

## Time and Colin Clout: Pastoralism of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*

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Arcadia is a figment of the poet's imagination, a fiction to project the idea of perfection, or perfect *otium*. There is one exception, however, and it is that Arcadia, too, suffers from the limitation of time and that the Arcadians have a recurring sense of the everlasting presence of Death. The Renaissance sensibility wanted always to be reminded of the human temporal predicament, to see the skull under the face, as it were, and its writers were fond of quoting an anonymous speaker who averred his ubiquity by the well-known phrase, "Et in Arcadia ego", in which the speaker is, as Panofsky says, Death.<sup>1)</sup> "I, too, was in Arcadia"—if this was the 18th-century reception of the Baroque melancholy, turning it into a sweet yearning for the lost Arcadia, the truly Baroque sensibility had Death for its speaker triumphantly proclaiming "Even in Arcadia I am." The ineluctible passage of time destroys even Arcadia. Arcadia thus becomes an exemplum that temporality is the condition of human existence, an evidence of the inseparability of time from human experience.

Yet Arcadia has survived undiminished as an idea, as a value, in the human imagination that yearns for a stasis, an idyllic moment when time seems to have stopped. Pastoral mode embodies a concept of time as both static and ever-flowing. Ultimately it aspires to a moment of recognizing the paradox that time is, as Spenser says of nature in the "Mutabilitie Cantos", "still moouing, yet vnmooued from her sted." (*The Faerie Queene*, VII, vii, 13)

Spenser begins his poetic career, as he ends it, with the twelve months. In *The Shepheardes Calender* as in his last, unfinished Cantos of "Mutabilitie", Spenser uses the spectacle of the changing seasons to place the painful mutations in human lives. The association of changing human states with changes in nature is perhaps as old as the pastoral tradition itself. "Clear sky one day, rain the next," says a Theocritan shepherd to cheer up his unhappy friend.<sup>2)</sup> Fluctuations in human feelings are as much the rule as fluctuations in the weather. But Spenser brings these parallel fluctuations into some larger harmony. His way was to combine the eclogue with the calendar form. As many critics have observed, a characteristic aspect of Spenser's poetry is his time-sense that always

1) Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York, 1955), pp. 295-320.

2) Theocritus, *Idyll*, IV. The text used is A.S.F. Gow's translation (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), vol. 1, p. 37.

functions implicitly as a unity or design, helping to form a structure below the explicit levels of narration.<sup>3)</sup> That this poem was designed to be "Aeglogues proportionable to the twelue monethes" shows what Spenser wanted to make of the Virgilian convention. Calendar, by understanding time in terms of the cyclical rhythms of nature, forces time to flow in an enclosed, circular course of eternal return. Through calendar man grasps the otherwise ungraspable time. Yet in doing so, man is shut in the endless repetition of the same movement. The calendar framework thus simultaneously involves the question of how man deals with and can transcend the year's round and his mutability.

Every recent criticism of the poem points out that there are two patterns of time functioning in this poem, and that the meaning somehow concerns man's relation to the cycle of nature. The reiteration of the ironic contrast, annually felt, between the recurring life of nature and the linear progress of human existence toward a definite end will point to something that is fundamental about Spenser's conceptual substructure of this poem: the meaning of existence lies in the present, while the standard of action is outside of time in eternity. In the "November" eclogue this problem is shown clearly. If the image of flower, withering or withered, underscores the transience of all existence, the seasonal image of a flower presents an ironic contrast to human existence precisely because it involves the idea of rebirth. Colin, weeping for the death of Dido, "the fayrest floure"(76), compares the rebirth of nature with irreparable human life:

Whence is it, that the flouret of the field doth fade,  
 And lyeth buried long in Winters bale:  
 Yet soon as spring his mantle hath displayd,  
 It floureth fresh, as it should neuer fayle?  
 But thing on earth that is of most availe,  
     As vertues braunch and beauties budde,  
 Reliuen not for any good.  
     O heaueie herse,  
 The braunch once dead, the budde eke needes must quaile,  
     O carefull verse. (83-92)

The solution comes with meditation on all earthly things:

O trustlesse state of earthly things, and slipper hope  
 Of mortal men, that swincke and sweate for nought,  
 And shooting wide, doe misse the marked scope:  
 Now haue I learnd (a lesson derely bought)

3) Most notably, A.K. Heatt, *Short Time's Endless Movement* (New York, 1960), analyzes *Epithalamion* in the perspective of Pythagorean aesthetic. Also cf. Rawdon Wilson, "The Deformation of Narrative Time in *The Faerie Queene*." *UTQ*, 41(1971), 48-62, and S.K. Henninger, "Form in *The Shepheardes Calender*," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 9(1962), 309-321.

That nys on earth assuraunce to be sought:  
 For what might be in earthlie mould,  
 That did her buried body hould,  
 O heaueie herse,  
 Yet saw I on the beare when it was brought,  
 O carefull verse. (153-62)

The solution is sought in the common theme of *contemptus mundi*. Christianity taught man to look beyond this world, toward the timeless City of God. Perfect landscape, protected from the invasion of time, is to be sought in the "inner garden" and sometimes in death.

Yet in the light of his poetry as a whole, Spenser's predominant theme is not this kind of celestial vision in a simple manner. Spenser was a typical Renaissance man, and his view of time is essentially this-worldly, and that in a very optimistic way. Unlike Donne or Herbert after him, Spenser, while being aware of human temporal limitation, was more concerned with the development within the limit of fixed potentials. In his treatment of cosmic and generative cycles, enduring moral qualities, and human development, he thought in terms of permanence and duration that can persist or be fulfilled in the course of time. Enduring qualities of poetry, continuity through procreation—these were the two main forces by which Spenser thought man could transcend time.<sup>4)</sup>

To return to the passage quoted above, Spenser's shepherd rejects this world altogether and looks unto heaven: "nys on earth assuraunce to be sought". Dido is not dead; she merely "hath the bonds broke of eternall night,/Her soule vnbodyed of the burdenous corpse" (165-6)—a typical Christian pastoral elegy. But immediately follows the naked fact that Dido *is* dead; hence the irony of the next line: "Yet I saw on the beare when it was brought." *I saw it*; Death is *here* on earth, and we are living *here*, and we merely "mone with many a mocke," as Perigot and Willye's roundelay says ("August", 120). Pastoral elegy proposes not so much a solution to the question raised by death as it does a setting in which those questions may be placed. The conventional ending of the eclogue enhances the contrast, by taking us back to this world:

Ay francke shepheard, how bene thy verses meint,  
 With doolful pleasaunce, so as I ne wote,  
 Whether reioyce or weepe for great constrainte?  
 Thyne be the cossette, well hast thow gotte.  
 Vp Colin vp, ynough thou morned hast,  
 Now gynne to mizzle, hye we homeward fast. (203-8)

Perhaps criticism of *The Shepheardes Calender* has been too much directed to finding a "heavenly" meaning of the poem, and to regarding Colin as a failure. In *The Shepheardes Calender*, as in the last stanzas of the "Mutabilitie Cantos", the cry of individual loss and

4) See the study of time in Spenser by Richard J. Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), ch. 7.

replacement is not muted, despite Colin's reliance, at the end of "December", on the presiding order of continuity and the large cosmic process. Perhaps that is due to the inwardness of Colin's melancholy, and perhaps that is what makes time in the poem not an abstract concept but a "felt" or "inner" time. Spenser's personal voice in "O! that great Sabbaoth God, grant me that Sabbaoths sight" might also be Colin's last words.

There are a few shepherds in *The Shepheardes Calender* who seem to enjoy the moments of sheer happiness. To them time seems to have stopped. Willye and Thomalin, who talk about catching Cupid in "March", Hobbinol who is regarded by Colin as one "that Paradise hast found, whych Adam lost" (June 10), and Willye and Perigot who are engaged in a singing match in "August"—these enjoy unhindered idyllic moments. Cut off from the flow of time, they are in the "holiday" of the idyllic world: "It fell vpon a holly eue,/Hey ho holliday." ("August", 53-4)

This kind of idyllic bliss is fragile, however. Marlowe's shepherd, dreaming of the world of eternal holiday, is answered by Raleigh's realistic nymph, who is all too aware of the illusoriness of the dream: "Time drives the Flockes from field to fold." Right after the moment of eternal bliss, the shepherds find the core of their being untouched by the fleeting vision. It is very easy to notice that they are also aware of the passage of time. Willye's words urging Thomalin to tell the story of catching Cupid show how impatiently he endeavors to forget time by plunging into the rapture of the present moment: "Let be, as may be, that is past;/That is to come, let be forecast./Now tell vs, what thou hast scene." (58-60) Thomalin is already the victim of love, which is, as Colin's case shows, the initiation to time. Cvddie is warned by Thomalin:

But eft, when ye count you free from feare,  
Comes the breme winter with chamfred browes,  
Full of wrinckled and frostie furrows:  
Drearily shooting his stormy darte,  
Which cruddles the blood, and pricks the harte.

("February" 42-6)

To the same warning of Piers, Palinode says:

Sorrowe ne need be hastened on:  
For he will come without calling anone.  
While times enduren of tranquillitie,  
Vsen we freely our felicitie.  
For when approachin the stormie stowres,  
We mought with our shoulders beare of the sharpe showres.

("May" 152-7)

Hobbinol also admits to seasonal change and decay (See, "September" 237-41). The conventional ending of each eclogue functions by submerging each eclogue in a melancholy reverberation: "hye thee home shepheard, the day is nigh wasted" ("February"), or "The

night nighth fast, yts time to be gone." ("August") Shepherds are fascinated by the irreparable past; "whilome" is a word that recurs very often. To be sure, a genuine backward glance is the sense of time in *The Shepheardes Calender*. The keynote of this work is not delight but melancholy.

Melancholy, according to Burton, comes with the perception of flux and decay. The melancholy philosopher, watching over the ebb and flow of nature and human existence, is saddened and driven to detachment and to the cultivation of his inner resources.<sup>5)</sup> The inwardness of the melancholic, which so permeates the Baroque period, the 18th-century landscape paintings of the ruins, and even the Romantic poetry, finds its earliest expression in the central figure of the poem, Colin Clout, and constitutes the emotional atmosphere of the poem.

"January", beginning with the same mood and metrics in which "December" ends, shows us Colin already in misery. He looks back upon his past and repeatedly compares his life to the changing of the four seasons:

Thou barrein ground, whom winters wrath hath wasted,  
 Art made a myrrhour, to behold my plight:  
 Whilome thy fresh spring flowrd, and after hasted  
 Thy sommer prowde with Daffadillies dight,  
 And now is come thy wynters stormy state,  
 Thy mantle mard, wherein thou maskedst late.

Spring and summer were happy but short, there was no autumn, and now Colin is in the midst of dreary winter. Spring, as soon as it began, is gone (29-30). Whether memory of the past summer is near or afar is fundamentally a subjective question. The word "late" (24) reveals the vividness of the memory evoked; it describes not so much the objective time as the speed of flow of the "time felt". As Donne says, "his first minute, after noone, is night."

It is noteworthy that Colin's melancholy and sense of decay are concomitants of his despised love for Rosalind. The identity of Rosalind, and what she stands for, have been regarded as providing a central key to the interpretation of the poem.<sup>6)</sup> Yet she still remains unidentifiable, and best she does so. For in the context of the poem she, like Dido, is simply a woman, an object of love, by which the shepherd is awakened to the delicate flowering and withering, the largest cosmic force of life and death. Dido, as a withered flower, occasions Colin's lamentation on nature's decay. Rosalind, whose coldness withers the "branches" of Colin's tree, leads him to feel that his years were "wast and woxen

5) Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy* (London, 1971), p. 150.

6) Robert Allen Durr says that Rosalind represents the "sinful world", "the eternal woman who is the world." So, according to him, Colin's love of Rosalind is *amor carnis* as opposed to *amor spiritus*. I agree with him only partially. See R.A. Durr, "Shepherds's Calendar of Christian Time," *ELH*, 24(1957), 269-295.

old." In a word, they are the occasions by which Colin is put to the posture of lamenting over nature's mutations, of placing sorrow and anxiety for the temporal predicament of all existence.

Thus, love is initiation to time. In the "Mutabilitie Cantos" we find a significant allusion to this question of love and time. In Canto VII, Nature summons up four elements, four seasons, twelve months, day and night, and hours. After all "came Life, and lastly Death." Iconographically, Death is related with Time's sickle and Life with the Cupid figure. (*The Faerie Queene*, VII, vii, 46, 47) At the end of our lives seeking after Cupid, the lines suggest, there awaits Death.

*The Shepheardes Calender* suggests two types of human response to this fact. Thenot and Cvddie, Piers and Palinode, are in dramatic situations, of which no conclusion is suggested, when we think merely of what is said in each eclogue.<sup>7)</sup> What is more important, however, is the gradual progress toward a conclusion, a conclusion that man must learn in time—in time, as if inside of time, since it is the condition of our existence. Here, what has passed unsaid is the way that gradual progress takes place through the course of each month (and it is here that we deal with the meaning of the calendar form as the substructure or design, and the meaning of each eclogue and the poem as a whole).

The poem begins with January, the month with which the Christian calendar begins. But the cycle of nature is generally understood as beginning with spring. Despite E. K.'s witty conjecture—or, rather, in accordance with his partly self-evasive gesture admitting his inability to know, to the effect that it is hardly a matter of great concern at all—this has not met with convincing explanations. My view is that it can be approached with the assumption that Cvddie in "February", Thomalin in "March", and Palinode in "May" are the *alter ego* of Colin Clout as he progresses through the year.<sup>8)</sup>

Colin continues to appear in "January", "June", "November", and "December", and if we include casual mention of him, in "April" and "August" as well. Colin's life, already shown in "January" as wounded by love and melancholy, certainly takes a linear progress toward a definite end. But as modulations of Colin we see the other shepherds, who might have been Colin's "former" selves reborn in accordance with the rhythm of natural cyclicity. The effect is that we simultaneously see Colin in the present and, through the other shepherds, Colin in the past.

Colin, by breaking his pipe, symbolically dies in "January". But in "February" we see

7) Patrick Cullen's interpretation of the poem as providing dramatic situations between two opposing perspectives, "Arcadian" and "Mantuanesque", arrives at the conclusion that each eclogue does not suggest to us any black-and-white distinctions of good and bad shepherds. Spenser rather provides us, he argues, with the limitations of each pastoral perspective. See Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

8) Although Cullen, *ibid.*, does not make this point, chapter 2 of his book gives some hint of it.

Cvddie (a second Colin, or Colin reborn), who, complaining as he does about the bitter weather, does not have any sense of the passage of time yet, and tauntingly retorts to Thenot's admonition. (In "December" Colin recalls that in the spring of his youth he never thought his spring would ever end. (29-30)) In "March" we see Thomalin (a third Colin), wounded by Cupid; with such experience of love, he seems to be like Cvddie a little grown. Suffering is introduced, through love, to the life of the shepherd:

For then I little smart did feele:  
 But soone it sore encreased.  
 And now it ranckleth more and more,  
 And inwardly it festreth sore,  
 Ne wote I, how to cease it. (98-102)

When we come to "May", we see Palinode who is already conscious of the passage of time. To the ascetic Piers, he retorts with a kind of *carpe diem* motif:

Sorrowe ne need be hastened on:  
 For he will come without calling anone.  
 While times enduren of tranquillitie,  
 Vsen we freely our felicitie.  
 For when approchen the stormie stowres,  
 We mought with our shoulders beare of the sharpe showres. (152-7)

These shepherds, together with their counterparts, intermingle with the story of Colin, and they altogether make a fugue of the main theme of the poem—to grow spiritually in time. Colin distinguishes himself from other shepherds; yet if he is seen side by side with other shepherds who successively replace each other, we may glimpse a never-ending movement of such kind as Wordsworth saw through Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey". This may be Spenser's structural design as well as meaning, or the moral if we wish, of the poem.

Colin's fragmentary retrospections in "January" and "June" are completed in the longer retrospection in "December". Here again Colin compares his life to the four seasons. First there was a spring of his life when he could enjoy those carefree days he erroneously supposed to be perpetual: "What wreaked I of the wintrye waste,/Tho deemed I, my spring would euer laste." (29-30) This contrasts with his recollection in "January". When in "January" he looks back on his spring, conscious of its having ended, it seems to have ended abruptly as soon as it began. Colin's agony began in summer, when he was initiated into love, and through love, into time. The summer provides various kinds of knowledge, without affording a cure for his malady. Time passes without bearing any fruit.

Thus is my sommer worne away and wasted,  
 Thus is my haruest hastened all to rathe:  
 The eare that budded faire, is burnt and blasted,

And all my hoped baine is turned to scathe.  
 Of all the seede, that in my youth was sowne,  
 Was nought but brakes and brambles to be mowne.

My boughes with bloosmes that crowned were at firste,  
 And promised of timely fruite such store,  
 Are left both bare and barrein now at erst:  
 The flattring fruite is fallen to grownd before,  
 And rotted, ere they were halfe mello ripe:  
 My haruest wast, my hope away dyd wipe. (97-108)

There is no harvest in Colin's autumn; his life's winter is rapidly approaching:

My spring is spent, my sommer burnt up quite,  
 My haruest hasts to stirre vp winter sterne. (128-9)

"December" lends itself to an interpretation of the poem in a Biblical perspective; Colin's story is the pilgrim's progress through life, through Christian years. Seed was sown in the garden of spring. But spring was only a promise not kept. Weeds are gathered together and burnt and thrown away. "New Life" that is allowed to flower and grass will not come to Colin. He wants to be released from the winter—or, indeed, the illusory spring—of nature; yet, as he has failed to grow spiritually, and as his life has been a waste, the seed that was sown in spring and budded fair is "burnt and blasted", "rotted" and "mowne".

Colin's story, vividly conveyed in "December" in the imagery of gardening, sowing, and harvest, is the story of one who has not passed from the wilderness of winter into the garden of spring, who was born in winter and dies in winter.<sup>9</sup> Illusory spring becomes an autobiographical motif of affliction.

Such Christian implications make "December"—and the whole poem—a kind of spiritual autobiography of Colin Clout. The calendar form reinforces the structure of juxtaposing biographical facts and spiritual growth through the year(s). What we find in "December" is the literary mode that has had great impact on some seventeenth-century poetry, the venerable tradition described by Louis Martz as "the poetry of meditation", or such works as Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, in all of which biographical facts through the years are described in terms of spiritual growth. In the "confessional mode" of the seventeenth-century poetry, man's confrontation with time is a vivid epitome of the Christian life; if properly redeemed, time is only a hindrance to the longed-for delight of final release; if not, the year of man's life ends where it began, in the winter of spiritual death. In Herbert's "Time", for instance, time is transcended by its paradoxical equation with the "gardener" who with his "pruning-knife" makes man "grow better by his cutting". Life is what detains us from the City of God, and death is welcomed as the place where we

9) See the interesting study of Stanley Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden* (Madison, 1966), ch. 4, "Time".



find God's grace. Time is God's bidding. Spenser's use of the gardener/harvest imagery invites a similar interpretation; the iconography of Time in the "Mutabilitie Cantos" is consistent with the general theme of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Man harvests his youth; at the end, time harvests man.<sup>10</sup> Thus the idea of an encounter with time has its implied imperative: the proper use and understanding of time. "Ripeness is all". Time is the teacher, and as the traditional aphorism had it, "truth is the daughter of time."

The recognition of such a dimension of time, therefore, is the ultimate meaning of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Time is an inherently equivocal process, making possible both the greatest unhappiness and the greatest happiness. Time, being as it is the condition of all earthly existence, is not necessarily a destructive and "cormorant" force, but also the space in which growth, maturation, and fulfillment take place. It is ultimately the space through which the still unrealized Providence becomes real, as Shakespeare's last plays tell us. Time is simply the condition out of which emerges the stage of mature awareness and virtue, as is perfectly, though unwittingly, illustrated by Colin's words: "And tryed time yet taught me greater things." ("December" 85)

Thus, toward the end of the "December" eclogue, there is a suggestion of an equally powerful counterthrust to the preceding vision of depletion. Colin *does* learn finally, and his words show a note of acceptance that finally defines the "December" eclogue. Throughout "January", and "December", life in Colin's consciousness is seen as a gradually accelerating stream of time flowing toward a definite end. Yet the best reaction he can find—and he does—is to call his death "timely":

Winter is come, that blowes the bitter blaste,  
And after winter dreerie death doth hast. (143-4)

is changed after a few lines into:

Winter is come, that blowes the balefull breath,  
And after winter commeth timely death. (149-50)

By calling his death "timely", Colin comes to accept his death, and "December" does not end in helpless desperation but with words of farewell which are a rather serene reconciliation to time:

Adieu delights, that lulled me asleepe,  
Adieu my deare, whose loue I bought so deare:  
Adieu my little Lambes and loued sheepe,  
Adieu ye Woodes that oft my witness were:

10) Cullen says: "'November' thus continues to develop the harvest theme that has appeared in the preceding five eclogues. But whereas in the preceding eclogues the theme was that of man's harvesting of nature, here (as in "December") the theme is that of nature's harvesting of man. The harvest is now...man's death." Cullen, *op. cit.*, p. 147. This is a point made also by S. Stewart.

Adieu good Hobbinol, that wast so true,  
 Tell Rosalind, her Colin bids her adieu. (151-6)

Although his consciousness of time has been different from some other shepherds' acquiescence and quietism, he is now not disturbed by the thought that his life should disappear from the cycle of yearly renewal. It should be made clear once again that Colin's "sentimental education", so to speak, is removed from Thenot-like asceticism; pastoralism is different from strict Christian dispensation. (Indeed, to regard Colin as a spiritual failure can only reveal the ascetic element of such viewers.) Nor does it register the *carpe diem* of love lyrics. Pastoral dispensation, if so may it be called, is the enjoyment of life attuned to nature's cycle. One may disappear from that cycle, but the cycle itself will last for ever. As the intimation of immortality, which Wordsworth realized in the course of a similar crisis, is through the intuition of life's continuity in this great universe, so the same might have been working in Colin's mind.

Here reference to Wordsworth's view of nature might not be altogether inappropriate. For what else does Spenser's Garden of Adonis represent? Adonis, the mythic personage embodying the inexhaustible force of nature, "which supplye the substaunce of natures fruitful progenyes" (*The Faerie Queene*, III, vi, 36), is to Spenser the paradoxical vision of immortality through mortality:

he may not  
 For ever dye, and never buried bee  
 In baleful night where all thinges are forgot:  
 All be he subject to mortalitie,  
 Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,  
 And by succession made perpetuall,  
 Transformed oft, and changed diverslie (III, vi, 47)

Spenser responds passionately to the larger ongoing processes that enable the continuity of the whole of nature and the human race. Change is subsumed under a more universal dimension, and man feels free and enlarged by identification with such a process. In Wordsworth, too, timelessness and stillness are intuited in the moving torrents and the decay of woods ("woods decaying, never to be decayed"), in the Simplon Pass passage (*The Prelude*, VI, 556-72). "Stationary blast"—that oxymoronic frozen violence—and a dialectic of light and darkness, raving tumult and peace, death and renewal—all these give way to an intuition of the "One Mind". But, then, the intuition of the sublimity of the huge eternal darkness and the feeling of terror it gives is not altogether what pastoral literature has to say. Pastoralism, after all, is a "lower strain".

The Garden of Adonis with its fecundity and growth embodies the concept of recurring time. *The Shepheardes Calender*, as its temporal structure tends to reinforce, reflects the idea of recurrence. The cyclical course of time set by the framework of the poem finds

corresponding patterns in the view of time held by some shepherds in what E.K. called "moral" eclogues. Quite aptly did he so, for, while all the eclogues have their own morals that can be summed up as spiritual growth in time, in these eclogues cyclicity itself becomes the moral.

In "February", when Cvddie complains about the bitterness of the winter, Thenot admonishes him:

Must not the world wend in his common course  
From good to badd, and from badd to worse,  
From worse vnto that is worst of all,  
And then return to his former fall? (11-4)

Piers, in "May", formulates a similar idea concerning the whole of human history, and predicts the return of the state of innocence before the Fall:

The Time was once, and may again retorne,  
(For ought may happen, that hath bene beforne) (103-4)

To them, time is a moral dimension in which human wishes and doings are finally judged, and therefore man must have a prospective view of time as a dimension in which Providence unfolds.

But this is not the only means provided by Spenser, nor is it a prominent one by which to transcend time. Transience of this-worldly existence may give rise to *contemptus mundi*, which becomes the ethic of Platonic-Christian teachings that always remind us of the limitations of this world. Vanity and decay, which are partly the issue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, are resumed in the *Complaints* volume, which, as the title of the book indicates, is full of Spenser's realization of the present as the "ruins" of the past done by the devouring time. Yet there is a very strong optimistic belief characteristic of the Renaissance man that poetry is a means by which to transcend the devouring force of time.

In *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, we find yet another aspect of this-worldly human life that was for Spenser a stronghold of man to endure the passage of time: love and procreation. On this point Spenser's humanistic commitment can easily combine the traditional invitation to love. Traditionally, transience of the world gave rise to the pagan motif of "catch the day", but this tended to work, as does the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene*, Book II, to isolate man in the present and obscure the nature of man's involvement in the cosmic process of growth, decay, continuity, and all social and historical reality. Yet, while being fully aware of its obnoxious aspect and retaining a stance against it in general, Spenser did not hesitate to combine the pagan motif of "let us love" with the Christian ideals in his religious conscience. Love, because of its social virtue of procreation through marriage, becomes a heroic force working against devouring time. Its principle is continuity in time. Lovers' realization of themselves in marriage is given broad imaginative amplification when it shares the joy of Christ's love; and the exhortation to

love is absorbed in the service of higher ends and purposes, from which it derives legitimacy. Sonnet 68 is a good example:

Most glorious Lord of Lyfe that on this day,  
 didst make thy triumph ouer death and sin:  
 and hauing harrowd hell didst bring away  
 captiuity then captiue vs to win:  
 This ioyous day, deare Lord, with ioy begin,  
 and grant that we for whom thou diddest dye  
 being with thy deare blood clene washt from sin,  
 may liue for euer in felicity.  
 And that thy loue we weighing worthily,  
 may likewise loue thee for the same againe;  
 and for thy sake that all lyke deare didst buy,  
 with loue may one another entertayne.  
 So let vs loue, deare loue, lyke as we ought,  
 loue is the lesson which the Lord vs taught.

Here human love between the sexes receiving religious endorsement in the love of Christ does not derive its force from Donnean wit. Earthly response to time, while menacing when it stands alone, is placed in a broader context when man and woman actually serve continuity and the purpose of the command to increase and multiply. Love, especially earthly love, is clearly subordinate in hierarchy to the more religiously conceived "virginity", yet it is still a highly respected level of existence. So, in Sonnet 70, Spenser could say a typical exhortation to love:

Make hast therefore sweet loue, whilst it is prime,  
 for none can call againe the passed time.

For the same reason, Spenser even asks time to move more swiftly in *Epithalamion*: "How slowly does sad Time his feathers moue?" (281) Night is welcomed as the time to fulfil their love ("Now welcome night, thou night so long expected" (315)), and to the moon he prays:

And sith of wemens labours thou has charge,  
 And generation goodly dost enlarge,  
 Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,  
 And the chast wombe informe with timely seed,  
 That may our comfort breed. (383-7)

Such love, of course, is not to be found in Colin's love for Rosalind. Colin's tragedy may be that his love did not find its fulfilment in marriage, an earthly means to transcend time in its own way. And for that matter, it should also be noted that the erotic hedonism of the pastoral is almost always elegiac—a quality it can retain by not having its love

fulfilled.

Finally, on the lyricism of the pastoral and the position of *The Shepheardes Calender* in English poetry. In Colin Clout we see a truly human response when faced with the existential question of temporality. Through his preoccupation with time and through his exploration of the internality of human mind, the "selfhood" of Colin Clout emerges in such a way as we do not find in earlier pastorals. The time-consciousness that makes him ponder on the human predicament is lacked by other shepherds of this poem, and Colin is the only shepherd that speaks in the lyric mode of monologue. His philosophical posture is subjective and self-revelatory; his expression is melodic and imaginative, tending away from the narrative and dramatic ("debate" is as old as the pastoral genre itself), toward the contemplative and inactive. In his introspective mood his eyes may rest on the objects in nature, but the objects soon gains subjective orientation and becomes a means for self-expression. His mind may dwell on a departed lover, but again true interest is in the "poetic mood" *per se*. Thus, as Poggioli says, pastoral literature gravitates toward becoming an image of the poet's soul, a "vehicle of solipsism."<sup>11</sup> Certainly Colin Clout had a great impact on later pastorals by introducing a taste—the melancholy old shepherd Rowland of Drayton and the solitary in Marvell's "The Garden" are only two of the many descendents of Colin. In all of them emerges the selfhood of the lyric poets. "Authenticity" as shepherds was out of the question from the beginning, and the other half of the shepherd's mythical role steps forward: the poet-persona.

According to Bruno Snell, Virgil transformed Theocritus' "clippings from life" into highly un-lifelike "landscape of the mind." Virgil's use of nature, he says, lies not so much in its ideal presentation but its incidental employment to do service to the expression of human feelings.<sup>12</sup> The same might be said of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Although natural phenomena are abundant in the poem, one tends not to remember specific scenes; it is rather the emotional state of the shepherd that is remembered. The characteristic settings of traditional pastoral are there, no doubt. But the "emotional setting" is all the more substantial, more concrete, and more comprehensible. The nature referred to is but a rhetorical device.

The most obvious index to Spenser's rhetorical channelling of nature into emotion is, of course, his use of the "pathetic fallacy," most notably in Colin's monody. But the "pathetic fallacy" is nothing but instances of the poet's exploitation of semantic interchangeability in order to express an emotional state, and this rhetorical device points to only one thing in the poem: the sense of loss. It is therefore a "thematic" loss, rather than the loss of identifiable particular objects. In this, Spenser is most true to Virgil's *Eclogues*.

As Arcadia is the paradise lost, seldom is the shepherd allowed to enjoy his paradise.

11) Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), p. 22.

12) Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), translated by T.G. Rosenmeyer, pp. 281-309.

The impression we have from reading *The Shepheardes Calendr* is deprivation and longing. Landscape of "barrein earth" is employed to express Colin Clout's, and man's perennial, yearnings in terms of his incidental loss of the constancy and beauty of nature. If, after all, this mood is one that precedes the pastoral setting itself, then we can say that what is happening in the poem is exactly the reverse of "pathetic fallacy", in which man weeps for nature, rather than nature weeps for man, as is generally thought to be the case of Colin Clout.