

A Reading of the Faerie Queene

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Spenser, in his letter, declares that the purpose of his epic is to represent a gentleman of perfect virtues so that readers may be educated to imitate his virtuous deeds. Each book has often been treated by critics as the representation of the development of an ideal virtue—Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice or Courtesy. The following quotation from a commendatory poem gives an example of such reading.

If Chastitie want ought, or Temperance her dew,
Behold her Princely mind aright, and write thy
Queene anew.¹⁾

The critics such as John Hughes, Thomas Warton, W.F. DeMoss and Edwin Greenlaw are among them.²⁾

As clearly and adequately expressed in Colin Wilson's *The Age of Defeat*, the people today have lost faith in a great strong man of perfect virtues or in their possibility to be such a one. Therefore, if *The Faerie Queene* is interpreted merely as the representation of perfect virtues, it has nothing to appeal to the readers today. Consequently some of them regard the epic as a pure romance which lacks probability, and it is for this reason that some say that it is a dull, unreadable narrative forgotten by people.

However, it must be asked whether such reading is right. Though Spenser states his purpose as above-said, an entirely different

interpretation seems to be possible, partly because what impresses us through the process of adventures of heroes is not the strength of virtue manifested in the heroic victory but failures repeatedly experienced by a hero who is a young swain or an unexperienced girl or a savage knight who has just come to the world, namely only an ordinary man. Even if he wins, the victory is only a temporal one and often turns to be the cause of next defeat. We cannot say that the virtue develops through the adventures, for it is not that the hero stands firm against one enemy ever after he fights against him. Surely, he wins at last, but it is not the result of continuous development; there is nothing like continuous development in the epic. The words are frequently charged with ambivalence and is used as the device to show the lack of insight in man. The comments put here and there by the author direct the readers not to the praise of an ideal man but to the pessimistic view on man and his world.

Needless to say, for a poem written for the sake of expression, how to impress the readers is only a secondary and eventual problem, but for a poem intended for some readers as *The Faerie Queene*, it is important how to impress and persuade the readers. Conversely speaking, to investigate what the readers are most impressed with and persuaded of may reveal its real theme. Thus reading, *The Faerie Queene* may excite our sympathy for its universal human problem and awaken us to a new significance of our own existence. The present study aims at elucidating this point.

1. Reality of Man and His World

i) "Thou, Man of Earth" (Book I)

In the Elizabethan age judgment based upon sense, not upon reason, was thought to lead to an error. Through the process of Red Cross Knight's quest of the old Dragon that has shut up Una's parents in the castle, an emphasis is given to this point.

The fatal weakness of Red Cross is already betrayed in the first scene when he finds shelter from the hideous storm in the woods. Deceived by the superficial calm and beauty of the woods, he cannot perceive the danger inherent there. Spenser says that Red Cross, *seeing* the pleasant birds and tall, straight trees, at once, believes the good nature of the forest. Namely, his judgment depends solely upon his *sight*. He has no mind to listen to his Lady's warning, but goes on with boldness and excitement only to meet a monster which is supposed to be Error. It may be said, then, what leads him to an error is his reliance on his sense.

Red Cross does not learn his lesson from the first experience. Archimago and his false Duessa attack his sense of seeing by presenting him a false image of his Lady Una burning with love. Red Cross *sees* it and is enraged. Spenser again uses the word *see* and *sense* here, and a little later when Archimago shows his another false image of Una making love with a young squire, Spenser calls our attention to his sense by saying that when he saw, he burnt with jealous fire. He repeatedly emphasizes the predominance of sight over reason in Red Cross Knight; ".....he's stout heroicke heart" is moved by Duessa's ".....seeming glorious show," (Canto 11, 21) "He in great passion all this while did dwell / More busing his quick eyes, her face to view." (11, 26) This repetition has a good effect to convince the readers of the limitation of seeing power of man.

After the victory over Sansfoy, Red Cross is brought to the Palace of Proud Lucifera and gives homage to the Queen of Pride. This may be interpreted as his pride in his victory and his strength. There he is said to fight with Sanjoy for praise and honour. Yet, when those who give him honour and praise are Lucifera and her followers, the state of Red Cross seems to be somewhat suspicious, and when we see the knight stir up his heroic strength with the cheer of Duessa, "Thine the shield, and I, and all," our negative estimation of Red Cross proves to be right. The source of his heroic strength is evil Duessa, but the word heroic usually implies something desirable and admirable. Therefore this episode teaches us not only his state of mind but also impossibility to believe what we see and difficulty to distinguish the real good from the evil; it shows the chaos in man and his world and the established value. The description of the Castle of Lucifera strengthens this impression. It dismays us, for it is the same with that of a really good things—"a goodly building bravely garnished," "a stately palace," "her bright blazing beauty," "glorious view," "rich throne, as bright as sunny day." The problem lies in the fact that the wrong and the foul put on the appearance of the good and the fair, and we may realize our inability to perceive and distinguish the wrong from the good. Unexpectedly the fallible nature of us is betrayed here and we are forced to accept the inability of Red Cross as our own.

Leaving the Palace, he takes a rest in the pleasant shade by a nymph's fountain. How he enjoys the soft cooling shades, sweet music of the cheerful birds and the crystal water of the fountain! He completely yields to the goodness appealing to his senses. The result is being dull and fainting, which is indicative of the inward

weakness of the knight. Thus enjoying, he is attacked by Orgoglio and this time he might be defeated unless Prince Arthur saved him. This experience of defeat leads him to utter despair. His tendency of despair is already guessed from the facts that he is grievous after the victory over Sanfoy and that he must fight with Sanjoy, namely "without joy." It means that the loads of this world is too much for him to bear with his own strength. Of course he is not conscious of it first, but when his helplessness against Orgoglio is proved, he cannot but notice it and be despaired. Human beings are too weak to bear the troubles of this world by themselves; they are limited, Spenser warns.

Later in the House of Holiness, a godly aged sire suggestively calls Red Cross Knight *Man of Earth*. He says that he is not of fairy lineage, but

.....in an heaped furrow did thee hyde
 Where thee a Ploughman all unweeting fond,

 And brought thee up in ploughmans state to byde.
 Where of Georgos hee thee gave to name. (Canto X, 66)

This story refers to that of Tages, the son of earth and his name Georgos means husbandman. This stresses the fact that Red Cross is a man of earth, a man created with clay. Orgoglio is called Masse of earthly slime. Therefore, so far as man is of earth, he cannot avoid being identified with that sinful Orgoglio in some point; he has something similar with Orgoglio in him. Then the sire says,

If any strength we have, it is to ill. (X, 1)

So man of earth cannot depend on and boast of his strength,

however strong it may be. Besides, even that power is limited. Spenser insists on it in his comments. He gives full particulars of Orgoglio's appearance and his strength, then comments on man's power.

What mortall wight could ever beare so monstrous blow. (X, 1)

Or again, in the beginning of Canto X, he emphatically states the weakness of human power.

What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might
And vaine assurance of mortality,
Which, all so soone as it doth come to fight
Against spirituall foes, yields by and by,
Or from that fields most cowardly doth fly! (X, 1)

He ascribes even Arthur's victory over Orgoglio not to his strength but to the light of the shield which is revealed by Grace. The more Spenser emphasizes Grace of God, the weaker the power of man seems to be. What we are shown up to this process is frailty and fallibility of Man of Earth.

2) "Image of Mortality" (Book II)

Spenser, in the first Canto of the Book, sets the focal point of the Book, by introducing the episode of Mordant who is the very motive of Sir Guyon's adventure. The name Mordant means *flesh*, and Spenser adds a comment, ".....all flesh doth frailitie bread." Just a few stanzas below, he says,

Behold the image of mortalitie,
And feeble nature cloth'd with fleshly lyre. (1, 57)

Reading his another comment,

Such is the state of man : thus enter wee
 Into this life with woe, and end with miseree. (II, 1)

we feel that frailty of flesh is not limited to Mordant alone : every man in the world is meant to be included here. Spenser's viewpoint of human beings becomes clear and our eyes are focused upon the fleshly nature of man.

Upon to the Canto VI, Sir Guyon looks to be firm and infallible, but his state is apparently doubtful when he meets Phoedria, a fair lady of unmeasured mirth and wanton idleness. He gets on her boat in spite of the disapproval of his guide, Palmer, and has to leave him, though reluctantly. Palmer is supposed to be Reason and his departure from him suggests his departure from reasonable judgment. This state is compared to that of the pilot who lost his guide of a star in the mists.

As Pilot well expert in perilous wave,
 That to a stedfast starre his course hath bent,
 When foggy mistes or cloudy tempests have
 The faithful light of that faire lampe yblent,

So Guyon having lost his trustie guyde ; (VII, 1-2)

This comparison helps our understanding that Guyon's mind is lost in the dark. What he depends on now is himself,

And evermore himselfe with comfort feedes
 Of his own vertues and praise-worthie deeds.

He falls now to the dangerous state of pride. It is in this condition that Guyon meets Mammon, and through their dispute his weakness is proved. The main reason for his refusal of the money offered by Mammon is that it does not serve his purpose, as his delight is

found in “Faire shields, gay steeds, bright armes,” in “der-doing armes and honours.” A little later it is told that Philotime, daughter of Mammon, is a lover of honour, only from whom all the honour and dignity are derived. Guyon’s delight can be said Philotime in this context. The words which express worth and value in our sense, such as “golden chaine,” “glistring glory,” “a state of dignitie,” “glistring bright,” are all given to her and her garden, and the following description makes us believe that she is a valuable and immortal creature sent from heaven.

That goodly was their glory to behold,
On earth like never grew, ne living which like ever saw,
But they from hence were sold. (VII, 54)

We are, for a moment, attracted and impressed by her worthiness, but comparison of the apples in her garden with that of Paris, illuminates the real nature of Philotime and her garden. Spenser’s intention of ambivalence is obvious and Guyon’s standing-point seems ambiguous. Mammon, too, must have smelled it out, for he offers him his daughter Philotime. *See* or *behold* has been repeated and emphasized.

Come thou……and see. (VII, 20)
Behold……with mortal eyes. (VII, 38)

Guyon’s decline for the reason that he, a flesh and earthly person, is unworthy of such an immortal mate illustrates the predominance of sense in his judgment of Philotime. In the end, he is helplessly overwhelmed with the power of Cymochles and Phrochles, perturbations of the mind, as the result of his subjugation to sense. It has been the cause of controversy among critics whether the episode of Mammon’s cave shows Guyon’s greatness or his fall,³⁾ but it

may be rightly concluded, as above-investigated, the lapse of Sir Guyon.

The limitation of man is further presented by the emphasis on grace.

And is there care in heaven? And is there love
 In heavenly spirits to these creatures bace,
 That may compassion of their evilles move?
 There is: else much more wretched were the cace
 Of men then beasts. But O! Th'exceeding grace
 Of highest God that loves his creatures so,
 And all his workes with mercy doth embrace,
 That blessed Angels he sends to and fro,
 To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe. (VIII, 1)

Prince Arthur would surely lose his life, if grace did not help him, when he is attacked by the enemies of the House of Alma.

Proofe be thou, Prince, the prowest man alyve,
 And noblest borne of all in Britayne land;
 Yet thee fierce Fortune did so nearely drive,
 That, had not grace thee blest, thou shouldest not survive. (XI, 30)

Prince Arthur must experience his weakness: there will be no escape of man from utter loss but for the help of grace.

So feeble is man's state, and life unsound. (XI, 30)

Although Spenser has already taught the untrustworthiness of man's eyes through the description of Philotime, the teaching is more effectively given in the Bower of Bliss. The Bower of Bliss is beautiful and fruitful: it has every beauty to attract us. It softly tickles our senses as Guyon's. Especially the love scene of Acrasia and Verdant has magical power to lull the senses. For a moment, completely forgetting the nature of the Bower, the readers may be

steeped in pleasure and consider it Paradise or the one far surpassing it.

Upon a bed of Roses she was layd,
 As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin ;
 And was arayed, or rather disarayd,
 All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
 That hid no whit her alablaster skin,
 But rather shewd more white, if more might bee :
 More subtile web Arachne cannot spin ;
 Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
 Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee.

Her snowy brest was bare to ready spoyle
 Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild ;
 And yet, through languour of her late sweet toyle,
 Few drops, more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,
 That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild ;
 And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
 Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
 Fraile harts, yet quenched not ; like starry light,
 Which sparckling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright.

(XII, 77-78)

Though the Bower of Bliss causes dreadful destruction to man, as suggested by the quicksand of Untrifthyhed, Whirlpool of Decay, rolling sea and a lot of deformed monsters, still to man's senses it looks beautiful.....

Yet well they seeme to him, that farre doth view,
 Both fair and fruitful..... (XII, 12)

Man's senses have limitation : they lack insight. Therefore Guyon's destruction of the Bower brings forth regret to the readers. There is much dispute about Spenser's way of presenting the Bower. Spenser has been said to approve of and stand for the Bower, though

unconsciously, as he seems to enjoy describing the beautiful bower, just as Milton has been said to be on the side of Satan. If he is on the side of the Bower, it may come to be the proof of his weakness. His rebuke of Verdant indulged in Acrasia's love may be for the purpose to awaken the readers and maybe Spenser himself from the intoxication and make them realize their own weakness.

Last of all, the significance of Guyon's chronicle must be mentioned. Elfe and Fay, who, after created by Prometheus, with their parts derived from beasts, lived in Garden of Adonis and brought forth the tribes of fairies there, can be identified with Adam and Eve before their fall. Then, it can be said that even if fairies are innocent, coming of the prelapsarian Adam and Eve, the story of Guyon, a fairy knight, tells that such ones, too, are destined to have weakness, so far as their parts are derived from beasts. This view on man is analogous to that of Milton. The innocent Adam and Eve in Eden have something to check and control in their nature as in the nature of Eden. The nature of man is originally limited.

iii) "Deadly Wounds of Love" (Books III-IV)

Early in her adventures, Britomart defeats six knights and goes to their Castle Joyous. The nature of the castle is presented by the picture of Venus and Adonis on the tapestry of the castle. According to Rose,⁴⁾ the names of the six knights, Gardante, Parlante, Jocante, Basciante, Bacchante and Noctante, signify the stages of lechery, that is, seeing, speaking, toying, kissing, reveling and copulating. The following description of Venus's love may make it clear that her love for Adonis goes through the same process.

When first her tender hart was with his beauty smit.

.....

Then with what sleights and sweet allurements she

Entyst the Boy.....

And wooed him her Paramoure to bee,

Now making girlonds of each flower that grew,

To crowne his golden lockes with honour dew ;

.....

And whilst he slept she over him would spred

Her mantle, colour'd like the starry skyes,

And her soft arme lay underneath his hed,

And with ambroisall kisses bathe his eyes ;

And whilst he bath'd with her two crafty spyes

She secretly would search each daintie lim, (I, 34-36)

Secondly it presents the love which makes the lover inactive.

And joyed his love in secret unespyde :

But for she saw him bent to cruell play,

To hunt the salvage beast in forrest wyde,

Dreadfull of daunger that mote him betyde,

She oft and oft adviz'd him to refraine

From chase of greater beastes. (II, 37)

Inaction—it is, so to speak, syncope, a kind of death. It comes to this that love is, here, associated with death. The love of Malecasta, the Queen of the castle, shows almost the same pattern—the inception of love through eyes, and plea for her lover's inaction, so that the picture is the presentation of Malecasta's love. Britomart's visit to this castle and her wound by Gardante raise a doubt that she, too, may be under the power of the lecherous love which is in the long run associated with death. This doubt is justified by the story of Britomart's love for a strange knight in the magic mirror. It begins with *seeing*.

Eftsoones there was presented to her eye

A comely knight.....

.....

The Damzell well did view his Personage. (II, 24-26)

The love-sick Britomart is unable to act for her love, but submits herself to inaction in the hope of death which may end her misery. Love makes her inactive as Venus in the picture. Even after her departure for the quest of her lover, she gets off her horse and disarms, lamenting over her pain.

But so her smart was much more grievous bredd,

And the deepe wound more deep engored her hart,

That nought but death her dolour mote depart. (IV, 6)

The conversation between Britomart and her nurse Glauce about her love brings a light upon the nature of her love. The name Britomart is borrowed from the daughter of Curme in Ovid who flees from Minos' love into the sea, but according to Roche⁵⁾ and Rose,⁶⁾ the conversation recalls that between Sylla and her nurse Curme. Therefore this similarity enables the readers to link Britomart's love with that of Sylla who betrays her father's kingdom to obtain the love of Minos, the enemy of her country. Anyway the implication here may be that her love contains some dangerous and destructive germ. The event in the house of Malbecco strengthens this impression. There it is revealed that Paridell comes of the Trojans as Britomart. He is a descendent of Paris whose love for Helen brought woeful destruction to Troy. He tempts Hellenore, the wife of Malbecco, to run away with him, which is undoubtedly the parody of Paris' love for Helen. It is right to say, then, that Paridell represents a destructive element of love and that the kinship

of Britomart with him also connects her with that kind of love. Spenser thus elaborates to indicate the potentiality of danger in her love.

This tendency of love is further emphasized in the next adventure of Britomart in which is found Scudamour pursued by Ollyphant, the masculine lust. Namely, he is enslaved to the lust for his lover, Amoret. It torments him almost to death.

There an huge heape of singuets and opresse
His struggling soule, and swelling throbs empeach
His foltring tounge with pangs of drerinesse,
Choking the remnant of his plaintife speach,
As if his dayes were come to their last reach: (XI, 12)

The Castle of Busyrane is the representation of lust which will bring ruin to lovers. As the pictures of the arras show, the power of Cupid is so strong as to deform gods, kings, queens, lords, ladies, knights and damzels, whose carcasses are heaped in order to show Cupid's power and efforts. Before the eyes of Britomart pass the maskers of Cupid—Fancy, Desire, Doubt, Danger, Fear, Hope, Dissemblance, Suspect, Grief, Fury, Displeasure and Pleasure. Amoret is forced to follow the maskers, captured by Cruelty and Despight, with her heart drawn forth on the silver basin. Later it is known that her heart is actually possessed by Busyrane. Her captivity is explicable in the terms of her experience at her wedding night. She is taken away by Busyrane, unnoticed, at her wedding feast, just before she is to be bedded, when all the guests are drunken and wantonly conscious of her bridal night. In other words Busyrane is her lust for her husband and it makes her fearful enough to escape from him. The maskers before and after her are

the symptoms of lust and especially Death is the result and destiny of such passion.

The question may arise whether such elements are inseparable from love. It is answered by Scudamour's story of his conquest of Amoret in the Temple of Venus. He must be assailed by Doubt, Delay, Danger, Hatred, Treason, Murder, Despight, and many other negative elements before he arrives at the temple where stays Amoret: he must pass false labyrinthes which distract eyes and he learns love and hatred are of the same mother. He must experience all these feelings, all these pains to obtain love. He sees, in the temple, two sexes, male and female, united in Venus, Goddess of Love. It clarifies Spenser's view on love that physical unity of two sexes is the perfection of love. This understanding is supported by his minor poems, for instance, *An Hymne of Love*. There spiritual love is embodied in the paradise where darlings of Venus lie in ivory beds adorned with roses and lilies, playing hurtless sports of love with Pleasure. Naturally, physical desire is a necessary and inevitable element of love, and there is possibility for such an element to be too strong to upset the balance and torture the lovers to death. As a result, the carcasses of the tormented lovers are scattered around the Goddess of Love.

The story of Florimell helps us to understand of Spenser's idea of love. She is incarnation of the beauty of soul. She is always fleeting, pursued by men, and at last she commits herself to a floating boat which is the place full of whims of the mutable life. Then, she is wooed by Proteus, God of the sea, who changes himself into many forms to threaten her, that is, he presents mutability of this world. It may be concluded that, even if it is

spiritual, beauty is destined to be under the control of mutability so far as it is manifested in the physical form, just as love is weak and fallible so far as it is embodied in the physical unity.

iv) “Fleshly Force” (Book V)

First of all, the desperate view of Spenser on the reality of the world is stated in the proem of the Book, and the condition of the world where our hero is about to start is described. The human hearts are as hard as the stones thrown by Deucalion and Pyrrha. Virtue is now called vice; vice, virtue. Right is called wrong; wrong, right. Even the courses of the rolling spheres have been changed. Wars, frauds and forces reign over the world. Spenser tells that Artegall is trained on the wild beasts. Then in Spenser’s mind man’s world is identified with that of wild beasts.

Astraea’s justice grew out freely among the people without any constraint, but Artegall’s justice seems a little different, as it is related with Bacchus who with furious might destroyed all the East, and with Hercules who subdued the tyrants with his mighty club. The intention of Spenser is made clear by his following comment.

Whoso upon himselfe will take the skill
 True Justice upon people to divide,
 Had neede have mightie hands for to fulfill
 That which he doth with righteous doom decide,
 And for to maister wrong and puissant pride :
 For vaine it is to deeme of things aright,
 And makes wrong doers justice to deride,
 Unless it be perform’d with dreadless might; (IV, 1)

The main point here is that Artegall’s justice is that which constrains people with its dreadful might. In the case of Sanglier who

kills his lady out of envy of another lady's beauty, he is displeased to obey Artegall's sentence, but he is forced to. When he settles the trouble between two brothers (Canto IV), the elder brother and his lady obey him in spite of their dissatisfaction, because they dread his strength. This way of solution may not be a thorough one.

The debate between Artegall and a giant shows what can be done by justice of this kind. The giant boasts that he will restore the lost equality. Artegall thinks it a great wrong, because man cannot restore it as he does not know what was the poise of every part of the old times. Human knowledge is limited, so that human justice is inevitably limited. It surpasses man's ability to restore equality. It only settles the situation by constraining the evil or wrong. The justice here seems the law in Old Testament.

.....through the law comes the knowledge of sin. (Romans 20)

.....the outcome of the law is wrath; (Romans 4, 15)

.....the law of sin and death. (Romans 8, 2)

It is the law of sin and death; it points out what is sinful and suppresses it by giving death to a sinner. It is contrasted in Bible with the law of the Spirit of Life which brings salvation to a sinner. The law of sin and death is valid only temporally before the coming of Christ. This limitation of the law is well-shown in Portia's famous plea for mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*.

It (mercy) becomes

The throned monarch better than his Crown :

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,

.....

.....consider this

That in the course of justice, none of us

Should see salvation: (IV, 1)

Like the sceptre or crown of a king, human law or justice, in contrast to mercy, is only of temporal power and cannot save any soul from sin or evil. It brings only death to man.

The cause of his trouble is that he is apt to forget this limitation and be proud of what he has done. In the dream of Britomart, the Crocodile swells with pride of his peerless power and threatens Isis. The dream signifies the idea that Artegall is proud of his matchless power. His pride can be inferred also from Britomart's words to him.

Then farewell fleshly force! I see thy pride nought. (VII, 40)

In consequence, as Samson, swollen with pride, sought only for his pleasure and was deceived by Delila, Artegall, yielding to his pleasure, voluntarily gives up his fighting and is enslaved to Radigund, a strong woman warrior of angelic beauty. In his meeting with Britomart, Artegall submits to her, charmed by her angelic beauty. His submission to Radigund may seem to be the same with that to Britomart, but the trouble is that he cannot perceive the inward difference between them, deceived by the outward beauty of Radigund.

Thus we are told through Artegall's story that human justice is limited and weak.

vi) "All Flesh Is Frayle" (Book VI)

Spenser prepares the readers to accept the sad nature of man, just at the beginning.

All flesh is frayle and full of ficklenesse,

Subject to fortunes chaunce, still chaunging new :

.....

The tempest of these worldly seas,
Where warres and wreckes, and wicked enemitie
Do them afflict, which no man can appease. (I, 41)

However hard man may try, the troubles in this world cannot be appeased: human endeavor is in vain.

The problem of Blatant Beast may be again that of sense. This view can be supported by the episode of Serena who is attacked and wounded by Blatant Beast, and the words of Old Hermit who diagnoses her wound. In his opinion the only means to recover is to

.....learne your outward senses to refraine
From things that stirre up fraile affection,
Your eyes, your ears, your tongue, your talk refraine
.....
From that they must affect..... (VI, 7)

This permits the inference that the evil of Blatant Beast belongs to the world of sense. Considering the condition in which Serena is assaulted by Blatant Beast, we can say it is quite natural for her to be injured by it. Calepine, her lover, disarms and when *disarm* is interpreted inwardly, Serena disarms too, because she is

Allur'd with myldnesse of gentle wether,
And pleasaunce of the place.....without
Suspect of ill or daunger hidden dred (III, 23)

and judges her circumstance with her sense. The subject of predominance of sense in Red Cross Knight who fails to perceive the danger latent in the woods pleasing to his eyes recurs here. The canivals who capture her later are of this world of sense, too.

Her yvoric neck, her alablaster brest,
 Her paps, which like white silken pillowes were
 For love in soft delight there on to rest,
 Her tender sides ; her bellie white and clere,
 Which like an Altar did itselſe uprere
 To offer sacrifice divine thereon ;
 Her goodly thighes, whose glorie did appeare
 Like a triumphal Arch, and thereupon
 To spoiles of Princes hang'd which were in battel won. (VIII, 42)

Sight is repeated. What are really pleasing to their eyes are described and such description as smooth feeling of alabaster or sleek touch of silk or soft delight appeals to the sense of touch. Their priest teaches them that Serena is a sacred treasure sent by God. She is made to be their object of religion. In other words, the most sacred and valuable for them is what satisfies their senses. Their act of tearing her garments into pieces to keep as a prey or trying to devour her is a symbolic act of their religion. They recall Adam in *Paradise Lost* who admired Eve as Goddess, allured by her beauty. Raphael's rebuke is valid here.

For what admir'st thou, what transports thee so,
 An outside ?

.....

But if the sense of touch whereby mankind
 Is propagated seem such dear delight
 Beyond all other, think the same voutsaf't
 To Cattel and each Beast ; (VIII, 567-582)

Spenser gives much implication to *disarmament* in this way. He further provide an example of disarmament and its danger in the episode of Aradine and his lover to reinforce the meaning.

Thus studied, Calidore's disarmament has a very ominous implica-

tion. His danger is alluded in the comparison of his disguise as a shepherd with the disguise of Paris. There is a good reason for Spenser to reprove him.

Unmyndfull of his vow, and high beheast
Which by the Faery Queene was on him layd,
That he should never leave, nor be delayd
From chacing him, till he had it attchieved? (X, 1)




To sum up, Calidore gives an impression not of a heroic knight but of a straying knight unconscious of his flaw and danger.

The completely harmonious life in the pastoral world is presented in the circle of Pastorella and shepherds. The circle of Mirabella and her unrequited lovers or that of Serena and the canivals may be considered as the one contrary to this circle. For Mirabella lovers are merely a means which pleases and satisfies her pride and they fail to see through her ugly inward, charmed by her outward beauty. For canivals sensual beauty which causes passion in them is a religious object. Both circles represent the sterile human relation resulted from reliance on sense. Pastorella and other shepherds are knit together by love with an insight which enables them to penetrate into her inner part. This is just like the heavenly vision of the circle of Graces on Mt. Acidale. However, this is the world of disguise. Not only Calidore, but Pastorella is a disguised shepherdess; she is, in fact, a daughter of a knight and a lady. Then, perfect happiness and harmonious human relation is not the reality but a make-believe. Actually its illusiveness is proved when it is ruined by the thieves. However much man wishes to live in the ideal world, it is only an illusion.

At the end of the Book, Blatant Beast, though once captured,

breaks his iron chains to do evils again in the world. Really, as quoted at the beginning, no man can restore the happy life. In this Book we are told Spenser's pessimistic idea of man's power and efforts, as well as the fallible state of our hero.

II. Immortality in Mortality

In stead of being convinced of their strength and virtue, the heroes experience their weakness and limitation from the beginning almost to the end of their adventures.⁷⁾ There is no gradual development to perfection. Their movement is not in a rising line from imperfection to perfection, but in a lateral line from imperfection to imperfection, frailty to frailty, or a falling line to the lowest state. But we see them rise vertically to the highest state in the end. For instance, Red Cross Knight who is enslaved by Despair and falls to the lowest state conquers Dragon in the next adventure and his glorious name is enrolled as a saint in heaven. To draw a line, it may be not  but  or . Our next concern is how this can be explained.

The wedding of the Thames and the Medway (Book IV) furnishes a key for the solution. The sea is used as "this devouring sea," "the sea of their tempestuous spright," "The sea of sorrow, and tempestuous grief/Wherein my feeble barke is tossed long...../Why do they cruell billowes beat so strong....." In other words, the sea symbolizes the chaotic and destructive reality of this world. However, in the wedding procession, the sea is described as the one which contains the entirely opposite power—the power of order, harmony and fertility. We can learn from this that power to recover may be in the chaos itself.

The comparison among three gardens—the Garden of Venus and Adonis in the Castle of Malecasta, the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis—will indicate the key more clearly. The clue lies in their attitudes towards time and death.

To hunt the salvage beast in farrest wyde,
 Dreadfull of daunger that mote him betyde,
 She oft and oft advis'd him to refraine
 From chase of greater beastes, whose brutish pryde
 Mote breede him scath unwares: but all in vaine;
 For who can shun the chance that dest'ny doth ordaine?

Lo! where beyond he lyeth languishing,
 Deadly engored of a great wilde Bore;
 And by his side the Goddess groveling
 Makes for him endlesse mone, and evermore
 With her soft garment wipes away the gore

But when she saw no helpe might him restore,
 Him to a dainty flowre she did transmew. (BKIII, I, 37-38)

Fear of the boar, that is, wicked mortality, and recoil from it—this is the attitude prevailing in the Castle of Malecasta. The result is Adonis' permanent transmutation to a sterile flower. Recoil from the sad reality of the world is repeatedly rejected throughout the epic. Red Cross Knight is brought to a chapel on a steep, high mountain (Book I). He implores an old man called Contemplation,

O! let me not.....then turne againe
 Backe to the world, whose joyes so fruitless are;
 But let me heare for aie in peace remaine..... (X, 63)

but he is rejected.

That may not be.....ne maist thou yitt
 Forgoe that royal maides bequeathed care,

Who did her cause into thy hand committ,
Till from her cursed foe thou have her freely quitt. (X, 163)

He is not allowed to recoil from the world and to live alone in contemplation. He is taught the only way left for him is to live in the world and face its troubles. Marinell in Book III offers another good example of one who avoids love—the natural experience of man—for fear that it should wound and kill him, and lives in the world of the sea treasures where no sorrow is known. He is satisfied with what the sea brings to him, namely the world which can be called pastoral. His defeat by Britomart shows, however, that such a life is impossible, that Marinell should be involved in the confusion of this world and experience pains and wounds. Spenser's refusal of this way of living is given again in Book VI. The pastoral world is described as the world of disguise, and actually it is swept by the thieves. Even before the havoc, an ill omen of impossibility of its existence is hinted in the shape of a tiger attacking Pastorella. Spring prevails forever in the Bower of Bliss, with no frost, no summer heat to cut it off, but it is only artificial.

Thus being entred, they behold around
A large and spacious plaine, on every side
Strowed with pleasauns: whose fayre grassy grownd
Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide
With all the ornaments of Floraes pride,
Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
Of niggard Nature, like a pompous bride
Did decke her, and too lavishly adorne,
When forth from virgin bowre she comes in th' early morne.

Therewith the Heavens alwayes joviall
Lookte on them lovely, still in stedfast state,
Ne suffred storme nor frost on them to fall,

Their tender buds or leaves to violate ;
 Nor scorching heat, nor cold intemperate,
 T' afflict the creatures which therein did dwell ;
 But the milde ayre with season moderate
 Gently attempted, and disposed so well,
 That still it breathed forth sweet spirit and wholesome smell ;

(BKII, XII, 50-51)

This attitude to drive away the natural phenomena with artificial device can be said a kind of fear and recoil from mortality into an illusion. Inevitable confrontation with mutability is the essential difference seen in the Garden of Adonis.

And sooth, it seemes, they say ; for he may not
 For ever dye, and ever buried bee
 In balefull night, where all thinges are forgot :
 All be he subject to mortalitie
 Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,
 And by succession made perpetuall,
 Transformed oft, and chaunged diverslie ;
 For him the Father of all formes they call ;
 Therefore needs mote he live, that living gives to all. (BKIII, VI, 47)

Time and death is natural to man and his world, and they experience and accept the fact as the inevitable. But paradoxically it attains freedom from it and eternal, fruitful life. It, then, suggests that the solution may be found in such an attitude.

Actually, Florimell's involvement in the miserable destiny and acceptance of it without averting her eyes become the first step for her to be free from the dungeon of Proteus, the symbol of mutability. To sum up, man can be free from and rise above the miserable reality and attains immortality by experiencing and realizing his reality—weakness, limitation, mortality—and by facing up

to it. To explain this in the terms of Pascal, man is miserable, but he is great in knowing and confronting with his misery and accepting it as his own without escaping into an illusion. In this sense, man is both little and great, mortal and immortal, and this is the very existence of man as a real being.

This may be also true to the knights in the epic. Their adventures are not the process of gradual ascent to perfection, but continuous experiences of frailty and misery. What links their state of frailty and misery with the higher state can be said their recognition of their reality and the inevitability to face up to it through their lives. After the recognition comes a victorious deed such as that of Red Cross Knight by which his name is enrolled in heaven as a saint. The last victory is the embodiment of their inward greatness. Further, the victory has been assigned to them from the beginning as what they should achieve,⁸⁾ so their achievement of it may be explained as their attainment to the existence as it should be.

The vision of Mt. Acidale is the summation of all these images and episodes.

There he did see that pleased much his sight,
 That even he him selfe his eyes envyde,
 An hundred naked maidens lilly white
 All raunged in a ring and dauncing in delight.
 All they without were raunged in a ring,
 And daunced round; but in the midst of them
 Three other Ladies did both daunce and sing,
 The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,
 And like a girlond did in compasse stemme:
 And in the middest of those same three was placed
 Another Damzell, as a precious gemme

Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced,
That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.

(BKVI, X, 11-12)

There is seen the perfect and eternal harmony of the Graces and a damsel joined in them. What calls our attention is that this damsel is a shepherd's lass. The perpetual circle of the Graces is compared to Ariadne's crown which, placed in the sky, gives eternal light. What is between two stages of the crown, a mere crown and an eternal star in the sky, and connects them is Ariadne's experiences of pains and troubles of the world and the Centaurs fighting against the Lapithes—the exponent of the miserable reality of man.

Looke! how the crown, which Ariadne wore
Upon her yvory forehead, that same day
That Theseus her unto bridale bore,
When the bold Centaures made that bloody fray
With the fierce Lapithes which did them dismay,
Being now placed in the firmament,

Through the bright heaven doth her beams display, (BKVI, X, 13)

From this comparison it can be assumed what connects a mere shepherdess with a state of Grace is also her experiences of pains and troubles as a human being and her bold facing to it. In this image in which a shepherdess and Grace are combined through her experience and facing to the sad reality, we can see the solution for the problem of what man really is at a glance.

The appropriateness of this reading of *The Faerie Queene* will be clearer when one bears in mind the relation of the “Mutability Canto” to the other Books.

Last of all, the significance of Spenser's setting of the place in the Fairy Land must be mentioned. It is intended as a happy land—the earthy paradise which directly leads to heaven. As a fact,

however, it is the world full of woes and cares, not different from this world. Nevertheless it can be said a happy land as Spenser intends. It is because it is the world in which man experiences and realizes the tragic reality of himself and, in so doing, attains greatness and immortality. He might say that the Fairy Land, the earthly paradise, is found in this world.

In this age when all the cruelty and misery has been exposed through the two great world wars, and futility of man has been felt as the result of mechanism, this basic question—what man really is—has again come into the mind of man. And it is said that this tendency has brought so-called existentialism into full bloom. It was also the question asked by Job in despair, by Jeremiah who asks the meaning of the world so full of evil and by Christ who cries on the Cross “Eli, lama sabachthani?” It is the universal problem asked by man beyond the limitation of time. *The Faerie Queene*, dealing with this basic problem of man by showing the weakness, limitation and misery of man and his vertical ascent, arouses the full sympathy and interest of even the people today, and through it the readers have seen a great transition of man from a mere unconscious being to a new conscious one, to a real being, through the realization of self, and by awakening the readers to a real existence of man, what Spenser intends in his epic—edification of his readers—is accomplished, though in the different way from that which he declares in his letter.

Notes :

- 1) *The Faerie Queene* BK III, *The Works of Edmund Spenser: The Variorum Edition*, p. 185.
- 2) *The Faerie Queene Book I*, pp. 314-362.
- 3) For instance, Maurice Evans in his “The Fall of Guyon” gives a

refutation to Kermode who regards the episode of Mammon's Cave as the one which shows his greatness.

- 4) Mark Rose, *Heroic Love*, p. 91.
- 5) T. P. Roche, *The Kindly Flame*, pp. 53-54.
- 6) Mark Rose, *Heroic Love*, p. 94.
- 7) In the case of Britomart, I regard her fight against Busyrane in the end of Book III as one end of her adventures.
- 8) As for Britomart, her victory over Busyrane is not the one assigned to her from the beginning. In this sense it may not be proper to say so about her.

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