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'Prince *Arthur*, Crowne of Martiall Band':
The Vision and the Quest in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*

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ABSTRACT

Over the four hundred years which have elapsed since the publication of *The Faerie Queene*, the effectiveness of Arthur as the central hero of the poem has been called into question time and time again. Critics have objected to the sporadic nature of Arthur's appearances, and to the fact that his quest is unfinished. In the first chapter of my thesis I provide a survey of Spenser criticism, covering neoclassical and romantic views as well as a selection of twentieth century studies. My own argument centres on the belief that the role of Arthur in *The Faerie Queene* is not best understood in terms of a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. In contrast to the titular heroes of each book, perfection is the starting point of Arthur's story, not a goal he gradually works towards. The effects of Arthur's interventions do differ from book to book, but this reflects the evolving moral allegory of *The Faerie Queene* rather than the development of Arthur himself.

In order to highlight the pre-eminence of Arthur vis-a-vis the titular knights of *The Faerie Queene*, chapter two compares the presentation of Arthur in a selection of medieval texts: the Celtic Arthur of the *Mabinogion*, the courtly king of Chretien de Troyes, Arthur's relation to the Grail in *La Queste del Saint Graal*, the warrior-king of Layamon's *Brut*, and the gathering together of different types of Arthurian narrative by Sir Thomas Malory. There has not been an extended study of Spenser's Arthur in this context - those critics who touch on the topic tend not to go beyond the generalisation that Spenser exploits the prestige of Arthurian tradition whilst avoiding the constraints of reworking the familiar story.

The remaining chapters of the thesis fall into two groups: first Arthur is considered as a visionary; subsequently the adventures of his quest are discussed. In chapter three I interpret Arthur's vision of Gloriana as the source of his pre-eminence. Although Gloriana is a transcendent figure, the intimacy of her meeting with Arthur is such that he becomes part of the ideal she represents. Chapter four sets out first in general terms, and subsequently through specific reference to Britomart's experience in the House of Busirane, the distinction between vision and adventure. This serves as an anticipation of chapters five to seven, in which the visionary turning points of the quests of Britomart, Calidore, and Red Crosse are shown to highlight the paradigmatic status of Arthur's experience. The visions of the titular knights are more specific and therefore more limited in their ideality, as

well as lacking the intimacy of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. Chapters eight to ten concentrate on Arthur's adventures. These do not constitute a developing narrative, but there is a pattern to his interventions in the stories of others. As an idealised but undeveloping figure Spenser's Arthur has some affinities with the legendary figure of medieval literature considered in chapter two. However, my final three chapters also suggest a significant similarity between 'Prince *Arthur* crowne of Martiall band' and a different romance figure, the best-knight-in-the-world.

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Chapter One: Readings of Spenser's Arthur (1590-1996)

In 1936 C.S. Lewis came to the following conclusion on the role of Spenser's Arthur:

The regrettable truth is that in the unfinished state of the poem we cannot interpret its hero at all. We know from the preface that he personifies Magnificence and is seeking Gloriana, or Glory. But if we consider how little we should know of Britomart from the mere statement that she is Chastity, we shall see that this tells us little about Arthur. And if we consider how little we should know of Spenser's 'chastity' if we had never been to the Garden of Adonis ... we must conclude that we do not know what 'Glory' would have come to mean in the completed poem... Spenser's whole method is such that we have a very dim perception of his characters until we meet them or their archetypes at the great allegorical centres of each book... Spenser must have intended a final book on Arthur and Gloriana which would have stood to the whole poem as such central or focal cantos stand to their several books ... As things are, however, Arthur is inexplicable ... The poem is not finished. It is a poem of a kind that loses more than most by being unfinished. Its centre, the seat of its highest life, is missing.¹

Lewis modified his view of Spenser's Arthur in subsequent studies of *The Faerie Queene*.² However, the above quotation serves as a succinct example of the general tendency of Spenser scholarship on this subject.³ Even critics such as James Nohrnberg who regard Spenser's Arthur as a more effective part of the structure of *The Faerie Queene* tend to look beyond the boundaries of the surviving text of the poem in order to do so:

The multiple unity of *The Faerie Queene* has Arthur for its emblem ... If only because Arthur is greater than the other knights, his periodic intervention on their behalf carries a strong suggestion of a 'descent from heaven' motif... Thus the regular introduction of Arthur is readily referred to a supervisory view of the poem's action; Arthur's intervention not only aligns the poem with itself - if that expression can be allowed - but also with a divine milieu ... By the end of twelve books the Prince should have had his quota of twelve cantos,

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study of Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 336-337.

² Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), pp.382-383 regards Arthur's relationship with Gloriana as more aesthetically effective, but as that of an ideal seeker rather than, as I propose to argue, an image of achieved perfection. See also his *Spenser's Images of Life*, ed. by Alastair Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 132-140; and 'Edmund Spenser, 1552-99' and 'Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser', both included in Lewis' *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 121-145, 149-163.

³ Compare, for example, Josephine Waters Bennett, *The Evolution of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 53-60; Graham Hough, *Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'* (London: Duckworth, 1962), pp. 89, 226-230; and Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p.82.

but until then the whole man can only be latent in the pattern, when compared to the self-realization allowed the other knights.⁴

Spenser's Arthur is certainly a problem, but he is not, as Lewis and others imply, the Achilles' heel of *The Faerie Queene*.

The fact that Spenser wrote only six of the projected twenty-four books of *The Faerie Queene* does not render the figure of Arthur aesthetically ineffective if attention is paid to the pattern suggested by his appearances in the extant text. In each book it is the titular knight who is cast as a developing figure. For example, the quest of Red Crosse has a beginning, middle, and end. The knight is presented as a more complete representative of Holiness when he defeats the Dragon than when he finds himself confronting the monster Error shortly after setting out on his quest. Arthur is introduced as a knight-rescuer in Book One, and this remains his characteristic role throughout the poem. To be sure, the effects of his interventions on behalf of Red Crosse, Guyon, Florimell, Amyas, Britomart, Timias, Serena and Mirabella are different. However, this variety reflects neither the development nor the diminishing of Arthur's perfection, but rather the evolving moral allegory of *The Faerie Queene*. In order to place this argument in the context of Spenser scholarship I will provide a survey of existing criticism, looking first at pre-twentieth century assessments, and subsequently at more recent studies.⁵ I will obviously focus on readings of Spenser's Arthur, but will place these in the context of general developments in criticism of the poem.

In the four centuries since the publication of *The Faerie Queene*, different critical approaches have led to correspondingly distinct interpretations of Arthur. From the earliest days of Spenser criticism, Arthur has been interpreted in terms of historical allegory: as a Sidney, Leicester or Essex figure; as a composite of Tudor worthies; or as a compliment to the Tudor dynasty which claimed him as its ancestor. Several attempts have also been made to explain Arthur by concentrating on his role as Magnificence in the moral

⁴ James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 36-37, 42.

⁵ General coverage of Spenser scholarship is provided by David Evett in 'Scholarship, 1579-1932', and in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. by A.C. Hamilton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp.628-630. See also *Contemporary Thought on Edmund Spenser: With a Bibliography of Criticism of the 'Faerie Queene', 1900-1970*, ed. by Richard C. Frushnell and Bernard J. Vondersmith (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press; London: Feffer and Simons, 1975); and the introductions, general and to specific books, in Hamilton's edition of *The Faerie Queene* (London and New York: Longman, 1977).

allegory. I will refer to both the historical and moral allegories of the poem where appropriate in the chapters which follow, but neither seems to me the most effective means of understanding the overall significance of Spenser's Arthur: he may well be a Leicester figure in the closing cantos of Book Five, but his intimate encounter with Gloriana can surely not stand such a reading; likewise interpreting Arthur as Magnificence only works if one changes what one means by 'magnificence' from book to book. For example, Arthur is presented as an invincible knight-rescuer in both the Orgoglio episode of Book One and the Grantorto episode of Book Five; but in the legend of Holiness his magnificence is encapsulated in his appearance (I vii 29-36), while in the social milieu of the legend of Justice it is reflected in the civic reception which follows his victory (V xi 34).⁶ At the opposite extreme from the allegorical approach is preoccupation with the literal narrative of the poem. I return to this approach when considering Romantic readings of *The Faerie Queene* but will not engage much with it for the simple reason that Arthur tends to be mentioned as an example of Spenser's style rather than as a significant component in the design of the poem. It is with interpretations which consider Arthur's structural position that I am primarily concerned.

Arthur's effectiveness as a unifying device was questioned long before C.S. Lewis' *Allegory of Love*. It is perhaps as well to begin by making clear what Spenser himself has to say on the subject. The Letter to Raleigh exalts Arthur above the titular knights by comparing him to the central protagonists of earlier epics:

... I haue followed all the antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Vlysses hath ensampled a good gouernour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso disseuered them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in Philosophy call Ethice, or vertues of a priuate man, coloured in his Rinaldo: The other named Politice in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised, the which is the purpose of these first twelue bookes: which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged, to frame the other part of polliticke vertues in his person, after that hee came to be king.⁷

⁶ See chapters eight and nine for discussion of these episodes.

⁷ All quotations from the Letter to Raleigh and *The Faerie Queene* are based on Hamilton's edition.

Regarded as an epic hero, the Arthur of *The Faerie Queene* is bound to be judged a failure.⁸ Yet he bears little resemblance to Agamemnon, Odysseus, Aeneas, Orlando, Rinaldo or Godfrey; and it is questionable whether he would have been regarded as their literary descendant had it not been for the Letter to Raleigh. In fact, even in this notoriously misleading document, Spenser associates his Prince with a different literary tradition:

So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule. So haue I laboured to doe in the person of Arthure: whom I conceiue after his long education by Timon, to whom he was by Merlin deliuered to be brought vp, so soone as he was borne of the Lady Igrayne, to haue seene in a dream or vision the Faery Queen, with whose excellent beauty rauished, he awaking resolved to seeke her out, and so being by Merlin armed, and by Timon throughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faerye land.

When Spenser's Arthur is compared to the legendary king of medieval chronicle and romance, and regarded as an example of the romance motif of the best-knight-in-the-world favoured by a faerie mistress, a more positive assessment of his role in *The Faerie Queene* is possible. Certainly Arthur's adventures do not bring him any closer to Gloriana: the object of his quest seems to be as distant a prospect when he leaves the poem for the last time (VI viii 30.7-9) as it does when he first recounts his quest (I ix 20. 1-2). However, it can be argued that it is precisely *because* Spenser does not tell the story of Arthur that the Prince functions as an effective paradigm: as an undeveloping figure of achieved virtue he effectively functions as an example to be followed. Through comparison of *The Faerie Queene* with earlier Arthurian literature, and through comparing the vision and quest of Arthur with those of the titular knights, I hope to show that he represents an achieved ideal from his first appearance in the poem, functioning as an inspiration for those who encounter him in the course of Spenser's fiction, and for the reader.

To impose period classifications on literary criticism, as on literature itself, has its risks - there are always dissident voices, and continuity tends to balance change. Nevertheless from 1660-1780, the consequences of neoclassical precepts for Spenser

⁸ Commendatory readings of Spenser's Arthur as an epic hero tend to distort the text. A relatively recent example is A. Kent Heatt's article, 'The Passing of Arthur in Malory, Spenser, and Shakespeare: The Avoidance of Closure', in *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition* (London and New York: Garland, 1988), ed. by Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe, pp. 173-192. Heatt interprets II x 49 as an anticipation of a victory equivalent to that of Malory's Arthur over the Roman Empire. Although ingenious, Heatt's argument depends too much on the might-have-beens of a complete *Faerie Queene*.

criticism were that *The Faerie Queene* was regarded as an epic rather than a romance, and generally found faulty because it did not observe epic conventions. Dryden, although an admirer of 'that immortal poem the *Fairy Queen*', objected generally to Spenser's disregard for unity of action, and in particular to his undifferentiated heroes in *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693).⁹ Even Thomas Warton and Richard Hurd, both of whom attempted to temper the neoclassical bias against romance with a more generous assessment of the medieval influences on *The Faerie Queene*, compared Arthur to the central protagonists of the classical epics. For Warton, Arthur fails as a unifying device:

It may be asked with great propriety, how does Arthur execute the grand, simple and ultimate design intended by the poet? It may be answered, with some degree of plausibility, that by lending his respective assistance to each of the twelve knights who patronize the twelve virtues, in his allotted defence of each, Arthur approaches still nearer and nearer to Glory, till at last he gains a complete possession. But surely to assist is not a sufficient service. This secondary merit is inadequate to the reward. The poet ought to have made this 'brave knight' the leading adventurer. Arthur should have been the principal agent in vindicating the cause of holiness, temperance and the rest. If our hero had thus, in his own person, exerted himself in the protection of the twelve virtues, he might have been deservedly styled the perfect pattern of all, and consequently would have succeeded in the task assigned, the attainment of glory. At present he is only a subordinate or accessory character. The difficulties and obstacles which we expect him to surmount, in order to accomplish his final achievement, are removed by others. It is not he who subdues the dragon, in the first book, or quells the magician Busirane, in the third. These are the victories of St. George and of Britomart. On the whole, the twelve Knights do too much for Arthur to do anything; or at least, so much as may be reasonably required from the promised plan of the poet. While we are attending to the design of the hero of the book, we forget that of the hero of the poem.

Observations on 'The Faerie Queene' of Spenser
(1754, second edition 1762)¹⁰

Hurd went beyond identifying Arthur as the formal hero of a poem in which he plays a surprisingly small part in the literal narrative, attempting to explain why this is the case:

... the part of Prince Arthur in each book becomes *essential* and yet not *principal*,

⁹ Compare S.K. Heninger, 'The Aesthetic Experience of Reading Spenser', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, p. 81 on the criticism of this period: 'By the end of the seventeenth century *The Faerie Queene* was being judged with the same expectations and by the same criteria as those soon to be applied to the novel.'

¹⁰ Quoted by Paul J. Alpers, ed., *Edmund Spenser: A Critical Anthology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 101.

exactly as the poet had contrived it. They who rest in the literal story - that is who criticize it on the footing of a narrative poem - have constantly objected to this management. They say it necessarily breaks the unity of design. Prince Arthur, they affirm, should either have had no part in the other adventures, or he should have had the chief part. He should either have done nothing or more ... But how faulty soever this conduct be in the literal story, it is perfectly right in the *moral*, and that for an obvious reason, though his critics seem not to have been aware of it. His chief hero was not to have the twelve virtues in the *degree* in which the knights had, each of them, their own - such a character would be a monster. But he was to have so much of each as was requisite to form his superior character. Each virtue, in its perfection, is exemplified in its own knight; they are all, in a due degree, centred in Prince Arthur.

This was the poet's moral. And what way of expressing this moral but by making Prince Arthur appear in each adventure and in a manner subordinate to its proper hero? Thus, though inferior to each in his own specific virtue, he is superior to all by uniting the whole circle of their virtues in himself. And thus he arrives, at length, at the possession of that bright form of Glory, whose ravishing beauty, as seen in a dream or vision, had led him out into these miraculous adventures in the land of Fairy.

Letters on Chivalry and Romance, letter 8, 1762¹¹

Hurd came to a more positive conclusion regarding the aesthetic effectiveness of Spenser's Arthur, but there is some confusion in his view of the relationship between the Prince and the titular knights. Can it be proven that Arthur is 'inferior' to, say, Red Crosse as an example of Holiness? Why then does Orgoglio defeat Red Crosse, only to be himself overwhelmed by Arthur? Does the reader have to wait until Arthur's appearances in subsequent books reveal 'the whole circle of virtues' united in him in order to appreciate his role as a paradigm of chivalry and virtue? Perhaps this limited interpretation of Spenser's Arthur from the most sympathetic eighteenth century readers of romance reflects the difference between Renaissance and Augustan expectations of an idealised figure. The literature of the later period does have its idealised figures, for example Fielding's Mr. Allworthy, but they are very much rooted in the contingent world which in the main body of my thesis I argue that Spenser's Arthur transcends.¹²

¹¹ Quoted by Alpers, pp. 117-118.

¹² Compare Heninger, pp. 82-83: 'No longer was ultimate reality believed to reside with Plato's timeless ideas, or with a benign deity, or with the heroes and heroines of old. Rather, according to prevalent assumption, the objects of physical nature became the constituents of ultimate reality. The ascendant ontology was materialistic and the ascendant epistemology was empirical ... Under these strictures, a poem as Sidney and Spenser conceived it is impossible.' Contrast Samuel Monk, *The Sublime* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960). Monk challenges the view that neoclassical principles had firm hegemony throughout the eighteenth century: the preoccupations of the age with the urbane and the factual were tempered by a gradually changing response to nature. The developments Monk discusses led to a more sympathetic conception of humanity; but not, as with the Arthur of *The Faerie Queene*, to an idealistic view of its potential.

During the Romantic era dreams and visionary expression became key preoccupations; and with this development came a more sympathetic response to Spenser's idealising cast of mind. Wordsworth acclaimed Spenser as a poet of 'visions' and of 'human forms and superhuman powers' (*The Prelude* VI 104-109).¹³ One might also contrast the neoclassical sentiments of Addison's *Account of the Greatest English Poets* (1694):

Old *Spencer* next, warm'd with Poetick Rage,
In Antick Tales amus'd a Barb'rous Age;
An Age that yet uncultivate and Rude,
Where-e're the Poet's Fancy led, pursu'd
Through pathless Fields, and unfrequented Floods,
To Dens of Dragons, and Enchanted Woods.
But now the Mystic Tale, that pleas'd of Yore,
Can Charm an understanding Age no more.¹⁴

with the fulsome praise of Keats, who invoked the author of *The Faerie Queene* as muse in 'Spenser ! a jealous honourer of thine'. Although Keats' developing preoccupation with the ambiguous relationship between dream and reality had affinities with Arthur's vision of Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene*, the main channel of influence between Spenser and Keats, and the romantics in general, remained stylistic.¹⁵

The views of Wordsworth and Keats are echoed in the criticism of the nineteenth century. Romantic enthusiasm for Spenser was not accompanied by constructive readings of the place of Arthur in *The Faerie Queene*. The role of Spenser's Prince is most effectively understood in terms of the structure and allegory of the poem, both of which were regarded negatively as restraints on Spenser's imagination. James Russell Lowell admired the potential for escapism offered by the dream-like narrative of *The Faerie Queene*, resenting those parts of the poem where the moral allegory was inescapable:

whenever ... you come suddenly on the moral, it gives you a shock of

¹³ W. J. B. Owen, 'William Wordsworth', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 735-737 discusses allusions to Spenser in Wordsworth's poetry. See also Samuel E. Schulman, 'The Spenserian Enchantments of Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence*', *MP* 79 (1981-82), 24-44.

¹⁴ Addison, it must be said, had not read *The Faerie Queene* when he wrote *The Account*. A more positive attitude to Spenser is shown in his contributions to *The Spectator*, 1711-1712. Addison is quoted from Robert M. Cummings, ed., *Spenser: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) pp. 224-225.

¹⁵ Miriam Allott, 'Keats', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 416-417. Both Spenser and Keats are accorded a chapter in Parker's *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 54-113, 159-218. For Keats I use *The Complete Poems*, ed. by John Barnard (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973).

unpleasant surprise, a kind of grit, as when one's teeth close on a bit of gravel in a dish of strawberries and cream.

'Spenser', *North American Review*, 1875¹⁶

Lowell's appreciation of the surface narrative of *The Faerie Queene* can be placed alongside Hazlitt's appraisal of Spenser in *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818). Here I return to a point I mentioned earlier: Hazlitt does mention Arthur, but only as an illustration of Spenser's style:

Of all the poets, he is the most poetical... There is an originality, richness, and variety in his allegorical personages and fictions, which almost vies with the splendour of the ancient mythology ... He waves his wand of enchantment - and at once embodies airy beings, and throws a delicious veil over all actual objects. The two worlds of reality and of fiction are poised on the wings of his imagination. His ideas, indeed, seem more distinct than his perceptions. He is the painter of abstractions, and describes them with dazzling minuteness. In the Mask of Cupid he makes the God of Love 'clap on high his coloured winges *twain*'; and it is said of Gluttony, in the Procession of the Passions, 'In greene vine leaues he was right fitly clad.' At times he becomes picturesque from his intense love of beauty; as where he compares Prince Arthur's crest to the appearance of the almond tree [quotes I vii 32] ... The love of beauty, however, and not of truth, is the moving principle of his mind; and he is guided in his fantastic delineations by no rule but the impulse of an inexhaustible imagination ...¹⁷

Warton and Hurd may have tried to read Arthur as a figure with stronger epic characteristics than he actually has in the poem. However, neoclassical focus on the structure of *The Faerie Queene* comes closer to a constructive reading of Spenser's Arthur than the opinions of most poets and critics of the nineteenth century.

Moving on to consider twentieth century interpretations of Spenser's Arthur, relatively few critics focus entirely on his role. By focusing my thesis on Arthur, the only

¹⁶ Quoted by Peter Bayley, ed., *Spenser, 'The Faerie Queene': A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 14. The limitations of Lowell's response to *The Faerie Queene* are discussed by Rudolph B. Gottfried, 'Spenser Recovered: The Poet and Historical Scholarship', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, pp. 61-68.

¹⁷ Quoted by Bayley, pp.34-35. A similar reading of this stanza is offered by John Arthos, *On the Poetry of Spenser and the Form of the Romances* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), p. 45. Hamilton, 'On Annotating Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, p. 51 cites annotations to I vii 32 from Kitchin to Kathleen Williams. Compare Alpers, *The Poetry of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 137-159 on early annotators of the poem. Alpers argues that their assessments anticipate his own emphasis on the importance of attending to the details of the surface narrative of *The Faerie Queene*.

figure who appears in every book of *The Faerie Queene*, I hope to avoid the two main problems experienced by critics of so vast and detailed a text - over-generality and over-specificity. What follows is a survey of significant *types* of readings, rather than an attempt at comprehensiveness. A similar structure is used in Merritt Y. Hughes' article 'The Arthurs of *The Faerie Queene*', published in the 1953 volume of *Etudes Anglaises*.¹⁸ However, the categories adopted by Hughes - the imperial Arthur, the minister of grace, and the rival of Hercules - require modification in the light of subsequent Spenser criticism. New historicism has produced readings which go far beyond the mere identification of allusions to specific individuals and events from Tudor history. Additionally, the influence of modern psychology can be detected in readings of *The Faerie Queene* which post-date Hughes' article. In the remainder of this introduction I will employ the following headings: Arthur as history, Arthur as myth, and Arthur as protagonist. These classifications are rather broad, but some organisational principle is required to create order from the extensive body of Spenser scholarship. I will concentrate largely on studies from the latter half of this century, as the reputations and significance of earlier criticism are well established.¹⁹ The confines of space permit me to cite only a few key works under each heading, and explore even fewer arguments in any detail. However, the selectivity of this general survey of criticism is balanced by acknowledgment of a wider range of scholarship in the footnotes to future chapters.

(i) Arthur as History.

This heading is used as an umbrella title for different kinds of studies. A number of critics have interpreted *The Faerie Queene* as an expression of the cult of Elizabeth. In general, these readings contrast the exalted position of Gloriana to the presentation of Arthur as a striving figure. In *The Poem's Two Bodies*, David Lee Miller writes:

Taking his cue from the queen's political transformation of chivalric and Petrarchan rhetorics, Spenser draws on the resources of Neoplatonism to infuse the monarch's body politic with an erotically compelling visionary glory: the transcendental beauty that the Platonic lover beholds in the personal soul of his Beatrice or Laura is assimilated to Elizabeth's political power in the vision of a 'lover' who seeks her favor as ardently as Arthur seeks Gloriana, and whose

¹⁸ Merritt Y. Hughes, 'The Arthurs of *The Faerie Queene*', *Etudes Anglaises* 6 (1953), 193-213; reprinted in *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy (London and New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 205-228.

¹⁹ See footnote five.

historical gestalt is as profoundly constituted by the fiction and figure of royal sovereignty ... Elizabeth is a figure of *The Faerie Queene's* ideal unity; unlike Arthur, she represents the achieved form of this unity, central and preeminent in her iconic splendor.²⁰

Miller's approach draws on new historicism and Lacanian psychology in presenting an anticipated but deferred wholeness as the key to understanding the poem. By contrast, Harry Berger provides an unusual interpretation of *Gloriana* as an unfulfilled figure:

Gloriana is but one aspect of Elizabeth, and Gloriana without Arthur images a certain incompleteness in Elizabeth herself; her humanity is dramatically enacted in the relationship between Gloriana and Arthur. A Queen needs the sympathy and the attitude toward life that Arthur possesses. She must respond, in fact, with special intensity to the travails of Everyman, not only because Everyman is her subject but because Everyman is herself. Gloriana is not, of course, an Everyman any more than she is a mere copy of Elizabeth.²¹

The argument I develop in the chapters which follow is that Arthur becomes part of the ideal Gloriana represents during their intimate encounter, thereafter functioning as a paradigmatic figure. The potentially damaging effects of the cult of Elizabeth on her courtiers is certainly an important element in *The Faerie Queene*, but it is more clearly shown through the presentation of Belphoebe and Timias.²² Timias is Arthur's squire and Belphoebe, Spenser tells us in the Letter to Raleigh, is an avatar of Elizabeth. Their story

²⁰ David Lee Miller, *The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 'Faerie Queene'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp.20, 98. For interpretation of the poem in terms of the cult of Elizabeth compare Thomas H. Cain, *Praise in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Robert J. Mueller, "'Infinite Desire': Spenser's Arthur and the Representation of Courtly Ambition", *ELH* 58 (1991), 747-771; and Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' and the Cult of Elizabeth* (London and Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983). See also Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). Berry's study is a critique of Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), combining the new historical approach with the feminist in her discussion of literary depictions of Elizabeth as an exceptionally powerful female object of desire.

²¹ Harry Berger, Jr., *The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 168.

²² Berger writes in 'Kidnapped Romance: Discourse in *The Faerie Queene*', in *Unfolded Tales: Essays in Renaissance Romance*, ed. by George M. Logan and Gordon Teskey (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 225: 'Perhaps, as Arthur leaves the third book, Timias becomes his surrogate, just as Florimell, Belphoebe, and Amoret have been thought to be surrogates for Britomart.' For a more extensive treatment of Belphoebe and Timias see Mary Villeponteaux, "'Semper Eadem": Belphoebe's Denial of Desire', in *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*, ed. by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (London and Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), pp. 29-45. However, Villeponteaux, p.44, implicitly implicates Arthur in the obvious vulnerability of Timias: 'When Arthur encounters him in the woods he fails to recognize his erstwhile squire, and Timias does not enlighten him.' See also Judith H. Anderson, 'Belphoebe', and A. Leigh DeNeef, 'Timias' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 85-87, 690-691.

thus serves as a negative foil for the portrayal of Arthur as an ideal knight, both in terms of the martial and amorous aspects of the chivalric ideal.

Historical interpretations of *The Faerie Queene* are not restricted to the presence (or absence) of Elizabeth in the text. The general studies of Arthur B. Ferguson and Richard McCoy on chivalry in Renaissance England include discussion of *The Faerie Queene*.²³ The chivalric institutions of the Tudor Age are also the central theme of Michael Leslie's monograph, *Spenser's 'Fierce Warres and Faithfull Loues': Martial and Chivalric Symbolism in 'The Faerie Queene'*.²⁴ Leslie covers Arthur's appearance in detail, and also treats his rescue of Guyon from Pyrochles and Cymochles at length. However, he does not stress what is a key point of my argument, namely that the perfection suggested by Arthur's chivalric accoutrements is confirmed through his actions. Arthur's love for Gloriana is the inspiration of his prowess in deeds of arms: he describes their meeting after - indeed almost as an explanation of - his rescue of Red Crosse from Orgoglio's dungeon.

The attitude of Spenser's contemporaries to the Arthurian legend received extensive coverage by Edwin Greenlaw and Charles Bowie Millican in the 1930s.²⁵ My own reading of Spenser's Arthur will place more emphasis on the affinities between *The Faerie Queene* and medieval romance than on historical background to the poem. At times Spenser uses contemporary allusions or direct exhortation of the reader to enhance the expository effectiveness of his poem. However, the impact of these moments depends on selective use. It is appropriate that Arthur should most closely resemble Leicester in Book Five, where the allegory is concerned with the administration of good government; while the description of Arthur's armour as an image of achieved virtue which 'may be seene, if sought' (I vii 36.9) before his supremacy is actively demonstrated through the rescue of Red

²³ Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986) discusses the transitional culture of which *The Faerie Queene* was one expression: Spenser was influenced both by medieval chivalry and Renaissance humanism. See also Ferguson's *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1960). McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (London and Berkeley: California University Press, 1989) argues that Spenser's treatment of Elizabethan chivalry was ambiguous rather than celebratory, an expression of the aristocratic struggle for independence from the domination of the sovereign. See also McCoy's article on chivalry in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 148-149.

²⁴ Michael Leslie, *Spenser's 'Fierce Warres and Faithfull Loues': Martial and Chivalric Symbolism in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1983).

²⁵ Edwin Greenlaw, *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932); Charles Bowie Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round: A Study in the Contemporaneous Background for Spenser's Use of the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932).

Crosse suggests that his perfection is an attainable goal. The combination of didacticism and historical reference in *The Faerie Queene* is discussed in A. Bartlett Giamatti's chapter on 'Arthur: History and Myth'.²⁶ Giamatti compares Spenser's Letter to Raleigh and Caxton's preface to Malory as expressions of 'the didactic desire to renew chivalric virtues on the model of Arthur'.²⁷ The chronicles of Britain and Faery read by Arthur and Guyon in Alma's castle are taken as a starting point for discussion of the interaction of history and myth which characterises Spenser's use of the Arthurian legend. Giamatti thus brings me to my second heading.

(ii) Arthur as Myth.

The overlap between this category and the former has a long history. During the Tudor era, whether Arthur was a historical or mythical figure was a hotly debated issue, aptly called 'The Battle of the Books' by Greenlaw.²⁸ Nevertheless, a distinction can be made between the emphasis modern studies place on the two ways of reading the poem. Maurice Evans acknowledges the historical dimension of *The Faerie Queene* - Arthur is 'the most famous of Elizabeth's ancestors' - but stresses the importance of his mythical associations - 'a prince of the Trojan line, Arthur was descended from heroes already celebrated in poetic myth and identified with the great tradition of heroic poetry'.²⁹ Graham Hough places Spenser's Arthur in the context of a different myth, and one with which I am more concerned:

French, British or Celtic in origin, largely translated as it may be, it is the

²⁶ Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses: Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'* (London and Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975), pp.53-62. See also Andrew Fichter, *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 5-6: 'To the extent that Spenser explores an analogy between Arthurian and Tudor times he follows a tradition propagated by the Tudor monarchs themselves, who claimed descent from Arthur and sought thereby to assert their right to his empire ... for him, as for Tasso, Ariosto, and Virgil, the business of forging links between the present and the past is more than incidental to the poem. Such connections argue against the view of time as a random, discontinuous, and irrational succession of events.'

²⁷ Giamatti, p. 54.

²⁸ Greenlaw, pp. 1-58. This debate continues in our own time. See Geoffrey Ashe, 'The Convergence of Arthurian Studies', in *The Arthurian Tradition: Essays in Convergence* ed. by Mary Flowers Braswell and John M. Bugge, (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. 10-28.

²⁹ Maurice Evans, *Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism: A Commentary on the 'Faerie Queene'* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 11. Arthur is specifically identified as a Hercules figure pp. 13, 200-201. See also Hughes, pp.205-213; and Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptation of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), pp. 207-213. Leslie, p.52 interprets Arthur as an idealised Achilles figure.

Arthurian legend that is the real British mythology, and it is Malory who has established it. Spenser's Arthur is aside from the central tradition; Spenser is describing the *enfances* of the king that we know, and they are merely his own invention. One does not invent a mythology; and Spenser's Arthur remains a personal imaginative creation, not a true part of the national consciousness.³⁰

Hough's conflation of Arthurian legend and British mythology is too limiting. Spenser's Arthur does contribute to the patriotic dimension of *The Faerie Queene*. This is perhaps most emphatically demonstrated in his response to *Briton Moniments*, the chronicle of his nation he reads during his involvement in the quest of the knight of Temperance:

At last quite rauisht with delight, to heare
The royall Ofspring of his natiue land,
Cryde out, Deare countrey, O how dearely deare
Ought thy remembraunce, and perpetuall band
Be to thy foster Childe, that from thy hand
Did commun breath and nouriture receaue?
How brutish is it not to vnderstand,
How much to her we owe, that all vs gaue,
That gaue vnto vs all, what euer good we haue.

(II x 69)

Much of the Spenser criticism which focuses on the mythical aspect of *The Faerie Queene* is indebted to the work of Northrop Frye. The preface to Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* explains how this study of critical theory began as an attempt to discuss the literary symbolism and Biblical typology of *The Faerie Queene*:

... in my beginning was my end. The introduction to Spenser became an introduction to the theory of allegory, and that theory obstinately adhered to a much larger theoretical structure. The basis of argument became more and more discursive, and less and less historical and Spenserian. I soon found myself entangled in those parts of criticism that have to do with such words as 'myth,' 'symbol,' 'ritual,' and 'archetype,' and my efforts to make sense of these words in various published articles met with enough interest to encourage me to proceed further along these lines.³¹

Frye makes considerable reference to Spenser in *Anatomy*, but not to the figure of Arthur. This is not true of his later article, 'The Structure of Imagery in *The Faerie Queene*':

Spenser means by 'Faerie' primarily the world of realized human nature. It is an 'antique' world, extending backward to Eden and the Golden Age, and its central

³⁰ Hough, p. 228.

³¹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p.vii.

figure of Prince Arthur was chosen, Spenser tells us, as 'furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time'...foreshortening of time suggests a world of dream and wishfulfilment, like the fairylands of Shakespeare's comedies. But Spenser, with his uneasy political feeling that the price of authority is eternal vigilance, will hardly allow his virtuous characters even to sleep, much less dream, ... Prince Arthur's long tirade against night (III, iv) would be out of proportion if night, like its seasonal counterpart winter, did not symbolize a lower world than Faerie.³²

Frye's interpretation of the poem as myth influenced James Nohrnberg's *Analogy of 'The Faerie Queene'*, quoted at the beginning of this introduction. Nohrnberg's opening chapter on the plan and organisation of the poem includes a section entitled 'Arthurian Torso', in which the importance of Arthur vis-a-vis the titular knights and his resemblance to other mythic figures are discussed.³³ Spenser's mythmaking is also the subject of one of the longer articles in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, in which Kenneth Gross discusses how Spenser connects past, present, and future in a manner which engages the reader.³⁴ Gross provides a useful bibliography, beginning with words which are worth repeating to conclude this section of my introduction:

Almost any study of the poet will have to characterize his use of mythological allegory, political iconography, or supernatural fiction in ways that could contribute to a description of his 'mythmaking' ...³⁵

(iii) Arthur as Protagonist.

In a sense all readings of Spenser's Arthur which regard him as a *developing* rather than a *complete* figure fall into this category. Some critics argue that Arthur is a central figure, superior to the titular knights, but by suggesting that he undergoes a process of change imply that he does not represent a fully realised ideal. An interesting but problematic example of this approach can be found in Pauline Parker's *Allegory of the 'Faerie Queene'*. Parker's argument centres on the Christian dimension of the poem. Not surprisingly, she regards Arthur as a redeemer figure. However, his transcendence is not unqualified:

... Spenser knew that the fates of all humanity are bound together, and that

³² Frye, 'The Structure of Imagery in *The Faerie Queene*', *UTQ* 30 (1960-1961), p. 113.

³³ Nohrnberg, pp.35-58.

³⁴ Kenneth Gross, 'Myth, Mythmaking', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 487-493.

³⁵ Gross, p. 492.

Arthur will never find Gloriana in herself if he has not sought her in her servants ... Arthur is not human in the usual sense of partaking in human frailty but is rather a kind of earthly providence... the whole action of all six books and all the land of faerie with its forests, castles, and sea-shores, exist in Arthur's soul, and there only. It is within him that the drama of transformation of the struggling actual into the triumphant ideal, is really taking place.³⁶

While Parker focuses on Arthur's relationship with the titular knights, an article by Thomas Vesce, 'Towards an Appreciation of Arthur's Persona in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', centres on his function as a model for the reader:

Of all the knights which traditional legend could offer Spenser, the *persona* of Arthur was most applicable to his purpose. Arthur possessed an aura which could directly touch the imagination of Spenser's audience, and so most instruct them ... Arthur is ... not so much an old literary figure refurbished as he is the personification of the essential *virtu* (power) of man ... Arthur should be understood as an emanation of man's mind, an all-encompassing *persona* whom Spenser cunningly offers as an unencumbered vehicle for the poetic process of fulfilment which is his *Faerie Queene*.³⁷

Vesce anticipates my own thesis in so far as he argues that the detachment of Spenser's Arthur from medieval tradition is crucial to his effectiveness as an exemplary figure. However, he has remarkably little to say on what Arthur actually does in *The Faerie Queene*. Surely it is in the recurrent pattern whereby Arthur demonstrates his pre-eminence vis-a-vis the less idealised figures of the poem, as much as through the occasional interpolated comments from the narrator which specifically address the reader, that the effectiveness of the Prince in the expository scheme of the poem is to be found?

Studies which interpret Arthur in terms of his Magnificence also tend to argue or imply that Arthur changes in the course of the poem, showing a more down-to-earth

³⁶ Parker, *The Allegory of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 8, 169. An exposition of *The Faerie Queene* as a Christian poem in which Arthur is used as a touchstone for a process of development can also be found in Anderson's *The Growth of a Personal Voice: 'Piers Plowman' and 'The Faerie Queene'* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). Anderson, p.177 concludes that 'whilst in Book I Arthur's significance is conspicuously theological', later appearances reflect the general 'personalising of vision' characteristic of *The Faerie Queene*. For Arthur as a figure who evolves through his successive encounters with the titular knights see also Evans, pp. 28-29; Angus Fletcher, *The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 53; Giamatti, p. 51; Hamilton, *The Structure of Allegory in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 56; and Heninger, pp. 88-98.

³⁷ Thomas Vesce, 'Towards an Appreciation of Arthur's Persona in *The Faerie Queene* ', *Mid-Hudson Language Studies* 4 (1981). pp. 43-44, 50. Ronald Arthur Horton, *The Unity of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978). pp.15-24 also links the development of Arthur with that of the reader.

virtue in the legend of Temperance than in the more spiritually charged context of the legend of Holiness. A.S.P. Woodhouse argues that Arthur represents divine grace in Book One, highlighting human unworthiness; while in Book Two he figures classical magnanimity, encapsulating an optimistic view of human potential. By using Arthur as a pre-eminent figure in both contexts, Spenser anticipates the eventual synthesis of the orders of nature and grace.³⁸ Ronald Arthur Horton interprets the Magnificence of Spenser's Arthur as a combination of ambition and perseverance, both qualities which suggest a positively presented but developing figure.³⁹ The most extensive treatment of Spenserian Magnificence is the unpublished dissertation of Hugh MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur in Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': Historical, Religious and Ethical Studies*. MacLachlan's sequential reading of Arthur's appearances in the poem concentrates on the first two books: in the first the Prince represents divine grace, the foundation of ethical life; in the second Arthur represents Magnificence - the great deeds which do not establish virtue but bring it to perfection. In the remaining books, MacLachlan argues that Arthur's interventionist role is slighter. Of the development of the poem MacLachlan concludes:

At its most fundamental level then, the movement of *The Faerie Queene* is from poetry of celebration to the poetry of meditation. It seems to me that the *Faerie Queene* is the precursor of that great body of literature of the seventeenth century that turns from the uncertainties of the external world to the contemplation of the internal world. Spenser's epic vision fails in the face of human experience. And the moment he turns inward he sets the pattern for writers like Southwell, Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw and Marvell. And in this new scheme of things the figure of Arthur, the perfection of all the rest has no place.⁴⁰

³⁸ A.S.P. Woodhouse, 'Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queene*', *ELH* 16 (1949), 194-228.

³⁹ Horton, pp. 16-18.

⁴⁰ Hugh Alexander MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur in Spenser's Faerie Queene: Historical, Religious and Ethical Studies* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975), p. 612. MacLachlan has published an article based on his thesis: "'In the Person of Prince Arthur": Spenserian Magnificence and the Ciceronian Tradition', *UTQ* 46 (1976-77), 125-146. See also Cummings, 'Spenser's "Twelve Priuate Morall Virtues"', *SS* 8 (1987), 35-59; Richard J. Du Rocher, 'Arthur's Gift, Aristotle's Magnificence and Spenser's Allegory: A Study of *The Faerie Queene* I. 9. 19', *MP* 82 (1984), 185-190; Michael F. Moloney, 'St. Thomas and Spenser's Virtue of Magnificence', *JEGP* 52 (1953), 58-62; Douglas D. Waters, 'Prince Arthur as Christian Magnanimity in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*', *SEL* 9 (1969), 53-62. John Erskine Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 1-16 compares Spenser's treatment of Magnificence to that of Francesco Piccolomini in *Vniuersa Philosophia de Muribus*. Margaret Greaves puts Spenser's treatment of this quality in the context of medieval (despite her title) and Renaissance literature in *The Blazon of Honour: A Study in Renaissance Magnanimity* (London: Methuen, 1964).

Like most sweeping generalisations, this raises as many questions as it answers. Moreover, the changing general effect of the poem casts into relief Arthur's continuing status as a paradigm of chivalry and virtue. MacLachlan does not accord separate sections of his thesis to Books Three to Six of *The Faerie Queene*, in which Spenser is closest to the world of medieval romance. Much more has been written on the relationship between Magnificence theories and Spenser's Arthur than on his affinities with the heroes of medieval romance, the channel of influence with which I am most concerned. The limitations of the former approach are in fact signalled by a comment in MacLachlan's thesis: 'Magnificence, the virtue that Spenser's hero is to personify in all his adventures in *The Faerie Queene*, is only mentioned twice in the body of the poem itself.'⁴¹

The studies I have cited so far interpret Arthur either as an ideal, or as a potential ideal, at some or several points of the poem. Furthest from my argument are those readings which humanise Arthur to the extent of not considering him a positively presented paradigmatic figure at all. Some of the studies cited as readings of *The Faerie Queene* in terms of the cult of Elizabeth also fit into this category, notably Robert Mueller's article, "'Infinite Desire": Spenser's Arthur and the Representation of Courtly Ambition'. Mueller distinguishes Arthur from the titular knights, but presents the Prince as a less complete figure:

The titular heroes of his books issue from the faery court with purposes that take them away from the sphere that would occupy a place of centrality if the experience represented in the poem were not a matter of compromise with an imperfect world. In characterological terms, the heroes are content where Arthur never is. But Arthur is placed in the poem to figure desire absolutely and thus profoundly to subsume the experience of all courtiers and chivalric questers. Arthur registers both Spenser's objection to the management of courtly ambition and his fascination with absolute power. The poem finally concerns not Arthur's quest itself but rather the devious routes which are taken by courtiers who have moved beyond their experience of frustration. Arthur must be there in a sense to appease Spenser's conscience, to illustrate the truth of how ambition serves power but not the players of the courtly game.⁴²

In an article by Elizabeth Bellamy, 'Reading Desire Backwards: Belatedness and Spenser's Arthur', Arthur is interpreted as the victim not of Tudor politics, but of the human condition. His vision of Gloriana is regarded as the central episode of the poem, but

⁴¹ MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur*, p. 325.

⁴² Mueller, pp. 764. Compare Berger, *Allegorical Temper*, pp. 105-106.

influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis and drawing on the language of structuralism, Bellamy comes to a pessimistic conclusion:

After his just-missed encounter with the signified of his dream, the changeling Arthur is forced to construct his identity from a sliding chain of signifiers, unreliable building blocks for one seeking to become the subject of his own story.⁴³

Although modern readings of Spenser's Arthur as myth and as protagonist are obviously very different from the neoclassical assessments of *The Faerie Queene* I cite at the beginning of my introduction, both types of interpretation assume that Spenser attempts to tell the story of Arthur. The general aim of my thesis is to demonstrate that this is not the case; that in contrast to the narratives concerning the titular heroes, perfection is the starting point for Spenser's Arthur, not a goal which he gradually works towards. In chapter three I will consider Arthur's visionary encounter with Gloriana. Although Gloriana is presented as a transcendent figure - a quality confirmed by the fact that she is never seen again, either by Arthur or by any other protagonist - the intimacy of her meeting with Arthur is such that he becomes part of the ideal she represents. Chapter four sets out first in general terms, and subsequently through specific reference to Britomart's experience in the House of Busirane, the distinction between *vision* and *adventure*. This serves as an anticipation of chapters five to seven, in which the visionary turning points of the quests of Britomart, Calidore, and Red Crosse are compared to Arthur's experience. The ideal quality of the visions experienced by the titular knights is specific to the moral allegory of the book in which they appear; and they also lack the intimacy of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. In chapters eight to ten I explore Arthur's paradigmatic status from a different angle by focusing on the adventures of his quest. Spenser does not tell the story of Arthur, but there is a pattern to his interventions in the stories of others.

In order to highlight the pre-eminence of Arthur vis-a-vis the titular knights of *The Faerie Queene*, I will preface the main body of my thesis with a chapter comparing the figure of Arthur in medieval literature. There has not been an extended study of Spenser's Arthur in this context - those touching on the question tend to stop after noting that Spenser exploits the prestige of Arthurian tradition while avoiding the constraints of

⁴³ Bellamy, 'Reading Desire Backwards: Belatedness and Spenser's Arthur', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989), pp. 806-807. See also Sheila T. Cavanagh, "'Beauties Chace': Arthur and Women in *The Faerie Queene*", in *The Passing of Arthur*, ed. by Baswell and Sharpe, pp. 207-218.

reworking a well-known story.⁴⁴ Kathleen Williams has surprisingly little to say on Spenser's Arthur in 'Romance Tradition in *The Faerie Queene*':

To follow too precisely any one romance, or any one kind of romance, would have destroyed the flexibility and inclusiveness that Spenser needed, but it is the narrative of chivalry which gives him the outlines of his fiction and gives him also his hero Arthur, whom he imagines as an ardent young prince as yet uncommitted to the set characters and events of the Arthurian cycle ... Spenser, with his freer form, is able to retain Arthur's name, with its associations of glory, loyal and selfless achievement, and of course of British greatness, and to use situations and motifs from the Arthurian cycle wherever they can be useful to him.⁴⁵

Rosemond Tuve and Zailig Pollock stand out from this standard view by arguing that the slight role of Arthur in the narrative of *The Faerie Queene* is in line with what the reader of medieval romance would expect. Tuve contends that 'an Arthur pursuing "his" adventures like the other errant knights, or "central" in the usual way of epic heroes, or given a Book of his own, would be a monstrous alteration of function, though Spenserians have often been known to ask for it.' Pollock argues that Arthur enters but transcends the world of the other questers: the career of Red Crosse illustrates the descent of the divine, that of Calidore shows the potential of nature to achieve transcendence, but only in Arthur are the

⁴⁴ Philip C. Boardman, 'Middle English Arthurian Romance: The Repetition and Reputation of Gawain', in *The Vitality of the Arthurian Legend: A Symposium* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1980), p. 73 argues that *The Faerie Queene* is not a version of the Arthurian legend, but only 'Arthurian' in so far as Arthur is a character. Richard Barber, *Arthur of Albion: An Introduction to the Arthurian Literature and Legends of England* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961), p. 138 emphasises the novelty of Spenser's Arthur: 'Even if his direct original was a mixture of Lord Berners's Arthur [of Little Britain], with the Arthur imagined by patriotic antiquarians, he produced from it an idealized hero rather than a specific character.' Christopher Dean, *Arthur of England: English Attitudes to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 123-126 finds the youth and ideality of Spenser's Arthur the causes of the failure of *The Faerie Queene* as an Arthurian poem. Dean concludes, p.125: 'Arthur's story was too well known for an author to take such great liberties and hope to get away with them in a serious work.' Stephen Knight does not accord an essay to *The Faerie Queene* in *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1983) on the grounds that its Arthurian material constitutes an overlay rather than an integral element. Compare James Douglas Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835* (Wichita: University of Kansas Press, 1973), p. 44: 'We are surprised to be reminded that *The Faerie Queene* is an Arthurian poem... Of the spirit of the great king of myth and romance, of his beautiful and terrifying triumph and tragic destruction through his sad-eyed queen and his noblest knight, there is nothing in *The Faerie Queene*.' Margaret J.C. Reid, *The Arthurian Legend: Comparison of Treatment in Modern and Medieval Literature: A Study in the Literary Value of Myth and Legend* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1938), p. 33 distinguishes Spenser's Arthur from the pseudo-historical Arthurian tradition: 'Prince Arthur is merely a romantic figure, somewhat of an abstraction, conforming to the perfect pattern of what a knight should be.'

⁴⁵ Kathleen Williams, 'Romance Tradition in *The Faerie Queene*', *Research Studies* 32 (1964), pp. 157-158. Williams does consider the relationship between Arthur and the titular knights in her later book, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass* (London: Routledge, 1966), but does not generally distinguish the Prince as a paradigmatic figure.

movements of ascent and descent comprising the circular pattern of virtue combined.⁴⁶ However, Pollock's interpretation differs from my own in the importance accorded to the end of Arthur's quest:

In *The Faerie Queene* as we have it we are not told very much of Arthur's story. Nevertheless, his story is central to *The Faerie Queene* ... Like the circular Christian pattern of virtue, Arthur's story involves an ascent from the natural to the divine in response to a descent from the divine to the natural. Arthur sees a vision of the goddess-like Gloriana which appears to him in the natural world of pastoral. This vision inspires him with a love which leads him to ascend out of the lowly pastoral world and seek Gloriana's lofty court in the heroic city of Cleopolis ... It is there that he is destined to take on his high heroic role as king and to fulfill the circular Christian pattern of virtue.⁴⁷

The quest of Spenser's Arthur is of a particular type, involving the demonstration of achieved virtue rather than working towards perfection. As an undeveloping figure he has some affinities with the Arthur of medieval legend as presented by Tuve and Pollock. However, their arguments stand in need of qualification as Arthur is not always a static figure in medieval literature. Merritt Hughes attempts to explain the negative appraisal of Arthur's effectiveness in *The Faerie Queene*, exemplified by the quotation from C.S. Lewis with which I commenced this introduction:

Lewis' jealous love for Spenser's allegory and his devotion to the Arthurian tradition contrast strangely with his contempt for the Spenserian Arthur. The key to his dislike of Spenser's Arthur and perhaps also to the prevailing modern distrust of Spenser's figure may be found in the widening gulf that scholarship has opened between him and the medieval Arthur.⁴⁸

'Contempt' and 'dislike' exaggerate the emphasis Lewis places on the problematic aspect of Spenser's Arthur. However, Hughes is correct to stress the difference between the medieval and Spenserian treatments of Arthur. The aim of my next chapter is to go some way towards bridging this gulf.

⁴⁶ Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 345; Zailig Pollock, *The Sacred Nursery of Virtue: The Pastoral Book of Courtesy and the Unity of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1977), p. 38.

⁴⁷ Pollock, pp.38-39, 195.

⁴⁸ Hughes, p. 194.

Chapter Two: Arthur Before *The Faerie Queene*

'I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many mens former workes.'

(Letter to Raleigh)

'He may not have existed at the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth, but he has existed in every century since the eighth ... Arthur exists in history, and even more so in literature.'¹

The Faerie Queene is a great poem, but not a great Arthurian poem.' Such is the conclusion of L.R. Galyon's article on Spenser in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*.² This view is understandable: Spenser does not recreate the Arthurian world presented by romance authors from Chretien de Troyes to Malory; nor does he give a birth-to-death rendering of Arthur's career equivalent to the pseudo-histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth and his imitators. Indeed, Spenser only mentions Arthur at a stage of his career barely mentioned in most earlier treatments of his legend, namely the period between the end of his childhood and his accession. I will quote and refer to many Arthurian texts throughout my thesis, but given that part of my overall aim is to establish the place of *The Faerie Queene* in Arthurian tradition it seems appropriate to devote a chapter to the development of the legend. What follows is not intended as a source study: I am not concerned with establishing which Arthurian texts Spenser may have known, but rather with comparing the role of Arthur in different *kinds* of medieval literature.³ Specifically, I consider the Celtic Arthur of the *Mabinogion*, the court-centred king of Chretien de Troyes, Arthur's relation to the Grail in *La Queste del Saint Graal*, and the warrior-king of Layamon's *Brut*, before turning to the gathering together of different types of Arthurian narrative by Malory. Comparisons to Spenser's Arthur are made at the end of each section, but as the purpose of this chapter is to provide an Arthurian context for *The Faerie Queene*, references to the poem are fairly general.⁴

¹ Michael Edwards, *Of Making Many Books: Essays on the Endlessness of Writing* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.126-127.

² L.R. Galyon, 'Spenser', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1991), ed. by Norris J. Lacy, p. 428.

³ Relevant source studies include Edwin A. Greenlaw's 'Spenser's Fairy Mythology', *SP* 15 (1918), 105-122, and, more recently, Anderson, 'Arthur, Argante, and the Ideal Vision: An Exercise in Speculation and Parody', in *The Passing of Arthur*, ed. by Baswell and Sharpe, pp. 193-206.

⁴ My bibliography of Arthurian Literature includes only a selection of the vast body of scholarship which takes the legend as its subject, and given the impossibility of being comprehensive I keep footnotes to a minimum. However, a general acknowledgment should be made to the invaluable articles in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*. More specifically, I am indebted to Rosemary Morris, *The Character of*

Turning first to the *Mabinogion*, I will consider three of its five Arthurian tales, *Culhwch and Olwen*, *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, and *Owein*. The remaining Arthurian tales, *Geraint* and *Peredur*, represent the same type of narrative as *Owein* and are hence not accorded separate treatment. *Culhwch and Olwen*, which probably dates from the tenth century although the earliest surviving manuscript dates from c.1325, tells of the trials and tribulations undergone in order that the titular heroes can be united. However, the traditional folk-tale formula of an untried young hero engaging in a quest to marry a giant's daughter is presented with an important difference.⁵ After the early stages of the tale we see very little of Culhwch. It is Arthur and his men who perform the tasks which make possible the union of Culhwch and Olwen.

Arthur in *Culhwch and Olwen* is an established figure: his reputation is enhanced by the deeds he performs on behalf of Culhwch, but does not depend on them. Even in the opening episode of the tale, where Culhwch is the centre of attention and Arthur is not even present, the name of Arthur casts a powerful shadow:

... the boy was baptized, and the name Culhwch given to him because he was found in a pig-run. Nonetheless the boy was of gentle lineage: he was first cousin to Arthur.⁶

'Nonetheless the boy was of gentle lineage' qualifies the inauspicious associations of Culhwch's place of birth. 'He was first cousin to Arthur' underlines and explains this effect by attributing the importance of Culhwch to his connection with Arthur. The prestige of the absent Arthur is made more explicit in the course of the conversation between Culhwch and his father which sets the main action of the tale in motion:

'My stepmother has sworn on me that I shall never win a wife until I win

King Arthur in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982). Morris concentrates as I do on the figure of Arthur. However, I have naturally been influenced by my concern with a text which postdates 1500, the terminus of Morris's study. *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy (New York and London: Garland, 1996) appeared too late to substantially influence my readings of the texts considered in this chapter, although some of the essays it includes have been consulted in earlier publications.

⁵ References to folk-tale motifs throughout my thesis have been influenced by the theory of the genre advanced by Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale*, transl. by Laurence Scott (London and Austin: University of Kansas Press, 1968; first published 1928).

⁶ *The Mabinogion*, translated by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London: J. M. Dent, 1993; first published 1947), p.80.

Olwen daughter of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant'. 'It is easy for thee to achieve that, son,' said his father to him. 'Arthur is thy first cousin. Go then to Arthur to trim thy hair, and ask that of him as his gift to thee'.⁷

Arthur's prestige is thus based upon practical power. As a kinsman, Culhwch is entitled to appeal to Arthur for assistance. However, as a great conqueror with much wealth at his disposal Arthur commands the respect of an entire community. His fellowship may be compared to the *comitatus* units into which early medieval society was organised, based on intermarriage and the ability of the lord to provide for his followers.⁸

Arthur's strength as a leader of men, reported to Culhwch by his father, is directly demonstrated to the young man when he arrives at Arthur's court. The catalogue of adventures recounted by the porter Glewlwyd must be quoted in full in order to convey their overwhelming rhetorical effect:

... Glewlwyd came into the hall. Quoth Arthur to him, 'Thou hast news from the gate?' 'I have. Two-thirds of my life are past, and two-thirds of thine own. I was of old in Caer Se and Asse, in Sach and Salach, in Lotor and Ffotor. I was of old in India the Great and India the Lesser. I was of old in the contest between the two Ynyrs, when the twelve hostages were brought from Llychlyn. And of old I was in Egrop, and in Africa was I, and in the islands of Corsica, and in Caer Brythwch and Brythach, and Nerthach. I was there of old when thou didst slay the war-band of Gleis son of Merin, when thou didst slay Mil the Black, son of Dugum; I was there of old when thou didst conquer Greece unto the east. I was of old in Caer Oeth and Anoeth, and in Caer Nefenhyr Nine-teeth. Fair kingly men saw we there, but never saw I a man so comely as this who is even now at the entrance to the gate.'⁹

Despite the vigorous activity Arthur is about to engage in, he is not a young man: two thirds of his life are past, and the insistent, incantatory repetition of 'I was there of old when ...' associates Glewlwyd's roll-call of conquests with the dim and distant past of Arthur's career. Arthur's experience and prestige are emphasised further by the catalogue of warriors in whose name Culhwch requests Arthur's assistance. Only a few pages into

⁷ *Mabinogion*, p.81.

⁸ Stephen Knight uses historical background to interpret *Culhwch and Olwen* in 'Chief of the Princes of this Island: The Early British Arthurian Legend', the first chapter of his *Arthurian Literature and Society*, pp. 1-37. Knight's reading of the society depicted in the text is persuasive, but his comparison of Arthur's grandeur to that of historical overkings overlooks his affinities with mythologically conceived figures.

⁹ *Mabinogion*, p.83.

Culhwch and Olwen, and before the main events of the tale begin, Arthur is presented as a living myth.¹⁰

As the narrative unfolds, the larger-than-life quality of Arthur is dramatically demonstrated. Some Arthurian scholars argue that Arthur and his followers are euhemerised gods, and *Culhwch and Olwen* certainly seems to support such theories.¹¹ Prior to the recovery of Mabon son of Modron in which Arthur plays a decisive part, his men encounter a series of 'oldest animals' adventures dismissed as unworthy of Arthur: 'The men said to Arthur, "Lord get thee home. Thou canst not proceed with thy host to seek things so petty as these"'.¹² Arthur's prestige is also signalled by the fact that the assistance he renders to Culhwch does not exactly fulfil the requirements of Ysbadadden, yet satisfies the giant nevertheless.¹³

Arthur's prestige also overshadows the union of Culhwch and the giant's daughter:

And Culhwch said, ... 'And is thy daughter mine now?' 'Thine,' said he.
'And thou needst not thank me for that, but thank Arthur who hast secured her for thee...'¹⁴

The indebtedness of Culhwch to Arthur is reiterated by the narrator in the final sentences of the tale:

And that night Culhwch slept with Olwen, and she was his only wife so long as he lived. And the host of Arthur dispersed, every one to his country.¹⁵

The narrative ends as it begins: gratification of the titular hero is linked to the power commanded by Arthur, suggesting that the tale of Culhwch is merely an episode in a far

¹⁰ Patrick K. Ford, 'Culhwch and Olwen', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, p. 105 arrives at a similar conclusion: 'It can be seen clearly that, while Arthur is portrayed as a great king whose reputation is far-flung, his activities are far from those of the feudal overlord of romance. Rather, he is like the hero in a wonder tale, aided by magic and accompanied by men with supernatural gifts, and his chief opponent has affinities with the divine animals of Celtic mythological tradition.'

¹¹ For example, Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (London: Constable, 1993; first published by Columbia University Press, 1926).

¹² *Mabinogion*, p.103.

¹³ Knight, p.25: 'The fact that the tasks performed are not those the giant required expresses the fact that the ruling family extends its power in its own terms, at its own will, not dancing to the tune of its opponents.'

¹⁴ *Mabinogion*, p.113.

¹⁵ *Mabinogion*, p.113.

grander tale of Arthur. The conclusion in particular implies that Arthur has before and will again involve himself, god-like, in the affairs of lesser men.

Culhwch and Olwen, as already indicated, corresponds to the folk-tale formula in which a young hero seeks to marry a giant's daughter. It is interesting to compare a non-Arthurian example of the model. In the Scottish fairy-tale, 'The Battle of the Birds', a similar pattern is followed: extraordinary tasks are set by a giant, and the narrative culminates in the marriage of the hero and the giant's daughter.¹⁶ However, there is no equivalent to Arthur in the Scottish tale. It is the progress of the king's son, then that of *his* son, which holds the narrative together, and the young heroes in 'The Battle of the Birds' are more assertive than Culhwch. The Scottish tale also features more than one helper-figure - a raven, a wife, and a shoemaker as well as Auburn Mary, the giant's daughter - a role performed by Arthur alone in the Welsh tale. A further distinction is that the helper-figures in 'The Battle of the Birds' work with the young heroes, whereas Culhwch's task is effectively over as soon as he requests Arthur's assistance. Even Auburn Mary, who does most for the king's son, is rendered temporarily helpless when he unwittingly disregards her command not to kiss anyone on his return to his father's court. These distinctions between the two tales cast into relief the aura commanded by Arthur in *Culhwch and Olwen*.

The grandeur of Arthur and his followers in *Culhwch and Olwen* is equally pronounced in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, a thirteenth century adaptation of events which took place during the reign of a Welsh prince who died in 1159. Madawg son of Maredudd sends his follower Rhonabwy to search for his treacherous brother, Iorweth. While travelling, he is obliged to shelter in an extremely inhospitable cow-shed. It is there that he has a dream in which he encounters Iddawg, the treacherous messenger from the battle of Camlan, and is taken to Arthur. Reference to Camlan, traditionally Arthur's final battle with Mordred, contributes generally to the illogical dream effect of the narrative. More specifically this chronological confusion enhances the larger-than-life aura of the figure of Arthur, who is presented fully in control of a battle after he should be dead. His own stature explains Arthur's nostalgic response to the appearance of Rhonabwy:

'Where, Iddawg, didst thou find those little fellows?' 'I found them, lord, away

¹⁶ I refer to the edition printed in *Scottish Fairy Tales* (London: Senate, 1995), pp.258-274.

up on the road.' The emperor smiled wily. 'Lord,' said Iddawg, 'at what art thou laughing?' 'Iddawg,' said Arthur, 'I am not laughing; but rather how sad I feel that men as mean as these keep this Island, after men as fine as those that kept it of yore.'¹⁷

Interpreted in general terms, Arthur's sentiments exemplify the Golden Age motif, in which the present is presented as a degenerate form of the past.¹⁸ The men who kept the island of yore are heroes like Cei from *Culhwch and Olwen*:

Cei had this peculiarity, nine nights and nine days his breath lasted under water, nine nights and nine days would he be without sleep. A wound from Cei's sword no physician might heal. A wondrous gift had Cei: when it pleased him he would be as tall as the tallest tree in the forest. Another peculiarity had he: when the rain was heaviest, a handbreadth before his hand and another behind his hand what would be in his hand would be dry, by reason of the greatness of his heat; and when the cold was hardest on his comrades, that would be to them kindling to light a fire.¹⁹

While Cei as described above is an extreme case, neither he nor his powers are out of place in the milieu of the *Mabinogion*, and the command of such men enhances the prestige of Arthur.

Arthur occupies a commanding position in both *Culhwch and Olwen* and *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, but in the latter he controls the action from its peripheries. Instead of fighting with his men he manipulates their fortunes through playing gwyddbwyll, a game similar to chess, with Owein. There are no equivalents in *The Dream of Rhonabwy* to the adventures which culminate in his redemption of Mabon son of Modron or the tracking down of Twrch Trwyth in *Culhwch and Olwen*. However, in both texts Arthur has the larger-than-life quality of a mythologically conceived figure.

Before turning to examine one of the later *Mabinogion* tales, *Owein*, I will briefly summarize the salient characteristics of the Arthur of *Culhwch and Olwen* and *The Dream of Rhonabwy* in order that comparison with Spenser's Prince can be made. Arthur plays a crucial role in determining the action of the two *Mabinogion* tales, although in each case the narrative is essentially the story of another protagonist. As such his structural position

¹⁷ *Mabinogion*, p.117.

¹⁸ In chapter nine I discuss Spenser's use of this concept in his presentation of Arthur's alliance with Guyon and Britomart. For the ideal of the Golden Age see Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry: A Student's Guide* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), pp. 9-20.

¹⁹ *Mabinogion*, p.90.

is similar to that of Arthur in the titular quests of *The Faerie Queene*. An important difference is that Spenser's Arthur is a young man whose interventions in the titular narratives are significant, but not the results of requests for aid - it is Gloriana who gives out quests. Spenser's Arthur is more like the best-knight-in-the-world of medieval romance than a god-like ruler in so far as he assists other knights but is not responsible for them. However, the point with which I commenced my analysis of *Culhwch and Olwen*, namely the aura commanded by the *name* of Arthur, enhances the reputation won through the actual actions of Spenser's young prince. Immediately after his first adventure in the poem, the rescue of Red Crosse from Orgoglio, and before he has recounted the little he knows of his background, he is acclaimed as 'Prince *Arthure*, crowne of Martiall band' (I ix 6.5).

In *Owein*, Arthur is again a presiding figure, but he is less closely involved in the events depicted in the narrative - it is very much the story of Owein. In subject matter and in structure *Owein*, together with *Peredur* and *Geraint*, is comparable to the Arthurian romances of Chretien de Troyes - much probably unresolvable scholarly debate centres around the question of whether the Welsh version is the chicken or egg of the relationship.²⁰ Almost everything that could be said about Arthur in *Owein*, could be adapted as a comment on Chretien's *Yvain*. However, 'adapted' is the operative word as the similarities between the Welsh and French tales are offset by significant distinctions.

Although *Yvain* tells essentially the same story as *Owein*, it is considerably longer. This can partly be explained by the inclusion of additional episodes, but Chretien's tendency to more elaborate descriptions of setting, together with the inclusion of long passages of self-examination by his protagonists, further distinguishes his courtly romance from the Welsh tale. In general, the bold vigour of *Owein* stands in contrast to the finesse with which Chretien presents his narrative. The introduction of Arthur in the opening scenes of the two texts illustrates this distinction:

The emperor Arthur was at Caer Llion on Usk. He was sitting one day in his chamber, and with him Owein son of Urien and Cynon son of Clydno and Cei son of Cynyr, and Gwenhwyfar and her handmaidens sewing at a window. And although it was said that there was a porter to Arthur's court, there was none. Glewlwyd Mighty-Grasp was there, however, with the rank of porter, to receive guests and far-comers, and to begin to do them honour, and to make

²⁰ See Brynley F. Roberts, 'Owain (or *The Lady of the Fountain*)', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, p. 348.

known to them the ways and usage of the court: whoever had right to go to the hall or chamber, to make it known to him; whoever had right to a lodging, to make it known to him. And in the middle of the chamber floor the emperor Arthur was seated on a couch of fresh rushes, with a coverlet of yellow-red brocaded silk under him, and a cushion and its cover of red brocaded silk under his elbow.

Thereupon Arthur said, 'Sirs, if you would not make game of me,' said he, 'I would sleep while I wait for my meat. And for your part you can tell tales and get a stoup of mead and chops from Cei.' And the emperor slept.²¹

Although Arthur is the central figure, the grandeur of the scene over which he presides is rugged rather than refined. Arthur's voluntary exclusion from the company impinges upon his status as a leader. When he returns, he has missed the tale of Cynon which initiates the main action of the narrative. This is rather pointedly not repeated for him:

... Arthur awoke and asked whether he had slept at all. 'Aye, lord,' said Owein, 'a while.'²²

The situation at the beginning of Chretien's *Yvain* is at once remarkably similar and significantly different. As in the Welsh tale, Arthur is introduced surrounded by his followers, a group he leaves in order to rest:

Arthur, the good king of Britain whose valour teaches us to be brave and courteous, held a court of truly royal splendour at that most costly feast known as Pentecost. The king was at Carlisle in Wales. After dining, the knights gathered in the halls at the invitation of ladies, damsels, or maidens. Some told of past adventures, others spoke of love: of the anguish and sorrows, but also of the great blessings often enjoyed by the disciples of its order, which in those days was sweet and flourishing ...

... it is my pleasure to tell something worthy to be heard about the king whose fame was such that men still speak of him both near and far; and I agree wholly with the Bretons that this fame will last for ever, and through him we can recall those good chosen knights who strove for honour.

On that Pentecost of which I am speaking the knights were very surprised to see the king arise early from table, and some among them were greatly disturbed and discussed it at length because never before at such a great feast had they seen him enter his room to sleep or rest. But that day it happened that the queen detained him, and he tarried so long at her side that he forgot himself and fell asleep.²³

²¹ *Mabinogion*, p.129.

²² *Mabinogion*, p.135.

²³ Chretien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, transl. by William W. Kibler (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p.295.

The grand feast to celebrate the great Christian festival of Pentecost is a world away from the mead and chops provided by Cei in *Owein*. Chretien's praise of love and the exalted position of the ladies at court belong to an entirely different setting from that in which Gwenhwyfar and her handmaidens are presented sewing at a window. Arthur himself is a correspondingly more dignified figure in *Yvain*, distinguished not only by the grandeur of his court, but also by his own exemplary valour and courtesy. The interpolated comment of the narrator, which has no equivalent in *Owein*, reinforces the prestige of the king. The standing of Chretien's Arthur is more subtly intimated by the surprise with which his withdrawal is greeted. This feeling is not registered in *Owein*, and suggests that Chretien's Arthur is not usually as weak as this action suggests. Further excuse is provided by the circumstance of paying attention to his queen, obedience to ladies being a crucial ideal in Chretien's courtly Arthurian world. In the Welsh text, Gwenhwyfar is amongst the audience of Cynon's tale, and is therefore implicated in its failure to involve Arthur in the adventure.

Both *Owein* and *Yvain* are distinguished from *Culhwch and Olwen* and *The Dream of Rhonabwy* by the relationship between the king and the titular heroes. Although the prestige of *Owein* and *Yvain* derives from their association with Arthur, in each case this is balanced by the suggestion that as the reputation of the knight increases, that of Arthur and his court diminishes.²⁴ The lady of the fountain (named as Laudine in *Yvain*) is persuaded of the need not simply for a powerful knight to defend her after the death of her husband, but of the particular advantage of acquiring a champion from Arthur's court. If this testifies to Arthur's prestige, complications arise when *Owein* and *Yvain*, once established as protectors of the lady, find themselves engaged in combat with representatives of Arthur's court. As in the opening episodes of the two texts, subtle but significant differences in the portrayal of Arthur emerge. In *Owein*, Cei initiates the marvel of the fountain, while in Chretien's romance Arthur sets the challenge of the court in motion (although it is Kay who actually does the fighting). In both romances Arthur resolves the conflict, but in *Owein* this has the effect of a recovery rather than a restatement of his prestige.

²⁴ This point is discussed by Charles Moorman, *A Knight There Was: The Evolution of the Knight in Literature* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1967), p.4. Knight, 'Prowess and Courtesy: Chretien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier au Lion*', in *Arthurian Literature and Society*, pp. 68-104 compares the relationship between Arthur and his knights in *Yvain* to the tension between the barons and kings in the twelfth century.

The quest structure of *Owein* and *Yvain* provides an interesting angle from which to consider *The Faerie Queene*. Although there are marked differences between the Welsh and French texts, in each case the narrative centres on the development of one of Arthur's knights. Arthur is essentially a respected figure, but it is necessary for the knights to leave the court in order to establish their reputations. A different relationship exists in *The Faerie Queene* as Arthur's destiny as a court-centred king is postponed beyond the limits of the surviving text of the poem. In the meantime he is presented as a quester whose path occasionally crosses those of the titular knights. These encounters almost always increase the potential of the titular knights, but without diminishing the prestige of Arthur.

While one does find some variety within the vast body of chivalric quest romances which *Owein* and *Yvain* exemplify, it is fair to say that the role of Arthur as the prestigious but largely passive lord of knights is extremely common. Arthur himself is rarely a quester, a notable exception occurring in *Perlesvaus*, a French Grail romance dating from the early thirteenth century.²⁵ Arthur seeks the adventure of the the Perilous Chapel, but he is ultimately unsuccessful as a quester - his adventure leads to repentance for past shortcomings rather than winning him glory. Ultimately he is, as in *Owein* and *Yvain*, upstaged by the titular hero.²⁶ In the early stages of Malory's version of the Arthurian legend, Arthur has a brief career as a knight-errant when he encounters Pellinore in the forest. However, his dependence on Merlin during this episode suggests that adventuring is not a natural way of life for Arthur. This impression is only slightly qualified by the relief of the court on his return:

So they rode unto Carlion; and by the wey they mette with kynge Pellinore.
But Merlion had done suche a crauffte unto kynge Pellinore saw nat kynge
Arthure [sic.], and so passed by withoute ony wordis.
'I mervayle,' seyde Arthure, 'that the knyght wold nat speke.'
'Sir, he saw you nat; for had he seyne you, ye had nat lyghtly parted.'
So they com unto Carlion, whereof hys knyghtes were passynge glad.
And whan they herde of hys adventures, they mervayled that he wolde jouparde
his person so alone. But all men of worship seyde hit was myrry to be under
such a chyffayne that wolde putte hys person in adventure as other poure
knyghtis ded.²⁷

²⁵ *The High Book of the Grail: A Translation of the Thirteenth Century Romance of Perlesvaus*, ed. by Nigel Bryant (Ipswich: Brewer, 1978).

²⁶ Morris, p. 123: 'In *Perlesvaus*, Arthur triumphantly overcomes one spiritual limitation ... represents Christianity against the Old Law, and is even permitted himself to experience the Grail; but still only Perlesvaus, the new Messiah, can in his mystic isolation attain to the highest spiritual experiences.'

Arthur in the medieval romances is constrained by the duties of kingship: successfully and repeatedly putting his person in adventure is a characteristic which distinguishes Spenser's questing Prince from the Arthur of medieval romance.

With the qualified exception of *Perlesvaus*, Arthur is as static a figure in the Grail romances as he is in those which depict an earlier and more prosperous period for the society he presides over. However, the attitude to adventuring in *La Queste del Saint Graal*, part of the thirteenth century Vulgate cycle of prose romances, is very different from that found either in Chretien, or indeed in an earlier part of the Vulgate, the Prose *Lancelot*; and the figure of Arthur evokes a correspondingly different response. In the *Queste*, there is not so much a clash of interests between Arthur and his knights as a confrontation between the values they represent together, the ideal of secular chivalry, and a spiritual alternative - the Grail.

Yvain, called Owein in the *Queste*, is neither prominent nor successful as a Grail knight.²⁸ However, it is easy to imagine Chretien's hero sympathising with the predicament of Gawain in the *Queste*:

Sir Gawain pursued his wanderings from Whitsun to St Magdalene's day without coming across an adventure that merited recounting; he found it most surprising, having expected the Quest of the Holy Grail to furnish a prompt crop of strange and arduous adventures.²⁹

Taken in isolation this is a drily severe statement of expectations confounded. However, the overall effect of this passage can be found touching because the reader knows from the opening chapter of the *Queste* that the values of knight errancy have been superseded. A damsel comes to court with a message, hardly an unusual event in the world of romance. However, this particular damsel neither requests assistance for herself, nor exhorts a knight to defend the prestige of the court:

²⁷ Malory, *Works*, ed. by Eugene Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.36. Arthur also experiences adventures in Malory's 'Arthur and Accolon', pp. 81-93, but these interrupt the appropriately kingly pursuit of hunting rather than forming part of a knight-errant's quest to prove himself.

²⁸ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, transl. by P.M. Matarasso (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 168, 202-204.

²⁹ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.162.

'King Arthur, I bring you word from Nascien the hermit that you will receive this day the greatest honour ever accorded to a knight of Britain, and that not for your own deserts but for another's. Do you know what this is? Today the Holy Grail will appear within your house and feed the companions of the Round Table.'³⁰

In a telling reversal of a stock romance situation, it is the court and not the damsel that is depicted as the needy recipient of honour from an external source.

The limitations of the Round Table become painfully clear with the introduction of Galahad, who comes from outwith this society and recalls the sword in the stone adventure which had formerly established Arthur as its head:

... a page came in and said to the king:

'Sire, I bring you news of a great wonder.'

'What is it? Tell me quickly.'

'Below your palace, Sire, I saw a great stone floating on the water. Come and look for yourself for I know it signifies some strange adventure.'

The king and his barons went down at once to see this marvel. When they came to the river bank, they found the great stone lying now by the water's edge. Held fast in its red marble was a sword, superb in its beauty, with a pommel carved from a precious stone cunningly inlaid with letters of gold. The barons examined the inscription which read: NONE SHALL TAKE ME HENCE BUT HE AT WHOSE SIDE I AM TO HANG. AND HE SHALL BE THE BEST KNIGHT IN THE WORLD.³¹

Arthur does not even consider attempting the adventure himself, looking instead to his knights to undertake it. However, he fails even to win honour through them: Lancelot refuses to attempt the adventure, and although Gawain and Perceval reluctantly take up the challenge they are unsuccessful. The failure of Arthur's best knights is cast into relief when Galahad is taken by Arthur to the stone:

'Sir, here is the adventure I told you of. Some of the most valiant knights of my household have today failed to pluck this sword from the stone.'

'Sire,' said Galahad, 'that is not to be wondered at, for the adventure was not theirs but mine. I was so sure of this sword that I came to court without one, as you may have seen.'

Then he took hold of the sword and drew it as easily from the stone as if it had never been fast; and he sheathed it in the scabbard.³²

³⁰ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.42.

³¹ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, pp.34-35.

³² *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.41.

Although Galahad does not present himself as an opponent of Arthur's court, his success in an adventure in which its representatives have failed initiates a sense of tension which culminates in the contrast between Galahad's complete vision of the Grail and the degrees of failure experienced by Arthur's knights. The worldly Gawain is simply denied the privilege of a glimpse of the Grail, while the visionary experiences of Bors and Perceval are less complete than that of Galahad.

The overturning of the values of Arthurian chivalry naturally influences the portrayal of the king. At first it appears that Gawain and his companions have not changed their attitude to Arthur any more than their approach to adventuring:

When they had arrived in that part of the forest that lies around Castle Vagan they drew rein before a cross. There Sir Gawain said to the king:
'Sire, you have ridden far enough; you must turn back now, it is not for you to escort us farther.'

Presentation of Arthur as a prestigious but inactive figure is comparable to the relationship between the king and his knights in *Owein* and *Yvain*, but the remainder of the conversation quoted above distinguishes the very different values of the *Queste*:

'The homeward path will seem longer by far than the outward, for it costs me dear to leave you; but, since it needs must be, I will return.'

Thereupon Sir Gawain bared his head and his companions did the same; and they went to embrace the king, he first and they after. When they had laced on their helms again they commended one another to God, weeping tenderly. And so their ways parted, the king returning to Camelot, while the companions took the forest track which led them to Castle Vagan.³³

The dialogue poignantly suggests what the role of Galahad makes explicit - the knights now serve a different ideal from that represented by Arthur. By the end of the *Queste* the limitations of Arthur's knights have been exposed, and the king himself is only able to act by having their limitations recorded for posterity:

... King Arthur summoned his clerks who were keeping a record of all the adventures undergone by the knights of his household. When Bors had related to them the adventures of the Holy Grail as witnessed by himself, they were written down and the record kept in the library at Salisbury.³⁴

³³ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.52.

³⁴ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.284. Michael Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetic* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 78-80 gives a more positive reading of these lines, which are included in Malory's *Tale of the Sankgreal*. 'Story' is interpreted as a world which knights actively seek to enter, rather than merely an artifact in which their failure is recorded. I would argue that although this is generally true of

Recording the quest for the Grail underscores its transcendence of the Arthurian world, a point which is made more poignantly by Malory, who follows the above passage with Bors delivering Galahad's message to Lancelot, in which the son bids his father to 'remembir of thys unsyker worlde'.³⁵

The limitations of the society Arthur represents are highlighted throughout the *Queste* by the hermits who interrupt the narrative with moral interpretations of marvelous happenings normally taken for granted in medieval romance.³⁶ The hermit as counselor is a common motif in Arthurian romance, but the severity and length of the sermons delivered in the *Queste* suggest that Arthur and his knights are literally being taught a lesson in ideals. Like the climactic episode in which the Grail is withdrawn from the world along with Galahad, the interruption of story with sermons emphasises the gap between mankind and its creator, a gap which Arthur cannot overcome. By adaptating the quest romance for expository purposes, the *Queste* is anticipatory of *The Faerie Queene*. However, in associating the figure of Arthur with human limitations the earlier text achieves an effect very different from Spenser. In *The Faerie Queene*, Arthur is presented as a paradigm of chivalry and virtue whose example *can* transform the lives of those more rooted in the constraints of contingent existence.³⁷

In the quest romances of Chretien and the Vulgate Cycle, Arthur is almost always a passive figure. Before turning to the Arthurian compilation of Malory, I will consider a text in which Arthur is more active. Layamon's *Brut* is a verse chronicle, derived from the French *Roman de Brut* of Wace, and ultimately from the *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth.³⁸ In each of these texts, Arthur is one of a long line of British rulers whose reign is recorded. However, all three texts accord a disproportionate amount of space to the story of Arthur. Arthur's importance is also denoted by the fact that Geoffrey, Wace and Layamon do not confine themselves to his reign, but cover his life from birth to death - and beyond. In Layamon's *Brut*, a text roughly contemporary with

the Arthurian romances, the overall effect of the *Queste* calls into question the standards of this world.

³⁵ Malory, p. 607.

³⁶ I discuss the 'expected' quality of romance adventures in chapter four.

³⁷ This point is explored in more detail in chapters eight to ten. See especially chapter eight, where I refer specifically to the Vulgate *Queste*.

³⁸ On the relationship between Geoffrey, Wace and Layamon see James Noble, 'Patronage, Politics and the Figure of Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and Layamon', in *The Arthurian Yearbook II*, ed. by Keith Busby (London and New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 159-178.

Chretien's romances, Arthur is partly an epic hero, partly an historical figure. As such his vitality not only marks him out from the Arthur of the romances but gives him a human dimension which distinguishes him from the mythologically conceived Arthur of the *Mabinogion*.

The position Arthur finds himself in at the death of his father has nothing of the romantic about it. The rightful heir succeeds, and he has a specific task to perform:³⁹

Then came it [sic.] all together, that was highest in the land, earls and barons, and book-learned men; they came to London, to a mickle husting, and the rich thanes betook them all to counsel, that they would send messengers over sea into Brittany, after the best of all youth that was in the worlds-realm in those days, named Arthur the strong, the best of all knights; and say that he should come soon to his kingdom; for dead was he Uther Pendragon, as Aurelie was ere, and Uther Pendragon had no other son, that might after his days hold by law the Britons, maintain with worship, and rule this kingdom. For yet were in this land the Saxons settled; Colgrim the keen, and many thousands of his companions, that oft made to our Britons evil injuries.⁴⁰

The circumstances of Arthur's succession are recounted in a matter-of-fact manner. Layamon is very much presenting the *history* rather than the *legend* of Arthur at this point in his narrative. Exceptions to this style of factual reporting do occur, and I consider them later, but it is important to note that the *Brut* is essentially cast as a chronicle.

Throughout his reign, the administration of justice emphasised in the passage quoted above is a priority for Layamon's Arthur. His death speech indicates that no change in values has taken place:

There came to him a lad, who was of his kindred; he was Cador's son, the Earl of Cornwall; Constantine the lad hight, he was dear to the king. Arthur looked on him, where he lay on the ground, and said these words, with sorrowful heart: 'Constantine, thou art welcome; thou wert Cador's son. I give thee here my kingdom, and defend thou my Britons ever in thy life, and maintain them all the laws that have stood in my days, and all the good laws that in Uther's days stood.'⁴¹

³⁹ Morris, pp.39-40 emphasises the legality of Arthur's accession in Layamon as an aspect which distinguishes the episode from its equivalents in Robert de Boron's early French version of the beginning of Arthur's reign, and from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

⁴⁰ Wace and Layamon, *Arthurian Chronicles*, transl. by Eugene Mason, intro by Gwyn Jones (London: Dent, 1962), p.183.

⁴¹ *Arthurian Chronicles*, p. 264.

Again the practicalities rather than the prestige of kingship are stressed. Layamon's Arthur has to work for his reputation, in contrast to the Arthurs of Chretien de Troyes and the *Mabinogion* who are introduced as established figures. While the adjudication of the dispute between two sisters at the end of *Yvain* shows an interest in the administration of justice, it is unlikely that Chretien's Arthur would have approved of the rough justice of Layamon's hero. This is characteristic of his regime, but perhaps never more emphatically shown than in his response to a brawl which disrupts his Yuletide feast:

Then approached the king out of his chamber; with him an hundred nobles, with helms and with burnies; each bare in his right hand a white steel brand. Then called Arthur, noblest of kings: 'Sit ye, sit ye quickly, each man on his life! And whoso will not that do, he shall be put to death. Take ye me the same man, that this fight first began, and put withy on his neck, and draw him to a moor, and put him in a low fen; there he shall lie. And take ye all his dearest kin, that ye may find, and strike off the heads of them with your broad swords; the women that ye may find of his nearest kindred, carve ye off their noses, and let their beauty go to destruction; and so I will all destroy the race that he of came. And if I evermore subsequently hear, that any of my folk, of high or of low, eft arear strife on account of this same slaughter, there shall ransom him neither gold nor any treasure, fine horse nor war-garment, that he should not be dead, or with horses drawn in pieces - that is of each traitor the law!⁴²

The founding of the Round Table to promote order which follows this speech is not sufficient to give Layamon's Arthur anything approximating to the courtly image he possesses in either Chretien's romances or in Layamon's immediate source in Wace. Although Layamon includes this scene from the *Roman de Brut*, he is unconvinced by its veracity:

This was the same board that Britons boast of, and say many sorts of leasing, respecting Arthur the king ... Enow may he say, who the sooth will frame, marvellous things respecting Arthur the king.⁴³

Leadership of the Round Table is certainly not crucial to the image of Arthur presented in Layamon's *Brut*. Although he holds grand feasts for his followers, these are the occasional celebrations of a warlord rather than the standard activities of a courtly king.

Layamon's Arthur is in any case primarily a conqueror, whose victories are described at far greater length than the periods of peace in his reign. First he rids Britain of

⁴² *Arthurian Chronicles*, p. 210.

⁴³ *Arthurian Chronicles*, pp. 211-212.

the Saxon menace, a success which leaves him free to expand his borders: Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, France, and finally the Roman Empire itself are forced to submit. Layamon's sweeping verse carries the reader from one victory of Arthur to the next, emphasising the near-invincibility of his hero.⁴⁴ A more subtle, but significant means of conveying the impression of Arthur moving from strength to strength are the passages describing his later conquests in which former foes fight with Arthur. The assembly which meets at Caerleon and hears the challenge of Lucius includes prestigious representatives of all subjected nations: the kings of Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, and Norway, together with a number of French nobles.⁴⁵ Arthur's patriotism is presented with rather grim humour in the epitaphs he pronounces over the bodies of his first victims, Colgrim and Baldulf:

Then laughed Arthur, the noble king, and thus gan to speak with gameful words: 'Lie thou there, Colgrim; thou wert climbed too high; and Baldulf, thy brother, lie by thy side; now set I all this kingdom in your own hands; dales and downs, and all my good folk! Thou climbed on this hill wondrously high, as if thou wouldst ascend to heaven; but now thou shalt to hell, and there thou mayest know much of thy kindred. And greet thou there Hengest, that was fairest of knights, Ebissa, and Ossa, Octa, and more of thy kin, and bid them there dwell winter and summer; and we shall here in land live in bliss; pray for your souls, that happiness never come to them; and here shall your yones [sic.] lie, beside Bath !'⁴⁶

There is no suggestion here that Arthur's conduct deserves reproach, but the values of Layamon's *Brut* have more in common with the *chansons de geste* than the courtly romances.⁴⁷

Because *The Faerie Queene* uses the imagery and quest-structure of chivalric romance, it has more affinities with *Owein*, *Yvain*, and the *Queste del Saint Graal* than with Layamon's *Brut*. However, in so far as Layamon's Arthur is young and active he may be positively compared to Spenser's Prince. Additionally, Spenser's essentially romantic narrative includes a chronicle of British history which anticipates that Arthur's later career will heighten this similarity:

... this land was tributarie made
T'ambitious *Rome*, and did their rule obey,

⁴⁴ A modern verse translation of the *Brut* is that of Rosamund Allen (London: J.M.Dent, 1992).

⁴⁵ *Arthurian Chronicles*, pp. 224-225.

⁴⁶ *Arthurian Chronicles*, p. 197.

⁴⁷ Compare the distinction between Chretien's *Yvain* and the *chansons de geste* made in Erich Auerbach's 'The Knight Sets Forth', in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by William R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp.123-142.

Till *Arthur* all that reckoning defrayd.

(II x 49.6-8)⁴⁸

Layamon's *Brut* also resembles *The Faerie Queene* in its treatment of Arthur's lasting fame. In the former, Merlin prophesies:

So long as is eternity, he shall never die; the while that this world standeth,
his glory shall last.⁴⁹

These sentiments find an echo in the destiny of the armour worn by Spenser's Arthur:

... when he dyde, the Faerie Queene it brought
To Faerie lond, where yet it may be seene, if sought.

(I vii 36. 8-9)

In both texts, the emphasis is not so much on the ambiguity surrounding Arthur's death as on his exemplary life.

Although Layamon's Arthur lacks romantic qualities, this generalisation requires some qualification as he is distinguished from the other rulers chronicled in the *Brut* by his association with otherworldly powers. The passages I have already quoted or referred to are very much concerned with Arthur as a ruler of men. Nevertheless, at the beginning and end of his career a connection is made between Layamon's hero and supernatural power. Before Arthur is born, a comet seen by Uther is explained by Merlin as an omen of Arthur's conquests:

... two gleams proceedeth forth that were wondrously light. The one stretched far south, out over France -- that signifies a powerful son, that of thy body shall come, who shall win many kingdoms with conflict, and in the end he shall rule many a nation.⁵⁰

Layamon's subsequent description of the begetting of Arthur indicates an even more direct link between him and a form of the supernatural normally associated with the romances which in so many respects the *Brut* does not resemble:

... Ygaerne was with child by Uther the king, all through Merlin's craft, before she was wedded. The time came that was chosen, then was Arthur born. So soon as he came on earth, elves took him; they enchanted the child with magic most strong, they gave him might to be the best of all knights; they gave

⁴⁸ The significance of these lines are discussed by Heatt, pp. 173-192.

⁴⁹ *Arthurian Chronicles*, p. 174.

⁵⁰ *Arthurian Chronicles*, pp. 165-166.

him another thing, that he should be a rich king; they gave him the third, that he should live long; they gave to him the prince virtues most good, so that he was most generous of all men alive. This the elves gave him, and thus the child thrived.⁵¹

Here, perhaps, lies the explanation for Arthur's remarkable successes in adult life. However, with the exception of his enchanted armour and insights into the marvels of Loch Lomond, Arthur's otherworldly associations are not mentioned again until the passages describing his 'death'.⁵² The circumstances in which this takes place are anticipated by Merlin, and repeated in the last speech of Arthur:

'And I will fare to Avalun, to the fairest of all maidens, to Argante the queen, an elf most fair, and she shall make my wounds all sound; make me all whole with healing draughts. And afterwards I will come again to my kingdom, and dwell with the Britons with mickle joy.'

Even with the words there approached from the sea that was a short boat, floating with the waves; and two women therein, wondrously formed; and they took Arthur anon, and bare him quickly, and laid him softly down, and forth they gan depart.

Then was it accomplished that Merlin whilom said, that mickle care should be of Arthur's departure. The Britons believe yet that he is alive, and dwelleth in Avalun with the fairest of all elves; and the Britons ever yet expect when Arthur shall return.⁵³

Such passages are as uncharacteristic in Layamon's *Brut* as they are striking. It would appear that having set his sights on presenting Arthur as a hero of the battlefield, Layamon is at key moments influenced by a quite different tradition.⁵⁴ The jarring effect of the Faery sections of Layamon becomes more clear when the *Brut* is compared to the

⁵¹ *Arthurian Chronicles*, pp. 177-178.

⁵² *Arthurian Chronicles*, pp. 194-195, 200.

⁵³ *Arthurian Chronicles*, p. 264. For Merlin's prophecy see p. 212.

⁵⁴ Lewis, 'The Genesis of a Medieval Book', in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, pp.21. 28 uses these sections of the *Brut* to argue that Welsh and English traditions, as well as Wace's *Roman de Brut*, influenced Layamon. Maureen Duffy, *The Erotic World of Fairy* (London: Sphere Books, 1989; first published by Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), pp.46-47 contrasts the striking use of the supernatural by Layamon to the more sophisticated Arthurian chronicle of Wace: 'Layamon knew his audience, not a courtly one but one that could take large doses of explicit fairy.' I am unconvinced by the use of 'large doses' to describe Layamon's evocation of the supernatural, but Duffy's explanation of Layamon's faery passages is interesting: 'It's often said that Layamon has made his additions from French sources. However that may be, much of his extra material may be traced to English works, particularly the references to magic. Of the strange rectangular pool with the different sorts of fish which Arthur showed Hoel he says unequivocally "elves dug it," a remark straight from *Beowulf*. The famous ending is very reminiscent of both *Beowulf* and the *Battle of Maldon* in its elegiac tone ... Layamon's testimony ... gives a strong indication that the partially submerged English-speaking population / was just as interested in the romantic Arthurian material as the aristocratic Normans. There would seem little point in the huge labor of translation otherwise.' See also Reid, p. 21 for Layamon as heir to the *Beowulf*-poet.

association of Arthur and Morgan le Fay in other works which recount his career in full, works such as the version of the Arthurian legend compiled by Sir Thomas Malory.

William Caxton printed *Morte Darthur* in 1485, and Malory's work was known in no other form until the discovery of the Winchester manuscript in 1934. Both texts illuminate the comprehensiveness of Malory's treatment of the legend. As in Layamon's *Brut*, Arthur's career is presented from birth to death; unlike Layamon, Malory also draws on French and English romances to include the adventures of Arthur's knights. In fact Malory gathers together each type of Arthurian narrative mentioned in this chapter: mythological, folktale, quest romance, and epic. By concentrating on the figure of Arthur it can be shown that there is development as well as difference between Malory's tales. Types of narrative normally found separately are combined in order to present the rise and fall of Arthur and his world.⁵⁵

The folk-tale and quest-romance elements of Malory's treatment of the Arthurian legend largely involve characters other than Arthur. In both *The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that was called Bewmaynes* and *A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake* Arthur is a prestigious but static figure, comparable to the Arthur of *Owein* and *Yvain*. Malory uses the quest romance format, with its stress on action and achievement, to demonstrate the flourishing of the Round Table. The Vulgate *Queste* is adapted as *The Tale of the Sankgreal* to show the failings of Arthur and his society, although Malory is more sympathetic towards human limitations both in his Grail narrative and in his final two books, *The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* and *The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur Saunz Guerdon*.⁵⁶ The mythological and epic aspects of Malory's

⁵⁵ This view of the construction of Malory's version of the Arthurian legend should be distinguished from the source study approach summed up by Lewis, 'The *Morte Darthur*', p.107.' This does not mean that Malory is not a fine artist; but his fineness is responsive, not creative. As he has lately read, so he writes. He is at the mercy of his originals.' As I am not attempting to write a source study of *The Faerie Queene*, and given the uncertainty as to whether the printed Caxton edition or Winchester manuscript is closest to Malory, I use the text which most clearly supports my argument. Each tale in the Winchester manuscript is based on one main source, and is therefore more self-contained than Caxton's books. Caxton's division of Malory's work into 21 books does not preclude the reader from following the development of Arthur and his society, but this progress is more clearly shown in the eight tale format of the Winchester manuscript.

⁵⁶ For Malory's treatment of the Grail see Stephen C.B. Atkinson, "'Now I Se and Undirstonde": The Grail Quest and the Education of Malory's Reader', in *The Arthurian Tradition*, ed. by Braswell and Bugge, pp.90-108. The relationship between the Vulgate and Malorian Grail narratives is also discussed by John Stevens, *Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), pp. 119-128.

compilation can be shown with more direct reference to Arthur himself. Both are most concentrated in Malory's depictions of the early and late stages of Arthur's career.

The opening of *The Tale of Sir Gareth* has a timeless, once-upon-a-time quality reminiscent of the milieux of both the *Mabinogion* and Chretien's romances:

... evir the kynge had a custom that at the feste of Pentecoste in especiall afore other festys in the yere, he wolde nat go that day to mete unto that he had herde other sawe of a grete mervayle. And for that custom all maner of strange adventures com byfore Arthure, as at that feste before all other festes.⁵⁷

Adventures are a way of life no more unusual than eating dinner for this society. Arthur attracts manifestations of the strange, a point to which I will return when considering the mythological dimension of Malory's Arthur. It is as a gateway to adventure that Arthur's court owes its prestige, a quality which Gareth hopes to share.⁵⁸ His story follows the traditional pattern whereby an underrated younger son establishes himself as a respected figure in the society which initially scorns him. An important respect in which *The Tale of Sir Gareth* differs from the folk-tale norm is that as the main symbol of authority, Arthur is positively presented and defends Gareth from the slights of his court.⁵⁹

The words of Lynet, Gareth, and Arthur himself combine to present the king as a figure with a well-established reputation. Lynet has come to court because Arthur is known as a provider of noble knights: 'bycause here ar called the noblyst knyghtes of the worlde, I com to you for succoure'.⁶⁰ However, it is taken for granted that Arthur himself will not offer personal assistance. In fact, the king is cautious about allowing any of his fellowship to accept the quest without further information regarding Lynet's sister: 'bycause ye woll not telle hir name nother where she dwellyth, therefore none of my knyghtes that here be nowe shall go with you be my wylle'.⁶¹ It takes the new blood of Sir Gareth to offer aid. However, the prestige of the court is upheld by Gareth's respect for

⁵⁷ Malory, p. 177.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetic*, does not specifically mention this part of Malory, but the general argument of his chapter on 'story' could be applied to the motives and experiences of Gareth.

⁵⁹ I emphasise the folk-tale aspect of *The Tale of Sir Gareth*. Compare the historical contextualisation offered by Joseph R. Ruff, 'Malory's Gareth and Fifteenth Century Chivalry', in *Chivalric Literature: Essays on Relations Between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and John Leyerle (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1980), pp. 101-116.

⁶⁰ Malory, p. 179.

⁶¹ Malory, p. 179.

Arthur. When Lynet, disgusted by the apparently lowly status of Gareth, attempts to dissuade him from accompanying her he retorts with dignity:

'Damesell,' seyde sir Beawmaynes, 'sey to me what ye woll, yet woll nat I go fro you whatsomever ye sey, for I have undirtake to kynge Arthure for to encheve your adventure, and so shall I fynyssh hit to the ende, other ellys I shall dye therefore.'⁶²

It is loyalty to Arthur which anchors Gareth's concern for the damsel. He is much more concerned with the honour of the court than the titular heroes of *Owein* and *Yvain*, in keeping with the role of the *The Tale of Sir Gareth* as a version of the quest romance which highlights the flourishing of Malory's Arthurian world.

The Tale of Sir Gareth has affinities with quest romance as well as folk-tale. However, the model of Chretien de Troyes, in which an already established knight maximises his potential through a career of knight errancy, is more clearly deployed by Malory in *A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake*. These adjacent narratives provide slightly different but complementary glimpses of the Round Table at its height. Gareth shows the progress of a chivalric figure aspiring to be accepted as Arthur's knight, while Lancelot shows what such a figure is capable of.

Malory's *Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot* is mainly based on incidents from the Vulgate *Lancelot*. However, while the main theme of his source is the courtly love of Lancelot and Guinevere, Malory mentions this relationship in the most cursory fashion:

... quene Gwenyvere had hym in grete favoure aboven all other knyghtis and so he loved the quene agayne aboven all other ladyes dayes of his lyff, and for hir he dud many dedys of armys and saved her frome the fyre thorow his noble chevalry.⁶³

The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot concentrates on establishing Lancelot as 'the best knight in the world'. Treatment of the complications caused by the division of his loyalties between lord and lady are postponed until Malory's later books, beginning with the 'Launcelot and Elaine' episode towards the end of *The Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones* and reaching a climax in the final two tales.

⁶² Malory, p.182.

⁶³ Malory, p.149.

Like Gareth, Malory's Lancelot is positively associated with the court. Lancelot has proved himself a loyal and capable knight of Arthur in the war with Rome, and now excels equally in the sports with which the court fills up its time in days of peace:

Sone aftir that kynge Arthure was com from Rome into Ingelonde, than all the knyghtys of the Rounde Table resorted unto the kynge and made many joustys and turnementes. And som there were that were but knyghtes encresed in armys and worshyp that passed all other of her felowys in prouesse and noble dedys, and that was well proved on many.

But in especiall hit was prevyd on sir Launcelot de Lake, for in all turnementes, justys, and dedys of armys, both for lyff and deth, he passed all other knyghtes, and at no tyme was he ovircom but yf hit were by treason other inchaument. So this sir Launcelot encresed so mervaylously in worship and honoure; therefore he is the fyrste knyght that the Freynsh booke makyth mencion of aftir kynge Arthure com frome Rome.

However, Lancelot must leave the court in order to develop his reputation:

Thus sir Launcelot rested hym longe with play and game; and than he thought hymself to preve in straunge adventures, and bade his nevew, sir Lyonell, for to make hym redy, 'for we muste go seke adventures'. So they mounted on their horses, armed at all ryghtes, and rode into a depe foreste and so into a playne.⁶⁴

In this respect, he resembles Chretien's *Yvain*: both are Arthur's knights, but leave his court to fulfil their potential. However, while Yvain feels threatened by the court, Lancelot's departure does not take place in a competitive spirit. Indeed, his adventures confirm his position as Arthur's pre-eminent knight as he resists the enchantments of Morgan le Fay and her associates, and rescues those of Arthur's fellowship who require aid. In *A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot*, Arthur is a revered figure, but even less associated with the action of the narrative than in *The Tale of Sir Gareth*, where he gives the hero his quest. Although this suggests that unless the king is in need, he cannot provide sufficient occupation for his knights, at this early stage in the development of the Round Table, tension between the honour of the court and the individual is not developed. As in the *Tale of Sir Gareth*, Malory adapts the quest romance pattern to show Arthurian society enjoying a period of prosperity.

⁶⁴

Malory, p.149.

The contribution of *A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot* to the image of Arthur presented by Malory should be seen in the light of the role Lancelot plays in the previous tale, *The Tale of the Noble King Arthur that was Emperor Himself through the Dignity of his Hands*. Based on the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Malory's version of Arthur's war with the Roman Empire is also adapted as part of the developing glory of Arthur.⁶⁵ In both sources, the episode precipitates the downfall of Arthur through the treachery of his son and disillusionment of his followers. However, in Malory the vitality of Arthur is not overshadowed at this point. Lancelot's first action is recklessly pro-Arthur:

Than leepe in yong sir Launcelot de Laake with a lyght herte and seyde unto kynge Arthure, 'Thoughe my londis marche nyghe thyne enemyes, yet shall I make myne avow aftir my power that of good men of armys aftir my bloode thus many I shall brynge with me: twenty thousand helmys in haubirkes attyred that shall never fayle you whyles oure lyves lastyth.'⁶⁶

During the campaign, Arthur rejoices in the prowess of his men: 'Be my fayth, there was never kyng sauff myselff that welded evir such knyghtes'.⁶⁷ He also participates in the action, both through single-combat with the giant of St. Michael's Mount, and by involvement in mass battle:

For evir kynge Arthure rode in the thyckeste of the pres and raumped downe lyke a lyon many senatours noble. He wolde nat abyde uppon no poure man for no maner of thyng, and ever he slow slyly and slypped to another tulle all were slayne to the numbir of a hondred thousand ...⁶⁸

This depiction of Arthur as a leader of men is reminiscent of Layamon's warrior-king, and stands in contrast to both the courtly ruler of Chretien and the superhuman Arthur of the *Mabinogion*. It is partly the human aspect of Malory's Arthur, suggested by his attitude to his followers throughout the Roman campaign - 'Fayre lordys, loke youre name be nat loste! Lese nat youre worshyp for yondir bare-legged knavys, and ye shall se what I shall do as for my trew parte' - and in the moving scene with Sir Ector and Kay when he becomes king - "'Allas!" said Arthur, "myne own dere fader and broder, why knele ye to me?" - that encourages the reader to respond sympathetically to the rise and fall of the civilization he heads in later books.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Derek Brewer, *English Gothic Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.269-271 and Morris, pp. 68-69 discuss Malory's adaptation of this episode from his sources.

⁶⁶ Malory, p.115.

⁶⁷ Malory, p.130.

⁶⁸ Malory, p.134.

⁶⁹ Malory, pp. 9, 132.

So far I have argued that Malory's adept re-working of the Arthurian legend is shown by his use of *different* kinds of narrative to present the development of Arthur. However, in the case of the chronicle tradition Malory's versatility is so great that the *same* source is drawn upon in the presentation of Arthur's rise and fall. Scenes of epic conflict reminiscent of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* recur in Malory's final book. However, in his last battle Arthur's mood is one of despair rather than active heroism. The quotation from his Roman campaign already cited stands in contrast to the sombre cadences used to introduce his final conflict with Mordred: 'And kynge Arthur toke hys horse and seyde, "Alas, this unhappy day!" and so rode to hys party.'⁷⁰ Arthur participates in the ensuing battle, but this time to no avail. The regard for his knights expressed by Arthur during his war with Rome is reiterated in poignantly different circumstances:

And thus they fought all the longe day, and never stynted tylle the noble knyghtes were layde to the colde erthe... Than was kynge Arthure wode wroth oute of mesure, whan he saw hys people so slayne frome hym ...

'Jesu mercy!' seyde the kynge, 'where ar all my noble knyghtes becom? Alas, that ever I shulde se thys doleful day! For now', seyde kynge Arthur, 'I am come to myne ende ...'⁷¹

The subsequent combat between Arthur and Mordred, in which both are mortally wounded, has a pointlessness which casts a dark, perhaps even tragic tone over this closing scene from Arthur's earthly life. Historical continuity does not inject the optimism one finds in Layamon's chronicle, where Arthur's speech to Constantine places his reign in an ongoing line of British rulers.

Stephen Knight uses the political struggles of fifteenth century England to interpret Malory's *Arthuriad*.⁷² Malory's interpolated comment on the denouement of his narrative certainly reaches beyond the world of his fiction to address his contemporaries:

Lo ye all Englysshemen, se ye nat what a myschyff here was? For he that was the moste kynge and nobelyst knyght of the worlde, and moste loved the felyshyp of noble knyghtes, and by hym they all were upholdyn, and yet myght nat thes Englyshemen holde them contente with hym. Lo thus was the olde custom and usayges of thys londe, and men say that we of thys londe have nat yet loste that

⁷⁰ Malory, p.713.

⁷¹ Malory, p.713.

⁷² Knight, "'A Great Angur and Unhappe": Sir Thomas Malory's *Arthuriad*'. in *Arthurian Literature and Society*, pp.105-148. See also Robert Merrill, *Sir Thomas Malory and the Cultural Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Lang, 1987); and Moorman, p.98.

custom. Alas! thys ys a greate defaughte of us Englysshemen, for there may no thyng us please no terme.⁷³

The darkness of Malory's conclusion is however mitigated by evocation of the mythological tradition in which Arthur is presented as a superhuman figure. The Arthur of *The Mabinogion* is a god-like figure, characterised by an invulnerability which Malory's Arthur cannot be said to possess. In associating Arthur with otherworldly power at the beginning and end of his career Malory achieves an effect closer to Layamon. However, the supernatural is more successfully integrated into Malory's overall design. This may be explained by the supernatural forces at work in the romance milieu of Malory's middle books, forces which have virtually no part to play in the matter-of-fact rendering of Arthur's actions between birth and death in the *Brut*. Enchantments are encountered by Arthur's knights in the course of their quests, the opening episode of *A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot* being a case in point. Just as Morgan le Fay seeks Lancelot because he is 'the best knight of the world', Malory's ambiguously motivated Faery Queen and her associates come for Arthur - the best king in the world. The concentration with which Arthur's association with otherworldly power is presented at crucial stages of his career, in the overall context of Malory's depiction of the rise and fall of Arthurian civilisation, creates the effect of a potentially superhuman figure moving in a fallen world.

Malory's contribution to the development of the Arthurian legend must be distinguished from the place of his work relative to *The Faerie Queene*.⁷⁴ Through Malory, Spenser had access to a variety of Arthurian narratives. However, the association of Malory's Arthur with a society increasingly circumscribed by the powerful but limiting aspects of human nature make him a very different figure from Spenser's Prince. Ultimately, Arthur is powerless in the face of the adultery of his wife and his best friend, and equally incapable of curbing the passion for revenge which motivates his nephew Gawain. Spenser's Arthur is an exemplary figure, an invincible knight-rescuer who can

⁷³ Malory, p. 708.

⁷⁴ Mark Lambert's article on Malory in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 450 notes that Malory's version of the Arthurian legend was reissued five times between 1498 and 1585. Lambert presents a convincing case for the influence of Malory on *The Faerie Queene*, while acknowledging that 'this is a difficult question to answer satisfactorily'. For the opposite view see Hough, p. 127: 'Though Malory was read, he exerted little influence in Tudor times. It is the historical British Arthur, not the hero of French romances, that the Elizabethans cared for. Hence the absence of direct debt to Malory in Spenser.' Hough, p. 20 also argues that in so far as Malory lies behind *The Faerie Queene*, the influence came through the intermediary source of the Italian romantic epics. Another sceptical view of Malory-Spenser influence is that of Bennett, 'Genre, Milieu, and the "Epic-Romance"', *English Institute Essays* (1951), pp. 108-109.

assist the more vulnerable representatives of the titular virtues of each book of *The Faerie Queene*. Unlike Malory's beleaguered king, Spenser's young prince is exalted above the society in which he moves - even the mythologically conceived Arthur of the *Mabinogion* must always be mindful of the claims of society upon him.

In concluding this chapter I shall give some indication as to why Spenser was able to portray Arthur in this way by considering the attitudes of the Renaissance to the legend. The romances proved popular although not always approved reading in the sixteenth century. Amongst the detractors of the genre Roger Ascham stands supreme:

In our forefathers tyme, whan Papistrie, as a standyng poole, couered and ouerflowed all England, fewe bookes were read in our tong, sauynge certayne bookes of Cheualrie, as they sayd, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in Monasteries, by idle Monkes, or wanton Chanons: as one for example, *Morte Arthure*: the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which booke those be counted the noblest Knightes, that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit foulest aduouleries by sutlest shiftes ...⁷⁵

It is tempting to question whether Ascham had actually read Malory! More seriously, as a protestant and a humanist Ascham objected to the medieval and Roman Catholic trappings of the romances. The fact that they continued to be read indicates that not all sixteenth century readers were as strict as Ascham; but also that the genre lent itself to adaptation in line with contemporary religious, nationalistic, and aesthetic concerns.

Didactic versions of the Arthurian legend were certainly not the invention of the Renaissance, as my consideration of the Vulgate *Queste* earlier in this chapter demonstrates. The expository tone of Spenser's Letter to Raleigh is also anticipated by Caxton's introduction to Malory.⁷⁶ However, like Layamon and the authors of the Vulgate cycle, Malory *tells the story* of Arthur. During the Renaissance, attitudes to Arthur and

⁷⁵ Ascham, 'The Scholemaster' in *English Workes*, ed. by W.A. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), pp.230-231. See also the mockery of Nashe in *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), quoted by Giamatti, p. 60: '... those worne out impressions of the feyned no where acts of Arthur of the rounde table, Arthur of litle Brittain, Sir Tristram, Hewon of Burdeaux, the Squire of low degree, the foure sons of Amon, with infinite others.' Contrast Lewis, 'The Morte Darthur', pp.104-105 on the aristocratic idealism of Malory. See also R.T. Davies, 'The Worshipful Way in Malory', in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C.S. Lewis*, ed. by John A. Lawlor (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), pp. 157-177.

⁷⁶ See Giamatti, pp. 53-54 and J.E. Housman, 'Hidgen, Trevisa, Caxton and the Beginnings of Arthurian Criticism', *RES* 23 (1947), 209-217.

to the chivalric ideal changed. Chivalry was regarded positively, but less as a way of life than as an occasion for show, as the Accession Day tournaments held during the reign of Elizabeth indicate. In literature, Stephen Hawes' *Passetyme of Pleasure* showed how motifs of chivalric romance could be constructed into an explicitly allegorical narrative.⁷⁷ Although Hawes was almost a contemporary of Malory, his work illustrates the different, more detached approach to chivalry by writers of his era and later.⁷⁸ The changing place of chivalry in society was paralleled by developments in the worlds of learning and politics. Humanists emphasised the difference between history and fiction, and the importance of Arthur was increasingly associated with his position as the ancestor of the Tudors.

Much has been written on this subject, and I do not intend to reiterate arguments already eloquently expressed save to note that Tudor society could be enthusiastic about Arthur *without hearing his story*. In fact the vitriolic condemnation of Arthurian romance by Ascham and the political exploitation of the tradition by the ruling dynasty are not as incompatible as they may at first appear. Both testify to a sense of detachment from medieval culture, and the belief that fiction should be morally instructive. A romance milieu was ideal for Spenser's purposes, as Charles Moorman notes:

Spenser's choice of a tale of Arthurian chivalry was an obvious one: it involved... a fairyland geography and tone suitable for the high adventure Spenser admired in the Italian romantic epics; it was flexible enough to allow the creation of allegorical character and incidents; and it could be turned easily, because of its nationalistic and political associations to the praise of the Queen.⁷⁹

Of Arthur himself, Moorman sees no substantial connection between 'Spenser's conception of a superhero' and medieval portrayals of Arthur.⁸⁰ The purpose of my thesis is not to suggest that they are similar, but to explore the implications of what makes Spenser's Prince distinct from the legendary king. By focusing on a period of Arthur's story

⁷⁷ Beverly Kennedy argues in *Knighthood in the 'Morte D'Arthur'* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; revised edition 1992, first published 1985) that Malory's typology of knighthood adds an expository dimension to the Arthurian legend. For Hawes see Moorman, p.117-121; Carol V. Kaske, 'How Spenser Really Used Stephen Hawes in the Legend of Holiness', in *Unfolded Takes*, ed. by Logan and Teskey, pp. 119-136; and Ferguson, *Indian Summer*, pp. 67,59-60. A.S.G. Edwards' article on Hawes in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. by Hamilton, p.348 belittles the possibility of direct Hawes-Spenser influence as *The Example of Virtue* and *The Passetyme of Pleasure* were not published between 1530 and 1555 (respectively) and the nineteenth century.

⁷⁸ See Ferguson, *Indian Summer* and *Chivalric Tradition*.

⁷⁹ Moorman, p.126. See also MacLachlan, 'The Legend of Arthur', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p.

66.

⁸⁰ Moorman, p. 130.

neglected in medieval Arthurian literature, namely the period between the end of his childhood and his accession, Spenser evokes the prestige of Arthurian tradition without being constrained by its details.⁸¹ In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser recreates Arthur, making an ideal from a traditional figure. The chapters which follow adopt two different but complementary approaches. Arthur in *The Faerie Queene* is a *visionary quester*. Accordingly I will first examine his *vision* of Gloriana, and subsequently the *quest* this experience initiates.

⁸¹ Gerald Morgan, 'Spenser's Conception of Courtesy and the Design of *The Faerie Queene*', *RES* (new series) 32 (1981), pp. 32-33 argues that the youth of Spenser's Arthur is an important part of his perfection, citing Dante's remarks on the subject in *Convivio* IV xxiv 1 as background; and the example of Virgil's Aeneas as an analogue to the descriptions of Arthur in *The Faerie Queene* I Proem 2, I vii 36, II viii 56, and IV viii 44.

Chapter Three: 'To haue seene in a dream or vision the Faery Queen'¹

Arthur's visionary encounter with Gloriana (I ix 12-15) occupies only three stanzas of Spenser's vast romantic epic. Nevertheless, it is central to the design and meaning of *The Faerie Queene*.² Two characteristics contribute to this status: intimacy and ideality. For the sake of clarity I will look at these qualities separately, before exploring the links between them. Although foregrounding Arthur's vision of Gloriana is not a new idea in Spenser scholarship, there is a place for an extended work of criticism which not only uses the vision and subsequent quest of Arthur in order to interpret *The Faerie Queene*, but also places Spenser's poem in the context of Arthurian literature. The account of Arthur's past which culminates in his vision narrative begins with a significant evocation of the Matter of Britain.

Arthur's *enfance* (I ix 2.6-5) and Spenser's Letter to Raleigh allude to the beginning of the Arthurian legend as we have it recounted by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Layamon, various French romance versions of Merlin's story, and the early books of Malory's Arthurian compilation. I will quote from the latter, as the example probably best known to readers in Spenser's day and our own:

... Merlyn stood at the porche of the pavelions dore, ... Whan kyng Uther sawe hym he said he was welcome... 'Now make you redy,' said Merlyn. 'This nyght ye shalle lye with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntigayll. And ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband ... wayte ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but say ye are diseased, and soo hye yow to bedde and ryse not on the morne tyll I come to yow,...Soo this was done as they devysed. But the duke of Tyntigail aspyed hou the kyng rode fro the syege of Tarabil. And therfor that nyghte he yssued oute of the castel at a posterne for to have distressid the kynges hooste, and so thorowe his owne yssue the duke hymself was slayne or ever the kyng cam at the castel of Tyntigail. So after the death of the duke kyng Uther lay with

¹ Spenser's Letter to Raleigh, quoted in *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p. 737.

² Contrast Evans, p.239: 'Spenser is more like Yeats than Eliot, and his essentially unmystical type of mind has little place for transcendental vision. He prefers the struggles of life to the artifice of eternity, the mirror-scaled serpent, multiplicity, to the One.' This has some truth, but while Spenser largely writes of the trials and tribulations of earthly life, at the centre of the poem Arthur's ideal vision represents the ultimate goal of such striving; while, as I argue in chapters five to seven, visionary experiences constitute important stages in the quests of Britomart, Calidore and Red Crosse. My view is closer to that of Giamatti, p.51: 'Arthur's quest is not completed in the poem, but his account of his search to make human the divine face of his beloved is a good description in brief of the movement of the whole *Faerie Queene*. This revelation is the center of value in Spenser's poem. Each knight's quest is a version of Arthur's; each knight is a part of him, as they all seek their ideal in the world and all ride in from the edges, hoping to be reconciled finally in that great central clearing in the woods, the court of Gloriana, where vision will be flesh.' Although I agree with the importance Giamatti assigns to Arthur's vision, I do not endorse the significance he places on an 'end' to Arthur's quest - see chapter ten for further discussion of this point.

Igrayne, more than thre houres after his deth, and begat on her that nyght Arthur; and or day cam, Merlyn cam to the kyng and bad hym make hym redy, and so he kist the lady Igrayne and departed in all hast. But whan the lady herd telle of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dede or ever kynge Uther came to her, thenne she merveilled who that myghte be that laye with her in lykenes of her lord. So she mourned pryvely and held hir pees.

Thenne alle the barons by one assent prayd the kynge of accord betwixte the lady Igrayne and hym... And anone, lyke a lusty knyghte, he assentid therto with good wille, and so in alle haste they were maryed in a mornynge with grete myrthe and joye...

Sone come Merlyn unto the kyng and said,

'Syr, ye must purvey yow for the nourisshyng of your child.'

'As thou wolt,' said the kyng, 'be it'.

'Wel,' said Merlyn, 'I knowe a lord of yours in this land that is a passyng true man and a feithful, and he shal have the nourysshyng of your child; and his name is sir Ector,... he will put his owne child to nourisshynge to another woman and that his wyf nourisshes yours. And whan the child is borne lete it be delyverd to me at yonder pryvy posterne uncrystned.'

So like as Merlyn devysed it was done.³

Compare Spenser's far briefer treatment of Arthur's origins:

... much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule. So haue I laboured to doe in the person of Arthure: whome I conceiue after his long education by Timon, to whom he was by Merlin deliuered to be brought vp, so soone as he was borne of the Lady Igrayne ...

(Letter to Raleigh)

For all so soone as life did me admit
 Into this world, and shewed heauens light,
 From mothers pap I taken was vnfit:
 And streight deliuered to a Faery knight,
 To be vpbrought in gentle thewes and martiall might.

Vnto old *Timon* he me brought byliue,
 Old *Timon*, who in youthly yeares hath beene
 In warlike feates th'expertest man aliue,
 And is the wisest now on earth I weene;
 His dwelling is low in a valley greene,
 Vnder the foot of *Rauran* mossy hore,
 From whence the riuer *Dee* as siluer cleene
 His tombling billowes rolls with gentle rore:
 There all my dayes he traird me vp in vertuous lore.

(I ix 3.5-4)

In both cases, the folktale motif of a future hero brought up in obscure circumstances anticipates his future renown by setting him apart from the society of which he will become a figurehead.⁴ However, although Spenser's Arthur is the son of Igrayne, no mention is

³ Malory, pp. 4-6.

made of her dubious liaison with Uther. Spenser does not deal with the illicit love which leads to the biological creation of Arthur; but foregrounds an idealised amorous experience which transforms him from a promising knight-errant into a paradigm of achieved chivalry and virtue. The role of love in this transformation is an important factor distinguishing *The Faerie Queene* from the celebration of courtly love in medieval literature, Arthurian and otherwise.⁵ Charles Moorman makes a tentative exception in the case of Malory, who does adopt a critical stance towards courtly love. However, the relationship of Lancelot and Guinevere culminates in tragedy. By contrast, Spenser gives courtly love a spiritual dimension, and simultaneously presents the bond between Arthur and Gloriana as intimate rather than impossible. In the remainder of this chapter I use the combination of intimacy and ideality in the account of Arthur's meeting with Gloriana to explain the making of Arthur as the most exemplary figure in Spenser's expository romance.

The intimate tone of the episode owes much to the relationship between reader and protagonist. Before his vision, Arthur is an imperfect but sympathetic figure. His attitude to love denotes immaturity:

That idle name of loue, and louers life,
 As losse of time, and vertues enemy
 I euer scornd, and ioyd to stirre vp strife,
 In midst of their mournfull Tragedy,
 Ay wont to laugh, when them I heard to cry,
 And blow the fire, which them to ashes brent:
 Their God himselfe, grieu'd at my libertie,
 Shot many a dart at me with fiers intent,
 But I them warded all with wary gouernment.

(I ix 10)

The juxtaposition of terms suggestive of pleasure and pain - 'ioyed-strife', 'laugh-cry' - indicates an insensitive delight in the emotional vulnerability of others. This impression is reinforced by the heavy rhythm of the alliterative final line of this stanza, and the connotations of defence associated with the words 'warded', 'wary' and 'gouernment'.

⁴ The career of Perceval is a more extreme version of the same motif. See also Spenser's own *Tristram* (VI ii). Arthur's dignity, either as courtly king or as Spenser's paradigmatic knight, precludes too much attention being given to this stage of his career.

⁵ Moorman, pp.132-133. Compare Kaske, p.121: 'Spenser purges his romance of any hint of adultery between characters for whom we have sympathy; he not only omits Guinevere and her adulterous lover Lancelot ... but replaces Guinevere with Gloriana.'

However, in defence of the Prince it can be said that he is acting in accordance with the advice of his tutor:

It was in freshest flowre of youthly yeares,
When courage first does creepe in manly chest,
Then first the coale of kindly heat appeares
To kindle loue in euery liuing brest;
But me had warnd old *Timons* wise behest,
Those creeping flames by reason to subdew.

(I ix 9.1-6)

However, his visionary meeting with Gloriana exposes the limitations of the training provided by Merlin and Timon.⁶ It is love rather than learning that transforms Arthur from an appealing protagonist to an exemplary figure of chivalry at its best.

The immaturity of Arthur is in any case balanced by his relish for the active life:

For on a day prickt forth with iollitie
Of looser life, and heat of hardiment,
Raunging the forest wide on courser free,
The fields, the floods, the heauens with one consent
Did seeme to laugh on me, and fauour mine intent.

(I ix 12.5-9)

The word 'laugh' recalls Arthur's contempt for lovers (I ix 10.6), but the laughter of nature is benign. Additionally Arthur's vitality has an independent appeal which makes him appear worthy of his good fortune. In the quest romance tradition, as in the epic, reputations are made through action. Homer's Achilles and Chretien's Erec win renown by rejecting the tranquility of domestic life, while Malory's Lancelot soon tires of life at court after distinguishing himself in Arthur's war with the Roman Empire. Arthur's duties as ruler and husband allow his knights to upstage him in Chretien's Arthurian romances, and in much of Malory. Spenser's Arthur avoids the stigma of stasis first by rejecting love, and subsequently through deeds inspired by a lover who far transcends the typical courtly lady.

The reader is also likely to respond favourably to Arthur because of the mature perspective with which he looks back on his youth. 'Looser', 'heat', 'prickt', 'iollitie', and 'raunging the forest wide on courser free' (I ix 12) carry sexual-libertine implications which

⁶ Arthur's education by Timon is discussed by Abbie Findlay Potts, *Shakespeare and 'The Faerie Queene'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp. 208-210.

might alienate sympathy if the portrait of the Prince were an objective description by the poet. However, these words are part of a confession which culminates in Arthur's acknowledgment of his own weakness:

But all in vaine: no fort can be so strong,
 Ne fleshly brest can armed be so sound,
 But will at last be wonne with battrie long,
 Or vnawares at disauantage found;
 Nothing is sure, that growes on earthly ground:
 And who most trustes in arme of fleshly might,
 And boasts, in beauties chaine not to be bound,
 Doth soonest fall in disauentrous fight,
 And yeeldes his caytiue neck to victours most despight.

Ensample make of him your haplesse ioy,
 And of my selfe now mated, as ye see;
 Whose prouder vaunt that proud auenging boy
 Did soone pluck downe, and curbd my libertie.

(I ix 11-12.4)

The cynosural position the youthful Arthur once accorded himself is undercut by his retrospective account. Recurrence of the Cupid motif (cf. I ix 10.7-9) reinforces the 'pride comes before a fall' structure of Arthur's narrative: 'wary government' does not prove foolproof protection from the darts of the god of love. As in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and as in the experience of the narcissitic young heroes of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the hubristic scorn of the protagonist serves only to emphasise its inevitable overthrow by the power of love.⁷ However, because Arthur judges himself the reader is left to look on sympathetically, perhaps echoing the sentiments of Una:

... gentle *Vna* thus to him gan say;
 O happy Queene of Faeries, that hast found
 Mongst many, one that with his prowesse may

⁷ Comparison of Spenser's Arthur to Chaucer's famous bachelor knights, Sir Thopas as well as Troilus, is often made. An important difference between the fortunes of Troilus and Arthur, not adequately discussed, is that Arthur's love is idealised while Troilus experiences the difficulties of an all too human passion. Anderson, "'A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine": The Chaucerian Connection', *ELR* 15 (1985), p. 172 reads the Chaucer allusion as one of the dubious undercurrents which may not undercut the idealism of Arthur's vision, but do give it human significance. For comparison of Arthur and Sir Thopas see J.A. Burrow, 'Sir Thopas in the Sixteenth Century', in *Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), ed. by Douglas Gray and E.G. Stanley, pp.69-91; Giamatti, pp. 49-52; Gross, p. 491; and William Nelson, 'Spenser *Iudens*', in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, ed. by Judith M. Kennedy and James E. Reither (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 94-96. Spenser's Arthur is compared to Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* by Potts, pp. 53-54.

Defend thine honour, and thy foes confound:
True Loues are often sown, but seldom grow on ground.

(I ix 16.5-9)

The final line is ambiguous. It could be argued that Una is sympathising with Arthur's failure to realise the ideal represented by his visionary lady. However, negative readings of Arthur as a lover are difficult to square with the martial prowess his love of Gloriana inspires. A more plausible interpretation exalts Arthur's relationship with the Faerie Queene as an exceptional privilege. Seldom grows does not mean never grows: the scriptural connotations of this image associate Arthur with the seed which falls on the soil and *does* produce fruit in the parable of the sower (Mark 4.2-20). The syntax of the stanza underlines this impression: juxtaposition of 'many' and 'one' emphasises Arthur's exalted status, while the use of chiasmus creates a resonant effect appropriate in a description of Spenser's paradigmatic chivalric figure. By the time that Arthur recounts his visionary experience, the reader has already been presented with one of its 'fruits', the rescue of Red Crosse. In such a context, pity for the enamoured Prince is likely to be tempered by admiration.

This impression may be underlined by contrasting the portrayal of Red Crosse with which Book One of *The Faerie Queene* commences:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Y cladd in mightie armes and siluer shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruell markes of many' a bloody fielde;
Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield:
His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield:
Full iolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,
As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt.

But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as liuing euer him ador'd:
Vpon his shield the like was also scor'd,
For soueraine hope, which in his helpe he had:
Right faithfull true he was in deede and word,
But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad;
Yet nothing did he dread, but euer was ydrad.

(I i 1-2)

The confident moods of both Arthur and Red Crosse are reflected in the buoyant rhythm and language with which they are described. In particular, the phrases 'pricking on the plaine' and 'full iolly knight he seemd' from the stanzas quoted above are echoed in Arthur's self-portrait: 'For on a day *prickt* forth with *iollitie*' (I ix 12.5). However, the precise effect of the irony varies in each case. In describing 'the Patron of True Holinesse' (I i arg.), Spenser naturally draws on the imagery of the Christian warrior, dating back to St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and developed through centuries of crusading, in order to give the limitations of Red Crosse a strong moral resonance. The flaws of Arthur are those of a typical knight-errant, rather than a representative of a virtue. Such a figure invites sympathy rather than reproof.

A sympathetic response from the reader is also encouraged by the relationship between Arthur and his environment:

Raunging the forest wide on courser free,
The fields, the floods, the heauens with one consent
Did seeme to laugh on me, and fauour mine intent.

For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;
The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
And pillow was my helmet faire displayd:
Whiles euery sence the humour sweet embayd,
And slombring soft my hart did steale away.

(I ix 12.7-13.6)

The flowing rhythm and imagery used to describe the expansive panorama in the first three lines quoted above denote the limitless potential of the young knight. In stanza thirteen the pace of the verse slackens, and the reader is drawn to focus on a particular place. The transition is a natural one - Arthur is tired and lies down - so the mood of optimism evoked in stanza twelve is compressed rather than dissipated. Overall, the animated benevolence of the environment in which Arthur finds himself anticipates the favour of his visionary lady - 'seeme to laugh on me, and fauour mine intent' and 'slombring soft my hart did steale away' could equally be applied to the actions of Gloriana. Arthur's narrow-minded rejection of love is overcome in a manner which exalts rather than exposes him.

Before moving on to consider the ideality of Arthur's visionary experience, the intimacy of his actual encounter with Gloriana remains to be considered. There is little question that their meeting is amorous: Gloriana expresses her desire for Arthur, and his response shows that her passion is reciprocated. The tell-tale lines 'her daintie limbes full softly down did *lay*' and 'nought but pressed gras, where she had *lyen*' (I ix 13.7, 15.2, my italics) indicate that more than a friendly chat is involved. The description of Gloriana herself conveys both strength of feeling and an impression of physical proximity. Because Arthur does not recount in detail what his visionary lady actually looks like, attention is drawn to the emotional intensity of the episode. The power of Spenser's poetry often depends upon detailed description, for example in the introduction of another type of Elizabeth, Belpheobe (II iii 21-31). Such specificity has a distancing effect: the character is understood by the reader from without, and is shown to exist on a level above or apart from the beholder. That this is not true of Arthur's vision intimates the closeness between vision and visionary, and helps to mark his experience out as exceptional.

The intimacy established between Arthur and Gloriana can also be shown from the emotional response of the Prince:

Most goodly glee and louely blandishment
 She to me made, and bad me loue her deare,
 For dearely sure her loue was to me bent ...
 But whether dreames delude, or true it were,
 Was neuer hart so rauisht with delight ...

(I ix 14.1-3, 5-6)

The cloying repetition of 'loue' and 'deare' conveys the bewilderment, but extreme pleasure, which Arthur feels on receiving Gloriana's favour. It remains to be seen whether Arthur's temporary bewilderment compromises his effectiveness as an exemplary figure. In the remainder of this chapter I will attempt to prove that this is not the case by considering the ideal aspect of his visionary experience.

By 'ideality' I refer to the quality of vision which makes it unquestionably worthy of aspiration. This admittedly general definition should become clear in the course of the remainder of this chapter, and in chapters five to six in which I consider the visions of Britomart, Calidore and Red Crosse. While the intimacy of Arthur's meeting with

Gloriana owes much to the sympathetic presentation of the Prince, the ideality of the episode centres around the introduction of his visionary lady. 'Introduced' is the operative word, because it can be shown that Arthur comes to participate in the ideality of Gloriana.

This is a key point of my argument. Jeffrey P. Fruen compares Spenser's allegorical technique to scriptural typology, arguing that Gloriana and her types bear a close structural relationship to Christ and the Old Testament figures who foreshadow him. This is an interesting reading, but it needs to be modified to account for the close bond established between Arthur and Gloriana.⁸

The stereotypical superlatives with which Gloriana is described are not enough to establish her as a figure of consummate perfection. Arthur's enthusiastic compliment - 'So faire a creature yet saw neuer sunny day' (I ix 13.9) - recalls descriptions of many a romance damsel and Petrarchan mistress. Consider, for example, the description of Chretien de Troyes' Enide:

The maiden was very beautiful, for Nature in making her had turned all her attention to the task. Nature herself had marvelled more than five hundred times at how she had been able to make such a beautiful thing just once, for since then, strive as she might, she had never been able to duplicate in any way her original model.⁹

The beauty of the mistress is also the standard conceit of the Renaissance love-sonnet - here is the idealised lady of Spenser's own *Amoretti*:

The souerayne beauty which I doo admyre,
witness the world how worthy to be prayzed:
the light wherof hath kindled heauenly fyre,
in my fraile spirit by her from basenesse raysed.
That being now with her huge brightnesse dazed,
base thing I can no more endure to view:
but looking still on her I stand amazed,
at wondrous sight of so celestially hew.

(*Sonnet III*, 1-8)¹⁰

In each case the lady is described in terms of the natural world, but exalted above it. Gloriana is distinguished from romance damsel and Petrarchan mistress by her

⁸ Jeffrey P. Fruen, "'True Glorious Type': The Place of Gloriana in *The Faerie Queene*", *SS 7* (1986), 147-173.

⁹ Chretien de Troyes, p.42.

¹⁰ For the *Amoretti* I refer to *Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. by J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912).

transcendence. It is this quality which renders Arthur's conventional compliment a meaningful expression of her perfection.

The reader of Spenser's Letter to Raleigh knows that Arthur's visionary lady is a type of the historical Elizabeth I:

In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene.¹¹

As she appears to Arthur, the bearing of Gloriana has a regality which reflects this identification. Her desire for the Prince is presented as his privilege rather than her lack:

Most goodly glee and louely blandishment
She to me made, and bad me loue her deare,
For dearely sure her loue was to me bent,
As when iust time expired should appeare.

(I ix 14.1-4)

Unlike the romance damsel, Gloriana does not require that Arthur perform a specific task; in contrast to the stereotypical Petrarchan mistress, Spenser's Faerie Queene does not toy with the affections of her beloved. Gratification of his desire is not denied, and although the moment of physical bonding is brief, Gloriana's promise weights the emotional effect of his visionary experience towards a positive feeling of expectation rather than disappointment. His progress through life is no longer aimless but directed by Providence, even if, as Arthur's bemused relation of his early career implies, a full understanding of his destiny eludes him (I ix 6.6-7.7).

In describing Arthur's confusion Spenser alludes to I Corinthians 2:9:

Was neuer hart so rauisht with delight,
Ne liuing man like words did euer heare,
As she to me deliuered all that night.

¹¹ Yates, pp. 215-216, writing of Raleigh's 'A Vision vpon this conceipt of the *Faery Queen*', argues that it is the regal status of Spenser's ideal lady which exalts his poetry above that of Petrarch. Raleigh's sonnet is also discussed by Louis Adrian Montrose, 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text', in *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts*, ed. by Patricia Parker and David Quint (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp.325-326. On Gloriana as a regal version of the idealised female figures of Petrarchanism, romance and folklore see also David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics of the English Renaissance* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp.113-116.

(The Faerie Queene I ix 14.6-8)

Arthur's recognition of transcendence is comparable to Shakespeare's version of the same scriptural reference:

Bottom: I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was... The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was!

*(A Midsummer Night's Dream IV i 201 ff.)*¹²

Both for Spenser's noble Prince and Shakespeare's figure of fun ignorance is crucial to the significance of their encounters with an otherworldly lady.¹³ The more that is known of an ideal, the greater the chances of discovering its shortcomings. This can be illustrated by considering the presentation of other, more specific types of Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene*: Una needs protection; Belphoebe thwarts rather than inspires; Mercilla is constrained by circumstances. One could also compare Britomart's relationship with Artegall, in which her initial ideal (III iv 5) is substantially qualified by the conduct of Artegall in Books Four and Five. Although Arthur allows that his meeting with Gloriana may have been a dream, what is really important is the *effect* of the experience upon him. From the perspective of the present, the past is equally intangible whether an event was real or imagined. Belief depends upon the detail, coherence and probability of a recollection; and Gloriana was real enough to Arthur for him to dedicate his life to realising the inspiration she provides.¹⁴

¹² I refer to the Alexander text of the *Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1994).

¹³ For comparison of Arthur's vision of Gloriana and Bottom's encounter with Titania see James P. Bednarz, 'Imitations of Spenser in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Renaissance Drama* 14 (1983), 79-102. Bednarz, p. 99 does not interpret either vision as a positive experience: 'The major similarity shared by Shakespeare's and Spenser's dreams of the Fairy Queen is the fact that they both connect the empirical and the ideal - the dreamer and his fairy mistress - and attack this relation as being fraudulent.'

¹⁴ Compare E.M.W. Tillyard, *The English Epic and its Background* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), p.291: 'The unexpected inrush of actuality in the mention of the "pressed grass" shows in itself how well he [Spenser] could check a realm of vision by a realm of fact. But the vision is none the less powerful and it represents a species of feeling that held his mind.' Contrast Bellamy, p.796: 'Of Arthur's dream, we may confirm only this: it records an event, an encounter with Gloriana, that has not really occurred because it can only be constituted as a latent possibility in the dream'. The ideal status of Arthur's visionary experience is also challenged by Anderson, 'Arthur, Argante and the Ideal Vision', and Cavanagh, 'Beauties Chace'; Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp.83-86; and Susanne Lindgren Wofford, *The Choice of Achilles: The Ideology of Figure in the Epic* (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 369-370. More general discussion of such views is offered in the 'Arthur as Protagonist' section of my introduction.

Gloriana's transcendence may be further defined by reference to another literary type, the faerie mistress pursuing the love of a mortal.¹⁵ In the Arthurian literature of the Middle Ages, Arthur has dealings with two rival faerie ladies - the Lady of the Lake and Morgan le Fay. About the Lady of the Lake, not much need be said in the present context. She is involved in the early stages of Arthur's career, providing him with a sword, and protecting him from Morgan.¹⁶ However, there is no suggestion of any erotic attraction, she is essentially a protector-figure. More interesting, but also more complex, is Arthur's relationship with Morgan le Fay. Morgan sometimes appears benevolent towards Arthur - but not always. In the early books of Malory, Arthur's faerie experiences are often threatening. For example in 'Arthur and Accolon' the king is enchanted by Morgan and almost meets his death at the hands of her lover.¹⁷ By contrast, the effect of Gloriana on Spenser's Arthur is as benign as it is overwhelming. This distinction is underlined by the positive resemblance between Morgan in her negative aspects and Spenser's Acrasia, although the malign demonic figure of the legend of Temperance more obviously reflects the influence of Ariosto and Tasso on *The Faerie Queene*.¹⁸

Even Morgan le Fay's benevolent interventions in Arthur's career confirm the more idealised status of Spenser's Gloriana. In Malory, Morgan is at her most benign when the wounded Arthur is received into her island kingdom of Avalon:

Than sir Bedwere toke the kynge uppon hys bak and so wente with hym to the watirs syde. And whan they were there, evyn faste by the banke hoved a lytyll barge wyth many fayre ladyes in hit, and amonge hem all was a quene, and all they had blak hoodis. And all they wepte and shryked whan they saw kynge Arthur ... And so they sette hem downe, and in one of their lappis kyng Arthure layde hys hede. And than the quene seyde,
'A, my dere brothir! Why have ye taryed so longe frome me?... thus was he lad away in a shyp wherein were three quenys; that one was kynge Arthur syster, quene Morgan le Fay, the tother was the quene of North Galis, and the thirde was the quene of the Waste Londis ...'¹⁹

¹⁵ For Spenser's use of the faerie mistress motif see Isabel E. Rathborne, *The Meaning of Spenser's Fairyland* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965; first published by Columbia University Press, 1937) and Greenlaw, 'Spenser's Fairy Mythology'.

¹⁶ Malory, pp.35, 93. The most extensive treatment of the Lady of the Lake comes in the Vulgate *Lancelot*, where she is more closely associated with Lancelot than with Arthur.

¹⁷ Malory, pp. 81-93.

¹⁸ Hough, p. 20 argues that it was through the Italian romantic epics that Malory influenced Spenser.

¹⁹ Malory, pp.716-717. See chapter eight for my comparison of this episode from Malory to the description of Spenser's Arthur after his battle with Maleger.

The narrator of *The Faerie Queene* reports that Gloriana bears Arthur's armour to Faery Land after his death:

... when he dyde, the Faerie Queene it brought
To Faerie lond, where yet it may be seene, if sought.

(I vii 36.8-9)

The elegiac tone with which Malory describes the passing of Arthur stands in contrast to the exaltation of the most exemplary figure in Spenser's expository romance. However, Gloriana's involvement in the end of Arthur's career is postponed beyond the limits of the narrative. In the poem as it stands, all we see of their relationship is their initial encounter. Unlike Morgan le Fay she does not flit in and out of the text, compromising her transcendence by her mere presence as well as through malign actions.

The importance of Arthur's visionary experience rests on the *interrelation* of its intimate and ideal aspects. Gloriana represents both an ideal to be striven towards, and creates from Arthur an image of the ideal striver. Although the knights of Maidenhead have met Gloriana, their service is presented as duty to their sovereign rather than the much closer bond between lovers Arthur enjoys.²⁰ The process of an ideal brought into being through the union of two individuals is suggested by the image of generation at the climax of Arthur's vision narrative -'Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind' (I ix 15.9).²¹ The episode may profitably be seen in the light of two traditions of idealised erotic experience: the belief that Adam and Eve were sexually experienced before the Fall, an idea which would achieve its fullest literary expression in *Paradise Lost*²²; and the comparison of a man's devotion to his mistress to the neoplatonic ascent.²³ Affinities with earthly but idealised love such as that of Adam and Eve, Petrarch and Laura, and

²⁰ This distinction is also made by Berger, *Allegorical Temper*, pp. 105-106, 170-171. See also Mueller, 'Infinite Desire'. However, neither Berger nor Mueller regard Arthur as a complete figure.

²¹ Evans, p. 34 links Gloriana as the inspiration of heroic deeds to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. This is an interesting comparison, because although Arthur is human, his encounter with a transcendent figure allows him to bring the redeeming influence of divinity into the fallen world.

²² For comparison of the dreams of Spenser's Arthur and Milton's Adam see John C. Ulreich, Jr., 'Making Dreams Truths and Fables Histories: Spenser and Milton on the Nature of Fiction', *SP* 87(1990), p. 372.

²³ Robert Ellrodt, *Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), p. 51 distinguishes Arthur's relationship with Gloriana from neoplatonism: 'The whole account of Arthur's resistance and final submission to love is thoroughly Petrarchan. As to the dream-vision, not "Neoplatonism" but "Romance" is writ large on it. Its origin in Sir Thopas and fairy lore is well known.' Contrast Heninger, 'pp. 88-89 on Arthur and Gloriana as a positive example of the 'process of unfolding'. A similar argument is advanced by Alastair Fowler, 'Emanations of Glory: Neoplatonic Order in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, ed. by Kennedy and Reither, pp.74-76.

Dante and Beatrice, do not detract from Arthur's paradigmatic status so much as suggesting the attainability of the ideal of chivalry and virtue he represents.²⁴

Interaction of intimacy and ideality can also be shown by considering Arthur's vision in the context of his quest. Arthur's perfection takes two forms: his role as knight-lover, and his performances as knight-rescuer. Both are considered at length in chapters eight to ten, but it is important to note their establishment in this episode. Commitment to his lady is shown in Arthur's summary of his quest:

From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;
 From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
 To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,
 And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,
 Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind.

(I ix 15.5-9)

The heavy rhythm of these anaphoral and alliterative lines reflects Arthur's dedication as a quester, standing in stark contrast to the expansive rhythm and imagery with which his earlier freedom is described (I ix 12.5-9). By this stage in the narrative the reader has also been presented with a display of Arthur's prowess in his release of Red Crosse from Orgoglio's dungeon (I vii 37-40): it is partly respect for Arthur's subsequent victory which encourages the reader to respond positively to his vision narrative.²⁵

Having established that the power of Arthur's visionary experience depends on the simultaneous evocation of intimacy and ideality, it remains to prove that it has paradigmatic status throughout the poem. Much of the foregoing analysis is based on the use of impressive but imprecise imagery. This exalted generality distinguishes the meeting of Arthur and Gloriana from the visions of other protagonists. In most cases these are less

²⁴ Comparison of Spenser's Arthur and Gloriana with Dante and Beatrice is developed in chapter seven.

²⁵ Rosemary Freeman, *The Faerie Queene: A Companion for Readers* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), pp. 108-109 makes an interesting comparison between Arthur and the visionary of Coleridge's *Anima Poetica*: 'Arthur's personal story gives solidity to his function in the entire Book while his search for the Queene of the Faeries underlines his comprehension of the emotion Una has described to him on their first meeting ... When he awoke in the morning he found "nought but the pressed grass where she had lyen". The story comes across in that memorable phrase just as Coleridge's man wakes to find himself still holding the flower he had been given in Paradise ... Both tales leave a proof and a mystery. Arthur will continue his search preserving a lyrical assurance in his decision. [quotes I ix 15.5-9] This was what made him the source of the knight's salvation and the ready interpreter of Una's plight.'

unambiguously ideal, and have a specific relevance to the titular virtues of the books in which they take place. It is to these visions that I turn in chapters five to seven. First, however, a chapter in which I define exactly what I mean, and perhaps more to the point what I do not mean, by 'vision'.

Chapter Four: 'For we muste go seke adventures'¹

Uses of the word 'vision' are various, and often rather loose. Perhaps the most obvious is the association of the term with sight². However, although sight is involved in the visionary experiences of Spenser's protagonists, it is not a distinguishing quality. For example, in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*, Arthur sees Gloriana, but he also sees Una. Both ladies are beautiful, but in Arthur's experience Una is a damsel in distress, and as such very much part of the romance milieu of the poem.³ Gloriana is distinguished from this world by the suddenness of her appearance, and by her transcendence. A further meaning of vision which should perhaps be mentioned in clarifying my position is illustrated in that popular phrase of literary critics, 'the poet's vision'.⁴ In general, I use 'vision' to describe encounters between romance protagonists and a manifestation of the otherworldly.⁵ The otherworldly takes various forms in *The Faerie Queene*, as comparison of the visions of Britomart, Calidore and Red Crosse to that of Arthur in chapters five to seven should clarify. However, vision is always to be distinguished from the integral place of adventures, often involving marvellous happenings, in the romance world.

Arthur's encounter with Una and his subsequent rescue of Red Crosse can be described as an 'adventure'. Adventures are the *raison d'etre* of the typical knight-errant, as a fuller version of the quote from Malory used as the heading of this chapter shows. I cite the following passage in chapter two, but it is worth repeating to clarify my present point:

¹ Malory, p. 149.

² Richard Pindell, 'The Mutable Image: Man in Creation', in *Eterne in Mutability: The Unity of 'The Faerie Queene': Essays published in Memory of Davis Philoon Harding 1914-1970*, ed. by Kenneth John Atchity (Hamden: Archon Books, 1972), pp.165-166, considers vision in the sense of sight in *The Faerie Queene*. See also the articles on 'vision' by Thomas Hyde and 'visions' by Joseph Wittreich in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp.721-723.

³ Una is described as a visionary lady, but she is experienced as such only by the reader (I iii 4) and, much later, by Red Crosse (I xii 23). I consider these stanzas in chapter seven.

⁴ A notable example from the field of Spenser criticism is Berger's *Allegorical Temper*. More recently see Gross, p. 489. Tillyard, p. 273 uses 'visionary' to describe Spenser's style of writing.

⁵ Compare Giamatti, *Exile and Change in Renaissance Literature* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 82-83: 'Moments of vision or revelation are much more frequent, and dense, in *The Faerie Queene* than in any preceding Romance; we are constantly offered such moments, from the primary level of visors raised and veils laid aside, to the grand visions in the tenth cantos of Books I, IV, VI or the dream at Isis Church in V. vii ... By holding these moments aloft, as it were, Spenser hopes to discover permanence behind change and thus shape the perspective of his reader. The poet's goal is to teach us to distinguish between magic and miracle, between what is only vain appearance and a moment of divinity.' See footnote 2 to chapter three for Giamatti on Arthur as a visionary, and my response. Compare Richard McCabe, *Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), p. 12: 'Once the concept of eternity is allowed, however, the final goal becomes an escape from time, and moments of vision take on an importance entirely disproportionate to their temporal duration.'

Thus sir Launcelot rested hym longe with play and game; and than he thought hymself to preve in straunge adventures, and bade his nevew, sir Lyonell, for to make hym redy, 'for we muste go seke adventures'. So they mounted on their horses, armed at all ryghtes, and rode into a depe foreste and so into a playne.

Adventures are not mundane, but the leisurely, dream-like movement from 'rested hym long with play and game' to 'preve in straunge adventures' suggests that their occurrence can be taken for granted as soon as a knight leaves the security of the court for the hazards of the quest. Elsewhere in Malory, and at the beginning of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Arthur and his court will not even sit down to dinner without a hint of adventure to savour their meat.⁶ In *The Faerie Queene*, 'adventure' is foregrounded at the very beginning of the poem in the introduction of Red Crosse - 'Vpon a great aduenture he was bond' (I i 3.1); and the word or its plural recurs fourteen times in Book One alone. 'Vision' or 'visions' occur only ten times in the entire poem. These statistics, for which I am indebted to Osgood's *Concordance*, reinforce the point that visions are a more exceptional form of romance experience than adventures.⁷

Normally, not all adventures are of equal importance to a questing knight. Spenser's Arthur, whose adventures in *The Faerie Queene* almost always involve the rescue of a representative of the titular virtue at a moment of great need, is an exception to the rule in this respect. More characteristic are the heroes of Chretien de Troyes' Arthurian romances. For example, Chretien's Lancelot encounters several adventures, but all are subordinate to the rescue of Guenevere which brings *The Knight of the Cart* to a climax. Corresponding figures in *The Faerie Queene* are the titular knights: Red Crosse, Guyon, Artegall and Calidore engage in several adventures before negotiating the climactic challenges posed by the Dragon, Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, Grantorto, and the Blatant Beast. However, although these episodes are distinguished from earlier adventures by the length with which they are described and their importance to the protagonists, they remain adventures rather than visions.⁸ In the remainder of this chapter the nature of 'adventure' is

⁶ Malory, p. 177; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ll. 85-99. See my discussion of the opening of Malory's *Tale of Sir Gareth* in chapter two. For *Sir Gawain* I use the edition of J.A. Burrow (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).

⁷ Charles Grosvenor Osgood, *A Concordance to the Poems of Edmund Spenser* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1915).

⁸ Fletcher, *Allegory: Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 350-351 does not sufficiently distinguish between thematic centres of the various books of the poem and

explored with reference to the climax of the legend of Chastity, in which its titular knight, Britomart, visits the House of Busyrane. Looking at this episode, and in my next chapter considering the qualities of Britomart's visionary experiences, should clarify the distinction between 'vision' and 'adventure'.

Most of Britomart's actions in Book Three can be described in terms of standard romance motifs. She jousts with Guyon; visits Malecasta's castle and is exposed to the temptations of courtly society; converses with another knight, Red Crosse, and asks him for news; jousts with Marinell; visits Malbecco's castle, and is once again confronted by courtly vice; encounters the giant Ollyphant; and finally rescues a damsel in distress, Amoret, from the power of the malign enchanter Busirane. As the climax of the legend of Chastity, Britomart's experience in the House of Busirane is to be distinguished from her earlier adventures. However, the enchanter and his abode lack the unexpected and otherworldly qualities of vision.⁹

Existing interpretations of the House of Busirane tend to take the form of a detailed exposition of what happens inside it.¹⁰ Such readings emphasise the thematic importance of the House of Busirane in the legend of Chastity. My aim is to demonstrate that at the level of romance narrative the episode is an adventure rather than a visionary experience. Accordingly, less emphasis is placed on the descriptive passages included in the episode than on its place in the quest of Britomart.

The Busirane episode, like the adventures of Malory's Lancelot after leaving Arthur's court in the lines quoted earlier, is presented as a chance occurrence. Britomart's

visionary experiences.

⁹ Compare the definition of vision and discussion of the Busirane episode by Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 109.

¹⁰ See Lewis, *Allegory*, pp.340-341. Lewis also considers the Busirane episode in *Spenser's Images of Life*, 18-35. Subsequent treatments of the episode include: Berger, 'Busirane and the War Between the Sexes: An Interpretation of *The Faerie Queene*' III. xi-xii', in *Revisionary Play: Studies in Spenserian Dynamics* (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 172-194; Elizabeth Story Donno, 'The Triumph of Cupid: Spenser's Legend of Chastity', *YES* 4 (1974), 37-48; Mary Adelaide Grellner, 'Britomart's Quest for Maturity', *SEL* 8 (1968), 35-43; Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 72-88. A recent exposition of this episode, and the career of Britomart generally, is found in Linda Gregerson's *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See especially the section on Spenser's revision of Petrarchanism, pp. 125-133. Gregerson, p. 131 reacts against readings of Amoret's plight as a psychomachia of her fear of chivalric marriage, eg. those of Berger and Roche. She sees Amoret as the victim of a male-orchestrated marriage ritual, compromised only in so far as she joins the ritual.

attention is diverted from pursuing the giant Ollyphant to assisting the beleaguered knight, Scudamour:

... he has gotten to a forrest neare,
Where he is shrowded in security...

Faire *Britomart* so long him followed,
That she at last came to a fountaine sheare,
By which there lay a knight all wallowed
Vpon the grassy ground ...

(III xi 6.6-7, 7.1-4)

The giant is forgotten, but the speed with which the narrative carries the reader into the next episode precludes reproach of Britomart on grounds of unfinished business. The transition is not explained, but as a life of continual but varied activity constitutes the standard pattern of the romance quest no explanation is necessary.¹¹ Britomart's earlier encounters with Arthur and Guyon (III i 4) and with Marinell (III iv 12) begin in a similar way, as do her later meetings with Blandamour and Paridell (IV i 17), and with Artegall (IV vi 9).

While visions are characteristically unexpected, knights-errant expect to find the excitement of adventures when they enter the forest. In a passage I have already quoted in chapter two, this convention is exploited to demonstrate the unworthiness of Gawain as a Grail knight:

Sir Gawain pursued his wanderings from Whitsun to St Magdalene's day without coming across an adventure that merited recounting; he found it most surprising, having expected the Quest of the Holy Grail to furnish a prompt crop of strange and arduous adventures.¹²

It is unusual for a knight not to encounter adventures, a sign that something is wrong in the romance world. More conventional is the experience of Malory's Lancelot. When he falls asleep under a tree in the forest and wakes up in the castle of Morgan le Fay, Lancelot responds: 'I wote not how I com into this castell but hit be by inchauntemente'.¹³ It is almost

¹¹ Contrast the interesting although somewhat strained thematic association of the two adventures by Berger, 'Busirane', p. 186: 'That Scudamour materializes in place of the giant suggests a symbolic equivalence and transference ... he too will be pursued by a destructive fantasy based in lust and infinite desire and variously displayed in the House of Busirane, the House of Ate, the House of Care, and, in a less evident manner, the Temple of Venus.'

¹² *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p. 162.

¹³ Malory, p.151. Contrast Bennett, 'Genre', pp. 104-105 on the importance of 'surprise' in romance

as if he expects to meet with supernatural forces: 'enchantment' is an unusual but not incredible means of transport in the forest. Spenser's Britomart is not surprised when confronted by Scudamour - she simply gets on with the business of assisting him as a good knight should. A more specific analogue for this meeting is the encounter with Pinabello which interrupts Bradamante's search for Ruggiero in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*:

She crossed a wood and afterwards a hill,
Then came at last upon a lovely rill...

... The Maid,
Turning her lovely eyes upon the scene,
A cavalier reclining there has seen.

Alone and silent, with a pensive brow,
Reposing in a shady grove beside
A green and flowery bank, he watches how
The limpid, crystal waters slowly glide.
His shield and helm are hanging on a bow;
His charger to the tree is also tied.
His eyes are moist with tears, his face held low,
And all his air betokens grief and woe.

(2: 33-35)¹⁴

Both the general parallel with Malory, and the more specific recollection of *Orlando Furioso*, confirm that Spenser introduces the Busirane episode as an experience of the type to be expected in the world of romance.

Adventures typically succeed one upon the other in this way, sometimes even interrupting each other. Here is an example from the Vulgate *Lancelot*:

'Sir Gawain,' the knight said, 'I shall tell you the custom of that castle. We shall have to fight an equal number of knights; and even if we defeat them, we shall not be safe from the others.'

'That is an evil custom,' said Sir Gawain.

Thus they rode together, and the damsel with them. And for now the story falls silent about the three of them for a while and returns to speak

literature: 'One of the fundamental differences between epic and romance, as it is between comedy and tragedy, is the difference between recognition and surprise as the chief source of narrative interest. Romance, like comedy, relies upon surprise and novelty. Epic, like tragedy, moves toward an end foreseen from the beginning, so that the audience is delighted with the telling of a familiar story, or at least hypnotized into belief by a sense of the inevitability of every step.' Bennett, preoccupied with late romances, forgets that in medieval literature the 'wonders' of the romance forest often evoke no more surprise than the trees.

¹⁴ For Ariosto I use *Orlando Furioso*, transl. by Barbara Reynolds (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975 [vol. I], 1977 [vol. 2]).

for a time of the knight of the litter.

Although the knight of the litter is Lancelot, the main protagonist of the romance, it is unlikely that a reader of the lines quoted above could fail to be interested in how Gawain and his companions will fare. However, several pages elapse before the text 'returns to Sir Gawain.'¹⁵ Ariosto deploys the narrative technique of *entrelacement* from the earliest stages of *Orlando Furioso*. Rinaldo is crossing the English channel in stormy conditions:

Veering from stern to stern, the cruel gale
Grows ever stronger, granting no release.
Now here, now there, they whirl with shortened sail,
At the storm's mercy tossed on angry seas.
But many threads are needed for my tale
And so, to weave my canvas as I please,
I'll leave Rinaldo and the plunging prow,
And turn to talk of Bradamante now.

(2: 30)

The fortunes of Bradamante and Ruggiero are followed for over two cantos before Rinaldo is mentioned again. Spenser uses *entrelacement* extensively in Book Three of *The Faerie Queene*, notably in allowing Britomart to disappear from view between cantos four and nine. The narrative transition between the Ollyphant and Busyrane episodes is less absolute than the examples I cite from the Vulgate *Lancelot* and *Orlando Furioso* in so far as Britomart remains the central protagonist. This helps to create a sense of impending climax - we continue to focus on Britomart, but wonder what is going to happen next that is so crucial that the narrator brings the pursuit of Ollyphant to such an abrupt end. Suspense is intensified by the responses of both Britomart and Scudamour to the wall of fire barring their entrance to the House of Busirane. The echoing final and first lines of successive stanzas - 'My Lady and my loue so cruelly to pen ?' and 'My Lady and my loue is cruelly pend' - (III xi 10.9-11.1) emphasise Scudamour's appreciation of the magnitude of the obstacle to be overcome. Although Britomart is less pessimistic, 'so we a God inuade' (III xi 22.9) indicates that she is far from complacent.¹⁶ Adventures are not to be feared, but no more are they to be regarded lightly. A sense of mystery is often an important part of

¹⁵ *Lancelot of the Lake*, transl. by Corin Corley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.188, 194.

¹⁶ Thomas Hyde, 'Busirane', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 123-124 goes so far as to argue that Britomart now acts as an agent of Providence. Certainly Britomart is cast as a rescuer-figure in this episode. However, as I show later, her success is not as complete as one would expect from an agent of Providence.

visionary experience, highlighting its otherworldly quality and establishing the privilege bestowed on the visionary.¹⁷ However, when evoked in the context of an adventure, mystery simply intensifies the challenge faced by the protagonist.

The role of the Busirane episode as a test is also intimated through the environment:

Tho when as chearelesse Night ycouered had
 Faire heauen with an vniversall cloud,
 That euery wight dismayd with darknesse sad,
 In silence and in sleepe themselues did shroud.

(III xii 1.1-4)

Night is rarely used to create a mood of optimism in English literature, and Spenser is in this respect traditional, although in a particularly potent manner. Detailing of a gradual but inexorable sequence of events conveys a sense of encroaching peril. The positive associations of 'faire heauen' are overwhelmed by the ominous effect of juxtaposing the power of Night and the vulnerability of 'every wight'. This impression is emphasised by the use of hard and soft alliteration in the fourth and fifth lines. Britomart's situation recalls the threat posed by the hours of darkness to Red Crosse and Una in the opening canto of the poem (I i 36); and Britomart's own nocturnal adventure in the House of Malecasta at the beginning of her quest (III i 57-59). These parallels - and one could go on endlessly with examples of disconcerting happenings encountered by Spenser's protagonists during the night - underline the character of the episode as part of the romance milieu, rather than as an otherworldly vision.

The threat posed by the onset of darkness is intensified by the description of the storm which follows:

... an hideous storme of winde arose,
 With dreadfull thunder and lightning atwixt,
 And an earth-quake, as if it streight would lose
 The worlds foundations from his centre fixt;
 A direfull stench of smoke and sulphure mixt
 Ensewd, whose noyance fild the fearefull sted.

(III xii 2.1-6)

Elemental disturbances of the sort described in the first four lines quoted above connote natural fear: storms, thunder, lightning and earthquakes do happen. However, 'a direfull

¹⁷ I develop this point with reference to Britomart's vision in Isis Church in my next chapter.

stench of smoke and sulphure' also calls to mind descriptions and depictions of Hell in medieval literature and art. Fear of the natural modulates into terror of the supernatural. In the next stanza the impression of malign power closing in on Britomart is intensified by the dramatic effect of the storm upon the building:

All suddenly a stormy whirlwind blew
 Throughout the house, that clapped euery dore,
 With which that yron wicket open flew,
 As it with mightie leuers had bene tore.

(III xii 3.1-4)

Britomart could at this point have had a vision. The environment in which she is depicted can be counterpointed with Malory's description of the Round Table before the arrival of Galahad and the appearance of the Grail:

... whan they were served and all syegis fulfilled sauff only the Syege
 Perelous, anone there befelle a mervaylous adventure: that all the doorys
 and wyndowes of the paleyse shutte by themselff ...

... every knyght sette in hys owne place as they were toforehonde.

Than anone they harde crakyng and cryng of thundir, that hem thought
 the palyse sholde all to-dryve. So in the myddys of the blast
 entyrde a sonnebeame, more clerer by seven tymys than ever they saw
 day ...

Than entird into the halle the Holy Grayle coverde with whyght samyte,
 but there was none that myght se hit nother whom that bare hit.¹⁸

In Malory, as in the Vulgate *Queste*, specific disturbances in nature prefigure the general transformation of the romance milieu from a world of adventure to a visionary country. Galahad is not only distinguished by his complete vision of the Grail, but also as the knight responsible for 'seeking out and terminating once for all the adventures of the kingdom of Logres.'¹⁹ However, Britomart's experience of elemental disorder is not followed by an otherworldly manifestation, but by a pageant put on by an enchanter.

The thematic importance of what Britomart finds within the House of Busirane is amply covered by existing Spenser scholarship. I do not want to go over well-covered ground in detail, save to note that the intensely detailed description of the tapestries, and

¹⁸ Malory, pp. 518, 521-522. Greenlaw, 'Britomart at the House of Busirane', *SP* 26 (1929), pp. 128-129 compares Britomart's experience in the House of Busirane to the Grail mysteries.

¹⁹ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.259.

the evocation of medieval allegory and Renaissance pageantry in the account of the Masque, confirm my argument that the episode is an adventure rooted in the romance milieu of the poem rather than a visionary encounter involving an interaction between this world and a transcendent plane of existence.

As the tapestries are described and the Masque of Cupid is performed, the protagonist recedes from view:

... the Championesse now entred has
The vtmost rowme, and past the formest dore,
The vtmost rowme, abounding with all precious store.

(III xi 27.7-9)

Repetition of 'vtmost rowme' directs the reader's attention away from Britomart and towards what she sees. Twenty-one stanzas describing the 'precious store' of Busirane follow before the narrative returns to Britomart:

That wondrous sight faire *Britomart* amazed,
Ne seeing could her wonder satisfie,
But euermore and more vpon it gazed,
The whiles the passing brightnes her fraile sences dazed.

(III xi 49. 6-9)

The reader is likely to be as overwhelmed by the aesthetic splendours of the tapestries as Britomart, an effect underscored by the heavy 'amazed', 'gazed', 'dazed' rhyme in this stanza as well as through the vivid imagery used throughout the description of the tapestries.²⁰ However, Britomart's experience is not visionary. A vision is characteristically given to a particular individual, or, notably at the beginning of the Grail quest, to a select group; but the poetic power and thematic significance of the tapestries does not depend on Britomart's response. The impression of a test being imposed on the protagonist within the romance world, rather than a vision bringing them into contact with otherworldly power, is reinforced by the tangibility as well as the wording of the inscriptions 'be bold, be bold' and

²⁰ Compare Alpers, *The Poetry of 'The Faerie Queene'*, pp. 9-19 on the relationship between Spenser's pictorial language and his rhetorical use of narrative in this episode. See also Hamilton, 'On Annotating Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, p.59. I agree with Hamilton's analysis of III xi-xii in points of detail, but not with his use of the word 'vision': 'In the first room, Britomart gazes in amazed wonder at the sight of the blinded Cupid triumphing over the blinded dragon-guardian of chastity. The corresponding vision in the second room is the mask which presents an anatomy of her love for Artegall.' Hamilton is using 'vision' to describe what is an impressive sight, but one firmly rooted in the romance milieu of the poem and better described as a pageant or procession.

'be not too bold' on the door of the room from which the Masque of Cupid emerges (III xi 54).²¹ The comparative insignificance of the spectator relative to the spectacle is also evoked by the ritualistic aspect of the performance:

All which disguised marcht in masking wise,
About the chamber with that Damozell,
And then returned, hauing marched thrise,
Into the inner roome, from whence they first did rise.

(III xii 26. 6-9)

Thus described, the Masque has the air of an event which has happened before and could go on like clock-work for an indefinite period.²² This expectation can be shown from the response of Britomart herself:

... from that same roome not to depart
Till morrow next, she did her selfe auize,
When that same Maske againe should forth arize.

(III xii 28. 3-5)

Britomart is taken aback when the Masque is not performed again (III xii 30.1-4). Although she appears to vanquish its creator, the fact that Busirane is not actually destroyed (III xii 41. 3-9) suggests that the whole performance could happen again for future Britomarts and Amorets.²³ In this respect the Masque of Cupid as seen by Britomart

²¹ Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 106 argues that the inscriptions give the episode a 'bloodcurdling fairytale provenance.' Earle B. Fowler, *Spenser and the System of Courtly Love* (Louisville: Standard Printing Company, 1935), p. 56 cites as an analogue the English folktale in which the heroine sees the words 'Be bold, be bold - but not too bold, lest that your heart's blood should run cold'.

²² Compare Hamilton, 'On Annotating Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed by Frushnell and Vondersmith, p. 58: 'The characteristic syntax of Spenser's allegorical technique is ritual: characters undergo set sequences of action by which they (i.e., we) are initiated into more fully realized states of the virtues displayed through them... A major example of ritual in the poem is Britomart's experience in the house of Busirane.'

²³ This point of my argument is intended as an extension of thematic explanations of the survival of Busirane, rather than as an alternative. Anderson, 'Britomart', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 114 writes: 'Busirane is abusive and evil, but he is an authentic presence in history, in myth, in Ovid, in Petrarchan sonnets, and in Britomart's experience.' Compare Berger, 'Busirane', p. 187: 'The persistence and increasing complexity throughout Book IV of problems only touched on toward the end of Book III indicates the peculiar quality of Britomart's triumph over Busirane. It also explains, I think, the odd feeling we have that the entire Busirane episode hangs or floats before us deceptively: its surfaces seem at once too real (in the sense of being vivid, visual, immediate) and too unreal in that they appear to be concealing their precise function in the story.' Evans, p 69 cites Britomart's visit to the House of Busirane as an example of T. S. Eliot's objective correlative theory: the relation of image and meaning giving Britomart's experience representative significance. These readings seem to me far more reasonable than the finality Mark Rose sees in the episode in *Heroic Love; Studies in Sidney and Spenser* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.112: 'Britomart's victory over Busirane describes not so much the rejection of a false form of love as the rejection of a now untimely passion, a passion that has served its purpose and is needed no longer.'

has some affinities with the adventure of the fountain in the Yvain romances I consider in chapter two, although the latter is more of an initiation-rite than a climactic adventure.²⁴ A closer analogue to Spenser's Busirane episode is the Joy of the Court at the end of Chretien's *Erec and Enide*, in which Erec defeats the hitherto invincible Mabonagrain and secures the liberty of a whole society.

Although presented as a spectator for much of the episode, Britomart is not completely detached. Poetically, the descriptions of the tapestries and the Masque of Cupid can stand alone; but they also contribute to the reader's awareness of Britomart's development. It is at this point that I turn to the long-term significance of the Busirane episode as one adventure in a quest which outlasts Spenser's legend of Chastity into the fourth and fifth books of the poem, and which is even then left incomplete.

When Britomart encounters Scudamour in the penultimate canto of the legend of Chastity, she has matured considerably since the metaphorical fire of love left her in a similar position. Allegorically, her rescue of Amoret and separation from Glauce suggest the progress the 'silly Mayd' (III ii 27.7) of the opening cantos has made towards womanhood.²⁵ However, Britomart retains some of her early vulnerability. Unable to satisfy her desire for the absent Artegall, she has, or is liable to develop, a disconcerting affinity with the dubious forms of love presented in the House of Busirane. She has already been through some of the experiences the Masque of Cupid show that love can lead to - the description of Fancy (III xii 7-8) recalls her naive idealisation of Artegall (III iv 5.5-9) - and must be warned against others - the portrayal of Suspect anticipates her fears during Artegall's absence (V vi 4.5-9).²⁶ Additionally, Britomart does not emerge unscathed from her encounter with Busirane, the wound she receives (III xii 33) recalls that inflicted on her by Gardante at the beginning of her quest (III i 65), a recurrence which symbolises her inability to transcend the trials and tribulations of human love.²⁷ The limitations of

²⁴ On this aspect of Chretien's *Yvain* see Auerbach, 'The Knight Sets Forth'.

²⁵ Roche, 'Amoret', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 30. Compare Leslie, p. 45: 'One cannot feel here that Britomart is greatly perturbed by the lurid scenes depicted in the tapestries, nor by the pageant she witnesses. Rather, in the gathering of her armoury about her and her drawing "her selfe aside in sicknesse", we are aware of the prudent watchfulness, the wise self-possession she now displays, in contrast to her too-ready sense of security in Malecasta's house.'

²⁶ For this reading of the masquers I am indebted to Grellner. I agree with her assessment of what Britomart sees in the House of Busirane. However, Grellner's use of the word vision in the final paragraph of her article is misleading. There is a difference between learning through adventure - an experience which tests the protagonist within the romance world - and as a result of a vision which brings the protagonist into temporary contact with a transcendent plane of existence.

Britomart, even at a moment of triumph, confirm that the House of Busirane is an adventure to be negotiated in order to continue her quest rather than a transforming visionary experience.

A final important qualification to Britomart's victory is that in rescuing Amoret, she achieves Scudamour's quest, not her own - and that only temporarily in the 1596 revision of the episode. Britomart is no closer to Artegall than she was at Malbecco's Castle or when pursuing Ollyphant. A life of endless adventuring aligns her experience with the quest pattern typical to romance literature in which adventures frequently fail to bring the knight closer to his goal. On this point I agree with Gareth Roberts:

If the quest is a means of structuring a book and providing it with its purpose and expected end, what *is* the quest of the knight of chastity and does she achieve it? It is certainly not her experience in the House of Busirane which, although it comes at the end of the book (like Redcrosse's fight with the Dragon and Guyon's temptations in Acrasia's garden), is an unexpected adventure Britomart undertakes only in III xi.²⁸

Britomart's experience is not dissimilar to that of Chretien de Troyes' Yvain, who has a number of adventures which do not detract from his reputation, but do not bring him any closer to his ultimate objective of a reconciliation with his lady. However, neither the frequency with which a knight is likely to encounter adventures, nor their often digressive nature, mean that knights should not seek them. What these characteristics do is distinguish adventures from visions. Britomart's victory over Busirane does not bring her personal satisfaction, an impression emphatically conveyed by her response to the happily reunited Scudamour and Amoret at the end of the 1590 *Faerie Queene*:

So seemd those two, as growne together quite,
That *Britomart* halfe enuying their blesse,
Was much empassiond in her gentle sprite,
And to her selfe oft wisht like happinesse,
In vaine she wisht, that fate n'ould let her yet possesse.

(III xii 46.5-9)

This image stands in contrast to Arthur's steadfast pursuit of his visionary quest:

²⁷ Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structure of Discourse* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p.3 notes the linked significance of Britomart's wounds. See also Rose, p.126.

²⁸ Gareth Roberts, *The Faerie Queene* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), p. 92.

When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd,
 And nought but pressed gras, where she had lyen,
 I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd,
 And washed all her place with watry eyen.
 From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;
 From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
 To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,
 And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,
 Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind.

(I ix 15)

Although Arthur laments the physical absence of his beloved in the first four lines of this stanza, his vision has taught him what it is like to enjoy the physical presence of his beloved. Moreover, as Gloriana is a transcendent visionary figure, Arthur's experience inspires him with a confidence which Britomart lacks on leaving the House of Busirane - she is more sure of herself *before* the adventure begins. The respect in which Britomart *can* be compared to Spenser's Arthur takes us away from the House of Busirane, back to her father's castle where she has a vision of Artegall in a magic mirror, and forward to Isis Church where she has an emblematic dream of her future union with Artegall. In these episodes, the subjects of my next chapter, the protagonist experiences the invasion of her romance existence by an otherworldly manifestation.

Chapter Five : Britomart's Dynastic Visions

Like Arthur, Britomart is inspired by visions with erotic and dynastic implications. In order to defend the paradigmatic status of Arthur's experience I will first compare Britomart's initial glimpse of Artegall in a magic mirror belonging to her father, arguing that this vision is both less intimate and less completely idealised. Subsequently I will consider whether Britomart's prophetic dream in Isis Church increases or decreases the challenge she poses to Arthur's pre-eminence as a visionary quester.

Britomart's quest resembles Arthur's in so far as it begins with an otherworldly interruption of her routine romance existence. Introduced as a conventional princess performing the ordinary action of looking at herself in the mirror, she sees more than her own reflection:

One day it fortun'd, faire *Britomart*
 Into her fathers closet to repayre;
 For nothing he from her reseru'd apart,
 Being his onely daughter and his hayre:
 Where when she had espyde that mirrhour fayre ...

Efstoones there was presented to her eye
 A comely knight ...

(III ii 22.1-5, 24.1-2)

There is a similarity between this scene and the image of Arthur in the lead-up to his vision of Gloriana (I ix 12.5-13): both the typical knight and the typical princess find their aimless movements suddenly given direction as a result of a visionary experience. However, the differences between Arthur and Britomart as visionaries are greater than their points of resemblance.¹

¹ Gross, *Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, and Magic* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 149 emphasises the ambiguous aspects of both visions: 'The vision in the mirror and the dream of Gloriana ... dislocate the consciousness of the quester who experiences them, and to some degree that of the reader who may identify with those questers.' In general my interpretation of the visions in *The Faerie Queene* differs from that of Gross in foregrounding their ideality. The visions of the titular knights are less ideal than Arthur's, but all are positive experiences. For comparison of Arthur and Britomart as visionaries see also Gregerson, p.161: 'The function of Lacanian error in the narrative of subjectivity is the function of godhead and unconscious memory in the *Phaedrus*, of Artegall's countenance in Britomart's glass, or of the Faerie Queene in Arthur's dream: it is a motive force.' I agree with this statement in so far as it goes. However, it is necessary to consider the consequences of these experiences: the transformation of Arthur is more instantaneous and complete than that of Britomart.

In chapter three I argue that the intimacy of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana contributes to his status as a paradigm of chivalry and virtue. Britomart's first glimpse of Artegall has a rather different effect: intimacy is desired rather than achieved, with the result that Britomart's vulnerability receives more emphasis than her potential.² This can be shown from the conversation with Red Crosse (III ii 4-5) which frames the account of Britomart falling in love, forming a structural parallel to the questioning of Arthur by Una (I ix 2, 6-8). However, while Arthur's *enfance* is reported in a matter-of-fact manner, and immediately succeeded by his vision narrative, Britomart indulges in a session of 'story-telling' (the word 'lies' would not do justice to the note of tenderness which pervades the episode) as a covert means of encouraging Red Crosse to praise Artegall. Their insult-compliment exchange comes to a climax when Britomart elicits a physical description of Artegall:

... Sir knight, these idle termes forbear,
 And sith it is vneath to find his haunt,
 Tell me some markes, by which he may appeare,
 If chaunce I him encounter parauaunt;
 For perdie one shall other slay, or daunt:
 What shape, what shield, what armes, what steed, what sted,
 And what so else his person most may vaunt ?
 All which the *Redcrosse* knight to point ared,
 And him in euery part before her fashioned.

(III ii 16)

Britomart bombards Red Crosse with the conventional language of chivalric bravado, but her confidence is only apparent. She does not need the information she solicits, but requests it as a second-best alternative to her real goal. Like Shakespeare's Rosalind, Britomart suffers as a result of her ostensibly liberating disguise: her conversation with Red Crosse may be compared with the responses of Rosalind and Celia to the love-struck Orlando (*As You Like It* III ii 151 ff), although the tone of the latter exchange is more playful than painful.³ Her response to the description of Artegall provided by Red Crosse reveals her true feelings, and they are not those of a knight seeking to establish a martial reputation:

² Compare Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p. 94: 'From the very first episode in which she appears, she is defined by an essential lack (III. i. 60.5-7), and even the union with Artegall is never, within the poem, realized.' See also David Mikics, *The Limits of Moralizing: Pathos and Subjectivity in Spenser and Milton* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1994), p.5: 'The experience of loss creates the self in the only form we know it - as emotional individuality'. This generalisation is certainly true of Britomart, but cannot be applied to Arthur.

³ This comparison is also made by Roberts, p. 105.

Yet him in euery part before she knew,
 How euer list her now her knowledge faine,
 Sith him whilome in *Britaine* she did vew,
 To her reuealed in a mirrhour plaine,
 Whereof did grow her first engrafted paine;
 Whose root and stalke so bitter yet did tast,
 That but the fruit more sweetnesse did containe,
 Her wretched dayes in dolour she mote wast,
 And yield the pray of loue to lothsome death at last.

(III ii 17)

The emotional vulnerability of Britomart distinguishes her from Arthur. Like Britomart, the Prince is humbled by love (I ix 10-12.4), but there is no equivalent to her devious, if sympathetic, tactics in his conversation with Red Crosse and Una, or in his speech to Guyon at the equivalent stage of Book Two. The rescues of the knights of Holiness and Temperance immediately prior to these exchanges are further proof that Arthur is made complete by his visionary experience.

As a term in literary criticism, 'sympathy' properly refers to a general sense of reader-protagonist identification, but the term is often used as a synonym for 'pity'. Pity is exactly the feeling evoked by the description of Britomart in the wake of her vision.⁴ This response is encouraged by the presentation of Glauce, who does not regard Britomart as Chastity or the ancestress of Elizabeth I, but simply as a beloved nursling. After censuring the lustful desires of Myrrhe, Biblis and Pasiphae, Glauce concludes:

But thine my Deare (welfare thy heart my deare)
 Though strange beginning had, yet fixed is
 On one, that worthy may perhaps appeare;
 And certes seemes bestowed not amis:
 Joy thereof haue thou and eternall blis.
 With that vpleaning on her elbow weake,
 Her alabaster brest she soft did kis,
 Which all that while she felt to pant and quake,
 As it an Earth-quake were...⁵

⁴ That Britomart is Spenser's most human protagonist is a commonplace of Spenser criticism. See, for example Roche, *Kindly Flame*, pp.51-52. Roche interprets Britomart as an example of the psychological validity of the allegorical method. W.B.C. Watkins, 'The Painted Dragon: Allegory and Characterisation', in *Shakespeare and Spenser* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 136-142 instructively contrasts the symbolically conceived Una to the character of Britomart.

⁵ See also her tender physical attentions (III ii 42), attempt at herbal-healing (III ii 49-52), and steadfastness before Merlin (III iii 16).

(III ii 42)

The endearing address in the first line quoted above indicates that Glauce is as concerned for the happiness of Britomart as with the virtue of Chastity. This impression is reinforced by the exaggerated comparison of Britomart's panting heart to an earthquake. Similarly, the authoritative tone of the central line of the stanza anticipates the commendation of Britomart's love-quest by Merlin, but underlines the importance of her emotional desires rather than her historical destiny. The effect of Glauce's counsel is touching in a different way from Una's response to Arthur's account of his visionary lover:

O happy Queene of Faeries, that hast found
 Mongst many, one that with his prowess may
 Defend thine honour, and thy foes confound:
 True Loues are often sown, but seldom grow on ground.
 (I ix 16.6-9)

Arthur seems vulnerable, but both the introductory portrait of the Prince in canto seven and his defeat of Orgoglio in canto eight suggest that he is really a figure of invincible chivalry. The martial images of the third line quoted above reflect the subordination of Una's pity for Arthur as a lover to her respect for him as the rescuer of Red Crosse. Glauce is more like the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* than a companion figure to the protagonist of a chivalric romance.⁶

The greater intimacy of Arthur's visionary experience can also be shown by comparing the close proximity of the Prince and Gloriana - 'by my side a royall Mayd / Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay' (I ix 13.7-8) - to the distance maintained between Britomart and Artegall:

Efstooones there was presented to her eye
 A comely knight, all arm'd in complete wize,
 Through whose bright ventayle lifted vp on hye
 His manly face, that did his foes agrize,
 And friends to termes of gentle truce entize,
 Lookt foorth, as *Phoebus* face out of the east,
 Betwixt two shadie mountaines doth arize;
 Portly his person was, and much increast
 Through his Heroicke grace, and honorable gest.

His crest was couered with a couchant Hound,

⁶ *Romeo and Juliet* II v, III ii. A similar note of tenderness occurs at fairly frequent intervals in Lord Berners translation of the French prose romance, *Arthur of Little Britain*. However, this is a late romance from which both the form and values of medieval romance are to be distinguished.

And all his armour seem'd of antique mould,
 But wondrous massie and assured sound,
 And round about yfretted all with gold,
 In which there written was with cyphers old,
Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win.
 And on his shield enueloped seuenfold
 He bore a crowned litle Ermilin,
 That deckt the azure field with her faire pouldred skin.

(III ii 24-25)

Emphasis on the external appearance of the knight highlights the physical separation of Britomart and Artegall imposed by the mirror.⁷ Britomart herself concedes that the man she loves is 'th'only shade and semblant of a knight' (III ii 38.3). She is left not only to pursue, but also to imagine the inner qualities of her visionary lover:

A thousand thoughts she fashioned in her mind,
 And in her feigning fancie did pourtray
 Him such, as fittest she for loue could find,
 Wise, warlike, personable, curteous, and kind.

(III iv 5.6-9)

Arthur may doubt whether his experience of Gloriana really happened, or took place in his dreams (I ix 14.5), but he does not have to invent a character for a figure experienced only as a mirror-image.⁸

On the subject of boundaries between visions and visionaries, the numerous analogies to *The Faerie Queene* explored by James Nohrnberg include an interesting comparison between Britomart and Lewis Carroll's Alice: 'Like Alice, she is able to enter the looking-glass world and eventually encounter the knights she saw there.'⁹The analogy is

⁷ Mikics, p. 99 attributes the vulnerability of Britomart to her dependence on images, first her own and then that of the unknown Artegall. Compare Gregerson, p. 19.

⁸ Donald Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in 'The Faerie Queene'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 70: 'Britomart is closest to him [Arthur] in her sense of manifest destiny, but her virginity and its attendant elements of uncertainty suggest a promise more dimly foreshadowed: only Arthur can move with confidence in the memory of a vision pledged with the pressed grass of waking experience.'

⁹ Nohrnberg, p.43. Comparison of Britomart and Alice is also made by Bennett, 'Genre', p.114: 'Most of her actions are allegorical, all can be so interpreted, but she does not begin as an abstraction. She is not Chastity made human, but human to begin with. She is Spenser's Alice in what is otherwise pure wonderland.' A closer analogue from nineteenth century literature is the call to fairyland experienced by Anodos in the opening chapter of George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. For MacDonald I use *Phantastes and Lilith* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971). Douglas Thorpe, 'George MacDonald', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p 444 discusses Spenser as a major influence on MacDonald's imagination, but makes no reference to the significant parallels between the early stages of the quests of Britomart and Anodos. Both are introduced in the early years of their maturity, and a turning point in their lives takes place when they are suddenly confronted by a manifestation of the otherworldly in an otherwise routine domestic setting.

an interesting one, but I would emphasise the word 'eventually'. Britomart does not pass through the mirror in which she sees Artegall. A journey to Merlin's cave and the protracted history lesson she receives from the magician precede her entry into Fairy Land. Moreover, fourteen cantos of the *Faerie Queene* elapse before she meets Artegall, and a further two precede their mutual recognition and professions of love. Britomart's experience may usefully be compared to the need to wait patiently for fulfilment in love which constitutes a key theme of much medieval romance, and is central to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. Viola and Helena only just achieve emotional satisfaction against heavy odds, while the endurance of Malory's patient lover, Elaine, ends in death.¹⁰ Spenser's Britomart is more fortunate than Elaine, less so than Viola and Helena, but like them learns to associate love with a long and difficult period of languishing. Arthur is told by his visionary lady that their reunion will take place only 'when iust time expired', but here romance waiting takes on apocalyptic resonance - cf. Mark 13: 32-37 - which balances Arthur's frustration as a lover with his awareness of and desire to co-operate with the will of Providence.

A quality of Britomart's experience which distinguished it from those of Shakespeare's Helena and Viola as much as Carroll's Alice is its specific allegorical significance. Glauce may regard Britomart as a loved one in distress, but for the reader the humanity of Britomart is balanced by her role as the titular knight of Chastity; a role illustrated in the opening canto of Book Three by her encounter with Arthur, Guyon and Florimell, as well as from her visit to Malecasta's castle. Britomart's initial vision of Artegall is unquestionably a positive experience, anticipating her destiny as Spenser's ideal of chaste marriage. However, these ideals do not have the general applicability throughout

Anados opens a secretary which had belonged to his father, and is confronted by 'a tiny woman-form' (p.16), whose tells him: 'You shall find the way into Fairy Land to-morrow' (p.18). Like Britomart, his visionary experience results in a quest which is as much about self-discovery as attaining an external goal. Both Britomart and Anados are to be distinguished from Spenser's Arthur, whose vision makes him complete, and whose subsequent quest involves the demonstration of achieved virtue rather than a process of development. MacDonald also uses a mirror as an image of a liminal state at the beginning of his later romance, *Lilith*.

¹⁰ W. David Shaw, 'Tennyson', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 683. Shaw compares Britomart's mirror vision to the experience of the Lady of Shalott. This is going too far - Britomart finds difficulties and disappointment as a result of her vision, but not death. However, Britomart is consistently presented as a less satisfied lover than Arthur. Potts, p. 67 considers Bertram and Helena in *Alls Well* 'in the light of Spenser's woman-ridden Marinell and the Virgin Knight, whose own happiness must be so long delayed. In his new version of an old situation Shakespeare could profitably have associated these two well-known allegorical agents of *The Faerie Queene* for a novel dramatic effect.' Roberts, pp. 104-105 compares the delays and difficulties experienced by the young lovers in Shakespeare's romantic comedies.

the poem of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. Inspired by his vision, the Prince functions as a paradigm of chivalry and virtue in each book of *The Faerie Queene*. It is difficult to imagine Britomart evoking the sympathy and admiration she commands in Books Three and Four in the legends of Holiness and Temperance; and, as I shall shortly show, she is far from comfortable when her love-quest takes her into the rigorous world of the legend of Justice.

Turning first to the ideality of Britomart's vision considered in terms of moral allegory, the virtue of Chastity is implied by Glauce's attempt to counter the initial doubts of her nursling (III ii 40-45). However, although Chastity is exalted in their ensuing exchange, Britomart's possession of the virtue is by no means certain. Despite Glauce's protestations, making a monster of the mind (III ii 40.2) is a genuine possibility given Britomart's professed envy of the unchaste figures from whom her nurse attempts to distinguish her:

For they, how euer shamefull and vnkind,
Yet did possesse their horrible intent.

(III ii 43.5-6)

Britomart's impatience is understandable, but less impressive than the immediate transformation of Arthur into a dedicated quester when he awakens to discover the object of his vision no longer present (I ix 15.5-8). There is a disconcerting resemblance between the desperate sentiments of Britomart and those of Malecasta in the opening episode of Book Three (III i 47-54); disconcerting because, as her name suggests, there is absolutely nothing chaste about the amorous designs of the lady of delight.¹¹ Of course, Malecasta's lust is not the result of a vision, it is simply her characteristic mode of behaviour.¹² Britomart's vulnerability as a visionary, and in her adventure at Castle Joyous at the beginning of her quest, exemplify a contrast which recurs in each book of *The Faerie Queene*: the titular knights gradually strive towards perfection in their virtue, in contrast

¹¹ Spenser draws on *Orlando Furioso* 25 for both episodes. This is a good example of the liberties he takes with his sources in the interests of the expository scheme of the poem.

¹² Thomas K. Dunsheath in *Spenser's Allegory of Justice in Book V of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 165 argues that sight determines the conduct of both Malecasta and Britomart: 'Since both lust and love enter through the eyes and have as their object beauty in nature, it is difficult to distinguish one from another in the first stages'. However, as I note at the beginning of chapter four, 'vision' does not equal sight: Britomart is not simply a good version of the evil Malecasta, the nature of her experience is entirely different.

to Arthur who has no need to develop after his encounter with Gloriana transforms him into a figure of achieved chivalry and virtue.

In the 'Arthur as History' section of my introduction I note that the ideality of Spenser's Arthur depends partly on his significance as the ancestor of the Tudor dynasty. However, the dynastic dimension of *The Faerie Queene* is more concentrated in the presentation of Britomart.¹³ Just as he is perfect in more moral virtues than Chastity, Arthur is more than a predecessor of Elizabeth I. While the Prince is not fully aware of his historical significance (I ix 6.6-9, II x 68-69), Britomart's importance as a historical figure is suggested by the social setting in which she is introduced. Britomart has an affectionate and human father:

One day it fortun'd, faire *Britomart*
 Into her fathers closet to repayre;
 For nothing he from her reseru'd apart,
 Being his onely daughter and his hayre.

(III ii 22.1-4)

Similarly, the mirror in Ryence's castle is not presented as a straightforward romance marvel, but rather as an important part of the defence of his nation:

It vertue had, to shew in perfect sight,
 What euer thing was in the world contaynd,
 Betwixt the lowest earth and heauens hight,
 So that it to the looker appertaynd;
 What euer foe had wrought, or frend had faynd,
 Therein discover'd was, ne ought mote pas,
 Ne ought in secret from the same remaynd ...

Such was the glassie globe that *Merlin* made,
 And gaue vnto king *Ryence* for his gard,
 That neuer foes his kingdome might inuade,
 But he it knew at home before he hard
 Tydings thereof, and so them still debar'd.
 It was a famous Present for a Prince,
 And worthy worke of infinite reward,
 That treasons could bewray, and foes conuince;
 Happie this Realme, had it remained euer since.

(III ii 19.1-7, 21)

¹³ The dynastic importance of Britomart and Artegall is crucial to Hough's *Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'* and Fichter's *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance*.

Britomart could have been depicted falling in love with an image seen in a mirror without these particular powers. However the information in the stanzas quoted above is relevant, anticipating the importance accorded to Britomart as the founder of a nation in Merlin's prophetic vision. The magical properties of the mirror are undoubted, but it is not simply a means of measuring individual prowess, like the fountain in Chretien's *Yvain*.¹⁴ The political importance of Ryence's mirror contributes generally to the patriotic aspect of Book Three of *The Faerie Queene*. However, its qualities can also be said to anticipate the less agreeable but equally necessary pragmatism of Talus, the weapon-squire of the knight of Justice. While Arthur is an idealised ancestor of the Tudor dynasty, the presentation of Britomart and her future spouse shows the trials and tribulations - and for the modern reader the ambivalence - of its emergence in a fallen world.

Structurally and thematically, Merlin's chronicle is presented as a sequel to Britomart's first glimpse of Artegall: the relationship between the two experiences is that of romantic dream to history lesson.¹⁵ As the creator of the magic mirror (III ii 21.1, iii 6.1-6), Merlin can approve and give direction to Britomart's quest with an authority which Glauce's sympathetic response cannot command. However, Merlin's exaltation of Britomart looks to the future. His response to the articulation of her present plight by Glauce is not unkind, but neither is it indulgent:

... th'Enchaunter softly gan to smyle
At her smooth speeches, weeting inly well,
That she to him dissembled womanish guyle ...

The wisard could no lenger beare her bord,
But brusting forth in laughter, to her sayd;
Glauce, what needs this colourable word,

¹⁴ Herbert Grabes, 'Mirrors', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp.477-478 discusses Spenser's combination of various mirror conventions: romance marvel, mirror of the heart, and praise of the ruler. See also Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 94: 'The mirror in Elizabethan symbolism could be of a kind to reflect false unreal shadows. [cf. Shakespeare's *Richard II* (IV i 264-302)] But it could also be the mirror of truth, penetrating the false appearance of things ... Britomart's mirror is identified for us as being of this kind when we are told of its power to uncover deceit ... while its spherical shape ... further emphasizes its nature. The globe, a sign of power over the world, is another attribute of Truth.' Gregerson, p. 34 compares the powers of the mirror to those of Arthur's shield: 'It is no ordinary theory of physics that governs Spenser's theory of reflection: a mirror's truth, he repeatedly leads us to understand, may lie precisely in its refusal to give back a straight rendition of the image before it, as Arthur's crystal shield dismantles false seeming and Merlin's glassy globe discovers the future.'

¹⁵ Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 93: 'Britomart needs, however, more than the robust sense of reality which Glauce represents; she needs also the knowledge which Merlin, the maker of the mirror, can supply. See also Gregerson, p.16. McCabe, p.187 compares Merlin to Anchises in the *Aeneid*. This seems rather strained: as a father-figure Anchises carries an emotional power which Merlin lacks.

To cloke the cause, that hath it selfe bewrayd ?
 Ne ye faire *Britomartis*, thus arayd,
 More hidden are, then Sunne in cloudy vele;
 Whom thy good fortune, hauing fate obayd,
 Hath hither brought, for succour to appele:
 The which the powres to thee are pleased to reuele.

(III iii 17.1-3,19)

The magician is condescending towards Glauce, and his advice to Britomart herself has a severity which the earlier counsel offered by the nurse lacked. In the course of his prophecy all that Merlin says about Artegall is a brief report of his marriage to Britomart, and an equally terse reference to his death by treachery (III iii 26-28), presumably not the kind of information Glauce wanted to draw from Merlin in order to comfort her nursling! There is no equivalent to the Merlin episode in the account of Arthur's vision. Merlin makes Arthur's armour as he makes the magic mirror for Ryence. However, the magician is not involved in Arthur's quest. The real making of Spenser's Arthur takes place during his encounter with Gloriana. Moreover, the Prince learns all that he needs to know from the words of Gloriana herself: his task is not to seek further information. An attempt to increase his knowledge of Gloriana after rescuing Guyon (II ix 2-9) leads nowhere, although neither does it detract from his status as a paradigmatic figure. He is able to function as the pre-eminent knight of *The Faerie Queene* without first-hand experience of Cleopolis because he has become part of the ideal its lady represents.

Although presented on one level as an authoritative figure, Spenser's Merlin also reinforces the vulnerability of the human condition suggested by the beginning of Britomart's quest. Commenting on Spenser's detailing of Merlin's biography (III iii 10-13), Harry Berger writes: 'Merlin is a victim of the "historical" phase of eros to which he belongs; his fate is like that of other male figures in the first half of III -Adonis, Marinell, and Timias.'¹⁶ I would add that Britomart's visit to Merlin underlines her own association with this category. The specificity with which Merlin's abode is described (III iii 7-8) roots the quest of Britomart in the world of contingency. By contrast, the anonymous landscape in which Arthur's quest begins (I ix 12-13) anticipates the absolute ideality of his vision and its consequences.¹⁷ Arthur engages with the difficult situations endemic to Spenser's fallen

¹⁶ Berger, 'The Faerie Queene, Book III: A General Description', in *Revisionary Play*, p.104.

¹⁷ Compare Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), p.57. The setting of Arthur's enfances, with 'only a glancing reference to the Welsh locale,' is contrasted to the 'amplified

Faery Land; but after bringing relief he departs from the scene rather than continuing to negotiate its pitfalls, the task which faces the titular knights.

Britomart's vision of Artegall and her visit to Merlin may be positively compared to Arthur's vision of Gloriana as formative experiences in the course of her quest. My analysis of the Busirane episode in chapter four indicates that Britomart has matured in her virtue by the end of Book Three. The very fact of Britomart's *development* makes her a less idealised figure than Arthur, whose successive appearances repeatedly demonstrate achieved chivalry and virtue. Moreover, although Britomart's progress continues in Book Four, she is still at some distance from her goal of union with Artegall when the narrative of her quest resumes in Book Five. Awaiting the return of her knight:

Sometime she feared, least some hard mishap
 Had him misfalne in his aduenturous quest;
 Sometime least his false foe did him entrap
 In traytrous traine, or had vnwares opprest:
 But most she did her troubled mynd molest,
 And secretly afflict with iealous feare,
 Least some new loue had him from her possest;
 Yet loth she was, since she no ill did heare,
 To thinke of him so ill: yet could she not forbear.

One while she blam'd her selfe; another whyle
 She him condemn'd, as trustlesse and vntrue:
 And then, her grieffe with errour to beguyle,
 She fayn'd to count the time againe anew,
 As if before she had not counted trew.
 For houres but dayes; for weekes that passed were,
 She told but moneths, to make them seeme more few:
 Yet when she reckned them, still drawing neare,
 Each hour did seeme a moneth, and euery moneth a yeare.

(V vi 4-5)

The twists and turns of the syntax in these stanzas reflect the doubts which wrack Britomart's mind. Evidently she has forgotten the reassurance provided by Merlin - her plight here is strongly reminiscent of her state before he interprets her initial vision of Artegall:

Thenceforth the feather in her loftie crest,
 Ruffed of loue, gan lowly to auaille,

And her proud portance, and her princely gest,
 With which she earst tryumphed, now did quaile:
 Sad, solemne, sowre, and full of fancies fraile
 She woxe; yet wist she neither how, nor why,
 She wist not, silly Mayd, what she did aile,
 Yet wist, she was not well at ease perdy,
 Yet thought it was not loue, but some melancholy.

(III ii 27)

Britomart's predicament in Book Five is also anticipated by her fascination with the tapestries inside the House of Busirane (III xi 53), and the Masque of Cupid (III xii 27-28). While Arthur is completely transformed by his vision of Gloriana, functioning thereafter as an inspiration to others, Britomart's initial glimpse of Artegall and the encouragement of Merlin do not preclude the need for another visionary experience to reinvigorate her faith in the future when faced with the challenging world of the legend of Justice.

Britomart's 'strange visions' (V vii Arg.) in Isis Church are dismissed as aesthetically ineffective by E.M.W. Tillyard:

The fifth book is one of the least read, largely because it contains none of the great scenes of pageantry which are the chief attraction for most readers of Spenser. In the place where pageantry could have been introduced most aptly, the description of the temple of Isis, he is brief and restrained.¹⁸

Pageantry of the sort which confronts Britomart in the House of Busirane is admittedly not on display in Isis Church. However, I would argue that it is this lack, and of course what is presented in its place, which makes the episode so important. As a vision rather than an adventure, Britomart's experience in Isis Church involves an intersection between the romance world of Britomart's quest and a transcendent plane of existence.¹⁹ As such the episode is not so much brief and restrained as compact and crucial. Spenser criticism already includes a number of more positive interpretations of Britomart's dream in Isis Church than that advanced by Tillyard, but sustained comparison of it with Arthur's vision has not yet been made.²⁰

¹⁸ Tillyard, p. 285. Contrast Carol Schreifer Rupprech, 'Dreams', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 227. Rupprech defines vision as an experience 'strange, wondrous, celestial, and dreadful'; and Britomart's experience in Isis Church is described as 'the poem's most visionary episode.' See also Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 174: 'As an evocation of justice the temple is one of Spenser's most haunting creations, its details building up a still, sacred atmosphere in which ascetic severity co-exists with a tender and sensuous richness.'

¹⁹ McCabe, p. 113 gives historical context for such climactic experiences: 'To the Medieval and Renaissance mind, time is "uneven": there are sacred times just as their [sic.] are sacred places ... Britomart undergoes such an experience in the Temple of Isis.'

Like her initial vision of Artegall, Britomart's dream in Isis Church lacks both the intimacy and ideality of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. A mythological digression from the narrator at the beginning of the Isis episode foregrounds its specific allegorical importance:

Well therefore did the antique world inuent,
 That Iustice was a God of soueraine grace,
 And altars vnto him, and temples lent,
 And heauenly honours in the highest place;
 Calling him great *Osyris*, of the race
 Of th'old Aegyptian Kings, that whylome were;
 With fayned colours shading a true case:
 For that *Osyris*, whilest he liued here,
 The iustest man aliue, and truest did appeare.

His wife was *Isis*, whom they likewise made
 A Goddess of great powre and souerainty,
 And in her person cunningly did shade
 That part of Iustice, which is Equity,
 Whereof I haue to treat here presently.

(V vii 2-3.5)

As the last line quoted above anticipates, the theme of Justice is developed as the narrative resumes. Isis Church is a fixed location in Faery land; a sacred place, but sacred to the specific principle of Justice.²¹ The description of Britomart's response to the building (V vii 5) is reminiscent of her reaction to the interior of the House of Busirane (III xi 49.6-9).²² However, the importance of the later episode in the allegory of Justice is made clear by the posture of the idol:

One foote was set vppon the Crocodile,
 And on the ground the other fast did stand,
 So meaning to suppressse both forged guile,

²⁰ Specific expositions of the iconography and historical or moral allegory of the episode are acknowledged where appropriate in the remaining footnotes to this chapter.

²¹ Frank Kermode, 'The Faerie Queene, I and V', in *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 33-59 interprets the episode as an allegory of the Elizabethan debate on Equity. Rene Graziani, 'Elizabeth at Isis Church', *PMLA* 79 (1964), 376-389 focuses on the political allegory of the episode, noting allusions to the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. Douglas D. Waters, 'Spenser and the "Mas" at the Temple of Isis', *SEL* 19 (1979), 43-53 discusses references to contemporary liturgical practice. These readings, as is often the case with expositions of literature in terms of topical allusions, are of limited application. One could not easily extend them to elucidate Britomart's parting from Artegall.

²² Compare the response of Red Crosse to his vision of the New Jerusalem (I x 56), which I discuss in chapter seven.

And open force...

(V vii 7.1-4)

The relevance of the Isis episode to the legend of Justice is reinforced by the detailing of Britomart's dream:

With that the Crocodile, which sleeping lay
 Vnder the Idols feete in fearelesse bowre,
 Seem'd to awake in horrible dismay,
 As being troubled with that stormy stowre;
 And gaping greedy wide, did streight deuoure
 Both flames and tempest: with which growen great,
 And swolne with pride of his owne peerelesse powre,
 He gan to threaten her likewise to eat;
 But that the Goddesse with her rod him backe did beat.

Tho turning all his pride to humblesse meeke,
 Him selfe before her feete he lowly threw,
 And gan for grace and loue of her to seeke:
 Which she accepting, he so neare her drew,
 That of his game she soone enwombd grew,
 And forth did bring a Lion of great might;
 That shortly did all other beasts subdew.

(V vii 15-16.7)

The interpretation offered by one of the priests (V vii 21-23) reinforces the destiny of Britomart and Artegall originally included in Merlin's prophecy (III iii 21-23). However, the priest of Isis foregrounds the virtue of Justice:²³

... that same Crocodile doth represent
 The righteous Knight, that is thy faithfull louer,
 Like to *Osyris* in all iust endeuer.
 For that same Crocodile *Osyris* is,
 That vnder *Isis* feete doth sleepe for euer:
 To shew that clemence oft in things amis,
 Restraines those sterne behests, and cruell doomes of his.

(V vii 22.3-9)

Britomart and Artegall are exalted to the level of myth, but to a myth which is euhemeristically cast - Isis and Osiris are themselves originally human figures. Artegall's ignorance of his destiny, and the disquiet of Britomart in the wake of her vision in Isis Church, show that they retain the humanity which Isis and Osiris cast off. In addition to being qualified in this way, the transfiguration of Britomart is bound up with one virtue.

²³ Clifford Davidson, 'The Idol of Isis Church', *SP* 66 (1969), p.82 does not make this distinction, noting the theme of peace emerging from war as an historical pattern in each case.

Like her initial vision of Artegall, her experience in Isis Church would be out of place in the earlier or later books of the poem.

Britomart is far from comfortable in the legend of Justice, an impression which can be shown from the contrast between her emotional response to Artegall's fall and the more severe reaction of Talus (V vi 12-16), from her parting from Artegall after she rescues her knight from Radigund (V vii 44-45.7), as well as from her disturbed state following her vision in Isis Church. The cumulative effect of these episodes suggests that the interests of Chastity and Justice are not yet compatible. The actions which Arthur's vision inspires him to perform show his virtue to involve 'the perfection of *all* the rest' (Letter to Raleigh, my italics). This comprehensiveness contributes in large part to Arthur's effectiveness as an exemplary figure.

In so far as Britomart's vision in Isis Church advances the titular quest of Book Five rather than bringing her own story closer to completion, the episode lacks the beneficent intimacy of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. However, 'beneficent' is the operative word, because it cannot be denied that Britomart participates in her vision:

Her seem'd, as she was doing sacrifice
 To *Isis*, deckt with Mitre on her hed,
 And linnen stole after those Priestes guize,
 All sodainely she saw transfigured
 Her linnen stole to robe of scarlet red,
 And Moone-like Mitre to a Crowne of gold.

(V vii 13.1-6)

In this respect Britomart compares favourably even with Arthur. However, Arthur is completely and permanently transformed by his visionary experience, while Britomart is only temporarily transfigured. Additionally, while Arthur enjoys his encounter with Gloriana - 'was neuer hart so rauisht with delight' (I ix 14.6); Britomart finds her experience in Isis Church emotionally disturbing:²⁴

... she waked, full of fearefull fright,
 And doubtfully dismayd through that so vncouth sight.

²⁴ Alice S. Miskimin, 'Britomart's Crocodile and the Legends of Chastity'. *JEGP* 77 (1978), p. 32 interprets the dream as an archetypal psychic experience, comparing it to the hallucination involving an invasion of crocodiles in Freud's essay on 'The Uncanny'.

So thereuppon long while she musing lay,
 With thousand thoughts feeding her fantasie,
 Vntill she spide the lampe of lightsome day,
 Vp-lifted in the porch of heauen hie.
 Then vp she rose fraught with melancholy.

(V vii 16.8-17.5)

Harsh alliteration at the end of stanza sixteen reflects the sudden and intense fear which the dream induces in Britomart; while the slower rhythm of the following lines suggest that she continues to be troubled by her dream. The effect of Britomart's emblematic dream - 'so vncouth sight' - lacks the romantic appeal of her initial glimpse of Artegall in her father's magic mirror, but the phrases 'feeding her fantasie' and 'fraught with melancholy' indicate her continuing emotional vulnerability.²⁵ The emotive power of these rhymed lines frames and overwhelms the optimism of the morning image: 'the lampe of lightsome day, / Vp-lifted in the porch of heauen hie.'

The imagery of Britomart's dream in Isis Church also has analogues in earlier Arthurian literature, for example John Upton compares the frenzied prophecies of Merlin in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.²⁶ Britomart's dream may also be compared to that of Malory's Arthur during his campaign against the Roman Empire:

As the kynge was in his cog and lay in his caban, he felle in a slumberyng and dremed how a dredfull dragon dud drenche muche of his peple and com fleying one wyng oute of the weste partyes. And his hede, hym semed, was enamyled with asure, and his shuldrys shone as the golde, and his wombe was lyke mayles of a merveylous hew, and his tayle was fulle of tatyrs, and his feete were florysshed as hit were fyne sable. And his clawys were lyke clene golde, and an hydeouse flame of fyre there flowe oute of his mowth, lyke as the londe and the watir had flawmed all on fyre.²⁷

²⁵ Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p. 170 argues that Britomart's disquiet in Isis Church is simply the most extreme instance of Britomart's 'conspicuous tendency to be upset by the thought of her future husband.' As earlier examples Cheney cites the Malecasta and Busirane episodes as well as Britomart's original vision. Davidson, p. 81 notes: 'The course of Britomart's love for Artegall provides ... source material which is used to form various elements in the vision.' Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, p. 162 draws an interesting parallel between Britomart's second visionary experience and her earlier adventure in the House of Busirane: 'The presence of the idol as well as the suggestions of a cultic ritual indeed mark Busirane's House as a temple, like the Church of Isis into which Britomart also enters in Book V, canto vi. Britomart's own sleeping vision - its animation of a statue, its unreal and violent imagery - also suggests parallels with the nightly masque, which we might even refer to by contrast as "Amoret's Dream".' Contrast the more optimistic assessment of Britomart's progress offered by McCabe, p. 117: 'Dispelling the illusions of Busirane is a necessary prelude to enjoying the insights of Isis. As in the case of Arthur and George, maturity transforms Britomart's sexual fantasies into political visions.'

²⁶ Upton is quoted in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, vol. 5, 1936), p. 220.

²⁷ Malory, p. 118. Davidson, p.77 compares this episode to Britomart's vision in Isis Church.

An interpreter tells the king that he is represented by the dragon, his knights by the tattered tail, and his enemy by the bear. This dream is also comparable to that of Spenser's Britomart in so far as both predict a time of struggle. For Spenser's Arthur, such difficulties lie beyond the scope of the surviving text of *The Faerie Queene*. His battles with the pagan king who is Gloriana's adversary, and the war with Rome he will undertake after becoming king would, had Spenser described them, have radically altered the image of Arthur as an invincible knight-errant which is presented in each book of the poem as it stands.

As at the beginning of her quest, the presentation of Britomart as a visionary in Book Five evokes sympathy because of the challenges she must overcome. She has proved herself in a series of adventures - Guyon, Malecasta, Marinell, Paridell, Busirane, Artegall himself, and Dolon have all been overthrown by her prowess. Yet although she is presented at her most exalted in Isis Church, a still greater obstacle stands between her and fulfilment of her quest - Artegall's willing submission to the Amazon queen, Radigund.²⁸ Much must be achieved and understood by Britomart before she can liberate her knight. Hence she is presented as a figure in need, obliged to become a supplicant to the goddess of Justice before she can play her part in advancing the progress of Artegall, titular representative of this virtue. While the single appearance of Gloriana and the interventionist role of Arthur testify to their transcendence, the ongoing narrative of Britomart and Artegall which dominates half of *The Faerie Queene* casts them as sympathetic if historically important types of fallen humanity. Britomart is transformed by her erotic and dynastic visions, but her continuing vulnerability means that she does not challenge the paradigmatic status of Arthur as a visionary quester.

²⁸ Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p. 168 sees the Radigund connection as part of the ambiguity of the episode: 'This vision also sheds light on her perilous closeness to the condition of her opponent, who has similarly vanquished Artegall (cf. Britomart's victory in IV. iv) without gaining him as lover.' If Fichter, p. 197 is correct in concluding that 'Britomart's dream in Isis Church ... is as close as Spenser comes to bringing the dynastic narrative to full closure in marriage' it has to be said that he does not come very close at all. See also McCabe, p. 116, and Richard A. Lanham, 'The Literal Britomart', *MLQ* 28 (1967), p. 445.

Chapter Six : Calidore's Vision of Art

Although Britomart is a less completely idealised figure than Arthur, her visions are similar in so far as they take place in the context of a love quest with dynastic implications. The paradigmatic status of Arthur's vision is challenged in a different way by the episodes I consider in my next two chapters - Red Crosse's vision of the New Jerusalem, and Calidore's encounter with the Dancing Graces. Like the prayer with which the surviving text of *The Faerie Queene* concludes, the visionary experience of Red Crosse looks beyond the world of the poem.¹ I turn first to the last vision which takes place in Faery Land, Calidore's glimpse of the Dancing Graces. In his introduction to Book Six of *The Faerie Queene*, A.C. Hamilton concludes:

Calidore's vision of the Graces during his pastoral retreat is more than the allegorical core of Book VI: it is the allegorical core of the whole poem, its climactic vision, and the moving centre about which the poem turns.²

The position of this episode at the end of the surviving text of the poem makes it a likely place for a retrospective view of what has gone before - including the establishment of Arthur as visionary quester *par excellence*. Revision is all the more likely given the presence of the poet's persona, Colin Clout, on Mount Acidale. However, close examination of Calidore's vision shows that, like those of Britomart, it lacks the degree of intimacy and the comprehensive ideality which distinguish the appearance of Gloriana to Arthur.

Calidore's glimpse of the Dancing Graces is comparable to the visions of Arthur and Britomart in so far as it is distinguished from the series of adventures which otherwise comprise his quest. As with Arthur and Britomart, Calidore's engagement in aimless activity casts into relief the crucial role of his visionary experience:

One day as he did raunge the fields abroad,
Whilest his faire *Pastorella* was elsewhere,

¹ For comparison and contrast of the visions of Red Crosse and Calidore see Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, pp. 211-212. Gross notes that both take place in the tenth cantos of their respective books, but that abandoning the quest has different moral implications for Red Crosse and Calidore. On VI x 10-12 he comments: 'These dancers are on the earth rather than in the air, like Redcrosse's vision' (p.212). Compare Clare Regan Kinney, *Strategies of Poetic Narrative: Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.20: 'In the tenth canto of Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's account of Calidore's vision of the Graces on Mount Acidale offers an internal allusion to (and a recasting of) Redcrosse's mountain-top glimpse of the workings of divine grace in Book I.'

² *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p. 623.

He chaunst to come, far from all peoples troad,
 Vnto a place, whose pleasaunce did appere
 To passe all others, on the earth which were.

(VI x 5.1-5)

The phrase 'raunge the fields' recalls Arthur 'raunging the forest wide on courser free' (I ix 12.7) immediately prior to his encounter with Gloriana (the replacement of 'forest' by 'fields' reminds the reader that Calidore leaves the world of the quest prior to experiencing his vision, a point I address later in this chapter). Similarly, the random movement which leads Calidore to Mount Acidale is reminiscent of Britomart's approach to the enchanted mirror in which she first sees Artegall - 'one day it fortun'd' (III ii 22.1). These linguistic echoes show that for all three protagonists the experience of a 'normal' setting is suddenly interrupted by an otherworldly manifestation. There are of course vast differences between the forms of the otherworldly represented by the Faerie Queene, a magic mirror, and the Dancing Graces; but each has an aura which distinguishes it as a vision experienced rather than an adventure pursued.

Turning now to the particular qualities of Calidore's visionary experience, its limitations can be shown by comparing the settings in which Gloriana and the Dancing Graces appear. Arthur's brief but joyful declaration that fields, floods, and heavens 'did seeme to laugh on me, and fauour mine intent' (I ix 12.9) suggests an exuberant self-confidence which is refined rather than rebuked by his encounter with Gloriana. By contrast, it is not Calidore but his environment that is exalted in the lead up to his visionary experience. Three and a half stanzas of exquisite details and superlative praise (VI x 5.6-8) establish Acidale and its environs as an Earthly Paradise.³ The 'gentle flud' (VI x 7.1) is compared to the boundary represented by the River of Paradise in Dante's *Divine Comedy* or in the Gawain-poet's *Pearl* by Humphrey Tonkin; and despite the differences in overall tone and structure between these works and *The Faerie Queene* the comparison is a valid one in so far as the protagonists are presented as lowly figures relative to their environment at a crucial point in their respective journeys.⁴ Acidale is also exalted by its status as a favoured resort of Venus (VI x 9). Unlike the New Jerusalem of Red Crosse's vision - which I discuss in my next chapter - the Dancing Graces are glimpsed within rather than

³ Specific analogues for the description of Acidale are cited in *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p.689. See also Rivers, pp. 9-20.

⁴ Humphrey Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 126.

beyond Faery Land. However, the splendour of Mount Acidale anticipates the nature of Calidore's visionary experience as an epiphany, a point of contact between the protagonist in the contingent world and the divine source of the virtue he represents.⁵ Not all are permitted to approach; and although Calidore is not excluded with the wild beasts and rude clowns (VI x 7.4-9, 10.1-2), as a privileged visitor to a sacred place he is more comparable to Britomart in the Temple of Isis than to Arthur as a visionary.⁶

Despite its divine associations, Acidale is very much an *earthly* paradise. The luxuriant imagery used to describe it anticipates the erotic dimension of Calidore's vision, ostensibly a point of resemblance between this experience and Arthur's meeting with Gloriana. However, the eroticism is not of the same kind in each case. In chapter three I argue that the exalted generality with which Arthur describes his visionary lady directs attention to the emotional rather than the physical bond established between them. In the account of the Dancing Graces as seen by Calidore, specific details create a more explicitly sensual effect:

He durst not enter into th'open greene,
 For dread of them vnwares to be descryde,
 For breaking of their daunce, if he were seene;
 But in the couert of the wood did byde,
 Beholding all, yet of them vnespyde.
 There he did see, that pleased much his sight,
 That euen he him selfe his eyes enuyde,
 An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
 All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight.

(VI x 11)

Terms of sight are piled one upon the other in this stanza. It is the senses rather than the emotions of Calidore that are stirred - he is more of a voyeur than a visionary. The dubious implications of the heavily stressed clause 'pleased much his sight' are reinforced by the peculiar image in the following line: the envying of his own eyes shows the extent to which Calidore is preoccupied with personal pleasure.⁷ There is also a slight but troublingly

⁵ See Frye, pp. 203-204; David Lee Miller, 'Abandoning the Quest', *ELH* 46 (1979), p. 186; Tonkin, p. 243; and Arnold Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk: The Sixth Book of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Michigan: Michigan State University, 1967), pp. 37, 57.

⁶ For comparison of Acidale with other spiritual centres in the poem see John G. De Maray, *Cosmos and Epic Representation: Dante, Spenser and Milton and the Transformation of Renaissance Heroic Poetry* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1991) p. 114; Nohrnberg, 'Acidale', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p.4; and Tonkin, pp. 244-246.

⁷ Compare Hume, p. 140: 'The vision itself engages the senses, the mind and the imagination of

significant echo of Braggadochio's reaction to Belpheobe (II iii 35-42), and an equally disturbing anticipation of the Diana-Faunus tableau (VII vi 42-47), in this description of Calidore.⁸ Admittedly, Braggadochio and Faunus, at best figures-of-fun, command less sympathy than the titular knight of Courtesy. In the first five lines of the stanza quoted above, Calidore resists the temptation to draw nearer to the Dancing Graces. Additionally, his curiosity is not merely sensual, but motivated by a desire for knowledge:

Therefore resolving, what it was, to know,
Out of the wood he rose, and toward them did go.

(VI x 17.8-9)

Nevertheless, Calidore is ultimately overwhelmed by a desire to please himself, showing a degree of self-absorption which stands in contrast to the intimacy of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana.

Calidore's limitations as a visionary are dramatically underscored by his unsuccessful attempt to reduce the distance which separates him from the Dancing Graces. Both Arthur and Calidore are bewildered by their visions. Even as Arthur recounts his experience of Gloriana to Red Crosse and Una, he is unsure as to 'whether dreames delude, or true it were' (I ix 14.5). Similarly, when confronted by the Dancing Graces:

Much wondred *Calidore* at this straunge sight,
Whose like before his eye had neuer seene,
And standing long astonished in spright,
And rapt with pleasaunce, wist not what to weene;
Whether it were the traine of beauties Queene,
Or Nymphes, or Faeries, or enchanted show,
With which his eyes mote haue deluded beene.

(VI x 17.1-7)

both Calidore and the reader, while also finding room for a touch of human comedy: the courteous knight's response to the naked maidens contains at first an entirely natural element of sensuality which the narrator registers with tolerant amusement.' See also Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, p. 220 and Richard Mallette, *Spenser, Milton and Renaissance Pastoral* (London: Associated University Presses; Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), pp. 181-182.

⁸ Wofford, p. 367 concludes that Calidore is an image of 'the impossibility of embodying a private vision within the political and historical context of the poem.' This is not substantially at odds with my own reading of the Dancing Graces as an ideal form of Calidore's virtue which does not clearly bring him any closer to vanquishing the Blatant Beast, but Wofford does not adequately stress the important differences which underly the ostensible similarity between the experiences of Arthur, Braggadochio, and Calidore.

Arthur's doubts are balanced by the words and bearing of his visionary lady towards him: 'dearely sure her loue was to me bent, / As when iust time expired should appeare'; 'And at her parting said, She Queene of Faeries hight' (I ix 14.3-4,9). Colin Clout subsequently confirms that the Graces *were* present, but in contrast to Arthur's experience not so much as pressed grass remains of the ideal. David Lee Miller interprets Calidore's interruption of the Dancing Graces as an example of the invasion of unfallen nature by fallen man.⁹ It is certainly true that even the partial bliss afforded to Calidore comes in the course of trespassing: his attempt to approach the Graces is a human response, but it leads to human disappointment. Calidore's vision seems all the more limited when compared to the relationship between fallen and unfallen operating in the opposite direction in Arthur's encounter with Gloriana: Arthur has all the imperfections of youthful immaturity prior to his vision; his subsequent appearances in the poem are those of a figure whose experience of an ideal allows him to bring relief into the world of Spenser's more fallible protagonists.

The more privileged status of Arthur as a visionary may be highlighted by comparing Gloriana and the Dancing Graces as variations of a motif common to folk literature and romance. Calidore, like the knight whose story is told by Chaucer's Wife of Bath, disturbs a dance of otherworldly ladies.¹⁰ Both the 'ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo' witnessed by the Wife of Bath's knight, and Spenser's Dancing Graces are complete without the mortal who observes them. Their disappearance when approached by a human figure poignantly reinforces the elusiveness of visionary experience, as A. Bartlett Giamatti notes:

What Chaucer distills, and Spenser treats here and everywhere in his poem, is the evanescence of vision, the frailty of harmony, the vulnerability of ideal revelations to the pressures of the world.¹¹

Arthur's vision exemplifies a version of the mortal-faerie encounter in which the human beholder is more privileged. Like, for example, Sir Lanval and Thomas the Rhymer,

⁹ Miller, 'Abandoning the Quest', p. 188. Compare Helen Cooper, *Pastoral: Medieval into Renaissance* (Ipswich: Brewer, 1977), p. 165: 'The fragility of the dance is less a symbol of mortality than of human fallibility. The dance, one feels, continues, even if mortals can no longer apprehend it.' The rhyming 'show' and 'know' is used in similar readings by Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses*, p. 87 and Wofford, pp.253-254.

¹⁰ *The Canterbury Tales*, D ll. 989-996. I use *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹¹ Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses*, p. 49. Giamatti goes on to discuss Arthur as a more privileged figure, but still one who must strive for perfection - see chapter three, footnote 2.

Arthur does not simply happen upon a glimpse of faerie, but is sought out by a particular faerie mistress, 'that greatest Glorious Queene of *Faerie lond*' (I i 3.3).¹²

Like Arthur, Calidore is positively presented as a lover. However, the passion of the knight of Courtesy is not a visionary one. Arthur's subjection to the power of love (I ix 10-12) is echoed not in Calidore's response to the Dancing Graces, but in his reaction to the shepherdess Pastorella:

He was vnwares surprisd in subtile bands
Of the blynd boy, ne thence could be redeemed
By any skill out of his cruell hands,
Caught like the bird, which gazing still on others stands.

(VI ix 11.6-9)

Admittedly, there are points of resemblance between the episodes in which Calidore is overwhelmed by love and by vision. The description of Pastorella and her companions anticipates the iconography of the Dancing Graces:

Vpon a litle hillocke she was placed
Higher then all the rest, and round about
Enuiron'd with a girland, goodly graced,
Of louely lasses, and them all without
The lustie shepheard swaynes sate in a rout,
The which did pype and sing her prayes dew,
And oft reioyce, and oft for wonder shout,
As if some miracle of heauenly hew
Were downe to them descended in that earthly vew.

(VI ix 8)

However, the diminutive and rustic details in this stanza distinguish Calidore's love as earthbound rather than visionary.¹³ Pastorella may be placed 'higher then all the rest', but

¹² I use the text of the Middle English romance, *Syr Launfal*, included in *Of Love and Chivalry*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows (London: J.M. Dent, 1993). See especially lines 254-258, in which two damsels of Dame Tryamour, daughter of the Fairy King, summon Launfal to the presence of their mistress; and lines 301-306, in which Tryamour declares her love for him.

¹³ See Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, pp. 227-230. The earthly nature of Calidore's love is also discussed by Richard Neuse, 'Pastorella', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 532-533. Neuse compares Pastorella to Matilda presiding over the Earthly Paradise in Dante's *Purgatory* 28 as both ladies represent the possibility of perfect social order on earth. Berger, 'A Secret Discipline', in *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by William Nelson (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961), p.63 links as well as distinguishing the shepherdess from the Graces: 'The fullness of vision, the triumph of imagination, is suddenly sprung from the conventional platform as the description of Pastorella reappears in its refined form.' Compare Alastair Fowler, 'Emanations of Glory', in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, ed. by Kennedy and Reither, p.72.

she is still only on a 'litle hillocke' of the sort it is easy to imagine as the setting for the conversations of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Affinities between the presentation of Pastorella and Spenser's early use of the lowly pastoral form reinforce the exalted status of Arthur as knight-lover. While the Dancing Graces represent an ideal from which Calidore is distanced, his intimacy with Pastorella - like Britomart's love for Artegall - is distinguished from Arthur's relationship with the Faerie Queene by being firmly rooted in human society.

Turning now from the attributes of Calidore as a visionary to consider the qualities of the vision itself, it certainly cannot be denied that the Dancing Graces are to be regarded positively. The exquisite beauty of the dance establishes it as an image of Courtesy in its most pure and absolute form. However, this specificity also limits the applicability of the episode to Book Six. The moral allegories of Books One, Two and Five could not incorporate the Graces as a positive image, and for Britomart, the main protagonist of the middle books, their dance would have little relevance. Although Gloriana appears to Arthur in Book One, and there only, as the Faerie Queene the ideal she represents reaches beyond the legend of Holiness. She gives Guyon, Artegall and Calidore their quests, and through her avatars, Britomart and Belphoebe, she is kept in view in Books Three and Four. The equivalent to the Dancing Graces in Book One is not Arthur's vision of Gloriana, but the glimpse of the New Jerusalem afforded to Red Crosse, an episode I discuss in my next chapter.

The etymology of 'Courtesy' associates the virtue with the contented co-existence of a group. Castiglione's *The Courtier*, the most famous courtesy book of the Renaissance, takes this concept as its structure as well as its subject.¹⁴ Courtesy has spiritual as well as social implications.¹⁵ However, it is as a social ideal that Spenser introduces the theme of his legend of Courtesy:

Of Court it seemes, men Courtesie doe call,
For that it there most vseth to abound;
And well beseemeth that in Princes hall
That vertue should be plentifully found,

¹⁴ The influence of courtesy books on the portrayal of Spenser's Calidore is discussed in *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, pp. 2, 622 and Hume, pp. 137-138, 142.

¹⁵ See Michael Trainer, "'The thing St. Paul ment by ... the courteousness that he spake of': Religious Sources for Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*", *SS 8* (1987), 147-174. I discuss the spiritual aspect of Courtesy in chapter ten, when considering Arthur's intervention in Book Six.

Which of all goodly manners is the ground,
 And roote of ciuill conuersation.
 Right so in Faery court it did redound,
 Where curteous Knights and Ladies most did won,
 Of all on earth, and made a matchlesse paragon.

(VI i 1)

The specific relevance of Calidore's vision to the legend of Courtesy can be shown from its celebration of a harmonious community:

There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found
 Full merrily, and making gladfull glee,
 And in the midst a Shepheard piping he did see.

(VI x 10.7-9)

The scene is a very different one from the appearances of the single figures of Gloriana and Artegall to Arthur and Britomart. Although Calidore's vision centres on the Fourth Grace (VI x 12.6-9), his response is to the group of which she is a part:

Tell me, what mote these dainty Damzels be,
 Which here with thee doe make their pleasant playes ?
 Right happy thou, that mayst them freely see:
 But why when I them saw, fled they away from me ?

(VI x 19.6-9)

The nature of Courtesy as a virtue which necessarily involves interaction between individuals is rhetorically reinforced by the insistent use of plural terms in these lines. Use of chiasmus in the alexandrine emphasises the bewilderment of Calidore.

The importance of the Dancing Graces to the moral allegory of Book Six is made explicit in the course of the explanation provided by Colin Clout:

These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
 Which decke the body or adorne the mynde,
 To make them louely or well faouered show,
 As comely carriage, entertainment kynde,
 Sweete semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde,
 And all the complements of curtesie:
 They teach vs, how to each degree and kynde
 We should our selues demeane, to low, to hie;
 To friends, to foes, which skill men call Ciuility.

Therefore they alwaies smoothly seeme to smile,
 That we likewise should mylde and gentle be,
 And also naked are, that without guile

Or false dissemblance all them plaine may see,
 Simple and true from couert malice free:
 And eeke them selues so in their daunce they bore,
 That two of them still froward seem'd to bee,
 But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore;
 That good should from vs goe, then come in greater store.

(VI x 23-24)

In chapter five I argue that the place of Britomart's visions in the legends of Chastity and Justice is underlined by the interpretations offered by Merlin and the priest of Isis. Colin Clout's explanation of the choreography of the Dance as an image of reciprocity underscores the importance of the Dancing Graces as an image of Courtesy.

The virtue of Courtesy is limited not only by its specificity, but also through the flexibility involved in its application. In Calidore's vision this aspect of Courtesy is reflected in the lightly tripping rhythm with which the choreography of the dance is described. However, this aspect of the virtue is not always presented positively: one does not need to read far into Spenser's legend of Courtesy to learn that the 'skill men call Ciuility' is essentially concerned with making an ideal from pragmatism.¹⁶ In the dance of the Graces flexibility is controlled and idealised; as set forth in the conduct of Calidore throughout Book Six this aspect of Courtesy can appear more dubious. In his encounters with Crudor and Briana, Tristram, Aladine and Priscilla, and Calepine and Serena, Calidore commends contradictory standards of behaviour. In this he is unlike the titular knights of Books One to Five, who gradually strive towards an absolute standard of perfection. Calidore's discomfiture of Calepine and Serena is particularly instructive as background to the Acidale vision:

... Sir *Calidore* approaching nye,
 Ere they were well aware of liuing wight,
 Them much abasht, but more him selfe thereby,
 That he so rudely did vpon them light,
 And troubled had their quiet loues delight.

(VI iii 21.1-5)

Although he does not come across unsympathetically, it is through apologising for what he has done rather than through positive action that Calidore demonstrates his Courtesy:¹⁷

¹⁶ The problems of courtly flexibility Spenser explores through Calidore occupy a significant place in a range of Renaissance texts. Compare Wyatt's Satire I, Berowne's assessment of Boyet (*Love's Labour's Lost* V ii 315 ff), Hamlet's apology to Laertes (*Hamlet* V ii 118ff), and Herbert's 'The Pearl'.

¹⁷ See Stanley Stewart, 'Sir Calidore and Closure', *SEL* 24 (1984), p. 71. Wells, p. 139 interprets

Yet since it was his fortune, not his fault,
 Him selfe thereof he labour'd to acquite,
 And pardon crau'd for his so rash default,
 That he gainst courtesie so fowly did default.

(VI iii 21.6-9)

Calidore's confession is so eloquent, his syntax so neatly balanced, that one is almost deluded into admiration. However, repetition of the accusatory 'default' breaks up the harmonious flow of the stanza, an appropriate reflection of its subject: Calidore *has*, albeit unwittingly, behaved discourteously in interrupting the lovers. After causing the disappearance of the Dancing Graces his Courtesy is again shown through acknowledgment of his shortcomings:

Right sory I, (saide then Sir *Calidore*,)
 That my ill fortune did them hence displace.
 But since things passed none may now restore,
 Tell me, what were they all, whose lacke thee grieues so sore.

(VI x 20.6-9)

Calidore's position is further compromised when he is obliged to repeat his apology (VI x 29). As in his earlier adventures, his conduct is better described as making the best of things than as part of a process of perfectibility.¹⁸ The knight of Courtesy could be re-named the knight of compromise - and this is the most generous reading of Calidore's shortcomings which can be made.

Less sympathetic assessments are those of David Lee Miller and Humphrey Tonkin, who argue that Calidore's interruption of the Dancing Graces associates him with the enemies of Courtesy.¹⁹ Debra Belt contrasts the exhortations to readers to avoid acting rashly set out in Renaissance courtesy books with Calidore's interruption of the Graces.²⁰ Alexander Leggatt goes so far as to compare Calidore to the person from Porlock who disturbs Coleridge's vision of Xanadu.²¹ These readings go too far in censuring Calidore: as

the motif of interrupted tranquility as an image of the rule of chance over the postlapsarian world.

¹⁸ Morgan, p. 25 distinguishes between Calidore's culpability in these episodes: 'Sometimes it is the case that acts of discourtesy are done unwittingly; when Calidore comes suddenly upon Calepine and Serena (iii 21) he can hardly be blamed for so doing (although he is rightly blamed for his invasion of the graces on Mount Acidale).'

¹⁹ Miller, 'Calidore', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 128; and Tonkin, p. 142.

²⁰ Debra Belt, 'Hostile Audiences and the Courteous Reader in *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI', *SS 9* (1988), pp. 114, 120-121.

²¹ Alexander Leggatt, 'Embarrassment in *The Faerie Queene*', *Essays in Criticism* 38 (1988), p.

the titular knight of Book Six, despite his faults and a prolonged absence from the narrative between the third and ninth cantos, he remains the main centre of sympathy for the reader. Nevertheless, the combination of condescension, praise and questioning with which he attempts to gloss over the sorrow he brings to Colin Clout has a temporarily alienating effect:

Haile iolly shepheard, which thy ioyous dayes
Here ledest in this goodly merry make,
Frequented of these gentle Nymphes alwayes,
Which to thee flocke, to heare thy louely layes;
Tell me, what mote these dainty Damzels be,
Which here with thee doe make their pleasant playes ?

(VI x 19.2-7)

A reader swept along in appreciation of the transcendent beauty of the scene by the narrator's account (VI x 12-16) is more likely to endorse the exaltation of the Graces by Colin Clout (VI x 21-28) than the superior tone which suggests how little Calidore appreciates the significance of his vision. What has been witnessed is not to be dismissed as a merry make of gentle nymphs, but rather exalted as a privileged glimpse of the daughters of the gods.²² The episode is then to be distinguished from Arthur's vision not only by its specific relevance to the legend of Courtesy, but also by the inability of the titular knight to fully appreciate a glimpse of his virtue in its most ideal form.

The paradigmatic status of Arthur's vision can also be shown by comparing its context with the significance of the Dancing Graces within Calidore's quest. Calidore's vision forms the climax of a pastoral interlude which interrupts his pursuit of the Blatant Beast.²³ Arthur has no need to retreat from the world of romance in order to have his

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²² Arthos, p. 133 writes of the Graces: 'They were not gods but as real, beautiful and simple in their nakedness, quiet, almost abstracted in silence as it is in Botticelli's Love and Spring where none is thinking of speaking.' See also Tonkin, 'The Faerie Queene VI', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 228.

²³ Kinney, p. 106 suggests that Calidore carries the difficulties of the chivalric world into the pastoral environment, and has to make a second retreat. One could place more emphasis on Calidore's limitations by adding that this second retreat does not solve the problems of either his courtship or his quest. J.C. Maxwell, 'The Truancy of Calidore', *ELH* 19 (1952), pp. 146-147 concludes that the ambiguities of the pastoral interlude in Book Six signify Spenser's dissatisfaction with the quest theme. Miller, 'Abandoning the Quest', pp. 182-185 is sympathetic towards Calidore's pastoral sojourn. See also Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 103-104: 'The potentially problematic nature of questing is raised earlier in the poem ... But here it seems curiously to be reflected in the Blatant Beast itself - both the quest's ostensible object and a monster which like Malory's Questing Beast seems at least partly to embody the restlessness of questing.' In chapter ten I argue that the undoubted shortcomings of Calidore and others are balanced by Arthur's continuing quest.

visionary experience - Gloriana comes to him, indeed it is as a result of his vision that Arthur becomes a quester. The propriety of Calidore's pastoral sojourn has always been regarded as ambiguous. Much has been written on this aspect of Book Six of *The Faerie Queene* since the first annotated edition of the poem compared it to the trauancies of Ulysses, Aeneas, Ruggiero and Rinaldo, and I do not intend to pause for long on the subject.²⁴ However, while visions of Gloriana and Artegall initiate the quests of Arthur and Britomart, and Red Crosse has the strength to defeat the Dragon only after his glimpse of the New Jerusalem, the connection between the vision and quest of Calidore is less clear. Admittedly, he arrives in the pastoral world where he encounters the Dancing Graces as a result of dedicated pursuit of the Beast (VI ix 3).²⁵ However, a questing knight should not value the quiet life in the way that Calidore does:

Giue leaue awhyle, good father, in this shore
 To rest my barcke, which hath bene beaten late
 With stormes of fortune and tempestuous fate,
 In seas of troubles and of toylesome paine,
 That whether quite from them for to retrate
 I shall resolue, or backe to turne againe,
 I may here with your selfe some small repose obtaine.

(VI ix 31.3-9)

In abandoning the wearisome life of the quest for a virtuous, but inappropriate existence, Calidore gives in to a temptation that Red Crosse twice resists (I x 63-64, xii 18, 41).²⁶ Like Shakespeare's Henry VI before the battle of Towton (3 *Henry VI* II v 21ff), Calidore in the lines quoted above idealises a way of life that is commendable in itself, but for him illegitimate. The dubiety of Calidore's position is underlined by the manipulating tone and manoeuvres he uses not only in his dealings with Meliboee, but also with the real rustic swain, Coridon (VI ix 38-44). The narrator's defence of Calidore (VI x 1-3) may win sympathy for the knight, but only by acknowledging that his conduct is sufficiently dubious to require excuse.²⁷

²⁴ See Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, pp. 296-297 for distinction of Calidore's truancy from those of the protagonists of Boiardo and Ariosto. Tonkin also compares Calidore's untimely retirement unfavourably to those of Aldus and the hermit, who give up the active life only when they are too old for it. Pollock, pp. 27-28 compares the range of attitudes to *otium* in Virgil with images of rest in Renaissance literature in general, and particularly in *The Faerie Queene*. Pollock, p. 134 also notes that relaxation has different connotations in the legend of Courtesy than in its predecessors.

²⁵ Cheney, p. 215.

²⁶ The pulls of opposing values operating on Red Crosse are discussed in detail in my next chapter.

²⁷ Pollock, p. 215 compares the narrator's courtesy towards Calidore with Colin Clout's elevation of the damsel at the centre of his vision from 'a cuntry lasse' to 'another Grace': 'Both leave us with an honest sense of doubt but with a courteous hope for the best.'

The ambiguous relationship between Calidore's vision and quest is confirmed by his actions on leaving Mount Acidale. Calidore's glimpse of the Dancing Graces does not bring him any closer to the Blatant Beast. Indeed, he finds that during the suspension of his pursuit of the Beast considerable damage has been wrought. The exposition of the narrator at the beginning of canto twelve makes this point, although without directly criticising Calidore:

For all that hetherto hath long delayd
 This gentle knight, from sewing his first quest,
 Though out of course, yet hath not bene mis-sayd,
 To shew the courtesie by him profest,
 Even vnto the lowest and the least.
 But now I come into my course againe,
 To his atchieuement of the *Blatant beast*,
 Who all this while at will did range and raine,
 Whilst none was him to stop, nor none him to restraine.

(VI xii 2)

Serious consequences ensue when a knight chooses to 'raunge the fields' (VI x 5.1) instead of the forest, the traditional landscape of knight-errancy in which Arthur's visionary quest begins (I ix 12). The implications of the stanza quoted above are that even if Calidore receives a positive lesson in his virtue and an opportunity to demonstrate it during his pastoral sojourn, the society he represents suffers.²⁸ Given that Courtesy is a social virtue, this deficiency in its titular representative is not to be taken lightly. It is the resumption of chivalric standards rather than the inspiration of the Dancing Graces which really advances Calidore's quest. However, although the pastoral-chivalric conflict presented through Calidore's courtship of Pastorella is resolved in the Bellamour-Claribell episode, Calidore is still troubled by divided loyalties:

Tho gan Sir *Calidore* him to aduize
 Of his first quest, which he had long forlore,
 Asham'd to thinke, how he that enterprize,

²⁸ Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p.105 arrives at a similar reading based on the motto to canto ten: 'The juxtaposition - however fortuitous - implies that "Pastorell" may be ravished *because* Calidore is rapt in vision.' Parker, p. 111 goes on to acknowledge the ambiguity of the episode: 'The duality of judgment surrounding Calidore's pastoral retreat ... has provoked a critical controversy which seeks to settle what Spenser leaves in ambiguous suspension'. Tonkin, 'The Faerie Queene, Book VI', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 286 also acknowledges the complexity of the episode: 'If Calidore had remained faithful to his quest, he would not have been vouchsafed this vision; but by abandoning or postponing it, he leaves the world vulnerable to the Blatant Beast.'

The which the Faery Queene had long afore
 Bequeath'd to him, forslacked had so sore;
 That much he feared, least reprochfull blame
 With foule dishonour him mote blot therefore;
 Besides the losse of so much loos and fame,
 As through the world thereby should glorifie his name.

(VI xii 12)

The contrary pulls of duty and desire link Calidore to Britomart, the titular knight I have already compared to Arthur; and with Red Crosse, the subject of my next chapter. Only Arthur, the beloved of the sovereign of Spenser's Faery Land, is not constrained by the opposing pulls of duty to society and personal desire.

Calidore's vision of the Dancing Graces does not seem any more relevant to the manner in which he eventually triumphs over the Blatant Beast than to his successful courtship of Pastorella:

Him through all Faery land he follow'd so,
 As if he learned had obedience long,
 That all the people where so he did go,
 Out of their townes did round about him throng,
 To see him leade that Beast in bondage strong,
 And seeing it, much wondred at the sight;
 And all such persons, as he earst did wrong,
 Reioyced much to see his captiue plight,
 And much admyr'd the Beast, but more admyr'd the Knight.

(VI xii 37)

There is something more decisive about the fate Red Crosse metes out to the Dragon, or - a closer parallel to the image of the captured Beast - about Guyon's treatment of the vanquished Acrasia.²⁹ The Blatant Beast is of fiendish extraction (V xii 37.8), more comparable to the Cerberus of Dante and his classical sources than to the Questing Beast of Malory.³⁰ Making a fool of the devil is a fool's business, as Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

²⁹ Maxwell, p. 147: 'Here as nowhere else in the *Faerie Queen* [sic] do we feel that the quest notion is an incumbrance. Courtesy can be shown in combat, but it is impossible to feel that Calidore's courtesy *culminates* in the allegorical fight with the Beast, as Guyon's temperance does in his destruction of the Bower of Bliss or even the Red Cross Knight's holiness (though the detail of that episode is not very well handled) in his fight with the dragon.' The limitations of Calidore's victory over the Beast are also discussed by Berger, 'A Secret Discipline', p. 43: 'The conclusion of the quest has nothing to do with slander, everything to do with an Elfin hero's dream: it is a ticker-tape parade through Faerie ... the most triumphant and ridiculous of all Elfin homecomings, exposed a moment later when the beast roars into the present and threatens the poet.'

³⁰ Bayley, 'Order Grace and Courtesy in Spenser's World', in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy*, ed. by Lawlor, pp. 186-188 considers the implications of the fiendish origins of the Blatant Beast, regarding the monster as the ultimate symbol of disorder in *The Faerie Queene*. See also Kenneth Borris, 'Fortune,

discovers to his cost, and Calidore's admirers are soon obliged to cease their mockery. Having broken his bands, the monster eludes a succession of Malorian knights, rampages out of the land of Faery into Spenser's own contemporary society, and threatens even the poet and his work (VI xii 38-41).³¹ This sombre postscript to Calidore's quest does not gainsay the ideal represented by the Dancing Graces. However, compared to the adventures of Arthur after his encounter with the Faerie Queene, the end of Book Six does suggest that the vision of Courtesy is less effective than the vision of Gloriana in bridging the gap between the source of virtue and its ability to bring relief into a fallen world.³²

It is when the Dancing Graces are regarded as a vision of art that the episode comes closest to challenging the paradigmatic status of Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. Considered as the experience of Colin Clout rather than Calidore, the vision is intimate as well as ideal. The shepherd-poet participates in the visionary scene Calidore beholds:

There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found
Full merrily, and making gladfull glee,
And in the midst a Shepheard piping he did see.

(VI x 10.7-9)

This intimacy is anticipated by the narrator's introduction of Colin Clout, which creates an emotional warmth rarely equalled elsewhere in the poem:

That iolly shepheard, which there piped, was
Poore *Colin Clout* (who knowes not *Colin Clout*?)
He pypt apace, whilst they him daunst about.
Pype iolly shepheard, pype thou now apace
Vnto thy loue ...

(VI x 16.3-7)

Occasion, and the Allegory of the Quest in Book Six of *The Faerie Queene*', *SS 7* (1986), 123-145. Leslie, pp. 60-61 compares the Blatant Beast to the Wolf in the opening canto of Dante's *Inferno*, noting that unlike the Blatant Beast the Wolf will finally be defeated.

³¹ Compare Kinney, p. 116: 'In the process of catching up with the Beast, Calidore leaves behind him the nostalgic ideals of both chivalric romance and golden age pastoral to enter a cosmos which, with its allusions to sixteenth-century historical realities, is more like that through which Arthegall rode in Book V.'

³² Miller, 'Abandoning the Quest', p. 189 suggests that achieved moral purpose can only be viewed as an artifact or as a future ideal. Compare Berger, 'A Secret Discipline', pp. 74-75: 'On Mount Acidale, when the play of mind realizes its vision, the poet dissolves it and moves on... For Spenser, who is among the true poets, the vision must be bounded and shaped by the sense that it is not reality; and it must yield to reality at last.' Contrast the more positive assessment of the contribution of Calidore's vision to his quest advanced by Ulreich, pp. 372-37: 'In breaking the dream Calidore teaches us how *not* to apprehend the poet's fiction; in questioning Colin, he learns how to interpret visionary experience; and in rescuing Pastorella he learns how to *enact* the poet's meaning - and his own.'

The presence of Colin Clout, a figure who E.K identifies as the persona of the poet-figure in his gloss to the January eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, certainly gives the final vision which takes place in Faery Land an exceptional quality.³³ Gary Waller's reading is one of the most recent interpretations of the scene as a positive demonstration of the power of art:

In Canto ten, Calidore is presented with a vision of the triumph of Colin's art; his own beloved is 'advauunst to be another Grace' (6.10.16), a source of poetic and moral inspiration alongside the queen. Is Spenser substituting his own 'personal' source of inspiration for that of the public world? Is poetry an area of human agency only insofar as it withdraws from its political ambitions? Calidore is excluded from that world; Colin Clout may have no power, but he at least has the power of language, the power of storytelling.³⁴

However, when the presentation of Colin Clout is placed in the context of *The Faerie Queene*, it can be argued that he is not exceptional in a manner which challenges the paradigmatic status of Arthur.

Arthur's privileged status vis-a-vis Colin Clout can be shown by comparing them as lovers. In this respect, Colin Clout is more exalted than Calidore, but he is a lesser figure than the knight who has been sought out by the Faerie Queene. The object of Colin Clout's affections is included in a divine scene, but she herself is an ordinary country maiden.³⁵

³³ On the relationship between Spenser and Colin Clout see David R. Shore, 'Colin Clout' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp.171-173.

³⁴ Gary Waller, *Edmund Spenser: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 67. See also Susanne Woods, 'Closure in *The Faerie Queene*', *JEGP* 76 (1971), p. 207: 'Calidore cannot understand, much less sustain, the vision without the help of the poet. Here, then, is one reason why the vision vanishes when Calidore approaches. Spenser is able to underscore the point that courtiers need poets to define and interpret the visionary world.' Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p. 230 also notes that Colin unites the Meliboe and Acidale episodes and concludes: 'Spenser seems concerned here to present the poet as mediator between the two worlds of phenomenon and idea ... Colin's vision belongs to the world of art it does not permit the scrutiny of outsiders, but must remain personal and momentary.'

³⁵ Greenlaw, 'Spenser's Fairy Mythology', p. 109 interprets this scene in terms of the Celtic motif of the fairy mistress: 'Colin, a mortal in love with a *fee*, has become an inhabitant of her world.' This is an exaggeration: Colin clearly states that his beloved is 'a cuntry lasse' (VI x 25.8). Compare the neoplatonic reading of Janet Spens, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': An Interpretation* (New York: Russell, 1934) p.112: 'Gloriana is the sun of the true world, but his lady is the reflection of her in the world of sense.' See also Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 216: 'Colin's nameless "love" is everyone's love in poetry, and the poetic inspiration which Calidore is allowed momentarily to see is, naturally enough, something like his first sight of Pastorella'; and Hamilton, *Structure*, p.201: 'There have been other visions such as this, the Red Cross Knight's vision of Una ... or Scudamour's vision of the hundred damsels with the bevy of ladies surrounding Amoret ... or Arthur's vision of "that face diuine"... All those heavenly significances gather in one who remains a country lass, a woman of flesh and blood, one who is the poet's beloved. When we first see this damsel at the centre, our gaze is suddenly directed ecstatically to the heavens ... Our gaze gathers the heavenly vision and turns it back to the simple maiden.'

... what so sure she was, she worthy was,
 To be the fourth with those three other placed:
 Yet was she certes but a countrey lasse,
 Yet she all other countrey lasses farre did passe.

(VI x 25.6-9)

While Gloriana is always the Faerie Queene, Colin Clout's lady has to undergo a transformation in order to be worthy of a place in the dance of the Graces. Her fluid status is enacted in the syntactical movement of the stanza: 'she worthy was' is qualified by 'yet was she certes but a countrey lasse', but this is in turn balanced by 'yet she all other country lasses farre did passe.' The more absolute exaltation of Gloriana is shown when the Dancing Graces are specifically subordinated to her by the narrator:

For what hath all that goodly glorious gaze
 Like to one sight, which *Calidore* did vew?
 The glaunce whereof their dimmed eies would daze,
 That neuer more they should endure the shew
 Of that sunne-shine, that makes them looke askew.
 Ne ought in all that world of beauties rare,
 (Saue onely *Glorianaes* heauenly hew
 To which what can compare?) can it compare;
 The which as commeth now, by course I will declare.

(VI x 4)

The pre-eminence of Gloriana is reiterated by Colin Clout himself in his exposition of the Dancing Graces:

Sunne of the world, great glory of the sky,
 That all the earth doest lighten with thy rayes,
 Great *Gloriana*, greatest Maiesty,
 Pardon thy shepheard, mongst so many layes,
 As he hath sung of thee in all his dayes,
 To make one minime of thy poore handmayd,
 And vnderneath thy feete to place her prayse,
 That when thy glory shall be farre displayd
 To future age of her this mention may be made.

(VI x 28)

In both examples there is some ambiguity in the praise of Gloriana. The poet-figure praises Gloriana immediately after presenting a negative critique of court society (VI x 2-3), an uneasy juxtaposition which raises a question mark over whether Gloriana can be regarded as an ideal point of reference in the poem if the court does not follow her example.³⁶ The

enthusiastic tone of Colin Clout's encomium does not completely compensate for the fact that he has used creative talent which could have been employed to praise Gloriana to exalt his own beloved: the accents of praise - 'great *Gloriana*, greatest Maiesty' is balanced by the apologetic 'pardon thy shepheard'. However, it is easy to take a sceptical reading of these lines too far. Richard Helgerson suggests that on Acidale as in the *Amoretti*, the poet associates visionary delight with his beloved and 'wearisome duty' with Gloriana. However, 'wearisome duty' is surely an exaggeration of the sense of obligation expressed by Colin Clout.³⁷ Admittedly he feels obliged to interrupt his praise of the Fourth Grace to acknowledge Gloriana; but the clash of loyalties is far less marked than those which afflict Red Crosse (I xii 18, 41) or Artegall and Britomart (IV vi 42-46; V vii 43-45). For Colin Clout, Gloriana is an additional inspiration rather than representative of a value opposed to his own beloved. More generally it can be said that any ambiguity in the praise of Gloriana in the stanzas quoted above remains an undercurrent. From its opening proem, *The Faerie Queene* is presented as an epideictic poem, and to label these eulogies obsequious flattery would be to reject the idealism at its heart.³⁸

Presented as an artist fashioning an image, Colin Clout is a benign version of Archimago and Busirane, the malign enchanters of the first half of the poem.³⁹ Art is celebrated through the guiding role Colin Clout plays in the dance of the Graces: 'He pypt apace, whilest they him daunst about (VI x 16.5)'. However, art is not life, and *The Faerie Queene* is a poem about life.⁴⁰ Both the literal narrative and moral allegory of the poem are

³⁶ Contrast Miller, 'Abandoning the Quest', p. 185 on this stanza: 'It is an ironic variation on the traditional image of Elizabeth as the sunlike centre of a world of beauties rare ... The lords and ladies of the court - their feeble eyes dazed, not inflamed, by the direct perception of virtue - are now associated with Envy, the allegorical monstrosity ... We emerge with a sense of the court ... as one more image of the sacred centre surrounded by the wicked world's disdain.' Spenser's uneasy eulogy of the court is another much discussed topic. See also Berry, p. 163, Mc Coy, p. 149. Norbrook, p.110-111, and Waller, pp.148-159.

³⁷ Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) p. 96. Compare Cheney, p. 115 on the *Amoretti* - *Faerie Queene* connection: 'The decorum of the *Amoretti* is most clearly expressed in the eightieth sonnet, where the poet apologizes for his truancy from the concerns of Fairyland, and describes the "personal" poetry of these sonnets as a kind of relaxation which will enable him to return to the remaining books of *The Faerie Queene* with renewed vigour'. On Colin's eulogy see Berger, 'A Secret Discipline', p. 72: 'For a moment the beloved is poised alone in visionary splendor; in the next moment she recedes to make room for Gloriana though, with the words "Sunne of the world," the two Ideas make brief contact. The lyric muse reveals her affinity to the epic muse and the vision gives way to the narrative of Book VI.'

³⁸ Wells' *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' and the Cult of Elizabeth* and Cain's *Praise in 'The Faerie Queene'* are key studies of this aspect of the poem - see the 'Arthur as History' section of my introduction.

³⁹ For comparison of Archimago and Colin Clout see Pollock, p.231.

⁴⁰ Pollock, p. 231 notes that the ideality of the vision is undercut by its vulnerability: 'The vision is fragile, reminding us that the flattering picture of nature created by the artist, although it may perhaps

developed through the image of the chivalric quest. The introduction of Colin Clout in the course of a digression from the quest narrative of the final book of *The Faerie Queene* is better regarded as a comment upon the progress of the poem than as an alternative to the ideal represented by Arthur's visionary quest. Although while the dance lasts Colin has a commanding role, this impression is overwhelmed by the image of his grief at its sudden conclusion:

... for fell despight
Of that displeasure, broke his bag-pipe quight,
And made great mone for that vnhappy turne.

(VI x 18.4-6)

The anger connoted by 'fell despight', the sorrow suggested by 'mone' and 'vnhappy', and the despairing gesture 'broke his bag-pipe', evoke sympathy for Colin Clout at the expense of his status as an authoritative figure. Moreover, he disclaims responsibility for the vision: 'none can them bring in place, / But whom they of themselues list so to grace' (VI x 20.4-5). Northrop Frye compares Colin Clout to Shakespeare's Prospero:

In Elizabethan English a common meaning of art was magic, and Spenser's Colin Clout, like Shakespeare's Prospero, has the magical power of summoning spirits to enact his present fancies, spirits who disappear if anyone speaks and breaks the spell.⁴¹

This interesting view requires qualification if one compares the disappearance of the Dancing Graces to the end of the masque Prospero presents to Ferdinand and Miranda (*The Tempest* IV i 139ff). Colin is not as powerful as Prospero - he guides the movement of the Graces but does not control their presence. The limitations of Colin Clout can also be shown from his effect on Calidore. He interprets the vision, as an enthusiastic art critic might explain the *Primavera*; but does not advance Calidore's pursuit of the Blatant Beast.⁴² The shepherd-poet is special only in so far as he does not have to negotiate the difficulties

reflect a higher reality, is in fact an artificial fiction and therefore is always open to the charge that it is simply a lie.' Belt, p. 125, severe in her analysis of Calidore as a 'hostile reader', also points out the limitations of Colin Clout: 'Calidore's very presence on Mt. Acidale implies, moreover, that the piper's desire for a controlled environment - a milieu in which he plays to an audience for whose dance he calls the tune and whose actions he therefore can predetermine - is best an ideal and at worst a delusion [sic], a fantasy so remote from actuality that the advent of a single unpredictable real-life reader is all that is needed to remind it of its fictional status and thus to send it vanishing into thin air.'

⁴¹ Northrop Frye, 'Structure', p. 126.

⁴² Contrast the connection made between Colin Clout's exposition and the public world to which he belongs by Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, p. 223: 'The words he speaks are those of a more discursive, secular allegorist, a cultural historian and glosser of emblems who recovers for the reader sterner lessons about virtue, generosity, and courtesy in the political world.'

of the quest faced by Calidore and the other titular knights; not, like Arthur, because of what he can do for them. His potential is not expressed through action, but by means of lyrical description.⁴³ In the context of a poem which takes the chivalric quest as its central structural device, the static Colin Clout is a less completely idealised figure than Arthur, whose vision inspires the prowess he displays as knight-rescuer in each book of *The Faerie Queene*. These rescues are considered in chapters eight to ten, however before turning to Arthur's adventures, two examples of visionary experiences which unlike those of Arthur, Britomart and Calidore direct the eyes of the visionary beyond the milieu of Spenser's Faery Land, remain to be considered.

⁴³ Belt, p. 125 suggests that the transformation of Colin's lament into enthusiastic praise of the beloved equal to that signified by his role in the dance indicates 'that such pauses for explanation possess their own attendant pleasures.'

Chapter Seven: Revelation The New Jerusalem and the Goddess Nature

The aim of this chapter is to conclude my treatment of visionary experiences in *The Faerie Queene* by considering two examples of *revelation* - the glimpse of the New Jerusalem afforded to Red Crosse, and the climax of the Mutability Cantos. While the visions of Britomart and Calidore are less completely ideal than Arthur's encounter with Gloriana, the New Jerusalem and 'Sabaoths sight' are representations of a different kind of ideal. As examples of revelation they can only be attained after the trials and tribulations of earthly life.¹ However ideal in themselves, in the context of a poem which takes questing in a contingent world as its principal image for the inculcation of virtue, the otherworldly and futuristic aspects of revelation highlight the limitations of fallen humanity. Neither the New Jerusalem nor the 'Sabaoths sight' challenge the paradigmatic status of Arthur because as a visionary quester he casts into relief the limitations of those he meets but, because he meets and inspires them, also functions as an image of human potential.

In chapter three, I argue that the transcendence of Gloriana contributes to the paradigmatic status of Arthur's visionary experience. Arthur describes his visionary lady as 'that face diuine' (I ix 15.5), and the use of impressive but imprecise imagery throughout his account of their meeting suggests that Gloriana exists on a higher plane than the milieu in which the action of the poem takes place. The otherworldly nature of Gloriana is also implied by the fact that she makes no further appearances, and by the admiration from afar pronounced by Guyon (II ix 2-7), the poet-figure and his fictional persona (VI x 4, 28). However, Gloriana's appearance to Arthur is not an example of revelation because it is the constraints rather than the cosmos of Faery Land that she transcends. Gloriana has a more peripheral place in Spenser's poem than the figure of Arthur in medieval romances such as Malory's Gareth and Lancelot narratives, in which the king remains at court while attention focuses on the adventures of his knights, but it is this conception on which Spenser draws for the structure of his poem. This is intimated in the Letter to Raleigh, but, more importantly, references to Gloriana in the poem make clear that she and her court are the starting point of the quests of Red Crosse (I i 3), Guyon (III i 2), Artegall (V i 4) and

¹ For the perspective on the world presented in the New Jerusalem episode and at the end of the Mutability Cantos see Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 191: 'In human terms - the terms of mortal state - we make sense of the world and ourselves as discordia concors or we make no sense at all. But there are also God's terms, in whom the opposites are at one, and we may approach a diviner vision by the way of the saint, which Red Crosse travelled, or by the way of the poet.'

Calidore (VI x 1). While the New Jerusalem and the 'Sabaoths sight' for which the poet-figure yearns at the end of the Mutability Cantos can only be achieved after life - like Bunyan's Celestial City - Gloriana is conceived of as a this-worldly ruler: her transcendence is intramundane.

There is no question that the New Jerusalem is presented as a positive ideal. Indeed, Red Crosse exalts the city of his vision above that from which he set out on his quest and over which Arthur's visionary lady presides:

Till now, said then the knight, I weened well,
 That great *Cleopolis*, where I haue beene,
 In which that fairest *Faerie Queene* doth dwell,
 The fairest Citie was, that might be seene;
 And that bright towre all built of christall cleene,
Panthea, seemd the brightest thing, that was:
 But now by prooffe all otherwise I weene;
 For this great Citie that does far surpas,
 And this bright Angels towre quite dims that towre of glas.

(I x 58)

The rapid succession of complimentary epithets used of Cleopolis are contained by the framing 'till now' and 'but now', the resonant Spenserian qualification 'seemd', the balancing of 'this' - referring to Cleopolis - and 'that' - referring to the New Jerusalem, and by the transformation of the term 'christall' to the more mundane 'glas' when the towers of the heavenly and earthly cities are compared. However, although Heaven and its King are more exalted than Cleopolis and Gloriana, given the importance of the quest as the structural principle which holds *The Faerie Queene* together, and as an image for a life in which virtue is achieved and shown through negotiating the pitfalls of a contingent world, a different conclusion may be reached.

While Arthur participates in his vision, the New Jerusalem is presented by the hermit Contemplation as an ideal which Red Crosse can see but not yet reach:

From thence, far off he vnto him did shew
 A litle path, that was both steepe and long,
 Which to a goodly Citie led his vew.

(I x 55.1-3)

'Litle' is an interesting Spenserian variant of the scriptural 'straight and narrow' (Matthew 7:14). This substitution, coupled with the weight of 'far off' and 'led his vew', emphasises the distance between Red Crosse and his vision. The crisp sound of the hard consonants used to describe the New Jerusalem underlines the severe if positive mood of the spiritual climax of his quest. An entirely different effect is achieved by the lines with which Arthur introduces his vision:

For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
 From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd...
 Me seemed by my side a royall Mayd
 Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay.

(I ix 13.1-2,7-8)

The softer sounds and gentle rhythm of these lines intimate the close physical proximity and emotional bonding which take place between Arthur and Gloriana. Both Red Crosse and Arthur are privileged, but Arthur is a more complete figure because of the intimacy of his ideal vision. The distance between Red Crosse and his vision aligns the New Jerusalem episode with the visions of Britomart and Calidore. However, Red Crosse is distinguished alike from the titular knights and from Arthur in so far as the New Jerusalem can only be achieved after life. The transcendence of Gloriana is intramundane, Britomart's destiny is an earthly union with Artegall, and Calidore's courtesy is shown through his adaptation to the circumstances of a contingent world. By contrast, the hermit Contemplation makes it painfully clear to Red Crosse that he is not yet ready to join the community of angels in the New Jerusalem.

The vision of the New Jerusalem does not begin or end the development of Red Crosse: it is at once a privilege which must be earned through submitting to the rigours of an education in the House of Holiness, and one which leaves the knight with his greatest battle still to fight.² The present unfitness of Red Crosse for his heavenly destiny is suggested to the reader by the grudging reception Contemplation affords to the knight. Joseph B. Collins compares the conversation between Red Crosse and Contemplation to that of St. Bernard and Dante at the end of the *Divine Comedy*.³ However, while Dante is

² Compare Kaske, p. 130: 'The vision of heaven cannot come at the very end as it does in Hawes's poem [*The Example of Vertue*] ... because within the time covered by *The Faerie Queene* Spenser's hero does not die or even retire permanently from his martial career.'

³ Joseph B. Collins, *Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1940), p.201.

encouraged with gentle benevolence as a 'son of grace' (*Paradise* 31:112), Contemplation emphasises the limitations of Red Crosse as a 'man of earth' (I x 52.2). In so doing Contemplation bears a closer resemblance to the hermits of the Vulgate *Queste* than to Dante's St. Bernard. Red Crosse must wait and work for his heavenly destiny, a constraint reflected in the construction of the stanza: 'ioyous rest and endlesse blis' is framed by 'labours long, and sad delay' and 'first thou must a season fast and pray'. Contemplation later specifies that Red Crosse must fulfil his duty to Gloriana before taking his place in the New Jerusalem:

... when thou famous victorie hast wonne,
 And high emongst all knights hast hong thy shield,
 Thenceforth the suit of earthly conquest shonne,
 And wash thy hands from guilt of bloody field:
 For bloud can nought but sin, and wars but sorrowes yield.

(I x 60.5-9)

Although Contemplation acknowledges that Red Crosse will achieve a 'famous victorie', this apparent praise is speedily qualified. The negative connotations of 'shonne', 'wash thy hands', and 'guilt of bloody field' suggest that even the best that humanity can achieve is but an obstacle in the path to the true, heavenly glory.⁴ The severity of the hermit's exhortation is underscored in the resonant alexandrine of the stanza quoted above, a line which owes its weight partly to the heavy rhythm arising from a preponderance of monosyllables, but also to the poignancy suggested by the comparative length of 'sorrowes'.

Certainly, the New Jerusalem is presented as an absolute, world-transcending ideal. However, *The Faerie Queene* is not a world-transcending poem, but one in which questing in the world is presented as an image for the inculcation of virtue.⁵ In this context, the heavenly vision afforded to Red Crosse has a dynamic instability which cannot be

⁴ This idea is developed in the Ruddymane episode at the beginning of Book Two, and in the chronicle of British history read by Arthur in Alma's Castle. Kaske, p. 123 compares the sentiments of Contemplation to the dislike of romance expressed by Roger Ascham - see my quotation and comments on Ascham in chapter two.

⁵ Miller, *The Poem's Two Bodies*, p. 78 describes this episode, together with the conflict between quest and ideal experienced by Calidore, and the sentiments of the narrator at the end of the Mutability Cantos, as an example of 'negative moment'. Compare Hume, p. 102: 'Spenser is alert to the opportunity for nice clashes of viewpoint in a dialogue between speakers dedicated to action and contemplation respectively. Although the tone of the conversation is serious there is room for a lightly comic disagreement or mutual misunderstanding on the subject of romantic love.'

finally resolved. This can be shown by the response of the knight to Contemplation's exhortation, and the hermit's counter-rejoinder:

O let me not (quoth he) then turne againe
 Backe to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are;
 But let me here for aye in peace remaine,
 Or streight way on that last long voyage fare,
 That nothing may my present hope empare.
 That may not be (said he) ne maist thou yit
 Forgo that royall maides bequeathed care,
 Who did her cause into thy hand commit,
 Till from her cursed foe thou haue her freely quit.

(I x 63)

As the central protagonist of Spenser's Legend of Holiness, and one who undergoes a process of maturity, Red Crosse is a more sympathetic figure for the reader than for Contemplation. Nevertheless, the overall effect of this episode implies that the duties a knight must perform for his society limit the response of Red Crosse to his ideal vision.⁶

There is no equivalent to the figure of Contemplation in Arthur's visionary experience. Instead the Prince receives reassurance regarding his future from the object of his vision herself. The lines quoted below are discussed in chapter three, but are worth repeating to clarify my present point. Arthur recalls how Gloriana

...bad me loue her deare,
 For dearely sure her loue was to me bent,
 As when iust time expired should appeare.

(I ix 14.2-4)

The final line quoted indicates that Arthur, like Red Crosse, will experience a delay between being presented with an ideal and fully and finally becoming one with it. However, although Arthur never appears any closer to Cleopolis than when he first enters the poem, each of his adventures show that, in contrast to Spenser's titular knights, and to the heroes of the medieval romances and classical epics on which *The Faerie Queene* is modelled, the completion of a journey is not necessary to complete his development.⁷ After

⁶ Compare the conclusion drawn from the dilemma facing Red Crosse by Patrick Cullen, *The Infernal Triad: The Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Spenser and Milton* (London and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 65: 'Red Crosse must learn to come to terms with the contradictions of his own nature... The complexity of our fallen nature is such that the man of earth that we are to crucify and that may be the source of our damnation is also inseparable from our sainthood.'

⁷ On the journey theme see A. Bartlett Giamatti, *Exile and Change*.

his vision of Gloriana, Arthur brings the intramundane transcendence of Cleopolis and its sovereign into the quests of the titular knights.

The distinction between Arthur as a visionary quester and Red Crosse as a quester who has a vision may be reinforced by comparing them to the protagonists of one of the Arthurian texts I discussed in chapter two, *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Kathleen Williams anticipates the point I am about to develop, although with reference to Malory's version of the Vulgate *Queste*:

In the legend of Holiness (Book I) there is something even of that conflict between the good and the best which is so moving a part of the story of Lancelot, and of the dispersal of the Round Table in the quest for the Sangreal.⁸

Williams' 'something' is a point well worth investigating in more detail. The perfection of both Spenser's Arthur and the Galahad of the *Queste* is attributed to their close association with a visionary ideal, and demonstrated through their rare but dramatic appearances in the quests of more fallible chivalric figures. Arthur's interventions in the titular quests of *The Faerie Queene* may be compared to the meeting of Melias and Galahad in the *Queste*:

... as a punishment for straying from His service, Our Lord led you to the very brink of death, to teach you to trust another day in your Saviour's help sooner than in your own right arm. And to succour you in your extremity He sent you Galahad, the holy knight, to rout the two knights representing the two sins lodged in you; and because he was free from mortal sin they could not stand against him.⁹

Red Crosse may be compared to the good but not perfect Grail knight, Sir Bors, who has a less complete vision of the Grail than Galahad, resuming his role as knight of the Round Table. Similarly, Book One of *The Faerie Queene* grants Red Crosse a glimpse of an otherworldly ideal, but both the hermit who directs his eyes to the New Jerusalem and the subsequent adventures of the knight foreground the difficulties he faces in order to achieve and represent Holiness in the fallen world.¹⁰

⁸ Williams, 'Romance Tradition', 158. See also *The World of Glass*, p.4, where Williams not only compares Red Crosse to Lancelot but notes: 'This is the only book of *The Faerie Queene* which reveals glimpses of what is beyond the created world; Red Crosse sees the New Jerusalem and hears the song of the angels, rejoicing in their "trinall triplicities" about the throne of God at his marriage to Una.'

⁹ *Quest of the Holy Grail*, p.71.

¹⁰ Mikics, p. 48 contrasts the situation of Red Crosse to the abandonment of heroism for piety idealised in the Perceval and St. George literature of the Middle Ages, a view to which I give qualified endorsement. In the *Queste*, the debate is not between the worthiness of the active and contemplative

Not least amongst these difficulties are the visions Red Crosse experiences at the beginning of his quest. Like Arthur's encounter with Gloriana these are erotic. However, far from proving a positive inspiration, the simulacrum of Una manufactured by the evil enchanter Archimago causes Red Crosse to abandon his quest.¹¹ At first the knight is sympathetically presented as the naive victim of the enchanter - 'he slept soundly void of euill thought' (I i 46.3), rather like the protagonist in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* prior to the temptations of Bertilak's lady. Ironically, it is the close resemblance of Archimago's false Una to the true - 'most like to seeme for *Vna* fit' (I i 45.9) that is the undoing of Red Crosse. Although this first attempt to divide Red Crosse and Una fails, the sight of the False Una wantonly copulating with a young squire achieves Archimago's design:

Which when he saw, he burnt with gealous fire,
The eye of reason was with rage yblent,
And would haue slaine them in his furious ire,
But hardly was restrained of that aged sire.

Returning to his bed in torment great,
And bitter anguish of his guiltie sight,
He could not rest, but did his stout heart eat,
And wast his inward gall with deepe despight,
Yrkesome of life, and too long lingring night.
At last faire *Hesperus* in highest skie
Had spent his lampe, and brought forth dawning light,
Then vp he rose, and clad him hastily;
The Dwarfe him brought his steed: so both away do fly.

(I ii 5.6-6)

lives - the narratives centre on the knights and the hermits are accessory figures. The important question is whether or not individual knights are worthy of visionary experiences as well the adventures which can be taken for granted by any quester.

¹¹ Patrick Gerard Cheney, "'Secret Powre Unseene": Good Magic in Spenser's Legend of Britomart', *SP* 85 (1988), p.9 sums up the dubious implications of these visions: 'Redcrosse seems to receive the reward of the quest, union with Una, without performing the quest, killing the dragon'. See also Susanne Murphy, 'Love and War in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*' in *Eterne in Mutability*, ed. by Atchity, pp. 134-135; Pollock, pp.223-224; Hamilton, *Structure*, 1961), p.63; Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p.73; and Anderson, 'A Gentle Knight', p. 171. Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p. 31 contrasts the delusions of Red Crosse (I i 48.7-9) to the pastoral vision of Calidore in Book Six. See also Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 9: 'The description has a fresh pastoral charm which is pleasant but inappropriate.' It is with these critics that I agree, rather than with Alpers, *The Poetry of 'The Faerie Queene'*, p. 125. Alpers' normally impressive analysis of the surface narrative of *The Faerie Queene* leads to difficulties on this point when he argues that Spenser 'does not expect our span of attention and retention to last for more than about a canto, or at most two.'

As a man suddenly disillusioned in all that he most valued, Red Crosse is a sympathetic figure. However, his rashness in abandoning his lady and quest is a less appealing quality, and one which the reader of his earlier encounter with Errour (I i 13-14) may now consider an ingrained shortcoming. Even in canto ten, having been saved from Despair by Una's intervention, Red Crosse is still capable of rejecting the life of earthly service she represents (I x 63). However, the final effect of his vision of the New Jerusalem is that Red Crosse has sufficient belief in Una to successfully complete the quest he has undertaken on her behalf.¹²

Una herself can be compared to the New Jerusalem in so far as she represents a future ideal. The importance of postponement in the relationship of Red Crosse and his lady is reflected in the structure of the poem, and through the imagery with which Una is described. Turning first to structure, the failure of Red Crosse in the first two cantos of the poem to appreciate the truth Una represents is ironically underscored when her hitherto concealed beauty is revealed at the beginning of canto three:

One day nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,
 From her vnhastie beast she did alight,
 And on the grasse her daintie limbes did lay
 In secret shadow, farre from all mens sight:
 From her faire head her fillet she vndight,
 And laid her stole aside. Her angels face
 As the great eye of heauen shyned bright,
 And made a sunshine in the shadie place;
 Did neuer mortall eye behold such heauenly grace.

(I iii 4)

There are strong resemblances in this stanza to Arthur's vision of Gloriana: 'that face diuine' (I ix 15.5) echoes 'her angels face'; 'so faire a creature yet saw neuer sunny day' (I ix 13.9) has its equivalent in 'did neuer mortall eye behold such heauenly grace.' However, while Arthur's visionary lady comes to him as an unsought privilege at the beginning of his chivalric career, only the reader sees Una's splendour unveiled at this stage in the poem - nine cantos of trials and tribulations must be negotiated before Red Crosse is similarly

¹² Berger, 'Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book I: Prelude to Interpretation', in *Revisionary Play*, pp. 67-68: 'In the sequence from dream Una through apparition Una to Duessa, we are shown the gradual objectification of the Morphean dreamworld in which Redcross is placed by Archimago and from which he is not fully released until the hermit Contemplation reveals his identity.' See also Fletcher, *Allegory*, p.195: 'Spenser's favorite way of getting the doubling effect ... is to play on man's illusion that he has a well-defined, unified ego. Spenser creates true doubles like Archimago and Duessa, who then assume particular aspects to fit each realm of virtue in which Redcrosse may be deceived.'

privileged (I xii 21-23). This distinction reinforces Arthur's status as a figure made complete by a visionary experience at the beginning of his chivalric career, while the quests of the titular knights depict a more gradual process of perfectibility.

Although Una is essentially conceived of as part of the romance milieu of the poem, a version of the motif in which a damsel-in-distress seeks a knight to champion her, the imagery used in the betrothal ceremony which concludes Book One reinforces her affinities with the New Jerusalem as an ideal which is at present out of reach for Red Crosse. She is described as

... proceeding with sad sober cheare,
 As bright as doth the morning starre appeare
 Out of the East, with flaming lockes bedight,
 To tell that dawning day is drawing neare,
 And to the world does bring long wished light;
 So faire and fresh that Lady shewd her selfe in sight.

So faire and fresh, as freshest flowre in May;
 For she had layd her mournfull stole aside,
 And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,
 Wherewith her heauenly beautie she did hide,
 Whiles on her wearie iourney she did ride;
 And on her now a garment she did weare,
 All lilly white, withoutten spot, or pride,
 That seemd like silke and siluer wouen neare,
 But neither silke nor siluer therein did appeare.

The blazing brightnesse of her beauties beame,
 And glorious light of her sunshyny face
 To tell, were as to striue against the streame.
 My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace,
 Her heauenly lineaments for to enchace.
 Ne wonder; for her owne deare loued knight,
 All were she dayly with himselfe in place,
 Did wonder much at her celestiall sight:
 Oft had he seene her faire, but neuer so faire dight.

(I xii 21.4-23)

Her beauty is compared to nature at its most powerful: the solar imagery in the final stanza quoted above giving Una a quality akin to the transcendence of Gloriana (I ix 13.9).¹³

¹³ Douglas Brooks-Davies, 'The Faerie Queene I' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 260 compares Una to Arthur, on the grounds of the solar imagery used to describe them, and their similar roles as redeemer figures. Some qualification of this comparison is required - Arthur and Una are not equals. Una interferes in Red Crosse's struggles against Error and Despair, but needs Arthur in order to secure the liberty of her knight from Orgoglio. Kaske, pp. 126-128 sees Una as a combination of romance damsel, comparable to

However, allusions to the Book of Revelation, specifically to the Bride of the Lamb in chapters 19 and 21, associate Una with Red Crosse's vision of the world-transcending New Jerusalem. This aspect of Una suggests that although Red Crosse is closer to union with her and the truth she represents than he was when her radiant appearance was first described to the reader alone, he does not experience the intimacy Arthur enjoys with Gloriana. His response to Una echoes the overwhelming effect of his vision of the New Jerusalem:

... adowne he looked to the ground,
To haue returnd, but dazed were his eyne,
Through passing brightnesse, which did quite confound
His feeble sence, and too exceeding shyne.
So darke are earthly things compar'd to things diuine.

(I x 67.5-9)

Although present in the fallen world of Spenser's Faery Land, Una at this point, like the New Jerusalem two cantos previously, is possessed of a splendour too otherworldly for her knight to cope with.

Even when the true glory of Una is revealed to her knight, Red Crosse is unfavourably distinguished from Arthur by his experience of divided loyalties.¹⁴ He cannot be an active member of the Order of Maidenhead and the husband of Una at the same time, as he himself explains to Una's father:

Of ease or rest I may not yet deuize;
For by the faith, which I to armes haue plight,
I bounden am streight after this emprize,
As that your daughter can ye well aduize,
Backe to returne to that great Faerie Queene,
And her to serue six yeares in warlike wize,
Gainst that proud Paynim king, that workes her teene.

(I xii 18.2-8)

I would not go as far as Barbara Estrin, who writes of the conclusion to Book One: 'the Red Cross Knight continues as if by atrophy on the old quests.'¹⁵ Red Crosse has certainly

Lunette in Chretien de Troyes *Yvain* and the Damsel Maldisaunt in Malory, and symbolic beloved, of which Hawes' Sapience and Clennes are cited as examples.

¹⁴ Compare the predicaments of the titular hero of Chretien's *Yvain* and Malory's Lancelot. Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 75-77 uses the impression of triumph qualified by future struggle at the end of Book One as an illustration of her general argument respecting the endlessness of romance narrative.

¹⁵ Barbara Estrin, *The Raven and the Lark: Lost Children in Literature of the English Renaissance*

matured through the experience of his adventures; and as a result of the inspiration provided by a vision of his heavenly destiny and a glimpse of the true glory of his beloved. Nevertheless, his development is less complete than the transformation of Arthur into a visionary quester during his encounter with Gloriana. Red Crosse is unquestionably loyal to Una when he appears for the last time in the poem in Book Three defending her reputation from the assault of Malecasta's knights (III i 24.2-9), but is still vulnerable to attack from the forces of evil. Following his vision of Gloriana, Arthur is always portrayed positively as the rescuer of the weaker inhabitants of the fallen world of Spenser's Faery Land.

As a symbol of an ideal state for which Red Crosse is destined, but which he has not yet achieved, Una performs a similar role to that of Dante's Beatrice. Comparison of Beatrice and Una to Gloriana adds an interesting angle to my general distinction of visionary experiences and revelation. Una is introduced as a romance damsel-in-distress, and is referred to as such again in Book Three -'she th'*Errant Damzell* hight.' (III i 24. 7). Her visionary splendour at the end of Book One is an icon of the future destiny of Red Crosse, rather than part of his present existence. Similarly, Beatrice is both the Florentine girl Dante loved during his life, and a figure who guides him through spiritual trials which allude to the secular world, but take place in the otherworldly regions of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. She is re-introduced to Dante accompanied by flowers 'flung from angelic hands', but playing against this image of the heavenly Beatrice is Dante's recollection of 'the old, old love in all its mastering might' (*Purgatory* 30:29, 39).¹⁶ Like Beatrice and Una, Gloriana is described with a mixture of secular and spiritual imagery. Arthur's exaltation of his visionary lady as 'that face diuine' (I ix 15.5) is balanced by the suggestive intimacy of 'her daintie limbes full softly down did lay' (I ix 13.8). However, while Gloriana brings her transcendence into Arthur's present existence; the transcendence of Beatrice, like the

(London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1985), p. 81. My view is closer to that of Cullen, pp. 66-67, acknowledging the achievements and potential of Red Crosse, as well as his limitations: 'Though Red Crosse has done as much as man can do, imitating Christ's triumph in the wilderness over the Flesh, the World, and the Devil, imitating also His Crucifixion, Harrowing of Hell, and final victory over the dragon at the Apocalypse, Spenser would not have us embrace an easy enthusiasm, a perilous confidence that now all things have their ending. Red Crosse must venture beyond these beginning triumphs, leaving Una to mourn.' Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 75-77 uses the impression of triumph qualified by future struggle at the end of Book One as an illustration of her general argument respecting the endlessness of romance narrative.

¹⁶ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, transl. by Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949 [vol. 1], 1955 [vol.2], 1962 [vol.3]).

destiny of Red Crosse, depends on separation from the world of contingency. Recalling the climax of his celestial journey, Dante recalls how Beatrice

... so distant fled,
It seemed, did smile and look on me once more,
Then to the eternal fountain turned her head.

(*Paradise* 31:91-93)

Beatrice directs Dante towards a higher form of love than that which did or could exist between them. In a similar way, and in contrast to Arthur's encounter with Gloriana, both the New Jerusalem and the description of Una at the end of Book One are revelatory intimations of a future and otherworldly ideal.¹⁷

Despite her name, the goddess Nature who appears at the climax of the Mutability Cantos anticipates the moment of revelation with which the surviving text of *The Faerie Queene* concludes, and with which I will end this chapter. The goddess makes a sweeping entrance, comparable to that of Una during her betrothal ceremony:

Then forth issewed (great goddess) great dame *Nature*,
With goodly port and gracious Maiesty;
Being far greater and more tall of stature
Then any of the gods or Powers on hie:
Yet certes by her face and physnomy,
Whether she man or woman inly were,
That could not any creature well descry:
For, with a veile that wimpled euery where,
Her head and face was hid, that mote to none appeare.

That some doe say was so by skill deuized,
To hide the terror of her vncouth hew,
From mortall eyes that should be sore agrized;
For that her face did like a Lion shew,
That eye of wight could not indure to view:

¹⁷ See Wayne Erickson, 'The Geography of *The Faerie Queene*', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 293-294 for the cosmology of the poem. For general Spenser-Dante comparison see Bennett, 'Genre', pp. 124-125; Robert Kirkpatrick, 'Dante', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 205-208; Foster Provost, 'Treatments of Theme and Allegory in Twentieth-Century Criticism of *The Faerie Queene*' in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith pp.1-40; and Vesce, p. 49. Kaske, 'Spenser's Pluralistic Universe: The View from the Mount of Contemplation (*F.Q.* I.x)', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, p. 137 specifically compares the two positive visionary experiences of Red Crosse: 'Although Una's symbolism is ignored in Redcrosse's debate with the Hermit ... it is finally invoked when Redcrosse is rewarded for his victory by betrothal to her. That this is a more-than-earthly reward for his action ... is indicated by Una's unveiling of her dazzlingly bright face (cf. Beatrice's unveiling to Dante) and the voices of angels singing to God in heaven that seem to sound through the earthly music of the betrothal ceremony.'

But others tell that it so beautiful was,
 And round about such beames of splendor threw,
 That it the Sunne a thousand times did pass,
 Ne could be seene, but like an image in a glass.

That well may seemen true: for, well I weene
 That this same day, when she on *Arlo* sat,
 Her garment was so bright and wondrous sheene,
 That my fraile wit cannot deuize to what
 It to compare, nor finde like stuffe to that,
 As those three sacred *Saints*, though else most wise,
 Yet on mount *Thabor* quite their wits forgat,
 When they their glorious Lord in strange disguise
 Transfigur'd sawe; his garments so did daze their eyes.

(VII vii 5-7)

Although in the context of the Mutability Cantos Nature is depicted as the central point of a mustering of earthly life, as a deity she transcends the contingent world.¹⁸ Like the New Jerusalem, and like Una when her beauty is unveiled, the appearance of Nature is so impressive as to defy detailed physical description, and resort is made to allusion. The exaltation of the New Jerusalem and Una in Book One is conveyed partly through apocalyptic imagery drawn from the Book of Revelation; and in the description of Nature quoted above, an allusion to the Transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17: 2) emphasises the transcendence of the goddess.¹⁹ Specific references to Christ are rare in *The Faerie Queene*, so it is all the more significant that another occurs in the description of the mountain from which Red Crosse glimpses the New Jerusalem:

... like that sacred hill, whose head full hie,
 Adorn'd with fruitfull Oliues all arownd,
 Is, as it were for endlesse memory
 Of that deare Lord, who oft thereon was fownd,
 For euer with a flowring girlond crownd.

(I x 54.1-5)

¹⁸ On the transcendence of Nature see John Guillory, *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton and Literary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 59: 'Dame Nature's features are not "subject" to description at all, only the effect of those features upon viewers if the veil were to be removed.' See also Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 79.

¹⁹ This scriptural allusion is noted by Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p. 244; Pindell, p. 178; and Sherry Reames, 'Prince Arthur and Spenser's Changing Design' in *Eterne in Mutability*, ed. by Atchity, pp. 205-206.

These scriptural allusions help to distinguish the New Jerusalem and the visionary climax of the Mutability Cantos as examples of revelation, experiences which direct the eyes of their beholders beyond the world of Spenser's Faery Land.²⁰

As a visionary lady, the goddess Nature can also be compared to Gloriana. David Lee Miller has in fact already done so, but draws conclusions which differ from my own:

The *Cantos* may remind us of Arthur's dream. It is the narrator himself, kindled with 'desire / Of heauenly things' (vii. 2.5-6), who plays the visionary. A veiled and mysterious goddess appears to him, briefly setting aside her veil and promising a full revelation to come; then she vanishes, leaving the speaker to meditate her sentence and to battle despair as he yearns for the promised vision.²¹

This is an inviting but not altogether convincing argument. The intimacy which contributes so much to the paradigmatic status of Arthur's vision is entirely lacking in the narrator's description of Nature - awe is not the same thing as amorous adoration. A further problem with Miller's comparison is that the narrator has no quest context. Like Colin Clout, his fictional persona in Book Six, the narrator is more accurately perceived as a commentator than as a participant in the action of the poem. If the narrator replaces the chivalric protagonists of *The Faerie Queene* as a visionary in the Mutability Cantos, this is because these cantos in their existing state are best regarded as a retrospective view of the six complete books of the poem.²²

²⁰ Frye, *Anatomy*, pp. 204-205 both compares and distinguishes the New Jerusalem and the climax of the Mutability Cantos: 'In *The Faerie Queene* there is a Pisgah vision in the first book, when St. George climbs the mountain of contemplation and sees the heavenly city from a distance. As the dragon he has to kill is the fallen world, there is a level of the allegory in which his dragon is the space between himself and the distant city... Spenser's fullest treatment of the theme is the brilliant metaphysical comedy known as the *Mutabilitie Cantoes* ... In this poem the relation of the heavenly bodies to the apocalyptic world is not metaphorical identification, as it is, at least as a poetic convention, in Dante's *Paradiso*, but likeness: they are still within nature, and only in the final stanza of the poem does the real apocalyptic world appear.' Compare Kaske, 'Spenser's Pluralistic Universe', pp. 134-135: 'The Hermit Contemplation is not only other-worldly but, as the representative of the completest vision, comes closest of any speaker in the poem to being a spokesman for the author himself. He parallels the poet-speaker whose Christian and other-worldly solution to Mutabilitie gets the last word in the poem as we have it.'

²¹ Miller, *The Poem's Two Bodies*, p.286. See also Arthos, pp. 198-199: 'The single singer of chivalry is now an individual in prayer, and the world of Faerie Land and all that it contains is put aside for the thought of the Sabaoth's sight... The scene is no longer the romantic world, nor is it a world of such dreams as come to Arthur of Glorianne, and it is unlike the magic mirror in which Britomart could see prophetically. This is the Vision of Paradise, and of Judgment, forever contradicting the merely imagined world.' Arthos, p. 200. places his interpretation of visions in *The Faerie Queene* in the context of medieval Arthurian literature: 'In Malory as in *La Queste del Saint Graal* deaths or true visions could supply the completion of the pattern, but such reality or vividness is alien to the conception of *The Faerie Queene*, and when a vision is spoken of in the *Mutabilitie* cantos the poem becomes instead of a narrative a hymn.'

Although Nature is a transcendent figure, she is not herself an example of revelation. She does not figure a completely ideal state: her triumph over Mutability ultimately depends on a kind of visionary experience which she does not herself represent, but can only anticipate. The argument put forward by Mutability is countered successfully only when Nature introduces new evidence:

... time shall come that all shall changed bee,
And from thenceforth, none no more change shall see.
(VII vii 59.4-5)

It is not the power of Nature herself that will defeat Mutability, but the power of the creator of both goddesses.²³ Nature's powerful rhetoric reverberates not only over the gathering at Arlo, but beyond the poem as the narrator reiterates her verdict in the final two stanzas.²⁴ As this speech concludes, the tone modulates into that of prayer, suggesting that achievement of an ideal existence cannot be hastened by human means:

... all that moueth, doth in *Change* delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight.
(VII viii 2.6-9)

In a sense, these lines are a retraction of the moral but secular idealism at the heart of the poem, with the heavily stressed 'but' qualifying the celebration of life which is summed up

²² Compare Waller, p.180: 'Regardless of intention, the effect of the Mutability Cantos is that of reassessment, not just of *The Faerie Queene* but Spenser's whole poetic career.'

²³ Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses*, p. 128 nevertheless makes an interesting comparison of the roles of Arthur in the six complete books of *The Faerie Queene* with Nature's in the Mutability Cantos: 'In the seventh canto of Book VII, Nature enacts the role of Arthur; here Nature is the redeemer, turning back Mutability's claim, saving the Heavens for eternity and, in confining corrosive change to earth, providing man with a hope beyond his mortal prison.' See also Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp.55: 'Nature's last word is of apocalypse, that most definitive of endings. [quotes VII vii 59.1-5] Nature's judgment is succinct and, it would appear, definitive. But it is not the poem's last word.' Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*, p.76 sums up the climax to the Mutability Cantos: 'The answer to Mutability is that the creation is deathless, but the last stanzas explain that this is not to grant them the condition of being-for-ever.' A. Kent Hieatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton: Mythopoeic Continuities and Transformations* (Montreal and London: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 242 compares Adam's response to Michael's prophecy at the end of *Paradise Lost* (XII: 553-556).

²⁴ Placing the description of Nature in the context of the Mutability Cantos as a unit Guillory, p. 63 writes: 'In retrospect, it seems clear that the narrative of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* has been structured by Spenser's ambivalent approach toward a moment of apocalypse, the final content and meaning of "revelation"'. Compare Berger, 'The *Mutabilitie Cantos*: Archaism and Evolution in Retrospect', in *Revisionary Play*, p. 267: 'The ideal and idyllic qualities of this medieval vision derive from its dialectical relation to canto vi; it is an improvement over the pagan viewpoint, but not the final improvement.'

by the assertion 'all that moueth, doth in change delight'.²⁵ However, a more optimistic interpretation is possible. William Pattens' 1576 *Calender of Scripture* notes the derivation of 'Elizabeth' from the Hebrew Eli-sheba, concluding that the queen's name can be glossed as 'seventh of God'. A.C. Hamilton comments on this etymological link:

Since Spenser ... would know ... that Elizabeth signifies 'Peace of the Lord, or quiet rest of the Lord,' his final prayer as an exile in war-ravaged Ireland is for sight of the Queen and the rest which she signifies. It is also Arthur's prayer for the sight of his Faery Queen.²⁶

In the structure of *The Faerie Queene* the powers of the God of Creation are shadowed in Gloriana as the creator of quests. Interpreted in this way, the concluding stanzas of the Mutability Cantos amount to a shift in perspective rather than a reversal of the paradigmatic status of Arthur's visionary quest. Both are images of an ultimate and achieved ideal, but in the case of the *revelation* with which the poem concludes this is presented as a future state.²⁷

The exact relationship of the Mutability Cantos to the six completed books of *The Faerie Queene* will never be known, although this has not stopped pages of speculation

²⁵ Hough, p. 235 argues: 'It is only by projecting his mind outside the created world, by seeing it for a moment in its eternal setting, that a resting-place can be found.' However, he significantly continues: 'This takes us a step beyond the ideal naturalism that is the normal temper of Spenser's mind.' See also Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 232: 'The transcendence of eternity has been glimpsed only once before, in the first book when Red Crosse turns from the world of fruitless joys to the bright towers of the New Jerusalem. Though it has done so by chance, Spenser's unfinished imitation has come full circle, rounding in its own small sphere the complexities of the created world.' Berger, 'The *Mutabilitie Cantos*', pp. 269-270 argues that the syntax of these stanzas suggest that the poet figure 'may be asking to see this vision now, while alive, since he cannot be certain of what is to come ... It is as if, should he turn too quickly, too hopefully, too unguardedly, nothing would be there.'

²⁶ Hamilton, "'Our new poet": Spenser, "well of English undefyld"', in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, ed. by Kennedy and Reither, pp. 110-111. Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p. 78 comments on this 'elaborate courtly pun': 'The "Eli-sabbath," God of the Sabbath, is also, in the English Renaissance compliment, the etymology of "Elizabeth," so that Spenser manages once again both to conceal and to reveal his sovereign within the "covert vele" of his poem'. See also Kinney, pp.120-121 and Nohrnberg, p.83n.

²⁷ Compare Kaske, 'Spenser's Pluralistic Universe', p. 126 on the conclusion offered by the narrator: 'The view which he opposes to Nature's is an exclusive Christianity. Obviously, as the poet-speaker, he must pull more weight, especially since he has the last word. Yet Nature's attitude is supported by the evidence and is more reasoned, comprehensive, and viable than the poet's *contemptus mundi* ... Loathing of life is a frequent topos in *The Faerie Queene*, and it is always characterized as an unjustified or temporary mood.' Specifically comparing these stanzas to the visionary climax of Book One, Kaske concludes: 'Like Redcrosse at the end of his life, Spenser, ending his poem prematurely in the shadow of death, returns to a vision of heaven perhaps more sublime, because more philosophical, than that of the New Jerusalem; but again it is paired with a vision through Nature's eyes of the cyclical perfection of earthly things, so that the poem as we have it ends in pluralism' (p.149). Compare Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p. 56: 'Unlike the vision of Chaucer's Troilus or Dante's pilgrim, or that of Urania in Spenser's own *Teares of the Muses*, the vision with which *The Faerie Queene* concludes is from the perspective of this world. If the end of history and of mutability is both envisaged and earnestly prayed for, it is remarkable chiefly for its distance.'

being written by Spenser scholars.²⁸ Composed in the same form, and demonstrating some of the same concerns as the main body of the poem, obviously there is a connection. However, what survives of the Mutability Cantos has no quest context, barring a reference to the interruption of a tale of chivalry:

And, were it not ill fitting for this file,
To sing of hilles and woods, mongst warres and Knights,
I would abate the sternenesse of my stile,
Mongst these sterne stounds to mingle soft delights.

(VII vi 37.1-4)

These lines perhaps make it likely rather than merely possible that the Mutability Cantos were conceived of as the allegorical core of a Legend of Constancy in which some comrade of Red Crosse, Guyon, Britomart, Artegall and Calidore goes on quest for an end which would symbolize this virtue.²⁹ If Book Three can contain both the Gardens of Adonis and the House of Busirane, it is reasonable to argue that the Mutability Cantos could have had a full Book Seven constructed around them. However, what we have, rather than what we might have had, is a debate about the forces which govern the cosmos followed by a prayer expressing the desire to escape the world of process. If the description of the gathering on Arlo hill signifies the relish of the poet-figure for life; the concluding stanzas represent his acceptance of its limitations.

It is easier to compare Arthur's vision of Gloriana to the New Jerusalem or the unveiling of Una than to the yearning for Apocalypse expressed at the end of the Mutability Cantos as the latter has no quest context. However, Arthur's vision represents an ideal state which differs from each of the episodes considered in this chapter

²⁸ A useful summary of views is offered in the introduction to the Mutability Cantos in *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p. 711. Pollock, p. 237 boldly speculates that the Mutability Cantos are part of the pattern established in the previous six books, and which is very far from complete in the surviving text of the poem: 'Had Spenser completed *The Faerie Queene*, I believe that the descent from the divine to the natural, beginning in Book I and ending in Book VI, would have been answered by a reascent from the natural to the divine, beginning in Book VII.' By contrast Woods, pp.215-216 sets the Mutability Cantos apart from the rest of the poem: 'The Mutability Cantos, despite their relation to other parts of *The Faerie Queene*, were not published during Spenser's lifetime and seem to represent an attempt at something quite different. At the end of Book VI we are at the end of *The Faerie Queene*. The first three books have explored private virtues, the last three public virtues, with the very last insisting again on the private basis for public virtuous action.' Compare Waller, pp. 184-185 on the direction of the Mutability Cantos: 'Its fragmentary nature makes it difficult to see it unambiguously as a coherent whole or as a continuation of the rest of the poem. Many aspects of the cantos continue the concerns of earlier books but there are many which do not fit ... The stance of the narrator is one such dislocation ... Even more telling is the apocalyptic note in the final cantos in which the poet turns back to his poem and, in effect, rejects the poem itself.'

²⁹ Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 353.

in so far as it is achieved in the world rather than projected into an indefinite future. At the beginning of this chapter I define the transcendence of Gloriana as intramundane. Even more than his visionary lady, Arthur is an idealised figure of the world. In a poem which uses negotiation of the difficulties of life to represent the development of virtue, it is the achieved rather than the predicted ideal which functions most effectively as a paradigm.

To assert that *The Faerie Queene* uses the chivalric quest as an image for the progress of the individual is a definite case of stating the obvious. Comparison of Arthur's visionary experience with those of Red Crosse, Britomart and Calidore suggests the possibility of more direct transformation. However, only in the case of Arthur is this realised. My remaining chapters turn to the effects of Arthur's perfect chivalry and virtue on the more vulnerable inhabitants of Spenser's Faery Land.

Chapter Eight: Arthur as Knight -Rescuer

Because the adventures of Spenser's Arthur are not confined to a single book, there has been a tendency in Spenser criticism to assume that his presence in the poem is slighter than is actually the case. For example, in his *Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'*, Graham Hough writes:

The student, concerned to interpret the allegory and find the rationale of Spenser's plan, may contrive to make something of Arthur, but I think it safe to say that the ordinary reader hardly notices his alleged central importance. His personal quest is to love and seek the Faerie Queene. [quotes I ix 15.7-8] But although he never rests he never appears to take any definite steps to discover her ... Most of the time we forget about Arthur and his love for the Faerie Queene.¹

In fact Arthur's appearances are not only significant in terms of what they achieve, but in some books occupy a substantial portion of the text - Arthur is present for a third of Book Two and a quarter of Book Five. Objections to the presentation of Arthur's adventures can be attributed to misunderstanding of the type of quest they comprise. Arthur's adventures involve the demonstration of achieved perfection: at the level of literal narrative the Prince is not a developing protagonist: his importance stems from the combination of his influence in the stories of others and the mystery surrounding his own story. It is the journeys of the titular knights which, like the Arthurian romances of Chretien de Troyes, depict a process of self-discovery in the course of an essentially linear narrative. The following chapters examine Arthur's pre-eminence as a quester from three different angles. In this chapter I consider the extent to which his first adventure, the rescue of Red Crosse, sets a pattern for his subsequent interventions in the poem. Chapter nine examines his involvement in the intertwined quests of Britomart and Artegall. Finally in chapter ten I consider Arthur's role in the final book of the poem, and the significance of the fact that his quest is unfinished.

Arthur's interventions in the titular narratives of *The Faerie Queene* have been interpreted in a variety of ways. Here, for example, is Edwin Greenlaw on the rescue of Red Crosse in Book One:

Arthur here may symbolize, as has been often said, the truth that the single

¹ Hough, p. 89. Hough does regard Spenser's Arthur as an effective symbol of historical and spiritual ideality (p.228), but clearly regards his place in the literal narrative as a weakness of the poem.

virtue is powerless in great emergency unless helped by Magnificence, sum of all the virtues. Or he may, more reasonably, represent the old device familiar in romance technique, of having the greatest knight in the world, Lancelot or another, appear in a story in which a new and untried knight is the titular hero. Spenser's art is complex, compound of many simples; both these conceptions may have been in his mind. But the great conception, the one that goes to the root of his real thought, is bound up with the widespread interest in the return motif. England is saved by the interposition of Arthur the Briton.²

Given that Greenlaw is writing *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory*, this conclusion is not surprising. However, as I observe in my introductory survey of Spenser criticism, a historical reading of Arthur cannot be applied with equal appropriateness to all of his actions in *The Faerie Queene*: a more comprehensive interpretation may be arrived at via the moral allegory or chivalric imagery of the poem. In keeping with my overall aim to contextualise *The Faerie Queene* in the development of Arthurian tradition, and in acknowledgement of the number of existing studies of Arthur's Magnificence,³ the remaining chapters of my thesis consider the extent to which he can be regarded as 'the best-knight-in-the-world' of Spenser's Faery Land.

The 'best-knight-in-the-world' is a phrase which recurs time and time again in medieval Arthurian romance, normally, as in the quotation from Greenlaw, with reference to Lancelot or Galahad. Lancelot is so described because his love for Guinevere inspires his supremacy in deeds of arms, while Galahad's purity explains his ability to take over the title when the shortcomings of the Round Table, and Lancelot as its leading knight, become apparent. Spenser's Arthur has affinities with both Lancelot and Galahad, but important distinctions should be noted. Lancelot is required to deal with competition to his pre-eminence, while Arthur's interventionist role in the poem distinguishes him from the contingencies of Spenser's Faery Land which the titular knights must constantly negotiate. In medieval romance, Galahad is a more transcendent figure than Lancelot, but Galahad too is to be distinguished from Spenser's Arthur as he does not rescue the more vulnerable figures he encounters, highlighting the shortcomings of other knights but not in a way which suggests that they can aspire to follow his example.

² Greenlaw, *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory*, pp. 97-98.

³ See chapter one for a survey and bibliographical details of this material.

Turning now specifically to Book One of *The Faerie Queene*, Arthur's pre-eminence is clearly established in the Orgoglio episode. Red Crosse, the good but imperfect knight, finds the giant invincible:

... his monstrous enemy
 With sturdie steps came stalking in his sight,
 An hideous Geant horrible and hye,
 That with his talnesse seemd to threat the skye,
 The ground eke groned vnder him for dread;
 His liuing like saw neuer liuing eye,
 Ne durst behold: his stature did exceed
 The hight of three the tallest sonnes of mortall seed...

... through presumption of his matchlesse might,
 All other powres and knighthood he did scorne.
 Such now he marcheth to this man forlorne,
 And left to losse: his stalking steps are stayde
 Vpon a snaggy Oke, which he had torne
 Out of his mothers bowelles, and it made
 His mortall mace, wherewith his foemen he dismayde.

(I vii 8.2-9, 10.3-9)

Orgoglio is truly a formidable foe. Spenser draws on the 'hero versus giant' formula common to folk-tale and romance - consider Ysbaddaden from *Culhwch and Olwen* and the Giant Herdsman or Harpin from Chretien de Troyes' *Yvain*.⁴ As a massive embodiment of evil the description of Orgoglio also has a proto-Miltonic ring, comparable to Satan as he prepares to rally his supporters after their expulsion from heaven (*Paradise Lost* I 283ff.), or to

The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
 Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.

(*Samson Agonistes* 1068-1069)⁵

⁴ Further examples of giants in folklore are cited in Antti Aarne's *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, transl. and enlarged by Stith Thompson (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia Academia Fennica, 1964). Anne Lake Prescott's article on 'Giants' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 332-333 focuses on the classical and biblical background to Spenser's giants, and the use of this material in Reformation propoganda. See also Heninger, 'The Orgoglio Episode in *The Faerie Queene*', *ELH* 26 (1959), 171-187; Hugh MacLean, 'Orgoglio', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 518-519; and Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, p. 12.

⁵ For Milton I use *Complete English Poems, Of Education, Aeropagitica*, ed. by Gordon Campbell (London: J.M. Dent, 1980). Compare the interpretation of Orgoglio and Milton's giant figures in terms of the medieval *schema* of the Flesh, the World, and the Devil in Cullen's *The Infernal Triad*.

However, the vulnerability of Red Crosse is also cast into relief by the strength of a still more awesome figure than Orgoglio - Arthur.⁶ The Prince not only defeats the giant, but reduces him to proportions which at least border on the comic:

... when the Prince, to battell new addrest,
And threatning high his dreadfull stroke did see,
His sparkling blade about his head he blest,
And smote off quite his right leg by the knee,
That downe he tumbled...

The knight then lightly leaping to the pray,
With mortall steele him smot againe so sore,
That headlesse his vnweldy bodie lay,
All wallowd in his owne fowle bloody gore,
Which flowed from his wounds in wondrous store.
But soone as breath out of his breast did pas,
That huge great body, which the Gyaunt bore,
Was vanisht quite, and of that monstrous mas
Was nothing left, but like an emptie bladder was.

(I viii 22. 1-5, 24)

This literal cutting down to size of an evil giant has antecedents in medieval romance. Here, for example, is the fall of Galapas to Malory's Arthur:

Whan Arthure had aspyed the gyauntes workes he cryed on lowde that knyghtes myght here and seyde, 'Fayre lordys, loke youre name be nat loste! Lese nat youre worshyp for yondir bare-legged knavys, and ye shall se what I shall do as for my trew parte.' He toke there oute Excalyber and gurdys towarde Galapas that grevid hym moste. He kut hym of by the kneis clenly there in sondir: 'Now art thou of a syse,' seyde the kyng, 'lyke unto oure ferys,' and than he strake of his hede swyftely.⁷

⁶ Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, p.115 compares the different kinds of power represented by Arthur and Orgoglio: 'I treat the two not so much as allegorical representations of Pride and Magnificence, but as exemplars of antithetical, if mutually contanimating, modes of representation itself. Orgoglio interprets for us the poetics of Pride - delusive, idolatrous, catastrophic - while Arthur unfolds the poetics of Magnificence - disillusioning and iconoclastic, but redeeming certain otherwise dangerous literary enchantments.'

⁷ Malory, *Works*, p. 132. See Hankins, pp.125-127 on the subject of Arthur as giant-killer. Specifically on the fate of Orgoglio see Gross, 'Myth, Mythmaking', p. 492: 'Spenser can also mock the pretended mythic origins of others, as when he suggests that Orgoglio - an image of papal pride and false mystery, a figure for the usurped authority and specious timelessness of the Roman church - derives his power not from a heavenly source but only from an empty subterranean wind that both impregnates and destroys, a chthonic rather than divine spirit which issues only in idolatry and impurity.' Compare John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 96: 'The defeat of Orgoglio and Duessa recalls ... a familiar component of Tudor Protestant satire: the toppling of the pope by a monarch.'

The image of the vanquished Orgoglio may also be compared to the grotesque trivialisation of Milton's Satan (*Paradise Lost* X 511-517). Taken together, these comparisons indicate the tense balance of potential humour and solemnity achieved by Spenser. Both elements reinforce the moral allegory at the level of literal narrative: Orgoglio is an image of the pride and lust of Red Crosse, qualities which may appropriately be mocked, while the rescue performed by the Prince makes the serious theological point that external assistance is required in order for entrenched human failings to be overcome.⁸

The pre-eminence of Arthur is reinforced by the physical action with which he liberates Red Crosse:

He found the meanes that Prisoner vp to reare;
Whose feeble thighes, vnable to vphold
His pined corse, him scarce to light could beare,
A ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly dreere.

(I viii 40.6-9)

A glance through Spenser's early vision poems indicates how typically Spenserian this 'ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly dreare' is in its melancholy. As part of the chivalric romance narrative of the legend of Holiness the image is all the more emotive: the 'pined corse' to which Red Crosse has been reduced stands in stark contrast to the vitality of the gentle knight pricking across the plain at the beginning of his quest. Most significantly for my argument, the helplessness of Red Crosse casts into relief the invincible prowess of Arthur. Contrast the melancholy imagery of the lines quoted above to the energy with which Arthur enters the dungeon:

... with percing point
Of pittie deare his hart was thrilled sore,
And trembling horreur ran through euery ioynt,
For ruth of gentle knight so fowle forlore:
Which shaking off, he rent that yron dore,
With furious force, and indignation fell.

(I viii 39.1-6)

⁸ King, p. 89 argues that Arthur's defeat of Orgoglio is a successful version of the 'aborted iconoclastic incident' represented by Red Crosse's visit to Lucifera's palace. Compare the theological interpretation advanced by Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, p. 191: 'Sin has no existence of itself; it is simply a breakdown in the lines of communication between God and his creation, some force which has stepped out of line ... if we can eliminate disorder we shall eliminate sin itself. Thus it is that when Arthur reclaims Redcross from the sin symbolized by Orgoglio, Orgoglio simply ceases to exist.'

In so far as a giant is killed and his prisoners released, the Orgoglio episode may be compared to scenes from the Vulgate *Lancelot*.⁹ However, Spenser's choice of imagery suggests that Arthur is not a straightforward example of a best knight rescuing a less able good knight. In the moral allegory, Arthur's intervention in the titular quest alludes to the role of Christ the redeemer in human history. More specifically, the defeat of Orgoglio alludes to the Harrowing of Hell, a theme powerfully developed in medieval literature and art.¹⁰ Both in canto eight of Spenser's legend of Holiness, and in Passus eighteen of Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the power of evil is confounded, and sinful humanity is given hope for the future through redemption rather than individual merit.¹¹ Although Langland wrote before the Reformation, he was fiercely critical of the medieval church and was regarded in the Renaissance and is seen in some modern critical studies as a proto-Protestant writer.¹² A thesis on Spenser is not the place to become involved in discussion of Langland's religious allegiance, but it is interesting that both Langland's Piers and Spenser's Arthur are Christ-like rather than rigidly identified with Christ. Piers the Plowman gradually becomes more like Christ, who is introduced as 'Oon semblable to the Samaritan, an somdeel to Piers the Plowman' (Passus 18: 10), and the poem breaks off with Conscience setting out to follow him (Passus 20: 381-387). In *The Faerie Queene*, the brightness of Red Crosse's armour as he encounters the Dragon is reminiscent of the introductory portrait of Arthur rather than that of the titular knight himself. This suggests a relationship between Prince and knight similar to the more concentrated intermingling of human and divine identity in the following lines of Langland's poem:

This Jesus of his gentries wol juste in Piers armes,
 In his helm and in his haubergeon - *humana natura*.
 That Crist be nocht biknowe here for *consommatus Deus*,
 In Piers paltok the Plowman this prikiere shal ride.

(Passus 18:22-25)¹³

⁹ *Lancelot of the Lake*, p. 194.

¹⁰ An interesting general survey of the Harrowing of Hell can be found in Tillyard's *Some Mythical Elements in English Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 19-44.

¹¹ For Arthur as a Christ-figure see, for example, Leslie, pp. 16-17; Miller, *The Poem's Two Bodies*, p. 85; Williams, *The World of Glass*, pp. 104-105; and Hamilton, *Structure*, pp. 77-79.

¹² Waller, p. 78: 'Robert Crowley was a printer and propagandist, who saw Langland's Piers Plowman [sic.] (which he printed) as prophetic of the religious and social revolution of the time.' See also Anderson, *The Growth of a Personal Voice* and Hamilton, 'The Visions of Piers Plowman and The Faerie Queene', in *Form and Convention*, ed. by Nelson.

¹³ For Langland I use *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M.Dent, 1978).

Both *Piers Plowman* and *The Faerie Queene* present redeemer figures who are to be imitated as well as admired.¹⁴ In the Arthurian romances, Lancelot and Galahad simply *are* the best-knights-in-the-world. As a figure whose pre-eminence inspires the progress of a less perfect knight, Spenser's Arthur reflects the general character of *The Faerie Queene* as an expository version of the chivalric romance.

The potency of the chivalric imagery used to exalt Arthur in the Orgoglio episode is enhanced by topical as well as theological allusions. Specifically, the description of Red Crosse's fellow-victims draws on accounts of contemporary religious persecution:

But all the floore (too filthy to be told)
With bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trew,
Which there were slaine, as sheepe out of the fold,
Defiled was, that dreadfull was to vew,
And sacred ashes ouer it was strowed new.

(I viii 35.5-9)

This scene has been compared to the slaughter of the Innocents by Herod (Matthew 2:16), and to the apocalyptic depiction of souls martyred for their faith (Revelation 6: 9-10).¹⁵ However, given that in the historical allegory Duessa and Orgoglio are associated with the corrupt power of the Roman Catholic Church - 'He gaue her gold and purple pall to weare, / And triple crowne set on her head full hye' (I vii 16. 3-4) - their treatment of Red Crosse also alludes to the killing of French Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Day.¹⁶ This topical allusion has an emotive impact which does not depend on its place in the structure of Book One of *The Faerie Queene*. Arthur plays an important part in the quest of Red Crosse, but the imagery used in the description of Orgoglio's dungeon allows the Prince to be interpreted as a symbol of Protestant resistance to Roman Catholicism. This topicality is a

¹⁴ The link between meeting Arthur and Red Crosse's eventual success in his quest is discussed by John E. O'Connor, 'Prince Arthur: The Cohesive, Tempering Grace', in *Eterne in Mutabilite*, ed. by Atchity, p. 147. See also Tonkin, p. 71. Tonkin argues that Arthur 'serves the useful narrative function of drawing off some of the apocalyptic associations of the Red Cross Knight's climatic fight with the dragon, a function which helps make the dragon fight a less definitive, more tentative victory', a view which corresponds to my own reading of the end of Book One in chapter seven.

¹⁵ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Roche with the assistance of C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 1098. Compare the use of similar imagery in Milton's 'On the Late Massacre in Piedmont.'

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the Earl of Leicester, upon whose exploits Spenser undoubtedly draws in his depiction of Arthur in Book Five, was amongst those most outraged by the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day. See his letter of 7 September 1572 to the Earl of Morton, cited in *Rivals in Power: Lives and Letters of the Great Tudor Dynasties*, ed. by David Starkey (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.160. See also Freeman, pp. 105-106; Hankins, p. 213; and Hume, pp. 93-96 for the topicality of the Orgoglio episode.

recurrent feature of *The Faerie Queene* rather than a constant characteristic of Spenser's allegorical technique. However, the fact that contemporary allusions are made lends added weight to the didactic power of the poem, in the Orgoglio episode making Arthur an exemplary figure for the reader as well as for Red Crosse.

In chapters five, six, and seven I distinguish Arthur as the paradigmatic visionary of *The Faerie Queene* partly by considering the visions of Britomart, Calidore, and Red Crosse in the contexts of their quests. Before leaving the subject of Arthur's intervention in Book One, an important question remains to be addressed: to what extent can his victory over Orgoglio be attributed to his vision of Gloriana? In the Vulgate *Lancelot*, and in Malory's adaptation of this text, Lancelot acknowledges Guinevere as the inspiration of his prowess by sending her his prisoners. Spenser is more subtle in linking Arthur's love of Gloriana with his successful deeds of arms. The rescue of Red Crosse takes place before Arthur describes his vision of Gloriana, but the two episodes form part of a carefully constructed sequence. In canto seven, Arthur is introduced as a literally shining example of chivalry, in one of the longest personal descriptions of the poem (I vii 29-36). I do not intend to offer a detailed analysis of Arthur's appearance, as this is one of the most adequately discussed aspects of his presence in the poem.¹⁷ However, a general point which bears repeating in the present context concerns the stark contrast between the two suits of armour seen by Una in the course of a few stanzas. The despondency she feels when confronted by the abandoned arms of Red Crosse (I vii 19) turns to hope as the virtue and vitality suggested by the appearance of Arthur is confirmed first by his encouraging words (I vii 40-42, 52), and subsequently by his victory over Orgoglio.¹⁸ In canto nine, Arthur explains his presence in Faery Land, and by implication his rescue of Red Crosse, by describing his encounter with the Faerie Queene herself (I ix 6.6-15). Una's response to this narrative acknowledges a direct connection between the vision and quest of the Prince:

... gentle *Vna* thus to him gan say;
O happy Queene of Faeries, that hast found
Mongst many, one that with his prowess may

¹⁷ See especially Leslie for detailed analysis of Arthur's appearance: Arthur's shield is discussed pp. 11-26, his armour pp. 49-56, and his sword pp. 84-87. Compare Freeman, pp. 102-103; Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, pp. 129-135; Hamilton, 'On Annotating Spenser's *Faerie Queene*', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, pp. 50-51; and Mark Rose, *Spenser's Art: A Companion to Book One of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 94-96.

¹⁸ A similar reading of the effect of Arthur on Una is advanced by Rose, *Spenser's Art*, p. 93.

Defend thine honour , and thy foes confound:
True Loues are often sown, but seldom grow on ground.

(I ix 16.5-9)¹⁹

As the adversary of one questing on behalf of Gloriana, Orgoglio is one of the foes of *The Faerie Queene*. The association of Arthur's prowess with the prestige of Gloriana is reinforced in the equivalent lines of the next stanza, in which Red Crosse echoes the sentiments of his lady:

... you, my Lord, the Patrone of my life,
Of that great Queene may well gaine worthy grace:
For onely worthy you through prowes priefe
Yf liuing man mote worthy be, to be her lief.

(I ix 17.6-9)

One might expect this effusion of gratitude from Red Crosse to come immediately after his liberation from Orgoglio's dungeon, but he praises his rescuer only after Arthur describes his vision of Gloriana. I am not trying to suggest that Red Crosse was ungrateful earlier ! However, the composition of the text in this way serves to reinforce the connection between Arthur's love for his visionary lady and his martial prowess.

Arthur's status as a paradigmatic knight-lover functions as a positive foil to the use of the romance motif of a knight's service to his lady in the story of Red Crosse. While the relationship of Arthur and Gloriana represents achieved perfection, that of Red Crosse and Una represents an ideal which is never fully realised in the extant text of the poem. The iconography with which they are introduced is essentially positive, but not without qualifications: Red Crosse is not as experienced as his armour (I i 1.1-5); Una is veiled (I i 4.1-6). Throughout Book One, the limitations of Red Crosse are illustrated through the vicissitudes of his relationship with Una. In the first ten cantos the knight struggles to be worthy of acting as her champion: he depends on her during their first adventure in Errour's den (I i 19); in resisting the temptations of Despair (I ix 52-53); and to negotiate his way through the House of Holiness (I x 18.3-9).²⁰ It is when separated from Una between the

¹⁹ Compare the interpretation of these lines by Watkins, p. 135: 'Without swerving from loyalty to Redcross, Una sees that there are advantages in having a superior knight; her comment is implied criticism, evidence that Spenser is by no means deficient in psychological subtlety.'

²⁰ Hankins, p. 121 provides an interesting reading of I viii 1.1-4: 'Like Beatrice, Una takes the initiative in rescuing the man that she loves. She procures the aid of Prince Arthur, or heavenly grace.' I would qualify this comparison: although Una is always an image of virtue, and twice described in terms which suggest she transcends the world of Faery Land (I iii 4, xii 21-23 - see chapter seven), she is essentially presented as a dependant romance damsel. Una rescues Red Crosse only in order that he might

second and eighth cantos of Book One that the shortcomings of Red Crosse are most apparent. The implications of the division become clear with the introduction of his new lady. Duessa is portrayed as everything that Una is not: beautiful without, but corrupt within; a guide who leads the knight astray rather than towards the goal of his quest (I ii 13, 20-27). While Una encourages Red Crosse to overcome his weakness - 'add faith vnto your force, and be not faint' (I i 19.3), Duessa exploits his limitations:

Ere long she fownd, whereas he wearie sate,
To rest him selfe, foreby a fountaine side,
Disarmed all of yron-coted Plate,
And by his side his steed the grassy forage ate...

Yet goodly court he made still to his Dame,
Pourd out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd,
Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame.

(I vii 2.6-9, 7.1-3)

Abandoning the path of his quest is in itself a compromising action, as Red Crosse discovers in the very first canto of the poem when he and Una enter the Wandering Wood and arrive at Errour's Den (I i 10-13.6). When coupled with the excessive indulgence of his dalliance with Duessa, such loss of direction not surprisingly precipitates the nadir of his quest.²¹

The contrast between the love of Arthur and lust of Red Crosse is highlighted by the balance of similar imagery and different consequences associated with their erotic encounters. The recumbent posture of Red Crosse anticipates certain details of Arthur's vision narrative. It is worth quoting a stanza I discuss in chapter three to clarify this point:

For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;
The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
And pillow was my helmet faire displayd:
Whiles euery sence the humour sweet embayd,
And slombring soft my hart did steale away,
Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay:

redeem her parents and their country from the Dragon. For much of the poem Una lacks the status and authoritative aura of Dante's beloved.

²¹ Compare Gross, *Spenserian Poetics* p. 117 on I vii 7: 'The giant does not simply break in on Redcrosse's lovemaking. He is rather a crisis that is oddly continuous with that lovemaking, even the "fulfillment" of it.'

So faire a creature yet saw neuer sunny day.

(I ix 13)

Although both Red Crosse and Arthur are overwhelmed by a beautiful woman in a moment of inactivity, the experience begins rather than almost ending the quest of the Prince. In chapter three I discuss Gloriana as a version of the romance motif in which a faerie mistress woos a mortal lover. Comparison of her love for Arthur with the dalliance of Red Crosse and Duessa confirms the difference between Spenser's Faerie Queene and her literary predecessors. Unlike Duessa, Gloriana is not literally present in Spenser's Faery Land in the way that Morgan le Fay and the Lady of the Lake figure in Malory's romance world. While in medieval romance the faerie mistress is often morally ambiguous in her attitude to mortals, Gloriana is a completely idealised figure, her transformation of Arthur is his making as a knight. Her treatment of Arthur is also associated with a higher form of supernatural power:

Most goodly glee and louely blandishment
 She to me made, and bad me loue her deare,
 For dearely sure her loue was to me bent,
 As when iust time expired should appeare.

(I ix 14.1-4)

The key phrase is 'when iust time', with its scriptural resonance (cf. Matthew 24: 6 and Galatians 4: 4) associating the enchantment of Arthur by Spenser's Faerie Queene with divine Providence. Small wonder that one so inspired plays such a positive part in the legend of Holiness. Duessa's supernatural powers are of a very different kind. She is described as 'the Witch' (I vii 3.6), and her deceit works a malign spell on Red Crosse, an effect potently underlined for the reader when Red Crosse naively ignores the warning of her earlier victim, Fradubio (I ii 34-42). Duessa's nature encapsulates some of the allure of the faerie mistress of medieval romance, but also the potential evil of such figures. One might compare her malign designs on Red Crosse to, for example, the episode in which Malory's Morgan le Fay attempts to kill Arthur with an enchanted mantle.²² The adaptation of the faerie mistress motif for different effects confirms my interpretation of the armour and combat skills of Arthur and Red Crosse - Spenser suggests that the strength which rescues Red Crosse from the consequences of his alliance with Duessa comes from Arthur's vision of Gloriana.

²²

Malory, pp. 93-94.

Spenser's Arthur is himself associated with an enchanted object with destructive properties:

His warlike shield all closely couer'd was,
 Ne might of mortall eye be euer seene;
 Not made of steele, nor of enduring bras,
 Such earthly mettals soone consumed bene:
 But all of Diamond perfect pure and cleene
 It framed was, one massie entire mould,
 Hewen out of Adamant rocke with engines keene,
 That point of speare it neuer percen could,
 Ne dint of direfull sword diuide the substance would.

The same to wight he neuer wont disclose,
 But when as monsters huge he would dismay,
 Or daunt vnequall armies of his foes,
 Or when the flying heauens he would affray;
 For so exceeding shone his glistring ray,
 That *Phoebus* golden face it did attaint,
 As when a cloud his beames doth ouer-lay;
 And siluer *Cynthia* wexed pale and faint,
 As when her face is staynd with magicke arts constraint.

No magicke arts hereof had any might,
 Nor bloudie wordes of bold Enchaunters call,
 But all that was not such, as seemd in sight,
 Before that shield did fade, and suddeine fall:
 And when him list the raskall routes appall,
 Men into stones therewith he could transmew,
 And stones to dust, and dust to nought at all;
 And when him list the prouder lookes subdew,
 He would them gazing blind, or turne to other hew.

(I vii 33-35)

Arthur's shield has received fairly extensive coverage in Spenser scholarship.²³ My concern is not so much with its allegorical significance as with its contribution to Arthur's role as

²³ See footnote 16. See also Don Cameron Allen, 'Arthur's Diamond Shield in *The Faerie Queene*', *JEGP* 36 (1937), 234-243 and W.J.B Pienaar, 'Arthur's Shield in *The Faerie Queene*', *MP* 26 (1928), 63-68. Pienaar concludes that Arthur's shield represents the 'faith upon which Providence is pleased to interuene on behalf of the faithful, a supernatural intervention that is represented by the magical action of the shield' (p. 66). Cheney, 'Secret Powre Unseene', p.13. interprets the shield as a talisman. Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, pp. 138-139 stresses its ambiguities: 'The shield is a power that the text seems to claim for itself and its hero, even in the process of making that power inaccessible, something both inside and outside the poem ... the shield defeats the Orgoglio in us which seeks a final meaning behind the text's bright, dark, reflective surface, or would reify its unsettled and unsettling tropes into a fixed iconic symbol or a fixed violence against the symbol.'

the pre-eminent knight of *The Faerie Queene*. The mysterious appearance of his shield - 'all closely couer'd ... / Ne might of mortall eye be euer seene' (I vii 33.1-2) - has a mysterious quality similar to that of the vision which begins the action of Malory's *Tale of the Sangreal*:

Than entird into the halle the Holy Grayle coverde with whyght samyte, but there was none that myght se hit nother whom that bare hit.²⁴

As a weapon with spiritual connotations, Arthur's shield is even more closely comparable to that of Malory's King Evelake:

...whan kynge Evelake was in the batayle there was a clothe sette afore the shyld, and whan he was in the grettist perell he lett put away the cloth, and than hys enemyes saw a vigoure of a man on the crosse, wherethorow they all were discomfite.²⁵

These powers are similar to those attributed to Arthur's shield in the introductory portrait of Arthur, and demonstrated in canto eight when it is the deciding factor in Arthur's battle with Orgoglio, dramatically reversing the fortunes of the giant:

Which when the Gyaunt spyde with staring eye,
He downe let fall his arme, and soft withdrew
His weapon huge, that heaved was on hye
For to haue slaine the man, that on the ground did lye.

(I viii 19.6-9)

Orgoglio cannot subsequently respond to Duessa's appeal for help when her beast is beset by the Prince because 'he has read his end / In that bright shield' (I viii 21.3-4). Similarities between Arthur's shield and the Grail are balanced by a significant difference: in both the *Vulgate Queste* and Malory's redaction, only Galahad achieves a full vision of the Grail, and this leads to the end of his life and the withdrawal of the Grail from the reach of earthly society. Because Arthur's quest involves helping rather than simply transcending others, he contributes positively to the expository dimension of *The Faerie Queene*. The armour of which his shield is a part symbolises an attainable ideal:

But when he dyde, the Faerie Queene it brought
To Faerie lond, where yet it may be seene, if sought.

²⁴ Malory, pp.521-522.

²⁵ Malory, p. 527. The parallel between the shields of Evelake and Spenser's Arthur is noted by Leslie, p. 24.

(I vii 36.8-9)

The narrator here apostrophises the 'vertuous gentlemen' he envisages as his readers.²⁶ Given that *The Faerie Queene* is introduced in the Letter to Raleigh and the opening proem as a celebratory and expository romance it is not surprising that the place of the Grail, which highlights the limitations of Arthurian society, is taken by a figure of perfection who revitalises as well as transcending fallen humanity.²⁷

In the remainder of this chapter, two subsequent combats between Arthur and representatives of evil are compared to the Orgoglio episode - his encounter with Corflambo in Book Four and his struggle against Maleger in Book Two. My reason for turning to Book Two after Book Four is that Maleger is as inexplicable as he is evil, and as such an especially significant challenge to Arthur. The overall effects of these three episodes are certainly different, but this is to be attributed to the evolving moral allegory of *The Faerie Queene*, rather than a reflection of Arthur undergoing a process of development in the way that the titular knights do during their quests.

In Book Four as in Book One, a malign giant and his female associate threaten representatives of the titular virtue, but are defeated by Arthur. However, two important differences reflect the transition from the absolute spiritual values of the legend of Holiness to the complex social milieu of the legend of Friendship. Firstly, while straightforward chivalric challenge and combat bring Arthur to the castle of Orgoglio, where the porter Ignaro proves only a temporary obstacle (I viii 2-34), the Prince uses a cunning strategy to consolidate his defeat of Corflambo:

That headlesse tyrants tronke he reard from ground,
And hauing ympt the head to it agayne,
Vpon his vsuall beast it firmly bound,
And made it so to ride, as it aliue was found.

Then did he take that chaced Squire, and layd
Before the ryder, as he captiue were,

²⁶ Commenting on this stanza, Alpers, *The Poetry of the 'Faerie Queene'*, p. 179 writes: 'Spenser reminds us that this figment of romance, this creation of magicians, is something whose reality lies - not in ourselves precisely, but in the exploring and responding activity of our reading the poem.'

²⁷ For speculation on Spenser's attitude to the Holy Grail of Arthurian tradition see *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p. 96. See also Hamilton's *Structure*, p. 74; Frye, 'The Structure of Imagery', p. 119; and Tuve, p. 124. Each of these critics distinguish Spenser from the Grail tradition, but only Hamilton and Frye argue that an allusion is being made.

And made his Dwarfe, though with vnwilling ayd,
 To guide the beast, that did his maister beare,
 Till to his castle they approched neare.
 Whom when the watch, that kept continuall ward
 Saw comming home; all voide of doubtfull feare,
 He running downe, the gate to him vnbard;
 Whom straight the Prince ensuing, in together far'd.

(IV ix 4.6-5)

This victory has a slightly sour effect which distinguishes it from the comic reduction of Orgoglio.²⁸ However, a more positive interpretation of the Corflambo episode is possible: Arthur's pragmatism does not qualify his pre-eminence so much as showing its applicability to different situations. In order to demonstrate his prowess in the social world of the legend of Friendship, Arthur *must* display craft against vice. The manner in which he enters Corflambo's castle anticipates his defeat of the Souldan in Book Five and outwitting of Turpine in Book Six, episodes I discuss in chapters nine and ten.²⁹ Such conduct is, unusually, more reminscent of the rough justice meted out by Arthur in Layamon's *Brut* or in Malory's account of the war with Rome than of the dynamic Arthur of *Culhwch and Olwen* or the prestigious sovereign of Chretien's romances. In chapter two I argue that Malory draws on different kinds of Arthurian narrative to depict the rise and fall of the legendary king. Variations in the effect of Arthur's actions in *The Faerie Queene* reflect his equal pre-eminence in a range of virtues.

A second difference between the presentation of Arthur in Books One and Four of *The Faerie Queene* concerns the ladies associated with Orgoglio and Corflambo. In Book One Arthur sees through the glittering image of Duessa and helps to expose her in all her ghastly glory:

... loe that wicked woman in your sight,
 The roote of all your care, and wretched plight,
 Now in your powre, to let her liue, or dye.
 To do her dye (quoth *Vna*) were despight,
 And shame t'auenge so weake an enemy;
 But spoile her of her scarlot robe, and let her fly.

²⁸ Nelson, 'Spenser *Iudens*', in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, ed. by Kennedy and Reither, pp. 89-90 remarks upon Spenser's humorous treatment of chivalric combat imagery with reference to both the Orgoglio and Corflambo episodes.

²⁹ Jane Aptecker, *Icons of Justice: Iconography and Thematic Imagery in Book V of 'The Faerie Queene'* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.123-124 comments on Arthur's use of guile in Books Five and Six, but does not link it to the Corflambo episode.

So as she bad, that witch they disaraid,
 And robd of royall robes, and purple pall,
 And ornaments that richly were displaid;
 Ne spared they to strip her naked all.
 Then when they had despoild her tire and call,
 Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
 That her misshaped parts did them appall,
 A loathly, wrinkled hag, ill faouered, old,
 Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told.

(I viii 45.4-46)

Spenser proceeds to forget his manners for a further two stanzas, but I think I have quoted enough to cast into relief the more sympathetic presentation of Poena. As the giant's help-mate she must be defeated; but in keeping with the theme of reconciliation which pervades Spenser's legend of Friendship she is reformed rather than rejected.³⁰ Arthur is in fact slightly susceptible to her beauty:

There he did find in her delitious boure
 The faire *Poena* playing on a Rote,
 Complayning of her cruell Paramoure,
 And singing all her sorrow to the note,
 As she had learned readily by rote.
 That with the sweetnesse of her rare delight,
 The Prince halfe rapt, began on her to dote:
 Till better him bethinking of the right,
 He her vnwares attacht, and captiue held by might.

(IV ix 6)

³⁰ Watkins, 'Marriage Song: A Coda', in *Shakespeare and Spenser*, p. 202 explains the importance of Arthur in Book Four, canto nine: 'Spenser begins this canto with neo-platonic exaltation of friendship, then shows that the two friends' loyalty is of highest value *only* so long as Poena persists in licentiousness and in usurping the man's dominant role; for with her change of heart, "friendly love" becomes the crown of a successful marriage built not in a daydream of perfection, but in the wisdom of forgiving past sins and accepting human limitations, with what achievements man can achieve with God's grace (Arthur).' Compare Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (London: Routledge, 1964), pp.29-30: 'Each of the four [Amyas, Aemylia, Placidus, and Poena] ... has a tendency to overvalue one loyalty at the expense of another. Thus Aemylia sins against love of kindred; and Placidus, by being immoderately loyal to his friend, lacks the forgiveness required by his role as peacemaker (IV. ix. 15). Expressing the relationships schematically, one might say that the tetrad is defective because Friendship and Peace have changed places; so that Friendship and Love now compete, instead of being linked adjacent terms. Arthur's additional mediation is needed to restore the tangled situation to "peace and settled rest" (IV. ix. 17)... Friendship by itself is not enough: only with reconciliation, forgiveness, and mutual adaptation, can there be any stable and peaceful relationship.' Heatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton*, pp. 81, 105 explains the effect of Arthur's intervention on Poena as the modification of her natural cruelty and pride by the acquired art of friendship. Compare the giant's daughter motif in a text I discuss in chapter two, *Culhwch and Olwen* on which Knight, p.19 comments: 'Initially Ysbaddaden represents wild nature, that huge and forbidding force against which the Celts had to pit their collective cultural efforts But nature also had its beneficent, summer-like side. This is represented by the giant's daughter Olwen. If his wrath can be faced successfully, her rich fecundity can be possessed.'

The crisp, insistent rhyming of 'Rote', 'note', 'rote', and 'dote' enacts the moment of strong temptation; but in the end Arthur is only 'halfe rapt' by Poeana. Disloyalty to Gloriana, in whose presence Arthur was 'rauisht with delight' (I ix 14.6), is not an issue. The final line of the stanza quoted above recalls the capture of Acrasia (II xii 81-82), but unlike Guyon when tempted by female charms as he approaches the Bower of Bliss (II xii 27-34.3, 63-69) Arthur does not need a Palmer to control his instincts. Poeana's appeal does not damage Arthur's reputation, but does effect a shift in tone which bridges the gap between the rough handling of Corflambo's corpse and the happy denouement of the episode, in which the Prince presides over the union of Placidas and Poeana as well as Amyas and Aemylia (IV ix 15-17.2). Like the distinction between Arthur's treatment of Orgoglio and Corflambo, the portrayal of Poeana contrasts with that of Duessa in a manner which illustrates the different roles of Arthur's perfect chivalry in the contexts of the absolute values of the legend of Holiness, and the world of human relationships which characterises *The Faerie Queene* from Book Three, but is perhaps most complex in the legend of Friendship where there is no quest to give the narrative a strong sense of direction.

The Corflambo episode amounts to a fairly straightforward confirmation of Arthur's pre-eminence as established in Book One. A far greater challenge to my argument is posed by his encounter with Maleger in Book Two. Existing studies of this episode tend to conclude that Arthur is more vulnerable in the legend of Temperance.³¹ This is understandable, when one considers the description of Arthur struggling against Maleger's hags, Impatience and Impotence:

So greatest and most glorious thing on ground
 May often need the helpe of weaker hand;
 So feeble is mans state, and life vnsound,
 That in assurance it may neuer stand,
 Till it dissolued be from earthly band.
 Prooffe be thou Prince, the prowest man aliue,
 And noblest borne of all in *Britayne* land;
 Yet thee fierce Fortune did so nearely driue,
 That had not grace thee blest, thou shouldest not suruiue.

(II xi 30)

³¹ Hamilton, *Structure*, p. 120; Robert Hoopes, "'God Guide Thee Guyon": Nature and Grace Reconciled in *The Faerie Queene*, Book II', *RES* (new series) 5 (1954), p.22; MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur*; Parker, *Allegory*, p.142; and Williams, *The World of Glass*, pp. 65-71.

It can be argued that Arthur is less invincible in Book Two in keeping with the distinction between its secular preoccupations and the more spiritual journey depicted in the legend of Holiness.³² Without wishing to argue against the undoubted shift which takes place in the moral allegory of the poem between the first two books, a point to which I will return, certain qualifications need to be made. Arthur compares favourably to Red Crosse as the adversary of Orgoglio, but even the Prince does not have an easy victory as the following description of a blow from the giant powerfully conveys:

... his hideous club aloft he dites,
 And at his foe with furious rigour smites,
 That strongest Oake might seeme to ouerthrow:
 The stroke vpon his shield so heauie lites,
 That to the ground it doubleth him full low
 What mortall wight could euer beare so monstrous blow ?
 (I viii 18.4-9)

It is only 'by chauce' (I viii 19.2) that Arthur's shield is uncovered and the giant vanquished. However, although as a man Arthur is not invulnerable, he does not depend only on human resources. Given the description of Arthur's shield quoted earlier, the reader knows that what happens 'by chauce' in the fight with Orgoglio was in fact likely to happen. He is saved by an enchanted shield, but the shield is *his*: the superhuman aspect of Arthur is part of what makes him the pre-eminent knight of *The Faerie Queene*. Although the limitations of his human aspect are dwelt upon at greater length in the Maleger episode, in the context of eventual victory this does not qualify his pre-eminence so much as emphasising his exemplary status. Arthur is admirable because he is successful, but his humanity suggests that his perfection is a goal towards which more vulnerable types of humanity can aspire. Hence Timias does not tackle Maleger alone but does help Arthur to achieve victory. Similarly, in canto eight Guyon needs Arthur to save him from Pyrochles and Cymochles, but the Prince does so using the sword of the fallen knight.

Arthur is twice a rescuer in Book Two, but his second encounter with evil is certainly not a redundancy in the structure of the poem.³³ Unlike Pyrochles and Cymochles, Maleger cannot be defeated by chivalric prowess:

³² See my citation of Woodhouse's 'Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queene*' in chapter one, note 38.

³³ One might contrast the repetitiveness of late medieval romances such as *Arthur of Little Britain*, where one victory of the protagonist is, wearily, very much like the next. See Sarah Michie, 'The Faerie Queene and *Arthur of Little Britain*', *SP* 36 (1939), p. 106.

... he made
 An open passage through his riuen brest,
 That halfe the steele behind his back did rest;
 Which drawing backe, he looked euermore
 When the hart bloud should gush out of his chest,
 Or his dead corse should fall vpon the flore;
 But his dead corse vpon the flore fell nathemore.

(II xi 37.3-9)

Similar strokes decisively end the challenges of Orgoglio (I viii 24) and Corflambo (IV viii 45), as well as those of Pyrochles (II viii 52) and Cymochles (II viii 45). The vivid image in the first three lines quoted above invites the reader to join Arthur in expecting Maleger to fall dead at his feet. Disengagement from Arthur after line six - the reader watches the Prince and Maleger, rather than watching Maleger with the Prince - does not make Maleger any less bewildering a spectacle. In the final two lines repetition of the heavily stressed 'dead corse' and 'flore' underline the response of transfixed horror. In the next two stanzas, this perplexity is reinforced by a succession of negatives which intimate the profoundly disconcerting strength-in-weakness of Maleger:

Ne drop of bloud appeared shed to bee,
 All were the wounde so wide and wonderous,
 That through his carkasse one might plainely see:
 Halfe in a maze with horror hideous,
 And halfe in rage, to be deluded thus,
 Againe through both the sides he strooke him quight,
 That made his spright to grone full piteous:
 Yet nathemore forth fled his groning spright,
 But freshly as at first, prepard himselfe to fight.

Thereat he smitten was with great affright,
 And trembling terror did his hart apall,
 Ne wist he, what to thinke of that same sight,
 Ne what to say, ne what to doe at all;
 He doubted, least it were some magicall
 Illusion, that did beguile his sense,
 Or wandring ghost, that wanted funerall,
 Or aerie spirit vnder false pretence,
 Or hellish feend raysd vp through diuelish science.

(II x 38-39)

Much has been written on the theological implications of Arthur's struggle to comprehend the nature of Maleger, but these arguments do not do justice to the striking effect of the literal narrative.³⁴ The bizarre imagery of the stanzas quoted above is without equivalent

in *The Faerie Queene*, and, to the best of my knowledge, in the pages of earlier romance literature, although Patricia Parker generalises that Maleger is 'the specter of melancholy (xi.22) which haunts any quest for a presence which is "there" and not "here."' ³⁵ Medieval romance abounds with individuals protected against any blow by enchantment: one thinks for example of Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, no knight of the Round Table has a figure as disconcerting as Maleger to deal with. Peter Bayley cites Orillo from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (15: 48ff) as an analogue, but goes on to qualify:

this episode is grotesque inventive comedy, Spenser's imaginative but serious, and allegorically significant, for Maleger cannot be defeated but by drowning in the water (stanza 46) which represents, here as elsewhere in the book, temperance and grace. Maleger cannot live in such an element, but is immortal only on that other element of earth (st. 45). ³⁶

Maleger is certainly not an example of 'grotesque inventive comedy'. His uncanny strength anticipates the potent images of gothic literature, for example the figure of Life-in-Death in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, or the battle in the Evil Wood witnessed by the hero of George MacDonald's *Lilith*:

A furious battle was raging around me ... Swords swept through the phantoms: they only shivered. Maces crashed on the skeletons, shattering them hideously: not one fell or ceased to fight, so long as a single joint held two bones together. ³⁷

One might also compare the death of Prince Prospero in Poe's *Masque of the Red Death*:

There was a sharp cry - and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet,

³⁴ MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur*, pp. 517-519 compares Maleger to the Old Man in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* and Spenser's own *Orgoglio* as figures of the Old Adam. MacLachlan also compares the stone-throwing episode in the final Book of the *Aeneid*, arguing that *The Faerie Queene* gives a theological version of this cultural transition. Compare Berger, *Allegorical Temper*, p. 87: 'The ground to which Arthur is forced in Canto xi (xi. 30) is the common frailty of mankind, the weakness resulting from Original Sin. Corruption, the sickness unto death, is not merely an illness of the weak, as Guyon had supposed, but an essential factor to be considered by the healthy. It is not in Guyon's nature to be aware of Maleger; but God has provided for this by sending Arthur.' Compare the more recent, but similar reading of Mikics, p. 81: 'Maleger, Arthur's mortality, cannot be vanquished by heroic virtue, only by grace. Here as in Pauline-Augustinian theology, a demonstration of the futility of trying to fight one's "lifeless shadow" or mortal weakness precedes grace. Even Arthur, the poem's strongest hero, must accept this weakness, discarding sword and armor and coming in direct contact with the old Adam "of the earth" (1 Cor. 15: 47), the Antaeus-like Maleger.' MacLachlan, Berger and Mikics do not adequately balance the undoubted difficulties Arthur experiences with acknowledgement of his eventual victory.

³⁵ Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, p.86. See also Freeman, pp. 160-161: 'This episode is one of those that stands out for its originality. It is strange, even for Spenser, both in its central figure, Maleger, and in the details of Arthur's fight with him.'

³⁶ Bayley, *The Faerie Queene, Book Two* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 318.

³⁷ MacDonald, p. 233.

upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.³⁸

Spenser's Arthur may struggle to defeat Maleger, but he comes out of the encounter more positively than MacDonald's Mr. Vane, and certainly better than Poe's Prince Prospero. The exceptional properties of Arthur's foe reinforce his exalted status: only a formidable protagonist can successfully deal with an adversary who cannot die because he himself does not really live.

Arthur is utterly bewildered by Maleger, but not overcome. Apart from the basic facts of survival and victory, the manner in which Arthur triumphs testifies to his pre-eminence over other knights:

His owne good sword *Morddure*, that neuer fayld
At need, till now, he lightly threw away,
And his bright shield, that nought him now auayld,
And with his naked hands him forcibly assayld.

(II xi 41.6-9)

This apparent act of despair ironically reinforces the status of Arthur - he is capable of powers greater than his chivalric accoutrements. These lines show that when occasion calls he can step beyond a role exalted in itself, that of the best-knight-in-the-world of *The Faerie Queene*. Classical allusions in this episode help to create an impression of Arthur as myth; in particular several critics have interpreted Arthur as a Hercules figure.³⁹ Although in chapter two I note some similarities between Spenser's Arthur and the Arthur of *Culhwch and Olwen*, some of his actions in *The Faerie Queene* align him more closely to

³⁸ *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe: Tales and Sketches 1831-1842*, ed. by Thomas Olive Mabbott with the assistance of Eleanor D. Kewer and Maureen C. Mabbott (London and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.676.

³⁹ I discuss this aspect of Spenser's Arthur in chapter one. See also Freeman, p. 165; Hankins, p. 85; and Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 135. Philip Rollinson, 'Arthur, Maleger, and the Interpretation of *The Faerie Queene*', *SS 7* (1986), p. 112 makes an interesting qualification: 'Although the basic pattern here is that of Hercules' defeat of the giant Antaeus, there is a significant variation. Once Hercules has squeezed the life out of Antaeus, he stays dead, even when dropped back on the ground, and the corpse does not have to rest in or on some substance other than earth.' I agree with Rollinson, but would take this point further: because Maleger is a tougher opponent than Antaeus, Spenser's Arthur can be seen as a more exalted figure than the semi-divine Hercules.

the impressive but not invulnerable heroes of classical legend. On the question of Arthur's vulnerability I take issue with L. R. Galyon's article on Spenser in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*:

By the very nature of his role in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's Arthur has to be essentially invincible; in part because of his infallibility, he is neither the most important nor the most memorable of Spenser's knights.⁴⁰

On the contrary, the Maleger episode suggests that it is the combination of transcendence with more human qualities which makes the Prince the most important and memorable of Spenser's knights, a figure who represents the best that *man* can be. A.C. Hamilton writes that Book Two 'analyses man's natural life through his right relationship to his own nature in a horizontal perspective of the world in which he lives.'⁴¹ Arthur is a paradigmatic figure in Book Two - in the context of such a milieu Spenser's knight-rescuer *par excellence* is bound to experience more of the struggle of life than he does in Books One and Four with their respectively more optimistic and generous views of human potential.

The paradigmatic status of Arthur can be confirmed by placing his battle with Maleger in its immediate context in the narrative of the legend of Temperance, that is as the climax of Arthur and Guyon's visit to Alma's Castle. It is the Prince rather than the knight of Temperance who is singled out as capable of lifting what has been a long siege (II ix 12, xi 16).⁴² The quest motif, as at the end of the House of Holiness episode in Book One, balances the progress of the titular knight by evocation of his duty. Guyon is the *servant* of the Faerie Queene, and after viewing the sights of Alma's Castle, he resumes the quest she has given him:

Vprose Sir *Guyon*, in bright armour clad,
And to his purposd iourney him prepar'd.

(II xi 3.5-6)

Arthur enters the House of Temperance with Guyon, but his relationship with Alma is of a different order. The Prince has shown his pre-eminence through rescuing Guyon, who has

⁴⁰ Galyon, p. 428.

⁴¹ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p.163. Hamilton also provides a summary of the extensive body of Spenser criticism on the relationship between Book Two of *The Faerie Queene* and classical ethics.

⁴² West, 'Spenser's Art of War: Chivalric Allegory, Military Technology and the Elizabethan Mock-Heroic Sensibility', *Renaissance Quarterly* 41 (1988), p.663 gives Spenser's chivalric imagery a historical context: 'In the military dream-world of the *Faerie Queene* one can dispel bands of terrorists by neutralizing their leader.' See also Spens, pp.22-23 for comparison of Maleger's troops to the peasantry depicted in Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*.

yet to perfect his virtue by destroying the Bower of Bliss. Like Guyon, Arthur learns from his visit to Alma's Castle, but what he gains is knowledge of what he already has, a crucial place in the history of his nation. Moreover, the knowledge Arthur receives is balanced by the service he performs. The presiding lady of the House of Temperance is also one of the poem's many types of Elizabeth.⁴³ Not, it must be granted, a particularly obvious one; but merely as a ruler-figure and an attractive virgin there is a resemblance:

She forth issewed with a goodly traine
Of Squires and Ladies equipaged well,
And entertained them right fairely, as befell.

Alma she called was, a virgin bright;
That had not yet felt *Cupid*'s wanton rage,
Yet was she woo'd of many a gentle knight,
And many a Lord of noble parentage,
That sought with her to lincke in marriage.

(II ix 17.7-18.5)

Alma's status as an avatar of Elizabeth allows a link to be made between Arthur's vision of Gloriana and the successful outcome of his encounter with Maleger.⁴⁴ Just as Arthur's rescue of Guyon can be linked to his love for the Faerie Queene because the knight of Temperance belongs to her Order of Maidenhead, the close bond between the Prince and his lady is shown as he, rather than Guyon, prepares to champion Alma against Maleger:

But let them pas, whiles wind and weather right
Do serue their turnes: here I a while must stay,
To see a cruell fight doen by the Prince this day.

(II xi 4.7-9)

The dismissive tone of the clipped monosyllables - 'but let them pas' - anticipates the far from celebratory comment of the Palmer on the conclusion to Guyon's quest at the end of canto twelve:

Let *Grill* be *Grill*, and haue his hoggish mind,
But let vs hence depart, whilest wether serues and wind.

(II xii 87.8-9)

⁴³ De Maray, p. 157 interprets Alma's Castle as 'one among a number of core icons with circles that are subsumed by the ultimate faeryland city and chivalric society of Gloriana's Cleopolis.'

⁴⁴ Hume, pp.120-125 argues that the description of Alma gives the episode a visionary aspect. I find this unconvincing - Alma occupies a crucial place in the allegory of the legend of Temperance, but she is firmly located in the contingent world of Spenser's Faery Land.

Combined with the urgent anticipation of Arthur's battle with Maleger (II xi 4.8-9), the framing of the Acrasia episode in this way suggests that the defeat of Maleger is just as important to the climax of the legend of Temperance as the capture of Acrasia. The opening words of canto twelve - 'Now gins this goodly frame of Temperance / Fairely to rise' (II xii 1.1-2) - can be read as a comment on Arthur's victory over Maleger as well as a forecast of Guyon's defeat of Acrasia. Indeed it can be argued that the 'firme foundation of true bountihed' (II xii 1.5) which enables Guyon to vanquish Acrasia is the purification of the body represented by Arthur's defeat of Maleger and his troops.⁴⁵

Arthur does not emerge from combat with Maleger unscathed, but in the world of chivalric romance wounds are not regarded as a stigma. The episode ends on a note of serene optimism:

... the fairest *Alma* met him there
 With balme and wine and costly spicery,
 To comfort him in his infirmity;
 Efstoones she causd him vp to be conuayd,
 And of his armes despoyled easily,
 In sumptuous bed she made him to be layd,
 And all the while his wounds were dressing, by him stayd.
(II xi 49.3-9)

The return of the wounded champion to a benign and majestic lady is described in terms slightly but significantly evocative of Arthur's visionary encounter with Gloriana (I ix 13-15), and the narrator's description of the destiny of his armour (I vii 36.8-9).⁴⁶ The effect of this echoing is to suggest that Arthur's victory over Maleger is positively linked to his love of the Faerie Queene.

⁴⁵ MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur*, pp.510-512 and Joan Warchol Rossi, 'Briton Moniments: Spenser's Definition of Temperance in History', *ELR* 15 (1985), p.46 argue that the two episodes are complementary. I am happy to accept this, but only if Arthur is held to retain his paradigmatic status vis-a-vis Guyon. The difference between Guyon at the end of cantos seven and twelve is a good example of what contact with Arthur can do, but does not give the knight of Temperance the status of a general paradigm. Hamilton, 'Our New Poet'. p.108; Heatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton*, p. 187; and Berger *Allegorical Temper*, pp. 221-222 see the defeat of Maleger as a pre-requisite for that of Acrasia.

⁴⁶ Freeman, p. 166 cites an interesting analogue in her interpretation of Arthur's reception by Alma: 'It is the right note to strike for the last sight of Arthur in this Book. Great poets can always teach others of their kind how to reach a quiet end. One is reminded of the conclusion of *Paradise Regained*.'

Like the Orgoglio and Corflambo episodes, Arthur's encounter with Maleger can also be placed in the context of earlier Arthurian literature. James Nohnberg writes of this stanza:

Within *The Faerie Queene* overall, it serves to illustrate a particular aspect of the myth of Arthur's return. In Malory and elsewhere this means the return from Avalon, and in Book II Arthur's survival is logically parallel to the remanding of the heroic persona from the underworld, which is also an apple-land of the dead. The early Church affirmed that God would not let his holy one see corruption, and the victory won in the Maleger episode shows that an analogous expectation exists on the part of Spenser's faerie.⁴⁷

Maleger himself may have no close analogue in the pages of medieval romance, but Arthur's return to Alma is a version of the romance motif of a wounded knight tended by a damsel skilled in healing arts used to very different effect in one of the most famous episodes in traditional accounts of the legendary king:

Than sir Bedwere toke the kynge uppon hys bak and so wente with hym to the watirs syde. And whan they were there, evyn faste by the banke hoved a lytyll barge wyth many fayre ladyes in hit, and amonge hem all was a quene, and all they had blak hoodis. And all they wepte and shryked whan they saw kynge Arthur.

'Now put me into that barge,' seyde the kynge.

And so he ded sofftely, and there resceyved hym three ladyes with grete mournyng. And so they sette hem downe, and in one of their lappis kyng Arthure layde hys hede. And than the quene seyde,

'A, my dere brothir! Why have ye taryed so longe frome me? Alas, thys wounde on youre hede hath caught overmuch coulde!'

And anone they rowed fromward the londe, and sir Bedyvere behylde all tho ladyes go frowarde hym. Than sir Bedwere cryed and seyde,

'A, my lorde Arthur, what shall becom of me, now ye go frome me and leve me here alone amonge myne enemyes?'

'Comforte thyselff,' seyde the kynge, 'and do as well as thou mayste, for in me ys no truste to truste in. For I muste into the vale of Avylyon to hele me of my grevous wounde. And if thou here nevermore of me, pray for my soule!'⁴⁸

Malory does not preclude the possibility of Arthur's return:

Yet som men say in many partys of Inglonde that kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne ...⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Nohnberg, pp. 322-323. Contrast Mikics, p.85: 'The canto's last two stanzas suggest the ineradicable nature of Arthur's malady.' This interpretation is unduly pessimistic in the light of Arthur's future appearances.

⁴⁸ Malory, p.716.

However, unlike the legendary king, Spenser's Prince *does* come again - and again. In the Alma episode as throughout *The Faerie Queene* Spenser evokes the aura of Arthurian tradition - although a young and active figure without responsibility his Prince is always potentially *King Arthur*. However, there is no tragic ending to Spenser's Arthur, indeed not even a story. Instead he functions as an example for both reader and other characters to follow, the best-knight-in-the-world of Spenser's Faeryland.

Chapter Nine: Britomart and Artegall - Arthur's Equals ?

In each of the episodes I consider in chapter eight, Arthur's paradigmatic status is shown by an action of which no other is capable. As the title of this chapter indicates, his pre-eminence vis-a-vis the representatives of Chastity and Justice is less clear. The relationship between Arthur and Britomart has been much discussed by Spenser scholars, normally resulting in readings which suggest that Britomart equals or takes over from Arthur as the most idealised figure of *The Faerie Queene*. For example, commenting on Book Three in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, Gordon Teskey writes:

Up to this point, Arthur's structural role in the poem conforms with what we are led to expect in the Letter [to Raleigh]. But in Book III, with the entry of Britomart in quest of Artegall, complications develop, for this new couple takes on many of the symbolic values previously associated with Gloriana and Arthur.¹

Such readings require qualification: however prominent Britomart is in the middle books of *The Faerie Queene*, she does not appear at all in Books One, Two or Six. Similarly, although Artegall is mentioned - indeed accorded high praise - in Book Two (II ix 6.9), it is difficult to imagine the knight of Justice taking a direct part in the action of the first three books of the poem, while his role in the legend of Friendship is mainly that of a knight-incognito (IV iv-vi), and he appears at the beginning of Book Six only to acknowledge his successor (VI i 4-10). Only Arthur plays an important role in the action of each book - surely a structural requirement of the poem's paradigmatic figure ? Moreover, it can be shown that Arthur's involvement with the intertwined quests of Britomart and Artegall does not compromise his exemplary status. Discussing Spenser's significant naming, A.Kent Heatt notes that Britomart and Artegall 'share a syllable with Arthur'. I would add and emphasise that this does not make either of them quite Arthur's equal.²

Arthur's first meeting with Britomart begins as an extension of his intervention in the legend of Temperance. However, one would not guess from the opening three stanzas that Arthur had once rescued Guyon from certain death - Prince and knight are introduced

¹ Teskey, 'Arthur in *The Faerie Queene*', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 70. See also *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p. 424; Hough, p.89; Roche, *The Kindly Flame*, p. 197; Williams, *The World of Glass* pp. 81,113-115.

² Heatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton*, p.91.

as companions. Their errancy at the beginning of Book Three evokes a milieu closer to that of medieval romance than those of the preceding books: they seek and encounter adventures which are not specified because they are the very breath of knighthood rather than exceptional events:

Long so they trauelled through wastefull wayes,
 Where daungers dwelt, and perils most did wonne,
 To hunt for glorie and renownmed praise;
 Full many Countries they did ouerronne,
 From the vprising to the setting Sunne,
 And many hard aduentures did atchieue;
 Of all the which they honour euer wonne,
 Seeking the weake oppressed to relieue,
 And to recouer right for such, as wrong did grieue.

(III i 3)

Such imagery is commonplace in medieval romance. Here, for example, are the travels of the protagonist of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*:

Mony clyff he overclambe in contrayes straunge,
 Fer floten fro his frendes fremedly he rides.
 At uch warthe auther water there the wye passed
 He fonde a foo him before, bot ferly hit were,
 And that so foule and so felle that fyght him behoved.
 So many mervayl by mount there the mon findes
 Hit were to tor for to telle of the tenthe dole.
 Sumwhyle with wormes he werres and with wolves als,
 Sumwhyle with wodwos that woned in the knarres,
 Both with bulles and beres, and bores otherwhyle,
 And etaynes that him aneledde of the high felle.
 Nad he bene doghty and drye and Dryghten had served,
 Douteles he had bene ded and dreped ful oft;
 For werre wrathed him not so much that wynter nas wors,
 When the colde clere water fro the cloudes schadde
 And fres ere hit falle myght to the fale erthe.
 Nere slayn with the slete he slepte in his yrnas
 Mo nightes then innogh in naked rokkes,
 There as claterande fro the crest the colde borne rennes
 And hinged high over his hede in hard iisse-ikkles.
 Thus in peryl and payne and plytes ful hard
 By contray cayres this knight ...

(ll. 713-734)

The landscape through which Gawain travels has a rugged quality perhaps more reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer* than anticipatory of Spenser's Faery Land.

However, like the description of Arthur and Guyon, the details the Gawain-poet provides are inessential to the advance of plot, but crucial to the creation of atmosphere.³ Introduced in such a setting, and as Guyon's equal, Spenser's Arthur enters Book Three of *The Faerie Queene* as an everyman romance protagonist rather than a paradigm of achieved chivalry and virtue.

This impression seems to be confirmed by Arthur's response to the sudden appearance of Britomart. He allows Guyon to engage in combat with the unknown knight, rather than doing so himself:

Which seeing good Sir *Guyon*, deare besought
The Prince of grace, to let him runne that turne.
He graunted...

(III i 5.1-3)

One knight courteously allowing his companion to undertake an adventure is a standard romance procedure. However, in this particular case there are allegorical complications. Should Temperance be fighting Chastity, and should Magnificence approve? Even allowing for the varying allegorical texture of *The Faerie Queene* - Guyon = Temperance, Britomart = Chastity, and Arthur = Magnificence will lead at best to a thinly reductive reading of the poem if these identifications are exclusively insisted upon - Arthur's conduct is suspect. The language used in the lines quoted above, and of the ensuing combat, has a clipped, formulaic quality, suggesting the vulnerability of the chivalric ideal Arthur and Guyon represent. At best, Arthur's gesture is more polite than practical. Comparison of their actions at the end of Book Two, in which the physical strength of the Prince overpowers Maleger while the knight of Temperance owes his success to resistance and reproof, suggests that the Prince would have had a better chance of victory.

The limitations of Guyon's chivalry are emphatically shown by the undignified posture he finds himself in after challenging Britomart: 'ere well he was aware, / Nigh a speares length behind his crouper fell' (III i 6.6-7). The narrator's subsequent address to Guyon, explaining his defeat, could be used to support the argument that Britomart supplants Arthur as the pre-eminent knight of *The Faerie Queene*:

³ For *Sir Gawain* I use the edition of J.A. Burrow (Harmondworth: Penguin Books, 1972). On Spenser's setting see Arthos, pp. 40-64.

Ah gentlest knight, that euer armour bore,
 Let not thee grieue dismounted to haue beene,
 And brought to ground, that neuer wast before;
 For not thy fault, but secret powre vnseene,
 That speare enchanted was, which layd thee on the greene.
(III i 7.5-9)

No particularising reference has been made to Arthur's arms since he threw away his sword while fighting Maleger (II xi 41). In contrast to the meetings between Arthur and the titular knights of Books One and Two, it is Britomart who is distinguished by her possession of enchanted arms.⁴

Britomart's supremacy does not constitute the lasting impression of her initial meeting with Arthur. Although the Prince does not become actively involved in the conflict, he does influence its outcome by helping the Palmer to pacify Guyon:

By such good meanes he [the Palmer] him discourseled,
 From prosecuting his reuenging rage;
 And eke the Prince like treaty handeled,
 His wrathfull will with reason to asswage,
 And laid the blame, not to his carriage,
 But to his starting steed, that swaru'd asyde,
 And to the ill purueyance of his page,
 That had his furnitures not firmly tyde:
 So is his angry courage fairely pacifyde.
(III i 11)

Judith H. Anderson describes Arthur's conduct in this scene as 'tactful dishonesty'.⁵ This is a valid reading of the stanza quoted above - Arthur is quite definitely 'making excuses' in the interests of peace. However, the following two stanzas effect a significant tonal shift as the reconciliation of the combatants is commended by the narrator:

Thus reconcilment was betweene them knit,
 Through goodly temperance, and affection chaste,
 And either vovd with all their power and wit,
 To let not others honour be defaste,
 Of friend or foe, who euer it embaste,
 Ne armes to beare against the others syde:
 In which accord the Prince was also plaste,

⁴ On this subject see Cheney, 'Secret Powre Unseene'.

⁵ Anderson, *The Growth of a Personal Voice*, p. 99. Compare Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p. 86: 'After this instance of artful dissuasion ... the reader is scarcely prepared to accept this as a reconciliation of two abstract virtues'.

And with that golden chaine of concord tyde.
So goodly all agreed, they forth yfere did ryde.

O goodly vsage of those antique times,
In which the sword was seruant vnto right;
When not for malice and contentious crimes,
But all for praise, and prooffe of manly might,
The martiall brood accustomed to fight:
Then honour was the meed of victorie,
And yet the vanquished had no despight:
Let later age that noble vse enuie,
Vile rancour to auoid, and cruell surquedrie.

(III i 12-13)⁶

It is not often noted in criticism of this episode that the alliance which provokes this nostalgic outburst could not have arisen without the intervention of Arthur.⁷ His paradigmatic status is intimated as he stands apart from the unproductively competitive chivalry of Guyon and Britomart. Their joust recalls many a display of Lancelot's pre-eminence in medieval romance, with Britomart as the Lancelot figure, and Arthur occupying a less active but more exalted position. Arthur's involvement in the quarrel between Guyon and Britomart is less dramatic than his rescues of the titular knights of Books One and Two. However, when the reputations of the representatives of Temperance and Chastity are at stake, reconciliation is exactly what is required to facilitate a satisfactory resolution. The episode closes by celebrating the peaceful alliance established by Arthur between 'goodly temperance and affection chaste' and anticipatory of the ideality of Book Four - 'that golden chaine of concord' in which, as I later show, Arthur is even more clearly superior to Britomart than he is in her own virtue of Chastity.

There is a hint in this episode of the portrayal of Arthur as arbiter of disputes in some of the medieval texts I discuss in chapter two. It is only a hint - Spenser's Arthur does not in general resemble either the severe law-giver of Layamon or the stately sovereign of Chretien's Arthurian world - but it is significant that having been introduced as a seemingly vulnerable everyman romance knight, Arthur transcends the quarrel of the titular knights.

⁶ Compare the narrator's praise of Arthur as protector of Amoret and Aemylia (IV viii 29-33). In both episodes Arthur plays a crucial role in bringing about a situation which is associated with the Golden Age. Contrast Fichter, p. 168 and Berger, 'Kidnapped Romance', p. 250, who highlight the dangers of idealising the past in discussing the nostalgic interpolations of the narrator.

⁷ Gregerson, p.9 notes Britomart's pre-eminence vis-a-vis her predecessor as titular knight, but fails to consider the important role of Arthur in establishing this alliance.

It is his experience of the difficulties of life in an imperfect world that cast into relief the perfection of Arthur and allow his pre-eminence to function as an example to be followed rather than as an elusive ideal.

Arthur's exemplary status receives one of its greatest challenges with the circumstances which separate him from Britomart:

All suddenly out of the thickest brush,
 Vpon a milk-white Palfrey all alone,
 A goodly Ladie did foreby them rush,
 Whose face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone,
 And eke through feare as white as whales bone:
 Her garments all were wrought of beaten gold,
 And all her steed with tinsell trappings shone,
 Which fled so fast, that nothing mote him hold,
 And scarce them leasure gaue, her passing to behold.

Still as she fled, her eye she backward threw,
 As fearing euill, that pursewd her fast;
 And her faire yellow locks behind her flew,
 Loosely disperst with puffe of euery blast:
 All as a blazing starre doth farre outcast
 His hearie beames, and flaming lockes dispred,
 At sight whereof the people stand aghast:
 But the sage wisard telles, as he has red,
 That it importunes death and dolefull drierihed.

(III i 15-16)

Florimell is introduced as a damsel-in-distress, a standard enough romance figure, as a glance through the works of Chretien de Troyes or Malory will indicate. However, the effect of this particular damsel-in-distress is decidedly unmedieval. It is to the pages of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* that one must turn for an analogue to Spenser's Florimell.⁸ Compare the stanza quoted above to the following description of Ariosto's Angelica:

The lovely damsel turns her palfrey round
 And through the wood full pelt she gallops off.
 Whether in clearings or where briars abound,
 Not caring if the going's smooth or rough,
 She lets her plunging palfrey choose the ground:
 She, pale and trembling, scarce has wits enough.
 Deep in a savage wood, as in a dream,
 She roams, and comes at last upon a stream...

⁸ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Roche, p. 1141; Peter De Sa Wiggins, 'Spenser's Anxiety', *MLN* 103 (1988), p.84.

Through dark and terrifying woods she flees,
 In lonely, wild, uncultivated places,
 The rustle of the undergrowth, the trees,
 Beech, rowan, elm, her terror interlaces,
 Weaving an evil dream in which she sees
 Of all she most abhors the dreaded traces.
 O'er hill and dale, each shadow a reminder,
 She seems to feel Rinaldo close behind her;

Just like a fallow fawn or new-born roe
 Which from its safe and leafy shelter spies
 Its dam seized by a leopard and brought low:
 With bleeding throat and breasts and flank she lies,
 And never more the light of day will know;
 From wood to wood the orphaned creature flies
 And of the cruel pard it seems to feel,
 With every bramble-scratch, the jaws of steel.

(1: 13, 33-34)

The appearances of Florimell and Angelica are undoubtedly similar, but their situations and functions in *The Faerie Queene* and *Orlando Furioso* are different. Angelica's circumstances only *look* like those of an orphaned roe: the description of her appearance is balanced by the reader's knowledge of her story. Partly responsible for her own predicament, she is sympathetic in the way that Hermia and Helena are when they experience the anguish of unrequited love in the woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By contrast, the reader of the opening canto of Book Three of *The Faerie Queene* does not know Florimell's story, and can regard her only as what she appears - beleaguered beauty. In these contexts, Angelica's pursuers are as much the victims of circumstances as the damsel, while Arthur and Guyon seem more like ravishers than rescuers.⁹

The Prince and *Guyon* equally byliue
 Her selfe pursewd, in hope to win thereby
 Most goodly meede, the fairest Dame alieue.

(III i 18. 6-8)

The heavily stressed 'meede' encourages the reader to consider the attitude of Prince and knight to be self-centred rather than an example of selfless chivalric duty. The determination of their pursuit also distinguishes the powerful evocation of sexual temptation in this scene from the fleeting casting of eyes on the beauty of Poena which

⁹ Roche, 'The Faerie Queene III', and 'Florimell', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* pp.271-272; 309.

softens the tone of Arthur's triumphant entry into the castle of the defeated Corflambo (IV ix 6).

The dubiety of Arthur's response to Florimell is underlined by the conduct of his squire, Timias, who nobly pursues the Foster. More importantly for the argument of this chapter, Britomart seems to behave more commendably than Arthur:

The whiles faire *Britomart*, whose constant mind,
Would not so lightly follow beauties chace.

(III i 19.1-2)

Care must be taken by the reader not to exaggerate Britomart's virtue in this scene. Certainly she is steadfast when the Chastity of Arthur is in doubt. However, as a woman in love with a knight (III i 8.6-9), Britomart is presumably not tempted by Florimell, giving the narrator's moralising a faintly comic undercurrent.¹⁰ Moreover, reading further on in the narrative allows a more positive reading of Arthur's response to Florimell.

By the time that Arthur's pursuit of Florimell becomes the focus of the narrative again in canto four, the reader has been presented with Britomart as a far more vulnerable figure than she appears at the beginning of the canto.¹¹ Indeed, some of the imagery used in cantos two and three to present Britomart as a love-sick maiden is suggestive of Florimell-like vulnerability:

Thereat she sighing softly, had no powre
To speake a while, ne ready answere make,
But with hart-thrilling throbs and bitter stowre,
As if she had a feuer fit, did quake,
And euery daintie limbe with horroure shake;
And euer and anone the rosy red,
Flasht through her face, as it had beene a flake
Of lightning, through bright heauen fulmined;
At last the passion past she thus him answered.

(III ii 5)

¹⁰ Compare Rose, *Heroic Love*, p. 85. Dunsheath, p. 153 notes that Britomart does not try to rescue Florimell. Berger, 'Kidnapped Romance', p. 213 explains the confusion felt by readers of this scene: 'Perhaps, since Florimell's fearful flight is so obvious an icon of Embattled Chastity, they expect the Knight of Chastity to give her a hand and are thus puzzled by her refusal to involve herself with that particular signifier of the virtue she represents... It is surely significant that just when Britomart steps out of the poem for a few cantos we learn that she was the indirect cause of the chase she would not lightly follow.' Roche, *Kindly Flame*, p. 209, points out that in the long run Britomart is drawn into the Florimell problem.

¹¹ See chapter five for a more extended discussion of Britomart's vulnerability in the wake of her mirror-vision of Artegall.

By canto four, the imagery used of Arthur modulates in his favour. This can be shown by comparing the description of his initial pursuit (III i 18.6-8) to the stanzas in which he parts company from Guyon:

At last they came vnto a double way,
Where, doubtfull which to take, her to reskew,
Themselues they did dispart, each to assay,
Whether more happie were, to win so goodly pray...

But fairest fortune to the Prince befell,
Whose chaunce it was, that soone he did repent,
To take that way, in which that Damozell
Was fled afore, affraid of him, as feend of hell.

(III iv 46.6-9,47.6-9)

'Goodly pray' may echo the 'goodly meede' described as Arthur's initial motivation (III i 18.8), but the pejorative connotations of these phrases are balanced by the implications of 'fairest fortune'. By this stage in *The Faerie Queene*, the positive moral associations of being on the right path are well established. Moreover, Arthur's apparent lust at the beginning of the chase is balanced by his attempt to reassure Florimell:

Aloud to her he oftentimes did call,
To doe away vaine doubt, and needlesse dread:
Full myld to her he spake, and oft let fall
Many meeke wordes, to stay and comfort her withall.

(III iv 48.6-9)

'Comfort her withall': these words recall Arthur's first appearance in *The Faerie Queene*, when he attempts to console Una after she hears news of Red Crosse's imprisonment (I vii 40-41). As the narrative proceeds, it becomes more reasonable to question Florimell's fear. Even when the Dwarf reveals that Florimell, like Arthur and Britomart, is engaged in a love quest, the manner in which her movements are described make it hard to believe that she is a searching figure. Flight, flight and more flight is what Florimell is all about - until she finally finds herself in the dungeon of Proteus (III viii 41).¹² Arthur's motives initially seem

¹² Compare Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses*, pp. 68-69. 121 on the relationship between Arthur and Proteus in *The Faerie Queene*: 'As an image of continuity, Arthur appears ... in canto viii of every book save Book III and thus initiates the redemptive movement of each book. In III, viii, we do not meet Arthur. Instead, here near the centre of the poem, the anarchic forces are most concentrated. Here we first meet the embodiment of illusion and travesty of substance, the False Florimell, and the very principle of deceptive flux, Proteus. Throughout, Arthur seeks the ennobling visionary core of experience, near the centre of the poem, vanity and mutable illusion are manifest. The dialectic - or what we call the dual impulse - goes on forever at the heart of epic ... This displacement of Arthur is surely no accident. is only one way Spenser

dubious, but there is little justification for jumping to conclusions with Florimell and likening him to a 'feend of hell'. John E. O'Connor arrives at a similar reading of this episode, which he then links to Arthur's interventions elsewhere in the poem:

One of the important aspects of grace brought out in the first two books of *The Faerie Queene* is that, in order to function effectively, those who are to be helped by grace must be disposed to receive its assistance ... The role played by grace in the third book differs ... because the person whom grace attempts to help, Florimell, flees from its assistance ... Arthur's ... bitter castigation of night, as the 'mother of annoyance sad, sister of heavy death and nurse of woe,' can be read as a diagnosis of Florimell's fearful attitude toward the natural risks of life.¹³

In contrast to the distressed damsels of medieval romance, Florimell does indeed seem to wilfully dismiss the possibility of rescue:

And though oft looking backward, well she vewd,
Her selfe freed from that foster insolent,
And that it was a knight, which now her sewd,
Yet she no lesse the knight feard, then that villein rude.

(III iv 50.6-9)

It is possible to read these lines as an undercutting of chivalric stereotypes: to Florimell there is no difference between the threat posed by a noble knight and a foul foster. However, Arthur's honourable intentions are reinforced by his conversation with the dwarf. His formal offer to champion Florimell (III v 11.6-9) recalls his encounters with Una (I vii 52) and Alma (II xi 16), and anticipates his later service to Belge (Vx 24).¹⁴ Within Book Three, the obviously threatening pursuit of Florimell in cantos seven and eight by the Witch's Son, Hyena, fisherman, and Proteus confirms that the Prince is less deserving of censure than he might at first appear.

underscores the centrality of these forces of dispersal and decay.'

¹³ O'Connor, p. 151. Similar interpretation of Florimell's fear are offered by Pamela J. Benson, 'Florimell at Sea: The Action of Grace in *The Faerie Queene*, Book III', *SS 6* (1985), p.85; Evans, p. 168; and Williams, *The World of Glass*, pp.113-114. Contrast Cavanagh, p.214: 'As Arthur approaches Florimell, the erotic nature of his quest comes into sharper focus - "Then gan he freshly pricke his fomy steed" (III. iv: 48.2) ... While Florimell's demonstrated powers of discernment do not always enable her to distinguish between worthy and suspect offers of assistance or sanctuary, here her refusal to tarry seems warranted, despite the narrator's assertions to the contrary.' Cavanagh's reading seems to me unconvincing because based upon only a few untypical lines of a drawn-out pursuit, itself only one adventure in a quest spanning the six books of *The Faerie Queene*. Roberts, p. 100 does not advance a positive or negative interpretation of Arthur's pursuit of Florimell, instead suggesting that the reader is encouraged to observe the masculine and feminine points of view from which the episode may be viewed.

¹⁴ For interpretations of Florimell as a symbol of what all knights should honour see Spens, p.84; and McCoy, p.139.

These shifts in the presentation of Arthur and Britomart in the opening cantos of Book Three can also be shown from their parallel laments in canto four.¹⁵ Arthur's complaint is preceded by a comment in which his attraction to Florimell is explained by her resemblance to Gloriana:

Oft did he wish, that Lady faire mote bee
His Faery Queene, for whom he did complaine:
Or that his Faerye Queene were such, as shee.

(III iv 54.6-8)¹⁶

Arthur's night of longing for Florimell, like his visionary encounter with Gloriana, forces him to consciously reconsider his motives. Gloriana has inspired his quest; Florimell now shows him how easy it is to lose patience or become deluded when pursuing an ideal.¹⁷ However, Arthur does not lose patience entirely or permanently.¹⁸ Admittedly, the potentially delusive aspect of dreams is evoked by the imagery used throughout his complaint to night, and summarised in the following lines:

In stead of sleepe thou sendest troublous feares,
And dreadfull visions, in the which aliue
The drearie image of sad death appeares:
So from the wearie spirit thou doest driue
Desired rest, and men of happinesse depriue.

(III iv 57.6-9)

¹⁵ On this subject see Wofford, 'Britomart's Petrarchan Lament: Allegory and narrative in *The Faerie Queene* III, iv', *Comparative Literature* 39 (1987), 28-57.

¹⁶ See Alpers, *The Poetry of the 'Faerie Queene'*, p. 395 for a similar reading. Teskey, p. 70 takes this point further: 'Although Arthur's thoughts at this point seem remote from his function in Spenser's plan, the passions he suffers during this night indicate his desire for glory ... The significance of Arthur's passion is set forth in the opening stanzas of the following canto: his apparently digressive pursuit of Florimell calls him forward on his "first poursuit" (v 2). And his tendency to admire ladies other than the one he is seeking ... is intended not to suggest waywardness but a nobility of character ... In Arthur, ethos and eros are one and the same.'

¹⁷ Ulreich, p. 370 compares the second dream of Milton's Adam: 'his waking consciousness at first fails to discover an immediate correlative of his vision.'

¹⁸ Contrast the uncompromising censure of Arthur by Gregerson, p. 134: 'Not even Prince Arthur is immune: his unceremonious capitulation to the universal chase scene brings him uncharacteristically close to burlesque when *in medias res* he clumsily tries to reconcile his intemperate pursuit through the forest with his professed constancy by "wishing" that the lady in flight might turn out to be the Faerie Queene to whom he has, he suddenly recalls, irreversibly dedicated his life (III iv 54). When Arthur loses Florimell to darkness, he falls into a night-long, railing funk, for Florimell has fled as desperately from the knights of Faeryland as from the rude "foster" whose antithesis they imagine themselves to be.' Similarly bleak readings of this stage of this episode are offered by Cavanagh, pp. 214-215 and Mueller, p. 763.

However, Arthur is talking in abstractions about what could but does not happen to him. Secure in the knowledge and experience of what it is like to be one with his beloved, Arthur resists the debilitating influence of the hours of darkness:

For day discouers all dishonest wayes,
 And sheweth each thing, as it is indeed:
 The prayes of high God he faire displayes,
 And his large bountie rightly doth areed.
 Dayes dearest children be the blessed seed,
 Which darknesse shall subdew, and heauen win:
 Truth is his daughter; he her first did breed,
 Most sacred virgin, without spot of sin.
 Our life is day, but death with darknesse doth begin.

(III iv 59)

Although the depiction of Arthur in the final stanza of canto four suggests that this particular night ends with disappointment - 'forth he went, / With heauie looke and lumpish pace' - this takes place 'ere the morrow' (III iv 61. 6-7, 3), and does not cancel the optimism of the stanza quoted above.¹⁹ From the earliest cantos of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser confidently presents light as a more powerful force than darkness - compare I i 36 and ii 1. Arthur's expression of confidence in day is more in keeping with the tone one would expect from an omniscient commentator than a love-sick knight: they could have come from the narrator, but not from Britomart. In a lover's complaint which parallels Arthur's at the beginning of the same canto, Britomart despairs of finding her beloved (III iv 8-10). Although she is roused by the appearance of Marinell into a display of martial prowess similar to that which overthrew Guyon, this not only brings her no closer to her visionary lover but also indicates that she lacks the patience which introduces a powerful note of optimism into Arthur's complaint.²⁰

¹⁹ Hume, p.108: 'Prince Arthur despite a temporary mood of frustration knows that the children of day will ultimately reach the heavenly kingdom (III. iv. 59), and in making this affirmation he echoes I Thessalonians 5.5.' On the significance of the scriptural allusiveness of Arthur's speech see also Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, pp. 77-78. Nohnberg, p. 38 argues that what seems like the nadir of Arthur's quest can be positively interpreted: 'The errant Arthur turns up in Book III, canto iv, as the most rhetorically benighted character in the entire poem, and at first this occurrence seems to contradict any guiding role. Nonetheless, Arthur's sensitivity to the onset of darkness can suggest his affinity for its opposite.'

²⁰ The need for patience in love is discussed in chapter five. Wofford, 'Britomart's Lament', p. 31 emphasises the similarity between the two complaints: 'The strong analogy between the situations of Arthur and Britomart, the direct echoing of their lines (compare 5.6 and 54.4), their framing positions at either end of the canto, and the differences between the mortal condition and that of the nymphs all serve to suggest a fundamental connection between the Petrarchan vision of life and the frustration implied in Arthur's lament.' On Britomart's encounter with Marinell see Berger, 'The Faerie Queene, Book III', pp. 106-107. Williams, *The World of Glass*, p. 115 does not acknowledge the note of optimism in Arthur's complaint: 'Love does not hold him long, for a spirit brave as his is roused to "the highest and the

Having defended the paradigmatic status of Arthur vis-a-vis Britomart at the beginning of Book Three, I will make one qualification before moving on to consider their meeting in Book Four - idealisation of Briton Prince and Briton Maid should not be regarded as incompatible. In so far as Britomart is both a type of Elizabeth and the representative of a virtue which cannot be recovered once lost, she can be described as the most exalted of Spenser's titular knights. However, like the other titular knights and in contrast to Arthur, Britomart undergoes a process of development. Whereas Arthur's appearances in each book of the poem demonstrate his status as an achieved ideal, Britomart's love-quest involves working towards union with Artegall. As the legend of Chastity proceeds it becomes increasingly clear that Spenser is dealing with the same kind of world as those to which Lancelot and Tristram, and later Orlando and Rinaldo and the Petrarchan soneteers, are driven by the sorrows of unrequited love.²¹ These analogues to Book Three suggest that it depicts a stage in the development of the perfect lover which Arthur must experience in order to function as an example for others to follow.²² However, the intimate bond established between the Prince and his visionary lady mean that the vicissitudes of human passion do not have the debilitating effect on him that they do on the protagonists of medieval and Italian Renaissance romance, the Petrarchan sonneteers, and, of course, Spenser's Britomart.

This distinction is confirmed by the presentation of Arthur and Britomart in Book Four. Book Four has no quest of its own, although the continuing quest of Britomart gives it some forward thrust. However, the ups of her quest in the legend of Friendship, notably her meeting with Artegall in canto six and the profession of love he makes to her, are balanced by corresponding downs. For example, the joy which follows her recognition of Artegall's courtship (IV vi 26, 41) gives place to despondency when he leaves her to pursue his own quest (IV vi 42-46.4). By contrast, Arthur's status as a paradigm of chivalry is

worthiest" rather than to "sensuall desire". but he has been drawn away for a while from his first pursuit, and ... he takes horse again after a grumpy night outdoors, unvisited this time by Gloriana'.

²¹ For the symbolic significance of the forest in medieval romance and Petrarchan poetry see Arthos, pp.73-74. Compare the allegorical interpretation of the forest setting offered by Hankins, p. 72: 'In so far as the body obeys, protects, and nourishes the soul, it is a castle. In so far as its weakness clogs, annoys, and imperils the soul, it is a forest. The beasts which inhabit the forest are themselves passions of the soul; the body provides the setting, but the warfare is within the soul.'

²² For discussion of the comparative humanity of Arthur in Book Three see Berger, 'The Faerie Queene, Book III', p. 89; Evans, p. 13; Pindell, pp. 166-167; and Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, pp. 72-73.

more clearly demonstrated in Book Four than in its predecessor; his ambiguous entrance into the legend of Chastity being replaced by an intervention on the pattern of Books One and Two. The next section of this chapter concentrates on Arthur's involvement with Britomart, although my conclusions respecting the Corflambo episode in chapter eight should be borne in mind in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of his role in the legend of Friendship.

When Britomart and Arthur meet for the first time since canto one of Book Three in the ninth canto of Book Four, a very different set of circumstances are presented. The Prince interferes on behalf of Britomart as she is assailed by four powerful adversaries:

Whom when the Briton Prince a farre beheld
 With ods of so vnequall match opprest,
 His mighty heart with indignation sweld,
 And inward grudge fild his heroicke brest:
 Eftsoones him selfe he to their aide addrest,
 And thrusting fierce into the thickest preace,
 Diuided them, how euer loth to rest,
 And would them faine from battell to surceasse,
 With gentle words perswading them to friendly peace.

(IV ix 32)

At the level of literal narrative, Arthur is clearly presented as an invincible knight-rescuer. However, the scene fits into the allegory of Friendship because no losers result from his intervention. Normally in Arthurian literature when the top knight enters the thickest press disaster ensues for the other combatants. Here, for example, is Malory's Lancelot:

Than sir Launcelot and sir Lavayne cam in at the thyckyst of the prees, and there sir Launcelot smote downe sir Brandeles, sir Sagramour, sir Dodynas, sir Kay, sir Gryfflet, and all thys he ded with one speare.²³

The motif of the best-knight-in-the-world overcoming all-comers is used in a similar way in Spenser's account of Satyrane's tournament; but in a manner which brings little contentment to the successively victorious knights, Artegall and Britomart (IV iv 39-44). In canto nine, Arthur's prowess is celebrated, but the competitive spirit which disrupts the earlier assembly is replaced by a different objective - reconciliation of the six knights.²⁴

²³ Malory, p. 625.

²⁴ Heiatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton*, p. 111 links Arthur's role in this episode to the celebration of 'wished freedom' (IV x 57), 'one of the great themes of Books III and IV'. See also Parker, *Allegory*, p. 198: 'Theirs ... is the fury of the weak; neither of the virtues is in any real danger, and when Arthur arrives and intervenes it is not to rescue, but first to impose peace by force, and then to reconcile the parties by

Camaraderie of the sort one finds amongst the Canterbury pilgrims in their more amicable moments prevails as erstwhile foes join together in encouraging Scudamour to recount his tale (IV ix 40-41). The emotional warmth of the scene which follows Arthur's successful intervention suggests that the ideal he represents is one which could be shared by those he has reconciled.

As an agent of reconciliation, Arthur's actions in this episode recall his first encounter with Britomart in Book Three. However, more active participation is required from the Prince when they meet again. Britomart is unable to pacify Claribell, Blandamour, Paridell and Druon:

Full oftentimes did *Britomart* assay
 To speake to them, and some emparlance moue;
 But they for nought their cruell hands would stay,
 Ne lend an eare to ought, that might behoue,
 As when an eager mastiffe once doth proue
 The tast of bloud of some engored beast,
 No words may rate, nor rigour him remoue
 From greedy hold of that his blouddy feast:
 So litle did they hearken to her sweet beheast.

(IV ix 31)

'Sweet beheast' emphasises the maid rather than the martial side of Britomart; and, however appealing, this quality is useless in such circumstances. Only the prowess of Arthur 'stints their strife' (IV ix Argument), and even for the Prince the task is far from easy (IV ix 32-35).²⁵ Spenser here draws on the common medieval romance formula in which two knights engage in the same action with different degrees of success. The failure of Britomart and success of Arthur in this episode may be compared to the different fortunes of Calogrenant and Yvain in the adventure of the fountain at the beginning of Chretien de Troyes' *Yvain*.

Considered allegorically, the actions of Arthur and Britomart in Book Four confirm the implications of their complaints in canto four of Book Three: the lady-knight is embroiled in the complexities of earthly love which Arthur transcends. Thomas P. Roche

persuasion.'

²⁵ Compare Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, p. 32 on the limitations of Britomart and Scudamour: 'The fact that both mediators require Arthur's help symbolizes the need for a twofold grace in the attainment of sexual harmony: an idea that is further developed in his subsequent reproof of the immoderate knights.'

links these two episodes, suggesting that the latter marks a development of the relationship between Arthur and Britomart:

Her parallelism to Arthur, reinforced by their parallel laments at the beginning and end of Book III, canto 4, made it unnecessary for Arthur to have an active part in aiding the virtue of Book III, and this is why he makes his usual rescue only in the latter stages of Book IV.²⁶

I agree that the episodes can be profitably compared, but Arthur's paradigmatic status can be demonstrated from Book Three as much as Book Four. What changes is its context: in Book Three Arthur is advantaged because he has known and is inspired by an intimate meeting with his beloved; in Book Four he is successful in promoting friendship. Britomart's continuing vulnerability in Book Four is indicated by her relationship with Scudamour, who shares her need for rescue when Arthur arrives on the scene of their quests:

And yet (quoth she) a greater wrong remaines:
 For I thereby my former loue haue lost,
 Whom seeking euer since with endlesse paines,
 Hath me much sorrow and much trauell cost;
 Ay me to see that gentle maide so tost.
 But *Scudamour* then sighing deepe, thus saide,
 Certes her losse ought me to sorrow most,
 Whose right she is, where euer she be straide,
 Through many perils wonne, and many fortunes waide.

(IV ix 38)

Scudamour claims his plight is worse than that of Britomart - and as he has known the presence of his lost wife one can sympathise - but the placing of their essentially similar complaints in one stanza produces an effect not unlike the duet of Hermia and Lysander at the beginning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (I i 128ff). Allegorically, this situation suggests that at this point in her quest there is a good deal of Scudamour in Britomart. The four knights who attack Britomart and Scudamour represent the turbulence which afflicts those experiencing human passion, as A.C. Hamilton's gloss to stanzas 21-27 suggests:

Druon rejects love through constancy to single life; **Claribell** loves excessively; **Blandamour** loves excessively but inconstantly; **Paridell** rejects love through inconstant lust. At the beginning, the first and second pairs are opposed in a battle of constancy against inconstancy. Then the two who reject love fight those who accept it.²⁷

It is her performance at Satyrane's tournament which causes Druon, Claribell, Paridell and Blandamour to assail Britomart (IV ix 28,36). Defeated by Britomart only to attack her again, the four knights highlight the emotional vulnerability caused by love even for the titular knight of Chastity. Only Arthur, who played no part in this social debacle, has the detachment required to effect a resolution.²⁸

There is no clearly marked end to Arthur's role in Book Four. He is last seen rebuking Britomart's adversaries (IV ix 37) rather than handing over Amoret to Scudamour and riding off in search of further adventures. It could be argued that failure to reunite Amoret with her husband undermines Arthur's earlier rescue of her from Lust and Sclaunder.²⁹ A further ambiguity concerns the lack of interest Arthur shows in Britomart after rescuing her: as in their first meeting at the beginning of Book Three, Arthur and Britomart do not address each other directly.³⁰ These loose ends are not particularly satisfactory, but the explanation lies in the nature and construction of the legend of Friendship, as James Nohrnberg notes:

Stories in Book IV define themselves as unfinished, continuing, long to tell, needing to be perfected or retold. And characters define themselves as having a story that wants relating, as they want or need friends or relations.³¹

The divergent narratives of Book Four, balanced by the friendship exempla (IV ii-iii, viii-ix) and the pageant of rivers (IV xi) allow the legend of Friendship to be seen as an orchestrated version of medieval polyphonic narrative.³² Nevertheless as far as the

²⁷ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Hamilton, p. 403.

²⁸ Contrast McCoy, p. 140, where the limited success of Arthur's intervention is explained by the need for a retrial after the bogus conclusion of Satyrane's tournament. I would argue that this reflects badly on the competitive world of the tournament rather than on the status of Arthur. On the quarrel between the six knights in this episode see also Hankins, p.32: 'These impulses may all exist together in a man's soul ... and may cause an emotional disturbance as he argues with himself now from one point of view, now from another. He can best compose his conflicting emotions through prayer and an appeal to heavenly grace, for it is Arthur who finally settles the confused quarrel of these six combatants.'

²⁹ Heatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton*, p. 85 speculates that had Scudamour and Amoret been reunited, Arthur and Britomart would have achieved the quest of Friendship, although their success would seem qualified by their continued separation from their own lovers. Heatt's comparison is not entirely fair as the physical absence of Gloriana does not mean for Arthur what separation from Artegall means for Britomart.

³⁰ Mark Heberle, 'The Limitations of Friendship', *SS* 8 (1987), p.108 makes this point of the later meeting but does not compare it to their initial encounter.

³¹ Nohrnberg, 'The Faerie Queene, Book IV', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 274. For a full-length study of the fluid sturcture of Book Four see Jonathan Goldberg's *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse*.

narratives concerning the main protagonists are concerned, loose ends definitely prevail. In such a context, the ambiguity with which Arthur's intervention in Book Four concludes does not amount to a culpable omission on his part, or even a sign of his limitations. When compared to his other appearances in the poem, Arthur's actions in Book Four reinforce the distinction between his perfection from the development of those, like Britomart and Scudamour, who not only illustrate progress, but also the *need* for progress to be made.

Structural clarity is a hall-mark of Book Five, and Arthur is presented in his characteristic poise as knight-rescuer *par excellence* from his entry in canto eight until his departure half-way through canto eleven. However, as in Book Three the titular knight is not rescued by the Prince. Like Red Crosse, Artegall finds himself a prisoner, but it is Britomart rather than Arthur who rescues him. Britomart's role in the legend of Justice is important, and has provoked much discussion amongst Spenser scholars. In her recent study of Spenser and Milton, Linda Gregerson writes:

Book V, which is nominally Artegall's, invests Britomart with the role of exemplary knighthood while consigning its ostensible hero to imprisonment and emasculating disguise, a reversal whose disruptive capacities considerably overshadow the patterns of surrogacy elsewhere established by Prince Arthur.³³

This credits Britomart with an invincibility she does not really possess, particularly in Book Five. Although she rescues Artegall from Radigund, both in the Isis Church episode and in the wake of her victory over the Amazon queen Britomart is a sympathetic but vulnerable figure.³⁴ By contrast, Arthur's transcendence over the knight of Justice is reflected both in their joint and separate adventures. However, like his initial meeting with Britomart in Book Three, Arthur's entrance into Book Five on first impressions seems to qualify his exemplary status.

³² Marvin Glasser, 'Spenser as Mannerist Poet: The "Antique Image" in Book IV of *The Faerie Queene*', *SEL* 31 (1991), pp. 37-38 compares the fluid structure of Book Four to the Mannerist paintings of Parmigiano, Rosso and El Greco, commenting specifically on Arthur's role: 'The poem is an anatomy of a psyche characterized by quantum shifts of energy, but there is also the sense of a finite entity, a Prince Arthur, fixed in a circular pattern like the Moses in Rosso's painting ['Moses and the daughters of Jethro'] who is circumscribed by figures in a variety of poses who function as frame and complement.'

³³ Gregerson, p. 38.

³⁴ For the limitations of Britomart in the context of Book Five see my discussion of the Isis episode in chapter five.

The effect of the romance landscape presented at the beginning of Book Three is achieved in Book Five by the introduction of Arthur as an anonymous knight-errant, 'another Knight' (V viii 5.1). His splendid armour is not, as in Books One, Two and Four, specified as a sign of his identity and transcendence over the titular knight. Arthur's defeat of one of Samient's opponents (V viii 4-6) is described after and in less detail than Artegall's victory over the other (V viii 6.8-8.4). Even when he is named (V viii 12.6) Arthur's conduct is not particularly distinguished. He is compromised by the hastiness with which he attacks Artegall, mistaking him for Samient's adversary: 'without discretion /He at him ran, with ready speare in rest' (V viii 9.2-3). Such combat scenes are not uncommon in medieval romance, and do not normally reflect badly on those involved. However, rashness is not a characteristic the reader associates with Spenser's Arthur: in the battles of the first two books he tempers heroism with caution (I viii 7; II viii 35,47-48, xi 24); in Book Three he calms the wrath of Guyon (III i 11); in Book Four his defeat of Corflambo depends as much on cunning manoeuvres as upon physical strength (IV viii 45-46, ix 4-5), and he uses words before action in attempting to reconcile Britomart and Scudamour to their adversaries.

As at the beginning of Book Three, Arthur's prestige is only temporarily threatened by his involvement with Artegall. The mutual recognition which brings their combat to a peaceful conclusion serves as a reminder that the Prince is *not* merely 'another Knight':

... when they saw their foes dead out of doubt,
Eftsoones they gan their wrothfull hands to hold,
And Ventales reare, each other to behold.
Tho when as *Artegall* did *Arthure* vew,
So faire a creature, and so wondrous bold,
He much admired both his heart and hew,
And touched with intire affection, nigh him drew.

(V viii 12.3-9)

There is no 'Artegall' in Malory's version of the Arthurian legend, or in the Vulgate romances upon which he drew for much of his material. However, combats in which unknown adversaries turn out to be friends are not unusual. For example, the meeting and subsequent adventures of Arthur and Artegall can be regarded as an optimistic version of the motif around which Malory's tale of the ill-fated brothers Balin and Balan is

constructed.³⁵ The positive mood of this scene can be further explained by reference to the Arthurian chronicle tradition:

In thys tyme also I find mencion made of a noble and valiaunt man called Arthegall, and he was the first Erle of Warwike, and he was one of the knights of the Round Table of King Arthure ...³⁶

In *The Faerie Queene* itself, Arthur and Artegall are brothers-in-arms in more than the professional sense of the term. Merlin's chronicle describes Artegall as the son of Gorlois (III iii 27), which makes him half-brother to Arthur. Arthur may not actually rescue Artegall, but the imagery suggests that their meeting is a fortunate event. Ignorance of their relationship adds to the emotive impact of their partnership.

The alliance between Arthur and Artegall is reminiscent of those involving the Prince and Red Crosse, Guyon and Britomart (I ix 1, 18-19; III i 12-13); and also recalls the first meeting of Britomart and Artegall (IV vi 26). However, Artegall and Britomart enjoy only a brief time together, and their separation leaves Britomart disconsolate and Artegall to pursue an onerous quest in which there is no place for Britomart (V vii 43-45). Artegall's meeting with Arthur is a more optimistic recapitulation of his encounter with Britomart because it is followed up by a successful joint campaign against the Souldan.³⁷ Although Britomart secures the release of Artegall from Radigund, it is after meeting the Prince and in his company that Artegall's quest resumes its momentum. Like Arthur, Artegall is a Briton who reaches maturity in Faeryland (III iii 26).³⁸ Moreover the nature of Artegall's virtue is such that his quest parallels Arthur's role as knight-rescuer throughout the poem. However, like Britomart and in contrast to Arthur, the titular representative of Justice undergoes a process of development. The partnership of Arthur and Artegall is a stage in the progress of the knight of Justice, but a demonstration of achieved virtue from the Prince.³⁹

³⁵ Malory, pp. 37-59. A further Malorian analogue is the reunion of Arthur and Accolon, p. 88.

³⁶ Grafton quoted by MacLachlan, *The Figure of Arthur*, p.648. For the association of Arthur and Artegall in the chronicles see also Fichter, p. 176; Greenlaw, 'Spenser's Fairy Mythology', p. 119; Carrie A. Harper, *The Sources of the British Chronicle History in Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'* (Philadelphia, 1910), p.144 ; Rathborne, p. 229. Heatt, 'The Passing of Arthur', p.180 argues that Spenser's use of chronicle material in this scene looks forward to their subsequent adventures in Book Five: 'In epic etiquette ... Spenser seems to have found it convenient to assign the ultimately fated struggle on native soil to a double of Arthur created for this purpose.'

³⁷ See Anderson, 'Artegall' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 64. and in *The Growth of a Personal Voice*, pp. 167-173. See also Mikics, p. 115.

³⁸ Horton, p. 27

Although Arthur and Artegall campaign together against the Souldan, suggesting that they are indeed 'equals', close examination of this episode confirms the supremacy of the Prince. Arthur and Artegall work towards the same goal, but play different parts in the enterprise:

... *sir Artegall*

Him clad in th'armour of a Pagan Knight
 And taking with him, as his vanquisht thrall,
 That Damzell, led her to the Souldans right.
 Where soone as his proud wife of her had sight,
 Forth of her window as she looking lay,
 She weened streight, it was her Paynim Knight,
 Which brought that Damzell, as his purchast pray;
 And sent to him a Page, that mote direct his way.

Who bringing them to their appointed place,
 Offred his seruice to disarm the Knight;
 But he refusing him to let vnlace,
 For doubt to be discouered by his sight,
 Kept himselfe still in his straunge armour dight.
 Soone after whom the Prince arriued there,
 And sending to the Souldan in despight
 A bold defyance, did of him requere
 That Damzell, whom he held as wrongfull prisonere.

(V viii 26-27)

The chivalric imagery used in these stanzas clearly exalts Arthur, whose honour is encapsulated in his challenge to the Souldan. Artegall's actions are important and take far longer to describe; but he is more like Arthur's squire than the fellow-knight of their initial rescue of Samient. Their entrance into the Souldan's Castle reinforces this distinction:

Then caused he [Artegall] the gates be opened wyde,
 And there the Prince, as victour of that day,
 With tryumph entertayn'd and glorifyde,
 Presenting him with all the rich array,
 And roiall pompe, which there long hidden lay,
 Purchast through lawlesse powre and tortious wrong
 Of that proud Souldan, whom he earst did slay.

(V viii 51.1-7)

³⁹ Giamatti, *Play of Double Senses*, p. 102: 'In recognizing Arthur and his splendid qualities ... Artegall spontaneously draws Arthur to him and becomes, in effect, what his name implies: Arthur's equal. By this revelation, Britomart's vision of a strong but tempered lover ... begins to assume reality. The more Artegall resembles Arthur, the more he approaches the reality of Britomart's ideal.'

Once again, Artegall contributes to the glorification of Arthur, but not in a manner which exalts the knight of Justice himself. This difference between Arthur as an idealised chivalric figure and Artegall as one who attends to more mundane matters hints at a point which becomes much clearer in their separate adventures in the final cantos of Book Five: Artegall can aspire to the ideal Arthur represents, but in practice his power to make right from wrong is limited.⁴⁰

Before turning to the final adventures of Arthur and Artegall in Book Five, the immediate sequel to their rescue of Samient remains to be considered. Samient conducts Prince and knight to the palace of her lady, Mercilla. Here, Arthur's pre-eminence is not only reiterated, but can be linked to his relationship with Gloriana. Samient introduces Mercilla as a fairly typical high-born romance lady:

... Then wote ye well, that I
Doe serue a Queene, that not far hence doth wone,
A Princesse of great powre and maiestie,
Famous through all the world, and honor'd far and nie...

Mongst many which maligne her happy state,
There is a mighty man, which wonnes here by
That with most fell despight and deadly hate,
Seekes to subuert her Crowne and dignity,
And all his powre doth thereunto apply:
And her good Knights, of which so braue a band
Serues her, as any Princesse vnder sky,
He either spoiles, if they against him stand,
Or to his part allures, and bribeth vnder hand.

(V viii 16.6-9, 18)

However, when directly presented Mercilla is firmly located in the moral and historical allegory of Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*. A lengthy quotation is necessary to convey the full iconographical power of the description:

... that gracious Queene:
Who sate on high, that she might all men see,

⁴⁰ Contrast the interpretation of the Souldan episode offered by Dunsheath, p. 196: 'Opposed by Arthur, the barbarous tyrant falls prey to his own barbarity. Thwarted of her felonious desires by Artegall, Adicia rushes madly into the "salvage woods" where she dwells among wild beasts, her fit companions. Although from this denouement, it appears at first sight that Arthur has had the greater success, in essence, however, each has achieved what it was possible for him to achieve. An individual tyrant may be completely crushed; but in the world of *The Faerie Queene* the principle of injustice will never be completely absent, no matter how far it is exiled from the company of men.' It is surely significant that it is Artegall rather than Arthur who is most closely associated with the constraints of contingency?

And might of all men royally be seene,
Vpon a throne of gold full bright and sheene ...

All ouer her a cloth of state was spred,
Not of rich tisew, nor of cloth of gold,
Nor of ought else, that may be richest red,
But like a cloud, as likest may be told,
That her brode spreading wings did wyde vnfold;
Whose skirts were bordred with bright sunny beams,
Glistring like gold, amongst the plights enrold,
And here and there shooting forth siluer streames,
Mongst which crept litle Angels through the glittering gleames.

Seemed those litle Angels did vphold
The cloth of state, and on their purpled wings
Did beare the pendants, through their nimblesse bold:
Besides a thousand more of such, as sings
Hymnes to high God, and carols heauenly things,
Encompassed the throne, on which she sate:
She Angel-like, the heyre of ancient kings
And mightie Conquerors, in royall state,
Whylest kings and kesars at her feet did them prostrate.

Thus she did sit in souerayne Maiestie,
Holding a Sceptre in her royall hand,
The sacred pledge of peace and clemencie,
With which high God had blest her happie land,
Maugre so many foes, which did withstand.
But at her feet her sword was likewise layde,
Whose long rest rusted the bright steely brand;
Yet when as foes enforst, or friends sought ayde,
She could it sternely draw, that all the world dismayde.

(V ix 27-30)⁴¹

As in the Alma episode of Book Two, the presentation of an Elizabeth avatar reinforces the pre-eminence of Arthur vis-a-vis the titular knight he accompanies. Indeed as Mercilla is a queen, the distinction is all the more marked in the later episode. During the trial of Duessa, Arthur is like Mercilla in pitying while he judges:

The Briton Prince was sore empassionate,
And woxe inclined much vnto her part,
Through the sad terror of so dreadfull fate,

⁴¹ Hume, pp. 136-137 emphasises the visionary aspect of the episode: 'Everywhere light streams out, and "litle Angels" (cherubim) uphold and encompass the throne, unmistakably indicating to Arthur, Artegall and the reader that the queen is God's representative on earth. The episode as a whole both provides necessary information about justice and equity, and for a moment offers a numinous experience.' I would argue that the impressiveness of the scene is iconic rather than visionary, an icon being a stable artifact while a vision involves a temporary experience of otherworldly power.

And wretched ruine of so high estate.

...she, whose Princely breast was touched nere
 With piteous ruth of her so wretched plight...
 Yet would not let iust vengeance on her light;
 But rather let in stead thereof to fall
 Few perling drops from her faire lampes of light;
 The which she couering with her purple pall
 Would haue the passion hid, and vp arose withall.

(V ix 46.2-5, 50.1-2, 5-9)

The knight of Justice is more severe:

But *Artegall* with constant firme intent,
 For zeale of Iustice was against her bent.

(V ix 49.4-5)

Artegall's rigorous approach is not surprising given the consequences of his pity for Radigund. In itself, his attitude is commendable enough. James E. Phillips explains the trial of Duessa by arguing that for the Elizabethans, cruelty to the bad meant mercy to the good.⁴² The trial ends when Arthur and Mercilla share and act upon Artégall's point of view.⁴³ Thomas K. Dunsheath writes of this scene:

Spenser is employing nice irony, literal poetic justice, when he has Arthur, who was the instrument of Duessa's first discomfiting, ascent to her final condemnation.⁴⁴

What is important is that Arthur's close identification with Mercilla reflects his status as the *beloved* of Gloriana. This is cast into relief by the presentation of Artégall as a loyal *servant*; so loyal in fact that he twice leaves Britomart disconsolate in order to do his duty by his queen (IV vi 42; V vii 43-45). In the palace of Mercilla, although both Arthur and Artégall are welcomed and praised (V ix 37), by the end of the episode the knight of Justice fades into the background and it is Arthur who acts as knight-rescuer at Mercilla's behest.

⁴² James E. Phillips, 'Renaissance Concepts of Justice and the Structure of the *Faerie Queene* V', *HLQ* 33 (1970), pp.114-117.

⁴³ Gregerson, p. 105 regards the trial as part of Arthur's education: 'At first, Arthur follows Duessa's trial as one might follow the evening soaps, empathetically. He is made to do so and then made to do "better" so that Spenser's audience might learn to think on a civic scale, might learn to distinguish mercy from failures of judgment.' Compare Fletcher, p. 167 and Horton, p.117. Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, pp.366-367 sees the Mercilla episode as the sequel to Arthur's encounter with history in canto ten of Book Two: 'The history lesson Arthur read under Eumnestes is replaced by a contemporary example ... the changing of Arthur's mind is the point of the trial.'

⁴⁴ Dunsheath, p. 6. I discuss what Dunsheath rather euphemistically describes as the 'first discomfiting' of Duessa in chapter eight.

When Belge seeks a champion from Mercilla, only Arthur offers his services:

Who when he none of all those knights did see
 Hastily bent, that enterprise to heare,
 Nor vndertake the same, for cowheard feare,
 He stepped forth with courage bold and great,
 Admyr'd of all the rest in presence there,
 And humbly gan that mightie Queene entreat,
 To graunt him that aduventure for his former feat.

(V x 15.3-9)

In romances as different as Chretien de Troyes' *Yvain* and the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal*, quests have plenty of candidates, even if only one is worthy. The singularity of Spenser's Arthur offering to champion Belge is of a different order, more comparable to Milton's Christ offering to redeem fallen mankind:

... all the heavenly choir stood mute,
 And silence was in heaven: on man's behalf
 Patron or intercessor none appeared -
 Much less that durst upon his own head draw
 The deadly forfeiture and ransom set.
 And now without redemption all mankind
 Must have been lost, adjudged to death and hell
 By doom severe, had not the Son of God,
 In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,
 His dearest meditation thus renewed...
 ... I for his sake will leave
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
 Freely put off ...

(*Paradise Lost* III: 217ff)

Mercilla's court is not Heaven; but angels attend the Queen. Belge is not guilty of mortal sin, but her society is, to borrow the terminology of Sidney's *Apologie for Poesie*, one of the least golden parts of Spenser's Faery Land. Arthur is not Christ; but his powers as a rescuer figure are linked to his bond with a transcendent figure.⁴⁵

It is reading between the lines, and perhaps exaggerating, to suggest that Artegall is implicated in the 'cowheard feare' of the assembled gathering. Dunsheath minimises Artegall's limitations in his explanation:

⁴⁵ Anderson, *The Growth of a Personal Voice*, p. 170 discusses the Christ-like qualities of Arthur in Book Five as a stage in his development. I see them as a sign of the perfection he attains during his encounter with Gloriana before any of his adventures in the present-tense narratives of the poem.

Since Artegall cannot rescue Irena (the object of his long search) and Belge without risking the possibility that one would succumb while the other was being saved, Arthur volunteers to champion the cause of the lady Belgae.⁴⁶

This is not an unreasonable reading, but no excuse of the sort made for Calidore when he becomes diverted from his pursuit of the Blatant Beast is made (VI x 1-3). Instead, Artegall's conversation with Sergis has exactly the opposite effect (V xi 39-41). By contrast, although Arthur's adventures do not bring him any closer to Gloriana, as the beloved of the Faerie Queene any good deed performed in Faery Land is part of his quest. Even Arthur's pursuit of Florimell is ultimately not to be seen as a distraction from his quest.

It is Arthur's status as an achieved ideal that enables him to champion Belge effectively. The parallels between the Geryoneo and Grantorto episodes (V x 18- xi 35; xi 36-xii) are striking; hence I have reserved Arthur's giant-killing prowess in Book Five for this chapter rather than including it with my analysis of his treatment of Orgoglio and Corflambo. Both Geryoneo and Grantorto are grotesque in appearance, and display pride and rage when confronted by a noble adversary. Arthur and Artegall each conquer in stages, first defeating the servants of the giants and generally displaying caution in their tactics. However, more than heroism is required for the successful demonstration of virtue in the harsh political world of the legend of Justice. Arthur consolidates his chivalric victory by reforming the government of Belge's land:

There he with *Belge* did a while remaine,
 Making great feast and ioyous merriment,
 Vntill he had her settled in her raine,
 With safe assuraunce and establishment.

(V xi 35.1-4)

Artegall begins to follow up his success as a knight in a similar way, but is prevented from completely reforming Irena's dominions:

During which time, that he did there remaine,
 His studie was true Iustice how to deale,
 And day and night employ'd his busie paine
 How to reforme that ragged common-weale...

⁴⁶ Dunsheath, p. 190.

But ere he could reforme it thoroughly,
 He through occasion called was away,
 To Faerie Court, that of necessity
 His course of Iustice he was forst to stay,
 And *Talus* to reuoke from the right way,
 In which he was that Realme for to redresse.
 But enuies cloud still dimmeth vertues ray.
 So hauing freed *Irena* from distresse,
 He tooke his leaue of her, there left in heauinesse.

(V xii 26.1-4,27)

These 'epilogues' to the giant-killing adventures of Arthur and Artegall demonstrate that the knight of Justice is very far from being Arthur's equal.⁴⁷ Structurally, the separate adventures of Arthur and Artegall in the concluding cantos of Book Five recall the final episodes of Book Two. The different degrees of success achieved by Prince and knight are more marked in the legend of Justice, but this reflects the more pessimistic outlook which pervades Book Five rather than any change in Arthur.

Arthur's continuing status as a paradigm of chivalry is shown not only through his victory over Grantorto, but also through its effect on Belge herself. Her initial pessimism could hardly be more extreme:

Ay me (sayd she) and whether shall I goe ?
 Are not all places full of forraine powres ?
 My pallaces possessed of my foe,
 My cities sackt, and their sky-threating towres
 Raced, and made smooth fields now full of flowres ?
 Onely these marishes, and myrie bogs,
 In which the fearefull ewftes do build their bowres,
 Yeeld me an hostry mongst the croking frogs,
 And harbour here in safety from those rauenous dogs.

(V x 23)

Judith H. Anderson sees the presentation of Belge as a sign of the desperate plight of the world of Book Five: 'Old, hiding among "marishes, and myrie bogs," with "fearefull ewftes ... mongst the croking frogs," suggests anything but the typical Faerie damsel in distress.'

⁴⁷ In assessing the end of the legend of Justice I take issue with O'Connor, p. 155: 'The equality of strength and effectiveness earlier established between grace and justice is maintained to the end of Book V. Arthur's restoration of Belge to her rightful position was accomplished without the help of Artegall, just as Artegall's assistance to Sir Burbon and his victory over Grantorto are accomplished without Arthur's help.' O'Connor passes straight on to his interpretation of Arthur in Book Six, without considering the aftermaths of his and Artegall's chivalric triumphs.

⁴⁸ These sentiments echo the disillusionment which dominates the mood of Spenser's early vision poetry. Belge *can* be positively compared to the figure of Verlame in *The Ruins of Time*, who also laments the fate of a city. Imagery of decay appropriately describes the ruined cities, but also encapsulates the disillusionment common to Spenser's early vision poetry and Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*. However, in the latter the effect also casts into relief the positive imagery used to describe the change in Belge's fortunes following Arthur's intervention. Belge's despair gives way to her joyful reception of the victorious Arthur:

Whom when she saw so ioyously come forth,
She gan reioyce, and shew triumphant chere,
Lauding and praying his renowned worth,
By all the names that honorable were...

Then all the people, which beheld that day,
Gan shout aloud, that vnto heauen it rong;
And all the damzels of that towne in ray,
Came dauncing forth, and ioyous carrols song:
So him they led through all their streetes along,
Crowned with girlonds of immortall baies,
And all the vulgar did about them throng,
To see the man, whose euerlasting praise
They all were bound to all posterities to raise.

(V xi 33.1-4, 35)⁴⁹

An interesting comparison can be drawn between these lines and the imagery of one of Spenser's shorter poems which could hardly be further in tone from *The Ruins of Time*. Although an entirely different situation is celebrated in *Epithalamion* - a wedding rather than a military triumph - public acclamation of an exceptional individual creates a similar mood of stately optimism. It is a commonplace of criticism of Book Five that the romance milieu of the poem is drastically altered by the prominence of topical allusions. Belge and Irena are Belgium and Ireland first, romance damsels second. However, Arthur remains an exemplary figure in this setting. If anything his stature is magnified as the milieu in which he intervenes becomes less and less romantic.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Anderson, "'Nor Man It Is": The Knight of Justice in *The Faerie Queene V*, *PMLA* 85 (1970), p.73.

⁴⁹ For historical background see Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1984), pp. 47-48: 'What spread across Europe was the notion of the entry as a triumph in terms of the monarch as hero, reflecting exactly the change in political climate as the nation states of early modern Europe developed their identity by focussing a people's loyalty on the cult of a dynasty.' Spenser's incorporation of such an entry into his poem underlines the supremacy of Arthur.

⁵⁰ For readings of Arthur's success as an expression of Elizabethan wish-fulfilment see Allan

The service Arthur performs on behalf of Mercilla exemplifies the implications of his earlier interventions in the poem; namely that his visionary encounter with the Faerie Queene enables him to bring the benign influence of her transcendence into the fallen world of the poem. Far from being Arthur's equal, Artegall - like the protagonist in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* - is very much a servant both in the types of actions he performs, and in requiring reward. Failure to gratify this last characteristic gives Book Five its bitter after-taste.⁵¹ The image of Artegall beleaguered by Envy, Detraction and the Blatant Beast, suggests that far from being triumphant in his quest, he could do with assistance:

These two now had themselues combynd in one,
 And linckt together gainst Sir *Artegall*,
 For whom they wayted as his mortall fone,
 How they might make him into mischiefe fall,
 For freeing from their snares *Irena* thrall,
 Besides vnto themselues they gotten had
 A monster, which the *Blatant beast* men call,
 A dreadfull feend of gods and men ydrad,
 Whom they by slights allur'd, and to their purpose lad.

(V xii 37)

Arthur does perform such a rescue in Book Six when he meets Timias fighting Defetto, Decetto and Despetto (VI v 20-22). However, in the context of Artegall's quest, force is not the real answer to the vice of slander the monster represents, as Artegall's restraint of Talus acknowledges. The real cause of Artegall's failure to complete his quest is the recall issued by Gloriana, and Arthur of course could do nothing to change this edict. The class of mythical heroes with which Arthur has affinities can inspire, but not become permanently established in the present: one might compare the Arthur of *Culhwch and Olwen*, although with the necessary qualification that he is an older figure, reverent as well as impressive.⁵²

H. Gilbert, 'Belphoebe's Misdemeaning of Timias', *PMLA* 62 (1947), p. 64; and Viola Blackburn Hulbert, 'The Belge episode in *The Faerie Queene*', *SP* 36 (1939) pp. 145-146; Parker, *Allegory*, p. 217.

⁵¹ Mueller, p. 764 fails to fully appreciate the contrast between the concluding images of Arthur and Artegall in Book Five, arguing that Arthur too is a dissatisfied figure: 'The triumph of his actions in book 5, which allude to the campaigns in Belgium which took Leicester and others away from Elizabeth's side, leaves Arthur in the same state of frustrated longing in which he entered the poem in book one.' My view of Arthur's exit from Book Five is closer to Parker, *Allegory*, p. 223: 'Arthur, ever triumphant, can never rest, the soul, even perfected, must always go forward in this world. Gloriana's knights, who have come from Cleopolis, could presumably have instructed Arthur, their benefactor, how to reach it. But Cleopolis still has its character of an enchanted dwelling, the stranger cannot enter it, or even find it, except at the appointed time. Arthur, therefore, goes his way.' In chapter ten I develop a more optimistic version of this interpretation by arguing that Arthur is not compromised by failing to reach Cleopolis because he has become part of the ideal its queen represents.

⁵² Compare Anderson, *The Growth of a Personal Voice*, p. 171 on Arthur as a mythical figure in the

However, although the legend of Justice concludes with an inauspicious image of its protagonist, Artegall's alliance with Arthur suggests that the ideal of chivalry and virtue the latter represents can reasonably be aspired to by the more vulnerable protagonists of Spenser's Faery Land.

specific context of Book Five of *The Faerie Queene*: 'Arthur, rather than Artegall, undergoes the kind of apotheosis Book V earlier described in connection with Osiris (vii. 1-2); he becomes a myth.' See also Evans, p. 200: 'Almost all the victories of the book [five] are gained by the ideal hero rather than the human knight, and to a greater extent than in any other part of the poem, Arthur plays the truly Herculean role, in his conquest of the Soldan's horses, of Gerioneo and of the Lernean monster who lives under the altar (V. xi. 32). Artegall, in contrast, is perhaps the least effective of all the heroes and his most strictly Herculean exploit is to wear woman's clothes as Hercules did for Omphale.'

Chapter Ten
Arthur in Book Six : 'But yet the end is not ...'¹

Each of the titular knights considered in the previous two chapters - Red Crosse, Guyon, Britomart, and Artegall - is assisted by Arthur at some point in their quests. Calidore is unlike the other titular knights in so far as he never receives the assistance of Arthur - in fact they do not even meet. In contrast to his predecessors, the knight of Courtesy is introduced as a representative of achieved virtue. The narrator tells us that of Gloriana's followers

... was none more courteous Knight,
 Then *Calidore*, beloued ouer all,
 In whom it seemes, that gentlenesse of spright
 And manners mylde were planted naturall;
 To which he adding comely guize withall,
 And gracious speach, did steale mens hearts away.

(VI i 2. 1-6)

In chapter six I argue that Calidore is not quite as perfect as these lines suggest by comparing his vision of the Dancing Graces to Arthur's encounter with Gloriana. The purpose of this chapter is to compare Arthur and Calidore as questers. Donald Cheney goes so far as to argue that Calidore supplants Arthur as the pre-eminent knight of *The Faerie Queene*:

Arthur is no more superfluous to the action of Book VI than he has been in the preceding Books. But although chivalric magnificence is essential to the operation of Courtesy it is inevitably defensive in its function. Only Calidore's deliberately unheroic diplomacy can lead to positive achievement.²

Arthur's intervention in Book Six certainly has a different effect from his meetings with the titular knights of Books One to Five. However, his continuing paradigmatic status can be shown from his encounters with Serena, Timias and Mirabella; and by comparing his treatment of Turpine with the way Calidore deals with Crudor.

¹ *The Faerie Queene* III iii 50.

² Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature*, p.213. Compare Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, p. 668: 'Both Calidore and the traditional Arthur are notable for their generous spirit. In part because of an ambiguity in the meaning of the word gentleman, Calidore may claim to be very much that gentleman that the poem conceives to be its end.' See also Bayley, 'Order, Grace and Courtesy in Spenser's World' in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy*, ed. by Lawlor, pp.195-196; and Kinney, pp.81-94.

Courtesy is an essential knightly attribute in all chivalric literature, distinguishing the protagonist of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and playing a crucial role in the structure of Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*.³ It is imperative that Spenser's pre-eminent knight should not be lacking in this quality. The pattern established by Arthur's first appearance in the poem, whereby his all-encompassing virtue is shown to include the individual qualities celebrated in each book through his relationships with the titular knights, does not need to be followed in Book Six because his Courtesy has already been demonstrated, time and time again, in the course of his earlier adventures.⁴ Arthur's perfection of what the Proem to Book Six describes as the essential virtue (VI Proem 4) is clear from his first speech in the poem, in which he offers comfort to Una:

When as this knight nigh to the Ladie drew,
 With louely court he gan her entertaine;
 But when he heard her answeres loth, he knew
 Some secret sorrow did her heart distraine:
 Which to allay, and calme her storming paine,
 Faire feeling words he wisely gan display,
 And for her humour fitting purpose faine,
 To tempt the cause it selfe for to bewray.

(I vii 38.1-8)

This courteous conduct has its equivalent in each book of *The Faerie Queene*; anticipating Arthur's initial generosity to Pyrochles and Cymochles (II viii 26-27), his pacification of Britomart and Guyon (III i 11-12) and attempt to reassure Florimell (III iv 48.6-9), his protection of Amoret and Aemylia (IV viii 22), and his attitude to Samient (V viii 15).

Although Arthur does not meet Calidore, their Courtesy can be compared through analysis of the Crudor and Turpine episodes. In both cases, Spenser incorporates the romance motif of a castle with an evil custom as an effective image in his legend of Courtesy (VI i 14.5-15; VI iii 38.4-9, 40).⁵ However, the experiences of Prince and knight are not identical. Crudor is a redeemable figure, and Calidore is able to reconcile him to Briana (VI i 42-44). By contrast, not even one with the name and attributes of Blandina can do anything to alleviate the discourtesy of Turpine (VI iii 42). This distinction is

³ For Spenser's legend of Courtesy in the context of medieval literature see the essays in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy*.

⁴ On Arthur's Courtesy prior to Book VI see Hamilton, *Structure*, p. 191.

⁵ Compare the castle where Perceval's sister meets her fate in Malory, pp. 590-593. See also Spenser's earlier adaptations of this motif for different expository purposes, for example in the legends of Chastity (III i 26) and Friendship (IV i 9).

reflected in the names of the discourteous knights: Crudor hardly has complimentary connotations, but turpitude is a more ingrained form of discourtesy.⁶ From his first entry into the narrative, when he laughs at Calepine floundering in the river (VI iii 40), until his final underhand attempt to murder Arthur (VI vii 1-2), Turpine is presented as the epitome of discourtesy - if the performances of the characters were to be graded, he would undoubtedly score in the minuses. The discourteous knight is a stock romance figure, a notable example being Malory's Perys de Foreste Savage:

'Sir,' seyde the damesell, 'here by this way hauntys a knyght that dystressis all ladyes and jantylwomen, and at the leste he robbyth them other lyeth by hem.'

'What?' seyde sir Launcelot, 'is he a theff and a knyght? And a ravyssher of women? He doth shame unto the Order of Knyghthode, and contrary unto his oth. Hit is pyte that he lyvyth! '⁷

Arthur's paradigmatic status is shown when he rather than Calidore tackles the challenge posed by the extreme discourtesy of Turpine.⁸ The result is a more subtle demonstration of Arthur's pre-eminence than is indicated by his direct encounters with the titular knights of earlier books, but the distinction *is* established.

Arthur's victory over Turpine is not presented as a foregone conclusion, but as in the earlier books of *The Faerie Queene*, the temporary vulnerability of the Prince contributes to his effectiveness as an exemplary figure. Indulging in amorous thoughts twice puts Arthur's safety in jeopardy. Here is how he appears to Enias and his companion, sent by Turpine to kill the Prince:

The gentle Prince not farre away they spyde,
Ryding a softly pace with portance sad,
Deuizing of his loue more, then of daunger drad.

(VI vii 6.7-9)

Thence passing forth, not farre away he found,
Whereas the Prince himselfe lay all alone,
Loosely displayd vpon the grassie ground,

⁶ See Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk*, p. 128 and Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, p.83.

⁷ Malory, p. 160. A similar comparison is made by Anne Shaver, 'Rereading Mirabella', *SS* 9 (1988), p. 220. Morgan, pp. 18-19 cites a more specific analogue to the Turpine episode. the Gawain-Marhalt encounter in Malory (*Works*, p. 96).

⁸ Tuve, p. 138-140 notes that it is Arthur who tackles Turpine (to whom she compares Orgoglio, Maleger, and Gerioneo) because only he can successfully deal with 'Evil pure' (p.138). See also Evans, p. 209: 'The unlovely quality which the beast embodies appears throughout Book VI in a variety of forms, but finds its most active expression in Turpine, the character upon whom Arthur demonstrates the nature of complete courtesy.'

Possessed of sweete sleepe, that luld him soft in swound.

(VI vii 18.6-9)

However, the extent to which Arthur is compromised by this situation may be questioned. Firstly, in the context of the villainous plot hatched by Turpine, the love-struck Prince is a sympathetic figure. Arthur's position in the lines quoted above may be compared to Chretien's Perceval as a good knight caught off his guard. Compare the description of Arthur 'deuizing of his loue more than of daunger drad' to the vulnerability of Perceval when diverted by amorous thoughts:

When Perceval saw the disturbed snow where the goose had lain, with the blood still visible, he leaned upon his lance to gaze at this sight for the blood mingled with the snow resembled the blush of his lady's face... Perceval mused upon the drops throughout the hours of dawn and spent so much time there that when the squires came out of their tents and saw him, they thought he was sleeping. While King Arthur was still lying asleep in his tent the squires encountered in front of the king's pavilion Sagremor who, because of his hot temper, was called Sagremor the Unruly...

Sagremor ran immediately to the king's tent and awakened him. 'My lord,' he said, 'there on the heath is a knight asleep on his horse.'

The king ordered him to be off, and commanded him to bring back the knight without fail. Sagremor immediately ordered that his horse be brought forth and called for his armour. All was done as soon as he commanded, and he had himself well armed without delay. In full armour he left camp and rode on until he came to the knight. 'Sir,' he said, 'you must come to court.'

But he did not move and acted as if he had not heard him.

Sagremor spoke again, but still there was no reply; so he became angry and said: 'By the Apostle Peter, you'll come now whether you like it or not! I'm sorry I asked you politely, for I can tell that I wasted my words'...⁹

The context of these two episodes lead to different overall effects - Perceval is preferable to the experienced courtiers because he is naive, not, like Spenser's Arthur, one exalted as an invincible knight-rescuer. However, in each case the reader's sympathy for the protagonist is if anything increased when engagement in a lover's reverie places him in danger. Becoming a target is not necessarily a sign of culpability, a point which may be reinforced by considering the spiritual as well as the social implications of Courtesy. Michael Trainer shows that an Elizabethan would have understood this virtue to be an essential characteristic of the ideal Christian community.¹⁰ In the context of Spenser's legend of Courtesy, Arthur's apparent folly is obviously preferable to the vice which threatens to exploit it. It is also more appealing than the calculated Courtesy involved in Calidore's

⁹ Chretien, pp. 432-433.

¹⁰ See chapter six, footnote fifteen.

courtship of Pastorella (VI ix 34-35) which I discuss in chapter six. Indeed, one of the effects of Arthur operating in the peripheral narratives of Book Six rather than intervening in Calidore's quest is to suggest that the self-assurance which accompanies the courtesy of the knight is limited because he does not know his own insufficiency. This speculation makes sense both in the light of Calidore's response to the Dancing Graces, discussed in chapter six, and in his treatment of the Blatant Beast, a point to which I return at the end of this chapter.

In addition to being presented sympathetically, Arthur's status is demonstrated by his eventual victory over Turpine. The Prince is not the first protagonist in *The Faerie Queene* to be 'loosely displayd vpon the grassie ground'. However, unlike Red Crosse (I vii 7) and Calepine (VI iii 20ff) he does not suffer as a result of placing the amorous side of his chivalry before the martial.¹¹ Like Chretien's Perceval, Spenser's Arthur is not discomfited for long:

... the Prince awaking, when he spyde
The traytour *Turpin* with that other knight,
He started vp, and snatching neare his syde
His trustie sword, the seruant of his might,
Like a fell Lyon leaped to him light,
And his left hand vpon his collar layd.

(VI viii 25.1-6)

He does not abandon his arms while 'possessed of sweete sleepe', an image which recalls the beginning of the vision which inspired his quest:

For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;
The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
And pillow was my helmet faire diplayd:
Whiles euery sence the humour sweet embayd,
And slombring soft my hart did steale away,
Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay.

(I ix 13.1-8)

¹¹ Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, pp. 687,710-711 compares the disarming of Red Crosse to the vulnerability of Arthur before Turpine. Compare Kinney, p. 94: 'The narrative goes out of its way to emphasize the gap between his original role in the Fable and his reduced stature in this, its latest recapitulation.' These arguments do not take into account Arthur's eventual defeat of Turpine; at best they can be said to emphasise exceptional moments of vulnerability. Pollock, pp. 124-129 does not distinguish Arthur from other knights taking their ease, arguing that the context of Book Six makes *otium* respectable for Arthur, but also for others.

By canto seven of Book Six, the reader has been shown time and time again the positive results of a moment of repose in which Arthur is overwhelmed by love.¹² When Arthur is 'possessed of sweete sleepe', it is reasonable not to feel the anxiety one does when a more vulnerable chivalric figure such as Red Crosse or Calepine takes his ease. In the context of the pattern of positive inspiration established by the link between Arthur's vision and earlier adventures, his apparent moment of weakness here does not compromise his status so much as confirming that he represents an ideal of chivalry to which those more often and firmly seen in such inauspicious circumstances can aspire. If Arthur was never depicted in this way, he would be an exalted but inaccessible ideal, the best-knight-in-the-world of *The Faerie Queene* in the sense that Galahad is in the Vulgate *Queste*.

The effectiveness of Arthur as an exemplary figure is reinforced by the forceful imagery used to describe his punishment of Turpine:

His foot he set on his vile necke, in signe
Of seruile yoke, that nobler harts repine.
Then letting him arise like abiect thrall,
He gan to him obiect his haynous crime,
And to reuile, and rate, and recreant call,
And lastly to despoyle of knightly bannerall.

And after all, for greater infamie,
He by the heeles him hung vpon a tree,
And baffuld so, that all which passed by,
The picture of his punishment might see,
And by the like ensample warned bee,
How euer they through treason doe trespasse.

(VI vii 26.4-27.6)

The severity of this treatment, fittingly described by Maurice Evans as 'a long cadenza on the term [shame]', is entirely justified.¹³ Turpine has shown himself completely unworthy by his treatment of Calepine and Serena, through his exploitation of the naive Enias and his companion, and by refusing to reform his ways. Failure to shame such a recreant knight would not be a positive image of mercy in a poem which uses chivalry to figure the

¹² Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, p. 84 emphasises the importance of the Salvage Man in Arthur's final victory over Turpine: 'Arthur can only defeat Turpine if he is helped by the natural world.' I do not disagree, but the fact that nature favours Arthur here, as it does in the lead up to his vision of Gloriana, underlines rather than undermining his pre-eminence.

¹³ Evans, p. 210.

potential of human virtue. Turpine is a disgrace to his calling, and to all that it signifies. Arthur's severity echoes the attitude of Lancelot towards Perys de Foreste Savage quoted earlier. Turpine's punishment also has a topical aspect: 'baffling', the ultimate disgrace for a knight is more than a romance motif adapted for expository purposes. This disgrace ritual was still practised in Spenser's time - the Earl of Northumberland was baffled in 1569. Apart from its contemporary relevance, the image of the baffled knight has strong emblematic power. Having had a reasonably sustained part in the narrative of Spenser's legend of Courtesy, Turpine ceases to have a story and becomes a speaking picture. He is no longer one who acts with or against the other inhabitants of Spenser's Faery Land, but a static feature of the landscape, comparable to Bunyan's Man in an Iron Cage. The finality of his fate and the power of the imagery used to describe it are a warning of what gross misconduct can lead to for all who pass by, including the reader.¹⁴

Arthur's encounter with Turpine is not only a blow struck for Courtesy against its opposing vice. The episode also involves the rescue of a beleaguered knight and lady, Calepine and Serena. The presentation of this unfortunate couple exemplifies another apparent limitation of Arthur's actions in Book Six - his rescues are incomplete. Following the defeat of Turpine, Arthur is unable to cure the wounds inflicted on Serena by the Blatant Beast:

Therefore the Prince, whom great affaires in mynd
 Would not permit, to make there lenger stay,
 Was forced there to leaue them both behynd,
 In that good Hermits charge, whom he did pray
 To tend them well. So forth he went his way.

(VI v 41.1-5)

The experienced hermit who assists young knights in trouble is another romance convention; and this particular hermit offers counsel which Arthur is apparently unable to provide.¹⁵ However, the Hermit turns out to be no more able than Arthur to completely cure Serena and her fellow victim, Arthur's squire Timias. The words of the Hermit state

¹⁴ See Leslie, 'Baffling and Degradation' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 78-79. In addition to citing the example of the baffling of the Earl of Northumberland in 1569, Leslie notes on VI vii 27.4: 'The reference here to "picture" may allude to the manner in which characters and events in *The Faerie Queene* operate as moral exempla ... Turpine acts as an emblem embedded in the poem for the education of "all which passed by," particularly those who are on a quest' (p.79). Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk*, p. 116 fails to appreciate the force of this image given the nature of *The Faerie Queene* as a chivalric romance, and the positive if nostalgic attitude of sixteenth century society to the code of chivalry.

¹⁵ Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk*, p.50.

explicitly what is implied by the important but temporary participation of Arthur in each of the titular quests of *The Faerie Queene*:

For in your selfe your onely helpe doth lie,
To heale your selues, and must proceed alone
From your owne will, to cure your maladie.

(VI vi 7.1-3)

Thus described, the predicament of Timias and Serena recalls the moral Arthur drew from the plight of Red Crosse:

... th'onely good, that growes of passed feare,
Is to be wise, and ware of like agein.
This dayes ensample hath this lesson deare
Deepe written in my heart with yron pen,
That blisse may not abide in state of mortall men.

(I viii 44.5-9)

I quote these lines here rather than in chapter eight because it is after the distinction between Arthur's exemplary chivalry and the limited potential of those he meets has been demonstrated several times that the reader, who shares the limitations of Red Crosse as an example of fallen humanity, learns the lesson which is all too clear to Arthur after his first experience of human frailty. Arthur is in fact no less successful as rescuer of Timias and Serena than he is as the liberator of Red Crosse. The Prince rescues Red Crosse from Orgoglio, but Red Crosse has to negotiate the subsequent trials posed by Despair and the Dragon alone. In each case, the onus is on those rescued to complete the rehabilitation Arthur makes possible.¹⁶

This impression is underscored in Arthur's last adventure in the surviving text of *The Faerie Queene*. The desperate plight of Mirabella is emphasised by the structure of the poem: she is briefly described, obviously in need of assistance (VI vi 16-17), but her circumstances are not explained until canto eight. This use of *entrelacement* highlights the extremity of Mirabella's suffering - judgement is impossible before her crime is articulated (VI vii 28-37), and in the meantime her pitiful predicament can only arouse sympathy. There is a significant similarity between Mirabella's confession (VI viii 20-22) and Arthur's

¹⁶ Cheney, 'Secret Powre Unseene', p. 13 gives a similar reading of I viii 44. Compare Wofford, *The Choice of Achilles*, p. 257: 'Arthur's words do not counsel giving up and dying: what characterizes his heroism is precisely his consistent choice of the quest, a choice made in the knowledge of the iron pen writing frailty in his heart.' I would qualify Wofford - the frailty written in Arthur's heart is not his own.

description of himself before his vision of Gloriana. In his carefree pre-vision days, the Prince took delight in watching the sufferings of lovers (I ix 10), a parallel which suggests that Mirabella is an image of what could have happened to Arthur had he gone on to injure others in a more serious way than scorning them.¹⁷ However, Arthur is preserved from such a fate by his vision of Gloriana which converts him to an idealised form of love which allows him to transcend the constraints of Petrarchanism and bring hope to those less fortunate.¹⁸

Although Mirabella is a more sympathetic figure than Turpine, and one who remains a figure of movement and of some although not much hope; like the discourteous knight her fate lends weight to the expository effectiveness of the legend of Courtesy. This is made clear when the narrator apostrophises his female readers:

And as ye soft and tender are by kynde,
 Adorn'd with goodly gifts of beauties grace,
 So be ye soft and tender eeke in mynde;
 But cruelty and hardnesse from you chace,
 That all your other praises will deface,
 And from you turne the loue of men to hate.
 Ensample take of *Mirabellaes* case,
 Who from the high degree of happy state,
 Fell into wretched woes, which she repented late.

(VI viii 2)

The key word is 'ensample'. Arthur's performance in this episode as in his encounter with Turpine - compare VI vii 27.5 - illustrates his role as an example for the reader as well as the figures he meets within Spenser's fiction.

Mirabella's situation makes her an appropriate recipient of Arthur's aid: she is the last in a line of distressed damsels he encounters, the successor to Una, Florimell, Amoret, Samient and Serena. Disdain is identified as the brother of Orgoglio (VI vii 41.5-9), the giant killed by Arthur in Book One.¹⁹ Arthur is more successful in assailing Disdain than

¹⁷ Anne Shaver, 'Rereading Mirabella', *SS* 9 (1988), p.213 makes this comparison, but comes to a different conclusion on Mirabella's plight - see footnote 22.

¹⁸ Humphrey Tonkin, 'The Faerie Queene, Book VI', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 286 places the Mirabella episode in the context of the Petrarchan tradition.

¹⁹ Nohrnberg, *Analogy*, p. 711 notes the similarity between Orgoglio and Disdain, but does not compare the role of Arthur in the two episodes. Borris, *Spenser's Poetics of Prophecy in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1991), p. 50 provides an interesting reading of the connection between Orgoglio, Gerioneo and Disdain, comparing all three combats to that between David and Goliath:

either Timias (VI vii 48-49) or Enias (VI viii 10). Of particular significance are the following lines describing the failure of the latter:

The villaine met him in the middle fall,
 And with his club bet backe his brondyron bright
 So forcibly, that with his owne hands might
 Rebeaten backe vpon him selfe againe,
 He driuen was to ground in selfe despight.

(VI viii 10.3-7)

Such power as Enias can muster is turned against him. Enias enters into the Petrarchan situation so completely that he cannot redeem Mirabella from it. Timias, the reader of Books Three and Four will remember, is equally the victim of such a relationship. Only Arthur, whose love exalts him rather than putting him down, can defeat Disdain. The states to which Timias and Enias are reduced stand in stark contrast to the effect of Arthur's prowess on the giant:

His dreadfull hand he heaued vp aloft,
 And with his dreadfull instrument of yre,
 Thought sure haue pownded him to powder soft,
 Or deepe emboweld in the earth entyre:
 But Fortune did not with his will conspire.
 For ere his stroke attayned his intent,
 The noble childe preuenting his desire,
 Vnder his club with wary boldnesse went,
 And smote him on the knee, that neuer yet was bent.

It neuer yet was bent, ne bent it now,
 Albe the stroke so strong and puissant were,
 That seem'd a marble pillour it could bow,
 But all that leg, which did his body beare,
 It crackt throughout, yet did no blood appeare;
 So as it was vnable to support
 So huge a burden on such broken geare,
 But fell to ground, like to a lumpe of durt,
 Whence he assayd to rise, but could not for his hurt.

Eftsoones the Prince to him full nimbly stept,
 And least he should recouer foote againe,
 His head meant from his shoulders to haue swept.

(VI viii 15-17.3)²⁰

²⁰'In all three contexts Spenser contrastingly entitles Arthur "the childe." playing on the biblical associations of childhood with humility and spiritual exaltation, besides the more obvious chivalric meaning.'

Disdain is a 'dreadfull' foe, but Arthur is proof against him, just as he was against Orgoglio. Arthur's triumph is literally underlined in the text by the bridging effect linking stanzas fifteen and sixteen. It is not Arthur's insufficiency which forestalls an otherworldly reunion of giants, but the Mirabella sense of duty:

Stay, stay, Sir Knight, for loue of God abstaine,
From that vnwares ye weetlesse doe intend;
Slay not that Carle, though worthy to be slaine:
For more on him doth then him selfe depend;
My life will by his death haue lamentable end...

Nor heauens, nor men can me most wretched mayd
Deliuier from the doome of my desart,
The which the God of loue hath on me layd,
And damned to endure this direfull smart,
For penance of my proud and hard rebellious hart.

(VI viii 17.5-9, 19.5-9)

In a chivalric romance narrative, when a distressed damsel, speaking of her oppressor, tells a would-be rescuer that 'in that villaines health her safety lies' (VI viii 18.5) something is far wrong. However, this situation does not diminish Arthur's status so much as underlining the shortcomings of the world in which he moves. Arthur *can* bring relief to Mirabella, but only by personally reforming her ways can she be fully transformed. Just as Red Crosse must endure the temptation to give up represented by Despair and the rigours of an education in the House of Holiness after meeting Arthur, Mirabella must work to reverse her plight. That she makes less progress than Red Crosse is not an aspersion on Arthur, but an instance of the contrast between the proleptic finalities possible in Book One of the poem and the increasingly entropic perspective in the final stages of the last two books.²¹

Having demonstrated Arthur's paradigmatic status in the context of the legend of Courtesy, it remains to consider the extent to which his encounter with Mirabella is satisfactory as the final glimpse of the Prince offered in the poem. The contrast between

²⁰ Williams, *Flower on a Lowly Stalk*, p. 54: 'The meaning is clearly that Disdain, the practice of treating others as though they were dirt, defeats itself, but only when the opponent is a self-assured, toughened Arthur.' See also Morgan, pp.27-28.

²¹ See chapter seven for my reading of the balance between the achievement and limitations of Red Crosse, and chapter nine for the difficulties which overwhelm Artegall at the end of Book Five.

Mirabella's plight and the idealised image of Arthur questing into the distance illustrates, for the last time in the poem, the transcendence of the Prince:

... I needes must by all meanes fulfill
 This penance, which enioyned is to me,
 Least vnto me betide a greater ill;
 Yet no lesse thankes to you for your good will.
 So humbly taking leaue, she turnd aside,
 But *Arthure* with the rest went onward still
 On his first quest, in which did him betide
 A great aduenture, which did him from them deuide.

(VI viii 30.2-9)

Mirabella represents the shortcomings of fallen humanity, among which is a limited ability to respond positively to an ideal. She may not share the reader's understanding of Arthur as a paradigm, but 'no lesse thankes to you for your good will' suggests that she recognises his virtue. Combined with her subsequent action - 'turnd aside' - Mirabella's response to Arthur can be said to exemplify Sidney's precept in *Apologie for Poesie*: 'our erected wit maketh us to know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it.' However, the contrast between her youthful disregard for others and the humility and courtesy she now displays permits a more hopeful interpretation of her situation. Materially, there is not much chance of an improvement in Mirabella's lot:

Here in this bottle (sayd the sory Mayd)
 I put the teares of my contrition,
 Till to the brim I haue it full defrayd:
 And in this bag which I behinde me don,
 I put repentaunce for things past and gon.
 Yet is the bottle leake, and bag so torne,
 That all which I put in, fals out anon;
 And is behinde me trodden downe of *Scorne*,
 Who mocketh all my paine, and laughs the more I mourn.

(VI viii 24)

However, her resignation and courteous words to Arthur in stanza thirty suggest that a more important, inner transformation has occurred.²² Mirabella's reformation actually

²² Contrast the pessimistic allegorical interpretation of Mirabella's plight offered by Hankins, p. 186: 'Internally her natural grace (Timias), her newly indulgent feeling towards others (Enias), and her sense of religion (Arthur) try to combat her despairing self-contempt; but they fail because of her conviction that it is right that she should suffer. Her hopeless love for her scornful non-lover becomes a kind of expiation for her former cruelties, and she now seeks to help others who suffer the pangs of love. Only thus can she eventually gain release from self-contempt and restore her self-respect.' See also Shaver, p.221: 'When

takes place before she meets Arthur. As such she is not so much in need of his help as a sign that his quest is worthwhile: in his final adventure, as he has done since his first entry into the poem, Spenser's Arthur functions as a guiding light in a world which is benighted, but willing to be guided.²³

There is a striking similarity between Arthur's final departure from the narrative of Book Six, and his exits from earlier books:

Thus beene they parted, *Arthur* on his way
To seeke his loue ...
(I ix 20.1-2)

So with the Dwarfe he backe return'd againe,
To seeke his Lady, where he mote her find.
(III v 12.1-2)

... thenceforth he went
And to his former iourney him address,
On which long way he rode, ne euer day did rest.
(V xi 35.7-9)

The decisiveness of his departures from the titular quests does not suggest Arthur's need for Gloriana, or hers for him, so much as the need of others for the ideal they represent. These lines show that Arthur provides assistance to those who need it, but does not remain in the foreground of Spenser's narrative long enough to come across as a developing protagonist. After watching Arthur bring relief, the reader focuses on the continuing struggles of those of Spenser's protagonists who undergo a process of development. When Arthur reappears in the narrative, it is always in the capacity of knight-rescuer, leaving the reader sufficiently impressed not to wonder what the Prince has been doing in the meantime. In Book Six the titular knight defeats a symbol of evil, but the narrative concludes with its resurgence: a quest won only to be lost is surely a less positive image than that of a quest which cannot end because there is always a need for the force of good in a world where there is always evil.²⁴ Calidore cannot come back to save the Malorian knights or the poet and his work from the Blatant Beast in the way that Arthur, victor over

Mirabella's story is actually told, not only is rescue impossible, but the very nature of her punishment prevents its completion, turning medieval romance into something as ironic and grotesque as a story by Kafka.' This reading does not take account of the mutual respect of Arthur and Mirabella, which highlights the spiritual progress Mirabella has made.

²³ Less optimistic readings of the final image of Arthur are those of S. K. Heninger, 'The Aesthetic Experience of Reading Spenser', in *Contemporary Thought*, ed. by Frushnell and Vondersmith, p. 94; Nohrnberg, *Analogy* p.44; and Wofford, p. 258.

²⁴ See my discussion of Calidore's capture of the Blatant Beast and its subsequent escape in chapter six.

Orgoglio, later deals with Maleger, Corflambo, Geryoneo, and Disdain. The place of Arthur in the structure of *The Faerie Queene* provides a romance analogue to the tradition of the Once and Future King in which the legendary ruler does not belong to one time, let alone one situation.²⁵ During his visionary encounter with Gloriana, Arthur experiences and becomes part of an ideal. His subsequent quest is of a radically different nature from those of both Spenser's titular knights, and the questers of medieval romance - he alone starts out by achieving his goal, and spends the rest of his quest demonstrating this perfection.

Arthur's appearances in *The Faerie Queene* invariably involve the demonstration of his supremacy in the context of the titular virtue, but bring him no closer to what is often perceived as the 'end' of his quest - reunion with Gloriana. This does not qualify his exemplary role in the poem - on the contrary it is entirely necessary to its effectiveness.²⁶ If Arthur had reached Gloriana, he would have become a static figure, like the King Arthur of medieval tradition, and in later versions of the legend, notably Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Spenser does not tell the story of Arthur in the way that the gradual development of the titular knights can be regarded as telling their stories. Certainly, enough reference is made to the Arthurian tradition in the Letter to Raleigh and the *enfance* which precedes Arthur's vision narrative for the reader to be sure that Spenser's Prince is to be identified with the legendary king. However, *The Faerie Queene* does not recount any of the adventures of the human and ultimately tragic tale of Arthur, Mordred, Morgan le Fay, Lancelot and Guinevere. Instead Spenser's Arthur functions as a paradigm, combining the best of King Arthur, and the best-knights-in-the-world, Lancelot and Galahad, and transcending their respective limitations; a fitting model for the lesser protagonists of the poem and the 'vertuous gentlemen' envisaged as its readers.

²⁵ Michael Edwards, *Of Making Many Books*, pp. 140-141 gives this tradition an historical casting: 'Arthur disappears in the legend ... just as he disappears in history, as if to focus attention on an absence. And it is in history that he returns, not once but in each generation. The prophecy is fulfilled in British and Welsh writings, in the Anglo-French world of the Normans and the Plantagenets, at the courts of Anjou and Champagne, in the dynastic politics of the Tudors and the Stuarts, and in other isolated texts down to our own day. He really has proved, strangely, a *rex futurus*. But it is the larger rhythm of his story which is important, its opening to origin and to end, to golden age and to apocalypse. For its shape is all-encompassing.' See also my quotation of Edwards as an epigraph to chapter two.

²⁶ A marriage of Arthur and Gloriana would also have been politically imprudent in a far more explicit manner than their idealised visionary encounter. See King, p. 150 and Norbrook, p. 116.

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