant's chain from which the lover struggles to escape; it is first the bond of sin (the meaning in line 184), but through Christ's sacrifice becomes the bond of love which unites God and man in eternal harmony (line 187).

Similarly, in the imagery of food and hunger desire in the first pair becomes fulfillment in the second pair. The conventional Petrarchan rhetorical conceit of the "contraries" is perhaps best expressed in a line from Drayton's Idea's Mirror: "Pyned with hunger, rising from a feast."⁹ The beautiful ladies or "faire blossoms" of Hymne of Love are cruel: "your lovers feeble eyes you feed / But serve their harts, that needeth nurture most" (HL 38-39). The young man elaborates on the Petrarchan conceit of the lover's low calorie diet: "He (the lover) thereon feeds his hungry fantasy, / Still full, yet never satisfied with it, / Like Tantale, that in store doth sterved ly" (197-200). In contrast, the conflict which reigns in the Petrarchan view of love is resolved in the Christian order where Christ, in the form of his body, provides eternally satisfying food in the Eucharist: "And last the food of life, which now we have, / Euen himselfe in his deare sacreament, / To feede our hungry

soules unto vs lent" (HHL 193-95). An Anglican reading these lines would quite likely recall the rubric from the prayer book: "He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life" (John 6:54). In the Christian context the meaning of the imagery is, paradoxically, diametrically opposed to the Petrarchan meaning. Cupid produces the eternal hunger of desire, symbolized by Tantalus; Christ's gift of his body and blood is eternally satisfying.

One of the most persistent uses of Petrarchan imagery and rhetoric revolves around the idea of love's "wound," as both the lover and Christ suffer pain and death (metaphorical and literal, respectively) at the hands of those they love. The "sharp empoisoned darts" from Cupid's bow "rest not till they have peirst the trembling harts of careful wretches" (HL 121-23). The wounds of the lover parallel the suffering of Christ on the cross:

O huge and most unspeakable impression
 Of love's deep wound, that pierced the piteous
 heart
 Of that dear Lord with so entire affection,
 And sharply launching every inner part,
 Dolours of death into his soul did dart,
 Doing him die that never it deserved,
 To free his foes, that from his hest had swerved.
 (HHL 155-61)

The rhetoric (and the alliteration) reinforce the irony of both the lover's and Christ's situation. In the earthly hymns, Cupid torments lovers, "making their pain thy play" (HL 135). And, paradoxically, Cupid wounds those who serve him: "Thou dost afflict as well the non deserver / As him that doth thy lovely hests despise" (HL 159-60). In the

same way, Spenser describes how sinful man killed the perfect man, "doing him die that never it deserved" (HHL 160). But the parallel between the two pairs is undercut by an ironic contrast (also emphasized by alliteration): the pains of Christ, unlike those of Cupid's victims, bring good to those who do not deserve it. Christ died "to free his foes that from his hests had swerved" (HHL 161).

The psychological effects of amor courtoise and Christian love are also paralleled and contrasted through imagery shared by secular and sacred literature. As we have seen, the penitent in Hymne of Heavenly Love sympathetically experiences the wounds of Christ: "Then let thy flinty heart . . . empeirced be with pitiful remorse / And let thy bowels bleede in every veine / At sight of that most sacred heavenly corse. / And let thy soul melt unto tears . . . and groan in grieved thought" (italics mine; HHL 246-52). Similarly, after the lovers in Hymne of Love have their hearts pierced, they "grieve and groan" at the sight of their ladies (HL 129). Yet the parallels in imagery serve not only to point out the similarities but to highlight the radical difference in the two modes of experience. The lover's existence is a kind of eternal death at which "tyrant love doest laugh and scorne." On the other hand, the penitent Christian grieves and groans in union with Christ, who shares his suffering and gives meaning to it in the final apotheosis which climaxes Hymne of Heavenly Love.

The imagery of fire is another instance where the same language ironically produces opposite effects. The flame of love which Cupid's poisoned darts ignite "sucks up the blood and drinketh up the life / Of careful wretches with consuming grief" (HL 125-26). These images of destruction and decay contrast sharply with the effects of meditating on Christ's grief. The devot experiences "sweet enragement of celestiall love / Kindled through sight of those fair things above" (HHL 286-87). Contemplation of Christ will "thy feeble breast / In flame with love, and set thee all on fire / With burning zeal through every part entire" (HHL 269-71). Both lover and devot are consumed with the flames of love, but in one case they are destructive, in the other purgatorial.

In a similar way the Petrarchan pose of the lover "dying" for his lady is contrasted with the attitude of the Christian contemplating heaven--or hell. Cupid wounds the lovers and then seeks "their dying to delay" (HL 138). When lovers glimpse the beauty of the lady "they deign to see and seeing it still die" (HL 133). The hyperbole is frighteningly apparent when we compare the finite pains of love to the infinite pains of hell as described in Hymne of Heavenly Love: "Where man forever should in bonds remain / Of never dead yet ever dying pain" (HHL 126). One expects a typical Petrarchan lover to be on the verge of death as the result of being spurned, and the young lover is indeed near death at the end of Hymne of Beautie. He asks for his lady's grace

"that can restore a damned wight from death." However, the metaphorical death of the unrequited lover looks trivial when one reads a few lines into Hymne of Heavenly Love and compares the lover's suffering to the eternal death of those who are quite literally damned. Furthermore, whatever salvific qualities Venus has pale in comparison to Christ's death and resurrection, which the Christian hopes will truly restore him from death, literally, not metaphorically.

At times the parallels between hymns are so close that a line in the first pair is almost identical to one in the second pair. For example, the two hymns to beauty express the same attitude toward the relationship between beauty and goodness--almost in the same words. "For all that faire is, is by nature good" (HB 134). "For all that's good, is beautiful and faire." (HHB 133) Yet, although the words are the same, Spenser is in fact translating a Neoplatonic into a correlative--but radically different--Christian concept. In Hymne of Beautie the equation simply proves that a beautiful woman is well bred. In proper fin amor fashion the lover continues, "It is a sign to know the gentle blood." And even this "sign" is often misleading since "oft it falls that many a gentle mind / Dwells in deformed tabernacle drowned." However, in the heavenly hymn, the context dramatically shifts from the beauty of a single woman to the whole "book of the creatures":

The meanes therefore which unto us is lent,
 Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
 Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
 And in the same, as in a brazen booke,
 To reade enregistered in every nooke
 His goodnesse, which his beauty doth declare,
 For all that's good, is beautiful and faire.
 (HHB 127-33)

The equation now proves God's goodness; the universe is so beautiful that one must conclude that its creator must be good. The verbal parallel reinforces the sense that the heavenly hymns do not contradict the earthly ones, but rather include them in a much wider context. The physical beauty of the lady, like the beauty of the created universe, reflects the goodness of its spiritual source. For the lady that source is, according to the Neoplatonists, the perfect form of beauty, while the source of the beauty of the creation is, in the Christian tradition, God himself.

Even the contemptus mundi passages which conclude the heavenly hymns are foreshadowed in the fixation of the lover on the beloved to the exclusion of everything else. Like the devot meditating on the heavenly light, the lovers see "no light but that, whose lamp doth yet remaine / Fresh burning in the image of their eye" (HL 131-33). The lover's mind is "affixed wholly" on the beloved: "Ne thinks on ought but how it to attain / His care, his joy, his hope is all on this / That seems in it all blisses to contain / In sight whereof all other blisse seemes vaine" (203-07). The love of God also claims man's whole attention, as in the devot's enraptured contemplation of heaven: "All other loves, with which

the world doth blind / Weak fancies and stirre up affections
 base / Thou must renounce" (HHL 262-64). For those who have
 had a glimpse of Sapience, "Their joy, their comfort, their
 desire, their gain / Is fixed all on that which now they see,
 / All other sights but fayned shadows bee" (HHB 271-73). The
 imagery sets up a kind of hierarchical relationship between
 the two experiences. For the earthly lover no pleasure can
 compare with the pleasure of seeing his lady; for the Chris-
 tian even the love of a lady cannot compare with the sight of
 God's beauty.

That Spenser chose to incorporate so much of the imagery
 and rhetoric of Petrarchan love poetry into devotional verse
 indicates how important it was to him to show the interde-
 pendence of the two modes of experience. Much of Spenser's
 poetry is concerned with the ways Christian charity justifies
 and ennobles human love when that love is guided by faith
 and reason. For example, in the Easter sonnet in Amoretti
 Christ shows love to man in his death and resurrection and
 becomes a model for the lovers to imitate: "So let us love,
 dear love, like as we ought, / Love is the lesson which the
 Lord us taught" (Amor 54, 113-14). As Ellrodt says of the
 sonnet, "Christ's redeeming love has not only justified sin-
 ners, it justifies human love."¹⁰ In Fowre Hymnes Spenser
 develops the same relation in a far more thoroughgoing way,
 incorporating the whole range of rhetorical devices offered
 by secular verse and Neoplatonic love lore. In the parallels

and contrasts we have noted human love is never denigrated, for to love a woman, Spenser implies, is something like loving God, and good for that reason if for no other. The fact that loving a woman is only like loving God is not sufficient reason to condemn it--unless of course one never sees the difference, and in the heavenly hymns Spenser's persona clearly does.

It is interesting to note that in 1590 the Jesuit Southwell, who later made Christian parodies of Petrarchan sonnets, explained the relation between human and divine love in a way Spenser might well have found congenial:

So there is nothing now more needful to bee
intreated, then how to direct these humors into
their due courses and to draw this flood of affec-
tions into the right channel. Passions I allow,
and loves I approve, only I would wish that men
would alter their object and better their intent.
For passions being sequels of our nature and
allotted to us as handmaids of reason, there can
be no doubt but as their author is godly, so their
use tempered in the meane implieth no offence.
Love is but the infancie of true charitie, yet
sucking nature's teat, and swathed in her bandes,
which then groweth to perfection, when faith
besides natural motives proposeth higher and
nobler grounds of amitye.¹¹

In Fowre Hymnes we see the same growth from virtuous human love, guided as much as possible by reason, to Christian charity based on faith. One might compare the Prohem of Book Four where Spenser answers those "rugged foreheads" who condemn love poetry:

Such ones ill judge of love that cannot love,
Ne in their frosen hearts feelee kindly flame;

For thy they ought not thing unknown reprove,
 Ne natural affection faultless blame,
 For fault of few that have abused the same,
 For it of honor and all virtue is
 The roote, and brings forth glorious flowers of
 fame,
 That crown true lovers with immortal bliss,
 The mead of them that love and do not live amiss.
 (10-18)

That love can be abused does not constitute grounds for condemning it, for love can also be ennobling, as the earthly hymns illustrate. And after all, it is earthly love that provides souls for heaven, as the young lover points out in Hymne of Love. Beasts, he says, only seek to quench the flames of lust without thinking of the future, "but man, that breathes a more immortal mind, / Not for lust's sake, but for eternitie, / Seeks to enlarge his lasting progeny" (HL 103-05). It should not surprise us that in Fowre Hymnes Spenser takes the same delight in human love and physical beauty as he does in his other poems. What is surprising about Fowre Hymnes is the skill--one might almost say daring--with which Spenser translates the language of secular love poetry into the language of religious devotion. The potential "contrarie dislikes" of secular and sacred art are "tempered," mediated through language to form a harmonious pattern that imitates the harmony Spenser's age found in the macrocosm.

The parallels and contrasts in imagery we have just examined are subsumed in the dominant image pattern in the poem, an imagery of ascent and descent that links the earthly and the heavenly orders. The tendency in Hymne of Love is

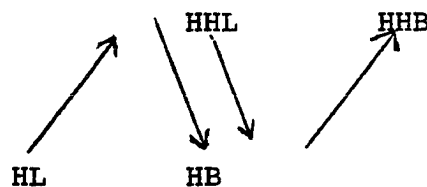
upward. As Cupid rears his head and flies up, lifted aloft, the lover moves steadily upward toward a vision of Cupid's paradise, leaving "dunghill thoughts . . . which like a mouldwarp in the earth doth lie." Cupid's element is fire, which rises "out of the lowly dust / On golden plumes up to the purest sky." In contrast, the overall movement of the parallel hymn to love is downward. Christ begins in heaven with the "triunal triplicities" and moves downward to earth where he continues in metaphorical descent until he is the least of men, "twixt two robbers crucified." Christ "down descended like a most demiss / and abject thrall" (HHL 136-37). Whenever there is an image of vertical movement, the motion is downward. The angels fall into "deepest hell" and man "fell from the hope of promised heavenly place."

As we might expect from the poem's symmetrical structure, in the hymns to beauty the directions are reversed; in contrast to the upward motion of Hymne of Love, the imagery of Hymne of Beautie tends to point downward. Hymne of Beautie begins in the Platonic realm of pure form where the demi-urge or "workmaster" has set the "perfect mould" of beauty and moves toward the speaker's own lady, "my dear dread," on earth. The movement is downward, from the general "wondrous pattern," through an analysis of the forms that pattern takes on earth, to an encounter with a specific lady whom the lover addresses directly for the first time at the end of the poem (l. 281). The imagery which conveys the descent conforms to

the traditional astrological character of Venus; her element, water, by its nature moves downward. She "pours" her "life-ful spirits," her influence "flows" and "streames" from heaven to earth; and at last the young man's lady, upon reading the poem, will "let fall one drop of due relief / That may recure my heart's long pining grief."

In Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, in contrast, there is a pattern of ascent from earth to heaven in a measured survey of the universe "beginning then below": "first the earth," then the sea (water), "then th' air" and finally the fires of heaven with their "captain's flaming head." The elements "by degrees arise," and the careful parallelism in the rhetoric conveys this steady motion: "Aire more than water, fire much more than ayer, / And heauen than fire appears more pure and fayre." In meditation the devot continues to "mount up aloft through heavenly contemplation" through the emperyan to "the footstool of his majesty" where he contemplates Sapience, the quintessence of beauty, in God's bosom. Finally there is a plea to "look at last up to that sovereign light / From whose pure beams all sovereign beauty springs."

The spatial structure of the hymns as a whole might be diagrammed in this way:



As the diagram indicates there are not only contrasts in

vertical motion, as we have just seen (Hymne of Love vs. Hymne of Heavenly Love; Hymne of Beautie vs. Hymne of Heavenly Beautie), but also parallels. Both Hymne of Love and Hymne of Heavenly Beautie ascend; both Hymne of Beautie and Hymne of Heavenly Love descend. The two hymns which move downward each end with an image of death, but death which promises new life. As we noted earlier, the death in Hymne of Beautie is metaphorical, the result of the hardness of the lady:

When your faire eyes these fearful lines shall read,
 Deigne to let fall one drop of dew releif,
 That may recur my hearts long pynning griefe,
 And shew what wondrous powre your beauty hath,
 That can restore a damned wight from death.
 (HB 281-87)

The new life he hopes for is, of course, some sign of his lady's compassion, some reciprocation for his love, symbolized by the falling tear. In Hymne of Heavenly Love, the parallel downward motion ends with Christ's crucifixion and death (239-45). The penitent speaker then looks up to heavenly light in preparation for his ascent toward God in Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, a kind of symbolic resurrection.

In contrast, the hymns with an imagery of upward motion each end in a vision of the kind of heaven for which the speaker longs. In the first hymn the young man describes the traditional paradise of lovers, rendered in sensual imagery reminiscent of medieval versions of the locus amoenus and fittingly populated by classical deities, Venus, Hercules,

and Hebe. The young lover ends the hymns with a plea that he might enter this paradise. Similarly, the upward motion of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie ends with a lengthy description of the Christian heaven with God enthroned and Sapience in his bosom. As with the first hymn, the last stanzas of this final hymn are a plea for rest in the heavenly vision.

On a purely structural level these parallels and contrasts in the imagery of ascent and descent serve to unify the hymns by revealing harmony within opposition, the discordia concors which undergirds the poem. What other significance might Spenser have intended in this imagery? In the case of the earthly hymns, one is tempted to conclude that Spenser merely had the cosmological tendencies of the elements in mind: Cupid as fire ascends, Venus as water descends. However, it is possible to see in the motion of ascent followed by descent an expression of the limitations of a purely earthly understanding of love and beauty. On a personal level the movement reflects the mounting aspirations of the young lover and the disappointment which follows the continuing refusal of the lady to grant his suit. The young man's confidence reaches a kind of peak at the end of the first hymn as he promises "thy triumphant name to raise / Above all the gods," if Cupid will only grant his suit. Hymne of Beautie ends on a much less hopeful note. The lover pictures himself as a chained captive in Venus' triumphal procession, begging his lady above to "let fall one drop of

dew relieve." Apparently his desire finds no fulfillment as there is no indication in the poem that the lady's heart becomes less "enmarbled."

Moreover, the young man's lack of success is not merely personal: it is typical of the whole tradition of love poetry that Spenser is working in. In the literature of courtly love, especially that modelled on Petrarch, the lover's hopes for an earthly union are inevitably crushed, either by the death of the beloved (as in Rima Sparsa and Vita Nuova) or by the lady's persistent refusals (as in Rima Petrosi and Astrophel and Stella, to name only two). The one notable exception is Amoretti, where Spenser puts sexual love in an entirely new context by introducing marriage and thereby changing the rules of the game. Thus, the rise and fall of the young lover in the earthly hymns is yet another illustration of the limitations of the conventional approach to love which secular court poetry espoused. The failures of the young man are in a sense the failures of Elizabethan love poetry, for the young man pins his hopes of influencing the young lady on the conventions and rhetorical strategies of that poetry.

When Spenser goes beyond the usual kind of love poem, as he does in Fowre Hymnes by adding the two specifically religious hymns, or in the Amoretti by adding a poem praising Christian marriage, he follows exactly the prescription Sidney and others gave for overcoming the ills which they thought

had befallen secular love poetry. In the Defence Sidney bemoaned the limitations of current love poetry and then proposed the very thing Spenser later did:

Other sorts of poetry almost have we none, but that Lyricall kind of songs and sonnets: which, Lord, if he gave us so good mindes, how well it might be employed, and with howe heavenly fruite, both private and publique, in singing the prayeses of the immortal beauty, the immortall goodnes of that God who gyueth us hands to write and wits to conceive: of which we might well want words, but never matter; of which we could turne our eies to nothing, but we should euer have new budding occasions.¹²

Spenser found in religious experience new "matter" with which to increase the range of poetry, just as Sidney suggested new poets would. In Fowre Hymnes he quite specifically turns from the conventions of lyrical praise of the lady to "singing the praises of the immortal beauty, the immortal goodness of God." His speaker is thus able to ascend to a new vision after falling into the throes of unrequited love.

In the heavenly hymns the downward motion of Hymne of Heavenly Love followed by the upward movement of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie reflects the spatial imagery of traditional Christian theology. In the incarnation Christ descends out of heaven's glory to earth where he becomes the humblest of men. In his death "twixt robbers crucified" he is the lowest of all men, and yet it is his death which provides the means for mankind to overcome death and rise from earth to heaven. The meditation on Christ in the third hymn,

culminating in contemplation of his death, prepares the way for the speaker's ascent through the creatures to the creator, in proper Pauline fashion.¹³ Spenser had to look no further than his New Testament to find the same spatial imagery applied to theology: "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:8, see also Phillipians 2:8-11, Colossians 2:12 and c.f. HHL 134-40). Thus, the contrasting movements of the heavenly hymns reflect this fundamental pattern of Christian thought: one must follow Christ's example and be humbled in order to be exalted, one must participate in Christ's death in order to be resurrected with him.

NOTES

¹This analysis is indebted to William Nelson, who first suggested that the hymns are structured as a series of parallels and contrasts. See The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, pp. 99 ff.

²C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 135.

³Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 232.

⁴Boccaccio on Poetry, tr. Charles G. Osgood (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), pp. xxxii to xxxv are an excellent discussion of Boccaccio's defence of the role of classical thought in Christian culture.

⁵Tillyard, p. 45.

⁶Quoted in Prescott, French Poets, p. 174.

⁷Peterson, pp. 175-76.

⁸Quoted in Alfred W. Slatterwaite's Spenser, Rensard, and DuBellay: A Renaissance Comparison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 204.

⁹Michael Drayton, Complete Works, ed. J. William Hebel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1925), v. I, p. 123.

¹⁰Ellrodt, p. 147.

¹¹Quoted in Peterson, p. 174.

¹²Sidney, Prose Works, p. 41.

¹³See Romans 1:20.

CHAPTER IV

AESTHETICS

Renaissance aesthetic theories, unlike some modern formalist theories, almost always assume a relation between poetry and the life of man, not only his life in society, but also his inner life as a spiritual being. A poem is rarely thought of as having an autonomous existence, but rather a poem both reflects reality (rational or spiritual, as well as physical) and affects reality (the life of man in society and eternity). In that central statement of Renaissance poetics in England, The Defence of Poesie (published the year before Fowre Hymnes), Sidney defines poetry in terms of both the Aristotelian mimetic theory and the Horatian affective theory. "Poetry is therefore an art of imitation . . . with this end, to teach and delight."¹

I begin this chapter with the assumption that Spenser subscribed, on some level, to these theories of the relation between poetry and reality, poetry and life, and that they helped to shape the structure of Fowre Hymnes. I believe we shall find that applying the commonplaces of Renaissance critical theory to this thoroughly Renaissance poem will yield some insights into the way aesthetic theories found significant aesthetic form in the poetic practice of the age.

As we might expect of an Elizabethan poem, the hymns quite clearly have a mimetic function and a didactic function, and these operate simultaneously to shape the underlying structure of the poem. First I shall examine the mimetic function in relation to the hymns, then the didactic function, and finally I will consider some broader but related issues: the theme of the limitations of poetry and language, and the theme of hope, as they relate to Spenser's aesthetic.

The first question, then, is, what does the poem imitate? Sidney says that poets "to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be, but range only reigned with learned discretion into the divine consideration of what may be and should be" (p. 8). What "is," Sidney says earlier, is "brazen," but the poet's "Idea or fore-conceit of the work" is "golden." For Sidney "imitation" means that a poem illustrates a universal concept through language. For example, Book I of the Faerie Queene illustrates or "imitates" the universal concept of holiness and the archetypical process by which man attains it. I suggest that in Fowre Hymnes Spenser is imitating two distinct but wholly interrelated conceptions of man, one in each pair of hymns. In the earthly hymns he imitates man in the order of nature, in the heavenly hymns man in the order of grace.

In two highly influential articles, A. S. P. Wodehouse explains these concepts as a dominant intellectual frame of reference for Renaissance man, and shows how the works of

both Spenser and Milton are illuminated by them. Many critics have disagreed with Wodehouse's conclusions, but none has questioned his basic assumptions about the importance of the two orders in Renaissance thought. Since the terms reveal a great deal about the relationship between the two pairs of hymns, I will quote at length Wodehouse's explanation:

There are in the life of man, and in the vast array of circumstances which form the setting of the human drama, two levels or, better perhaps, two orders of existence, the natural and the religious, or what we may call the order of nature and the order of grace. To the religious mind, of course, each is dependent on the power and providence of God, but in a manner sufficiently different to warrant the restriction of the term religious (which means Christian) to one order only.

To the order of nature belongs not only the whole physical world, but also man himself considered simply as a denizen of that world. The rule of its government is expressed not only in the physical laws of nature, but in natural ethics, (in what is significantly called the Law of Nature), and even in natural, as opposed to revealed, religion. This order is apprehended in experience and interpreted by reason: and it has its own wisdom, for upon the simple law of nature, by experience and reason, is erected the ethical system of a Plato, an Aristotle, or a Cicero. . . .

To the order of grace belongs man in his character of supernatural being, with all that concerns his salvation and the two dispensations, the old and the new. The rule of its government is the revealed Law of God, received and interpreted by faith, which includes a special kind of experience, called religious experience.²

We can begin to see the general relation of the earthly hymns to the order of nature and the heavenly hymns to the order of grace if we recall the analysis in chapter two of

the change in the persona. The basic concerns of the persona in the first two hymns are those of the order of nature. The questions raised are ethical (how should men and women behave in a love relationship?) or psychological (what is the effect of love and beauty on human beings in the natural order?). And the answers to these questions lie with the pagan philosophers, in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy and psychology. In the earthly hymns, as in the order of nature, to obey Natural Law, to act as a rational being in society ought, is the highest aim, the key to enjoying a happy life. In this context "heaven" consists of getting the girl by virtuous means. One does what is natural for a young courtier. Cupid and Venus, gods of "natural" as opposed to "revealed" religion, hold sway here, as we noted in chapter three. And experience and reason are the only sources of truth to which Spenser's persona appeals. Conversely, the heavenly hymns threat that other kind of experience, the religious experience. Their figures are drawn from Biblical revelation, one from the old testament, one from the new. Theology, not philosophy, holds sway here, and the poet's goal is overtly supernatural, union with God in the Christian heaven, not union with the lady in an earthly paradise.

The two orders, as the objects of limitation, the "Idea or fore-conceit" in Sidney's words, serve the same function in Fowre Hymnes that Aristotle's "twelve moral virtues" serve in the Faerie Queene. The virtues are the conceptual

skeleton which is fleshed out with the images, the six knights and Arthur, who is a composite of the virtues of the others. Sidney calls this process "figuring forth." In the earthly hymns, for example, Spenser "figures forth" a man, his speaker, operating in the limited order of nature, where everything the speaker attempts is proper and decorous in that order, as we saw in chapter two. In the order of nature, Wodehouse says, man can rise to the level of the fully human through the proper exercise of his reason in society, or descend to the level of a beast. Spenser's young lover, as a man in the order of nature, could ignore what is noble, rational, and fully human in himself and, like the beasts, "seeke onely, without further care,/To quench the flame which they in burning find" (HL 101-02) and "like a moldwarpe lie" in "loathly sinful lust" (HL 179 and 183). But instead he attempts to lift himself up to truly noble human love through the practice of moral virtue, in accordance with the natural law discovered through experience and taught by the ancient philosophers. In the universe of the heavenly hymns, the action is played out on a cosmic and religious rather than a social and ethical plane. Faith as well as reason is required to achieve the eternal end which is set, an end far beyond the love of an earthly woman. Here Spenser "figures forth" a man, his Christian speaker, in the much wider order of grace. Here man can ascend to the highest heaven through clearly supernatural means, but he can also

fall to hell, a place whose tortures, as we noted in the last chapter, are incomparably worse than the pains of jealousy, unrequited love, or fiery sexual desire, no matter how bestial.³ Revelation is the only sure guide here: the speaker is attempting to go beyond any previous experience where reason might be depended upon.

This, then, is the mimetic function of Fowre Hymnes: to imitate a central concept of Elizabethan culture, the relation between the order of nature and the order of grace. And in this regard Spenser's use of the persona becomes crucial, for a poem, according to Sidney, is not philosophy (a set of precepts to be learned) but rather a "speaking picture" of an idea, precepts given flesh. As Sidney puts it, the "many infallible grounds of wisdom" of the philosopher "lie dark before the imaginative and judging power if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy" (p. 14). It might be objected that the hymns are merely versified Neoplatonic philosophy or Tudor theology, and indeed some critics have treated them as if they were this and nothing more. But because Spenser, as a poet, "figures forth" in his speaker the philosophical and theological precepts they can not simply be taken as lessons from a text ("pedanteria"); rather we are encouraged to see each statement of the speaker in light of his experience, in the context of his capacities and limitations as a man and a poet, and his successes and failures on the intellectual and

spiritual journey. Spenser gives us knights in action to "figure forth" the twelve moral virtues in the Faerie Queene; in Fowre Hymnes he gives us a poet in love to "figure forth" the two orders of man's existence. Thus, though the two poems differ radically, epic versus hymn, narrative versus a lyric voice, the same essential Renaissance aesthetic principle of mimesis governs them both: the poet "imitates" some "Idea or fore-conceit," "figured forth" in a "speaking picture" of a man. Whether that man is a knight, a shepherd, or the devout lover of Fowre Hymnes, the mimetic function is consistent in Spenser's work.

In Renaissance critical theory it is a logical step from the mimetic to the didactic function, for imitation is not generally thought of as valuable in itself, but rather as a means to the true end of poetry: learning. The poet presents examples of virtue which first delight the reader, but then, more importantly, teach him virtue and arouse in him a desire to attain it. Sidney's famous example of the process is Xenophon's romanticized portrait of the virtues of a ruler in the Cyropaedia (an example which Spenser also uses in the letter to Raleigh to illustrate the way poetry teaches). Sidney claims the poet is not merely day-dreaming when he describes things not as they are but as his imagination idealizes them; rather, the poet is attempting to affect the real world in profound ways by encouraging young readers to imitate virtuous models (and flee from evil ones):

[The imaginative "Idea or foreconceit"] is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air, but so far substantially it worketh, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they [readers] will learn aright why and how that maker [the poet] made him. (p. 8)

Sidney assumes that young men will become like Cyrus if they imitate the larger than life portrait of a virtuous ruler which Xenophon presents. In this way the poet can "make many Cyruses"--if the readers learn properly.

When Sidney explains the most famous locus classicus of the didactic theory, the Horatian dictum to "delight and instruct," the emphasis is clearly on the teaching, conceived of primarily in ethical terms:

For these ["right poets"] indeed do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand which without delight they would fly as from a stranger, and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved. . . . (p. 10)

In this same vein he argues later that poetry is a superior method of educating youth in virtue, a better method, in fact, than philosophy (which gives only dull precepts) or history (which gives only dry factual examples stripped of their ethical meaning and imaginative force). A poem, then, is valuable to the extent that it affects its readers and, through them, man's future in both temporal society and the eternal economy.⁴

Significantly, the dedication to Fowre Hymnes begins with precisely these same concerns: the didactic function, the effect of poetry upon youth:

Having in the greener times of my youth composed these former two hymns in the praise of love and beauty, and finding that the same too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which, being too vehemently carried with that kind of affection, do rather suck out poison to their strong passion than honey to their honest delight, I was moved by the one of you two most excellent ladies to call in the same.

The metaphor of poison and honey is common in contemporary discussions of poetry's moral effects. For example, Sir John Harrington prefaces his translation of one of Ariosto's more ribald passages with this: "I must confess these be two knavish tales that be here in this booke, and yet the bee will pyke out the honey of the worst of them."⁵ Both Spenser and Harrington are alluding to the belief that the wise bee could extract honey even from the flowers of poisonous plants, an apt metaphor for the process by which a reader can learn virtue from poems which present imperfect or even immoral characters or actions. It seems clear from the dedication that Spenser hopes young readers will be edified by his poetry, that they will learn something for their "honest delight"; otherwise he would not have "reformed" his youthful hymns. The question is, what does Spenser hope to teach through imitating the two orders of experience, and how does he form (or perhaps "reform") his poem to accomplish this didactic end?

The first two hymns teach a conventional humanist version of what is proper to man in the order of nature, specifically, how, on a purely and fully human level, man can pursue two real goods, love and beauty. These hymns are firmly grounded on the Platonic assumption, most fully developed by the stilnovisti poets and the Neoplatonist philosophers who followed them, that the love of a woman is ennobling--provided that love is virtuous.⁶ According to the popular courtly tradition, a beautiful woman has within her an essential goodness: "For all that faire is, is by nature good" (HB 139); and to desire that beauty (to love a beautiful woman) is to want that goodness for one's self. Thus, to love properly is to grow in virtue, to become more noble and less bestial.

The long courtly love tradition (beginning with the twelfth century troubadours, continuing through the stilnovisti, Ficino, and his popularizers in the conduct books, to Spenser) retained this fundamentally ethical rationale, despite the adulterous practices, often condemned by the church, that courtly love seems to have spawned.⁷ Spenser, more than most exponents of love doctrine, constantly reminds us that human love, properly seen, is a refining force that raises man above the animal level. "Such is the power of that sweet passion," he says of love, "that it all sorrid baseness doth expel" (HL 190). Love raises the mind (HL 178-83), thus demonstrating its moral worth. It is essentially good, but

like any good in the order of nature it depends on good use and can therefore be perverted.⁸ Spenser recognizes the limitations of the order of nature and provides numerous warnings against the misuse of love. Both the praise of love and beauty and the warnings against its misuse are designed to teach young men and women to desire these good things and to seek them in a decorous, noble way, both through following the good example of the young lover and, I suspect, learning to avoid his mistakes (which we examined in chapter two). In this regard the "end" of the earthly hymns is not very different from the "general end" which Spenser set for the Faerie Queene in the letter to Raleigh: "To fashion a gentleman in virtuous and noble discipline." But while the epic deals with several virtues, religious, political, and so on, the earthly hymns concentrate on love, that most intimate of human relationships and the one with the most important tradition of lyric verse behind it.

The didactic function of the earthly hymns can perhaps best be seen in their affinity with another far more popular form of Renaissance literature, the conduct book. These books were a kind of "how to" manual expressly designed to teach the theory (Neoplatonic philosophy) and practice (courtly manners) of love to young aristocrats. The most popular one in England, Hoby's translation of the Courtier, might well have provided Spenser with many of the conventional ideas about love he expresses in the earthly hymns: the soul

beautifying the body (134-140); the dominance of spirit over matter (43-54); the problem of the beautiful, virtuous soul in an ugly body (246-52); and the sensual ravishment of the lover (246-52), to name only a few parallels.⁹ But even if Spenser took these conventional ideas from others of the many contemporary sources--or directly from Ficino or even Plato--the context in which the ideas are presented is essentially that of the conduct books: a young aristocrat, desperately in love, learns how to court his lady in the proper--the noble--way.

The difference is that in the Courtier and the other conduct books there are at least two speakers, an adept and an initiate, who carry on a dialogue, but in Fowre Hymnes the one giving the advice on love and beauty is himself learning these lessons through bitter experience. In this respect Spenser's young lover illustrates Sidney's point that poetry teaches both by precept (like the philosopher) and example (like the historian). The young man is full of weighty precepts about love and beauty, at times sounding for all the world like a moralist ("For things hard gotten men more early deem", HL 168) or even a worried father ("Let not your beames with such disparagements / Be dimd . . . Loathe that foule blot, that hellish firebrand, / Disloyal lust" HB 164-70). Yet the young lover himself is an example of the effects of love and beauty, and holds himself up to the reader as such. After describing love's cruelties he sighs to Cupid, "So hast

thou often done--ay me the more-- / To me thy vasal" (HL 141). Moreover, we remember the earthly hymns end with his personal plea for relief from the torment he has earlier so meticulously analyzed. In this respect, Spenser teaches the love that is proper to the order of nature in precisely the way Sidney argues the "peerless poet" should. "For whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he [the poet] givieth a perfect picture of it [the precept] in someone by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example" (p. 14). And if there is disparity between "whatsoever the philosopher sayeth should be done" and what the "particular example" (the young lover) does, between the ideal of happy, fulfilling sexual love and the reality of a young man's frustrated attempts to find that ideal, perhaps it is because Spenser is reminding us that the order of nature, though essentially good, is imperfect and distinct from the order of grace. And by pointing up the distance between the speaker's ideal of love and beauty and his actual experience of it, Spenser is preparing the way for the heavenly hymns. In order to teach the highest virtue one must imitate not only the order of nature but the order of grace, since in Spenser's world view the perfection of nature depends ultimately upon the intervention of grace.

What then does Spenser teach in the heavenly hymns? As we might expect, he teaches what is proper to man in the order of grace, to man experiencing divine love and beauty.

Once again the speaker hopes to elevate man through the poem, not merely from an animal level to a fully human level, but to the spiritual level of the order of grace, where man is not merely a rational animal but a divine being, made in the image of God. The invocation to Hymne of Heavenly Beautie states the poet's didactic intention:

Vouchsafe then, O thou most almightie Spright,
From whom all gifts of wit and knowledge flow,
To shed into my breast some sparkling light
Of thyne eternal Truth, that I may show
Some little beames to mortall eyes below,
Of that immortall beautie, there with thee,
Which in my weake distraughted mynd I see.

That with the glorie of so goodly sight,
The hearts of men, which fondly here admyre
Faire seeming shewes, and feed on vaine delight,
Transported with celestiall desyre
Of those faire formes, may lift themselves up hyer,
And learne to love with zealous humble dewty
Th'eternall fountaine of that heavenly beauty.
(HHB 8-21)

Sidney says the greatest kind of poems were "they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God," specifically mentioning hymns as examples (p. 9). And in the heavenly hymns Spenser does precisely this, with the expressly didactic intention of increasing his reader's love and devotion to God. The poet hopes to affect men spiritually through his verse, to teach his readers to desire that which he imitates: the love and beauty of God.

But how may a poet imitate spiritual things, or teach man the love of God? Spenser uses the two traditional forms through which God was thought to reveal his grace to man:

the Word (the biblical revelation) and the Book of the Creatures (the visible creation). Hymne of Heavenly Love is essentially a summary of the biblical account of the life of Christ. By representing Christ--spiritual perfection in human form, God made man--the poet hopes to teach his readers to follow Christ's example, and therefore realize their existence as spiritual, not merely ethical, beings. Towards the end of Hymne of Heavenly Love the speaker states this intention succinctly when he enjoins his readers to meditate upon Christ's life in order to "learn to love that loved thee so dear, / And in thy breast his blessed image bear" (258-59). Of course the tradition of the "imitation of Christ" is an extremely old method of encouraging devotion, but in Hymne of Heavenly Love this tradition neatly fuses with Renaissance aesthetic theory. In a Christian society the poet's task of holding up virtuous models of imitation to instruct men is nowhere more thoroughly accomplished than when the model to be imitated is the God/Man and the virtue taught is holiness.

The second source of revelation, the Book of the Creatures, also teaches man his obligations in the order of grace. In Hymne of Heavenly Beautie the poet imitates the beauties of the physical world to teach religious devotion, rising through the ladder of being, describing each rung. His didactic method is in the time-honored tradition of the speculum creatorum: God's beauty is mirrored in the beauty of His creation, so by meditating on this visible and limited beauty,

man can by degrees rise to an understanding of God's invisible and eternal beauty.¹⁰ The created universe is, in the ancient metaphor, a book which teaches man the goodness of God. The speaker states the convention succinctly at 128:

The means, therefore, which unto us is lent
Him to behold, is on his works to look,
Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
And in the same, as in a brazen book,
To read enregistered in every nook
His goodness, which his beauty doth declare.

The structure of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie "figures forth" the process by which man is "elevated" spiritually by learning divine lessons from nature's book. As the speaker contemplates the visible and imperfect forms of beauty and then those which are invisible and perfect, he attains greater and greater spiritual insight. Like Dante in the Paradise, Spenser's devot can see more and more clearly as he ascends through the heavens. The readers follow and are also, he hopes, "transported with celestiall desire," and taught "to love with zealous humble dewty" through the medium of poetry. Thus, the imitation of the "inconceivable excellencies of God," which Sidney says is the function of the "divine poem," accomplishes in Fowre Hymnes an essentially didactic purpose, going beyond ordinary moral teaching to the final end of man in the Christian scheme, his union with God.

The didactic aim of the heavenly hymns again reminds us of their affinity with the devotional manuals, a connection which we developed in a different context in chapter two.

Just as the conduct books provided instruction on how to conduct one's self on the highest level of the order of nature, aristocratic society, the devotional manuals teach man how to rise to the highest spiritual level possible in the order of grace. Father Collins has convincingly demonstrated that Spenser's heavenly hymns follow the two techniques of meditation recommended in the devotional manuals popular in Spenser's day: meditation on Christ's life, and the orderly contemplation of physical nature, what Collins terms Christocentric and Theocentric meditation, respectively.¹¹ That Spenser used these methods in his hymns indicates a similarity of purpose: the spiritual growth of the reader. The "reformed" earthly hymns lead to moral edification, the heavenly hymns to spiritual. The teaching of all truth, secular and sacred, "naturall" and "celestiall," is the business of the poet.

We see again the unity of the two pairs, this time from the aesthetic point of view. Spenser imitates both orders of experience in one poem, both nature and grace, because he subscribed to the Christian humanist view of the relationship between the two. Wodehouse draws a distinction between two types of Renaissance thinkers on the basis of their view of the relation between the two orders. One group "insists on the sharp contrast and wide divergence between the two orders." Among these are the radical Protestant and the rigorous ascetic for whom everything natural is evil, and the Baconian scientist for whom experience is neatly divided into two

compartments, the empirical and the religious. Wodehouse describes the other group in this way:

Opposed to them were all those thinkers who, with many different shades of emphasis and inference agreed in responding to the profound human instinct for a unified view of life. They insisted that the order of grace was the superstructure whose foundations were securely laid in nature; that there was no interval between the two orders; that grace came to perfect nature, an idea including discipline and a miraculous remedy for man's fall; that well-being must be defined in terms of the two orders simultaneously, and that what was for man's good as a natural being could not be to his detriment as a supernatural, or vice versa.¹²

If a poet perceives a fundamental unity in the two orders of experience, then a poem which aims to teach the most important truths cannot ignore either source of wisdom: philosophy or theology, the classics or scripture. By including both orders in the hymns, Spenser is on one level showing that characteristically Renaissance passion for copi, the desire to get everything in. But on a deeper level he is attempting to hold up a model of unified thought, a vision of man in which loving another person and loving God are both seen as worthy ends toward which the young should strive. In this way Spenser does not need to deny any kind of experience--even the erotic--as a fit subject for poetry (as some Puritans did), for all experience could yield truth to the inquiring mind, to those able to find "honey to their honest delight."

From these considerations we can see that Spenser, like Sidney, had a very exalted view of poetry and the poet.

Sidney says the goal of all learning is "to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of" (p. 11). And since poetry is the greatest teacher, of all forms of learning it has the greatest potential for elevating man. Spenser's persona in Hymne of Heavenly Beautie prays that his poem will teach men to love God, yet he also expresses doubt as to whether such an exalted view of poetry is warranted. Can the poet in fact move men to know and love God? How high may "our degenerate souls" be drawn by poetry? In other words, what are the limitations of poetry and the poet in a fallen world?

Through his speaker in Fowre Hymnes, Spenser seems to be saying that there are limits to poetry, because, in a fallen world, man's knowledge is limited. Since God is by his very nature ineffable, beyond the reach of language, the goal of devotional poetry (to "imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God") can never be realized, for one cannot imitate what one cannot know. The fact of God's transcendence thus poses what seems to be an insurmountable problem for devotional poetry.

This problem is first broached in the invocation to Hymne to Beautie:

I meane to sing the praises of thy name. . . .
 Only I feare my wits enfeeble late . . .
 Should faint, and words should faile me to relate
 The wondrous triumphs of thy great godhead.
 (10-18)

At this early stage, the protest must be taken as mere conventional humility, what Curtius calls the rhetorical topos of affected modesty (p. 83). As a humble slave of Cupid, the poet protests that he is not worthy to praise so great a lord--and then proceeds to do so. But as the Petrarchan conventions give way to the devotional tones of the heavenly hymns, the weightier matter gives new urgency to the theme: "(The Father's) kingdom's throne no thought of earthly wight / Can comprehend, much less my trembling verse / With equal words can hope it to rehearse" (HHL 40-43). Job-like, the Christian has realized the full "otherness" of God: he cannot comprehend, much less express divinity. The topos of affected modesty becomes the topos of true ineffability, what Curtius calls "the emphasis on inability to cope with the subject" (p. 103). As we noted in chapter one the topic is familiar in classical and Christian epideictic rhetoric, especially in exordiums. Its pervasive use in the hymns shows the poet's full recognition of man's limitations in the fallen world, theologically, experientially, and aesthetically. In a theological sense the poet cannot fully know God because he is "an earthly wight," a finite creature whose intellectual powers are unequal to the task of knowing, much less picturing God. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth . . . so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is. 55:9). Saint Thomas's analysis of the limitations on knowing God through the Book

of the Creatures had come to be a commonplace among theologians in Spenser's day:

From material things we can rise to some sort of knowledge of immaterial things, but not to perfect knowledge; for there is no proper and adequate proportion between material and immaterial things, and the likenesses drawn from material things for the understanding of immaterial things are very unlike them.¹³

In an experiential sense, the poet cannot comprehend God because his senses are unequal to the task:

But we frail wights whose sight cannot sustain
The sun's bright beams when he on us doth shine
But that their points, rebutted back again,
Are dulled, how can we see with feeble eyne
The glory of that majesty divine? (HHB 119-23)

The glory of God is so great that mortal eyes are not capable of piercing it to see His face:

With the great glory of that wondrous sight
His throne is all encompassed around
And hid in his own brightness from the sight
Of all that look thereon with eyes unsound.
(HHB 176-80)

Men can only experience God at a great remove, in glimpses ("little beames . . . which in my weak distraughted mind I see")--never face to face. Consequently, in an aesthetic sense the poet's powers are constrained by God's ineffability. After the speaker describes each rung of the heavenly hierarchy, he finally approaches "God's own person" where he stops, unable to find words. "Yet is the Highest far beyond all telling," he says, and then asks a rhetorical question: "How then can mortall tongue hope to express / The image of

such endless perfectness?" (104-05). The topos of ineffability is further expanded in several stanzas at the climax of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie: not just this poet is incapable of expressing transcendence, but all artists, "that painter . . . which pictured Venus" and "that sweet Tiewan poet" as well as the speaker. "The fairness of her [Sapience's] face no tongue can tell . . . / That it doth far excell all humane thought / Ne can on earth compared be to nought" (204-10). In the face of God's transcendent beauty, images are inadequate, and images are all the poet has.

Though the poet never overcomes this dilemma, the theme of the limits of poetry is counterbalanced by a parallel theme--the theme of hope. Throughout the poem there is a kind of dialogue between song and silence, between hope and despair. With each hymn the poet feels he can no longer sing, but he forges on, in hope, and renews his praise. In the first hymn, for example, hope conquers despair at the very end. At line 294 the thwarted lover complains, "Ay me, dear lord, that ever I might hope . . . / To come at length unto the wished scope / Of my desire, or might myself assure / That happy port forever to recure." But nevertheless he has hope that he will attain that love and once again sing. "Then would I sing of thine immortal praise / An heavenly hymn, such as the angels sing" (301-02). He then offers his present song to Cupid in the hope of eventually singing a greater one. "Till then, dread Lord, vouchsafe to take of

me / This simple song thus framed in praise of thee" (306-07). Similarly, at the end of Hymne of Beautie the poet places great hope in his song to overcome the hardness of his lady's heart and end his suffering:

And you, fair Venus' dearling, my dear dread . . .
When your fair eyes these fearful lines shall read,
Deign to let fall one drop of dew relief,
That may recur my heart's long pining grief,
And show what wondrous power your beauty hath,
That can restore a damned wight from death.
(ll. 281-87)

Though this peroration is a typical bit of Petrarchan hyperbole, the poet is nevertheless entrusting his future, even, he says, his life, to the power of his song to produce relief. In Hymne of Heavenly Love the poet fears he will be unable to sing: "[God's] kingdom's throne no thought of earthly wight / Can comprehend, much less my trembling verse / With equal words can hope it to rehearse" (40-42). But he does not despair; instead he invokes the Holy Spirit to help him continue his song:

Yet O most blessed spirit, pure lamp of light,
Eternal spring of grace and wisdom true,
Vouchsafe to shed into my barren sprite
Some little drop of thy celestial dew,
That may my rhymes with sweet infuse imbrue;
And give me words equall to my thought.
(ll. 54-49)

Hope has again brought song out of silence as the poet begins the story of Christ's life. In Hymne of Heavenly Beautie the ascent up the heavenly ladder threatens to end abruptly when, as we noted earlier, the beauties are found to be "beyond all

telling." The poem almost comes to a stop ("Cease then my tongue . . .", 106), but after he muses (for three stanzas) on the impossibility of fully knowing God, the poet gazes upon the beauty of the creation once again and, his hope renewed at the thought of God's "beauty excellent" revealed in His "brazen book," begins his ascent again.

The theme of hope also comes to have significance for the poem's overall structure as a journey through time. Hope is essential to the spiritual journey of a man, a poet, and, by extension, mankind, which we have traced in the poem. For a Christian the ultimate goal of the journey through life is the Heavenly City, and this archetypal pattern lies behind Fowre Hymnes as well. The speaker begins in the confusion of youth, moves on to the increasing spiritual insight of maturity through the ascent up the ladder of creation, and finally ends gazing toward heaven, the destination of the whole journey, where he hopes to find complete rest after death. Every journey, as opposed to mere wandering, presupposes hope, a direction, a teleos. In Fowre Hymnes the poet asserts that existence moves toward the good, in both an eschatological and a personal sense, that all history and each Christian will be completed and perfected at the end of time, or (in reference to the individual) at the end of one's time on earth. Hope lies behind the whole structure of the poem, sustaining the young man's love when the courtship becomes difficult, and inspiring the devot to renew his song when he

fears that words will fail him.

The end of the poem is perhaps the best place to illustrate the theme of hope, for it is here, where song does give way to silence, where the poet is closest to his destination, that Spenser's attitude toward the possibilities and limitations of poetry are clearest. The poem ends not in final rest but in the hope of rest. There is a tentativeness about the ending which, when considered with the endings of Spenser's other works, suggests an unwillingness on Spenser's part to see a poem as an artifact, a complete, finished product. This tentativeness suggests instead the position of art in a fallen world, a temporary (temporal) world in which nothing is final and everything is moving toward completion. One sees this attitude most clearly at the end of the Amoretti/Epithalamion, where the poet/bridegroom speaks of his poem as a tentative gift, a replacement for the more fitting gift he had hoped to offer. In the famous last lines he describes his poem in ambiguous--one might say tentative--language: "Song . . . be unto her a goodly ornament / And for short time an endless monument." A poem is "endless" in the order of nature where it can endure through every generation, but in the order of grace it will exist only "for short time" because the order of nature itself will pass away at the apocalyptic end.

Similarly, in the concluding stanzas of the hymns, there is both a longing for the perfection of eternity and a

recognition of the poet's timebound condition in the order of nature where imperfection is the rule. At the close of Hymne of Heavenly Beautie the speaker describes the joys of those who have been admitted into the presence of Sapience, those who have glimpsed her face with the "inward eye" of the soul (285). Then follows an address to his own soul, which is much more the plea of a searcher than the confident statement of a fait accompli:

Ah then my hungry soule, which long hast fed
 On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,
 And with false beauties flattering bait misled,
 Hast after vaine deceitful shadowes sought,
 Which all are fled, and now haue left thee nought,
 But late repentance of thy follies prief;
 Ah cease to gaze on matter of thy grief.

And looke at last up to that soveraine light,
 From whose pure beams al perfect beauty springs,
 That kindleth love in every godly spright,
 Even the love of God, which loathing brings
 Of this vile world, and these gay seeming things;
 With whose sweete pleasures being so possest,
 Thy straying thoughts henceforth forever rest.
 (ll. 288-301)

This final plea is couched in the imperative mood; in a kind of dialogue between self and soul, the devot is chiding his soul for its past follies and then commanding it to look toward its final rest in heaven. The hortative tone he has used so many times to address others is now, in the peroration, reserved for himself. The pilgrim is still on the road, but he is getting closer, close enough to catch a glimpse of his destination: so he urges himself on, past words, to the silence which is the true end of every poem,

and every life.

The final stanzas of the hymns remind one of the concluding lines of the Mutability Cantos (though of course we cannot be sure those lines were meant to be a conclusion, either of those cantos or the Faerie Queene, since the whole poem is "unfinished" and therefore in some sense tentative). Here as in Fowre Hymnes the poet looks past time and mutability, the earthly things in the order of nature, toward eternity and rest: "But thenceforth all shall rest eternally / With him that is the God of Sabaoth hight; / O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabbath's sight!" The "endings" of both poems have the same musing tone, the same hope of eternal rest expressed in extremely personal terms. (Spenser is probably playing on the Hebrew word Sabbath, which means "a time of rest.")¹⁴ This desire for rest is a common topos of the conclusion, used frequently in medieval and Renaissance works to signal an abrupt end. As Curtius describes it: "Often poets end 'seeking rest,' or rejoice that they may rest again. When the poet lays down his pen we sense that he breathes easier" (p. 90).

Moreover, the fact that the poem ends looking toward the future has even wider significance. It suggests the incompleteness of any work of art. Viewed in the eternal context, both Faerie Queene and Fowre Hymnes are "unfinished," incomplete, even though Spenser wrote all the four hymnes he promised and did not write all the twelve books he promised

in the Faerie Queene. Every work of man is incomplete, "imperfect," waiting to be perfected by grace at the end of time. Consequently, every poem is in one sense incomplete, imperfect, since each is made of words, and words, like every other human thing, are tainted by the fall, according to the Renaissance understanding of them. In the popular metaphors, words are a veil through which one must pass, a "dark conceit," or a dark glass. As Isabel McCaffrey puts it in her book on Spenser's allegory, "Only God can write the ultimately satisfying poem, and it will not be an allegorical fiction. Now we all see through a glass darkly, but dark conceits and mutability will alike will vanish when all the veils are cast aside."¹⁵ Until the final end, the end of time, a poem which attempts to portray the beatific vision will remain open-ended.

By having his poet/speaker in both poems look toward heaven without actually entering it, and pray for rest without receiving it, Spenser is recognizing the limitations of art in a fallen world. Poetry is not magic; whatever effect it has is gradual and partial. But at the same time Spenser is affirming the poet's ability to point the way toward that final rest; there is emphatically a destination toward which man journeys, though whether or not he will reach it remains in doubt. The poem is not completed with the last word; it is completed in the silence which follows it, in the full revelation of God at the end of time. Consequently, the

poem is not an artifact, complete in itself, but a sign which points beyond itself, in hope, to the future.

Turning from the end of the hymns to their beginning, the dedication, we can see the same tentativeness, the same sense that the poem is temporary and the poet can only hope that it will be completed in the future. What Spenser writes to the ladies might fittingly be spoken to God, since the hymns, at least the last two, are not only addressed to those human "ornaments of all true love and beauty," the ladies, but also to their creator. Spenser offers the poem as "my humble service, in lieu of the great graces and honorable favors which ye daily shew unto me until such time as I may be better meanes yield you some more notable testimonie of my thankful mind and dutiful devotion." Just as the hymns he wrote in youth needed to be "reformed," these four hymns are also imperfect and will suffice only until a more perfect hymn or "some more notable testimonie" can be offered. The process goes on: one hymn succeeds another, until heavenly perfection supplants tentative earthly forms, and eternity gives final meaning to time.

NOTES

¹The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, Albert Feuillerat, ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 9, hereafter cited in the text.

²"Nature and Grace in the Faerie Queene," in Essentiall Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, A. C. Hamilton, ed. (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972) and "The Argument of Milton's "Comus"," University of Toronto Quarterly, 9 (1941), 46-71.

³See Chapter III, pp. 14-15.

⁴For a concise discussion of Renaissance affective theory, especially the relation between poetry and ethics, see Hardison, The Enduring Monument, pp. 51-60.

⁵Quoted in Hallet Smith, Elizabethian Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning, and Expression (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 313.

⁶C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love (Oxford: University Press, 1938), pp. 1-43.

⁷See Lewis, Allegory, pp. 14-19.

⁸Wodehouse, Comus, p. 63.

⁹For the parallels in Hoby's Courtier see the notes to these lines in Kellogg, pp. 498-505.

¹⁰For a discussion of the use of the speculum creatorum in medieval and Renaissance verse see Collins, p. 47 ff.

¹¹Collins outlines the two types of meditation on pp. 37-40.

¹²Wodehouse, "Nature and Grace," pp. 59-60.

¹³Summa Theologica, Bk I, Q. 88, art ii, quoted in Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 26.

¹⁴For a discussion of Spenser's use of the word in the Mutability Cantos see James Carson Nohrenberg, The Analogy of the Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 82.

¹⁵MacCaffrey, p. 242.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albright, Evelyn M. "Spenser's Cosmic Philosophy and His Religion." PMLA, 44 (1929), 715-59.
- Aristotle. The Rhetoric of Aristotle. Trans. Lane Cooper. New York: D. Appleton, Inc., 1932.
- Bennett, Josephine Waters. "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes: Addenda." Studies in Philology, 32 (1935), 131-57.
- _____. "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes: A Resurvey." Studies in Philology, 29 (1932), 207-32.
- _____. "The Theme of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes." Studies in Philology, 28 (1931), 18-57.
- Berger, Harry, Jr. "The Prospect of the Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry." Studies in English Literature, 1 (1961), 93-120.
- Bhattacharje, Mohinimohan. Platonic Ideas in Spenser, 1935; rpt. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970.
- Blench, J. W. Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: A Study of English Sermons 1450-c. 1600. Oxford: Blackwell, 1964.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium. Ed. Charles G. Osgood. 1930; rpt. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956.
- Bush, Douglas. Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1963.
- Cave, Terence C. Devotional Poetry in France c. 1570-1630. Cambridge: University Press, 1969.
- Colie, Rosalie. Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- Collins, Joseph B. Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940.
- Courthope, W. J. "The Poetry of Spenser." The Cambridge History of English Literature. Ed. A. W. Ward and

- A. R. Waller. Cambridge: University Press, 1909. III, 239-80.
- Courthorpe, W. J. "The Poetry of Spenser." In University of California Publications in Modern Philology, No. 5. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1917.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages. Trans. Willard Trask. New York: Pantheon, 1953.
- Dodge, R. E. Neil, ed. The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908.
- Drayton, Michael. Complete Works. Ed. J. William Hebel. Oxford: Blackwell, 1925.
- Ellrodt, Robert. Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser. Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, No. 35. Geneva: E. Droz, 1960.
- Fletcher, Jefferson B. "Benivieni's 'Ode of Love' and Spenser's Fowre Hymnes." Modern Philology, 8 (1911), 545-60.
- Greenlaw, et al., eds. The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition. 10 vols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932-49.
- Hardison, O. B., Jr. The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962.
- Horton, Ronald A. The Unity of the Faerie Queene. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978.
- "Hymnody." The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1966 ed.
- Jones, H. S. V. A Spenser Handbook. New York: F. S. Crofts, 1930.
- Kellogg, Robert, and Oliver Steele, eds. Books I and II of The Faerie Queene, The Mutability Cantos, and Selections from The Minor Poetry. New York: Odyssey Press, 1965.
- Landrum, Grace W. "Spenser's Use of the Bible and his Alleged Puritanism." PMLA, 41 (1926), 517-44.
- The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible. Ed. Charles M. Laymon. New York: Abingdon Press, 1971.

- Lee, R. W. "Castiglione's Influence on Spenser's Early Hymns." Philological Quarterly, 7 (1928), 65-77.
- Lewis, C. S. Allegory of Love. Oxford: University Press, 1938.
- Lotspeich, Henry Gibbons. Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser. Princeton Studies in English, No. 9. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932.
- MacCaffrey, Isabel Gamble, Spenser's Allegory: The Analogy of the Faerie Queene. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Martz, Louis. The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.
- Miller, Arnold. "The Two Matters: Classical and Christian in the Renaissance." Studies in Philology, 38 (1941), 158-64.
- Nelson, William. The Poetry of Edmund Spenser: A Study. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.
- Ovid. Amores. Trans. Christopher Marlowe. In The Works of Christopher Marlowe. Ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
- Padelford, F. M. "Spenser's Fowre Hymnes." Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 13 (1914), 418-33.
- Peterson, Douglas L. The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Eloquent Styles. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- Prescott, Anne Lake. French Poets and the English Renaissance: Studies in Fame and Transformation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.
- Purvis, Dale. "A Study of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes." Diss. University of Tennessee, 1976.
- Puttenham, George. The Arte of English Poesie. Ed. Gladys D. Willcock and Alice Walker. Cambridge: University Press, 1936.
- Quitslund, Jon A. "Spenser's Image of Sapience." Studies in the Renaissance, 16 (1969), 181-213.
- Renwick, W. L., ed. Daphnida and Other Poems. London: Scholartis Press, 1929.

- Ricks, Don M. "Convention and Structure in Edmund Spenser's 'Amoretti.'" Proceedings of the Utah Academy, 2, 44 (1968), 438-50.
- _____. "Persona and Process in Spenser's 'Amoretti.'" Ariel, 3 (1972), 5-15.
- Rollinson, Phillip Bruce. "Spenser's Four Hymns and the Tradition of the Literary Hymn." Diss. University of Virginia, 1968.
- Satterthwaite, Alfred W. Spenser, Ronsard, and DuBellay: A Renaissance Comparison. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.
- Saurat, Denis. Literature and Occult Tradition: Studies in Philosophical Poetry. Tr. Dorothy Bolton. London: MacVeagh, 1930.
- Sidney, Sir Philip. The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney. 4 vols. Ed. Albert Feuillerat. Cambridge: University Press, 1912-26.
- Smith, Hallet. Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions Meaning, and Expression. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952.
- Southwell, Robert. The Complete Poems. Ed. Alexander B. Grosart. London: Robson and Sons, 1872.
- Spens, Janet. Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation. New York: Russell and Russell, 1934.
- Spenser, Edmund. Poetical Works. Ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912.
- Symonds, John Addington. An Introduction to the Study of Dante. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899.
- Tillyard, E. M. W. The Elizabethan World Picture. New York: MacMillan, 1944.
- Tuve, Rosemond. Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- _____. Essays By Rosemond Tuve: Spenser, Herbert, Milton. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Underhill, Evelyn. Worship. New York: Harper and Row, 1937.

Welsford, Enid, ed. Spenser: Fowre Hymnes and Epithalamion.
Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967.

Williams, Kathleen. Spenser's World of Glass: A Reading of
The Faerie Queene. Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1966.

Wimsatt, William K., and Monroe C. Beardsley. The Verbal
Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry. Lexington:
University of Kentucky Press, 1954.

Winstanley, Lilian, ed. The Fowre Hymnes. Cambridge:
University Press, 1907.

Wodehouse, A. S. P. "The Argument of Milton's Comus." Uni-
versity of Toronto Quarterly, 9 (1941), 46-71.

_____. "Nature and Grace in the Faerie Queene." In
Essentiall Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser.
Ed. A. C. Hamilton. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972.