

GOD SAVE THE QUEENS: INTERROGATING “ENGLISHNESS” THROUGH ALLEGORY
IN EDMUND SPENSER’S *THE FAERIE QUEENE* AND
GEORGE MACDONALD’S *PHANTASTES*

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A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English
in the Graduate School of
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2017

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ABSTRACT

In 1936, C.S. Lewis published a comprehensive study of medieval love allegory through the ages, culminating in an analysis of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596). While Lewis's methodological approach to Spenser's epic relies on an examination of a literary tradition which spans centuries, it neglects certain other forms of allegory with which Spenser was writing, specifically those which are political and historical. The entrenchment of Spenser's epic within its own lineage of literary tradition, however, provides a way for us to recognize and establish patterns not only across ages of literature but also across genres: George MacDonald's 1858 fairy novel *Phantastes* contains similar plot structure, motifs, conventions and, most importantly to this thesis, cultural capital in the story of King Arthur.

This thesis examines English national identity and its literary depictions within these works by placing them within the rich literary traditions from which they are drawn, specifically the Arthur narrative, as well as placing them within their own specific historical contexts. By blending the methodological model provided by Lewis with a more historicist approach – essentially, a model concerned with examining the part in light of its whole and a model concerned with a text's impact on its own particular moment in history – I will offer both an understanding of “Englishness” as it is depicted and established in these texts, as well as a methodological model which seeks to explore allegory that transcends both its formal constrictions and its specific historical context.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to everyone who encouraged, supported, and prayed for me throughout the creation of this manuscript; it would not have been completed without all of you. In particular, my parents and siblings (Cris, Kim, Pearson, Evie, and Reese); the Christian Heritage community (David, Andrew, Ranald, Kathryn, Martin, Ben, Katherine, Hayden, Meredith, and Jon); the ladies of Kimberly Road (Angeline, Maggie, Eve, and Florence); and “To Hell With Pudding” (Sara, Casey, Jamie, Megan, Lani, Crawford, David, Will, Will, Daniel, and Cole).

“Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick. But that made no difference to what he had to do.”

-C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am honored to have this opportunity to thank the many colleagues, friends, and faculty members who have helped me with this manuscript. I am first and foremost indebted to Dr. Emma Wilson, not only for her guidance and instruction in the research process, but also for reading draft after draft (after draft), taking time out of her busy schedule to meet with me, and letting me drink tea in her office when the writing process became overwhelming. I am likewise grateful to Dr. Albert Pionke for providing constructive yet encouraging feedback, listening to my pre-molded ideas and helping form them into something resembling literary criticism, and poking through my perfectionism to remind me that “the best thesis is a finished thesis.” A special thanks to Reverend Malcolm Guite of Girton College at the University of Cambridge for taking the time to help me with my research and providing resources I would not have otherwise had access to. I would also like to thank the University of Alabama Graduate School and Department of English for providing funding for me to do archival work for this project, and the Cambridge University Library, the Weston Library in Oxford, and the Kings College London Archives for allowing me to use their rare book and archival resources to enrich my research. I owe a great deal of thanks to Christian Heritage in Cambridge for many things, but for the sake of space, I will limit my gratitude for the incredible internship opportunity last summer, the research I did for which inspired this project.

Finally, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of my friends, family, professors, and fellow graduate students at the University of Alabama. Thank you all.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The critical conversation regarding allegory and its interpretation is replete with complexities. Allegory by nature is subjective, and thus the study of it can also be subjective, overdetermined, grounded in the intentional fallacy, and inattentive to subtler facets of complicated texts. These problems were noted as early as 1936, when formalism was the prevailing school of criticism, by C.S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love*, itself still one of the authoritative texts on this particular figurative device. Lewis recognized that allegory is “introspective,” and that “[t]he allegorical love poetry of the Middle Ages is apt to repel the modern reader both by its form and by its matter” for this very reason (*Allegory* 76, 1). Though his work is very often considered “outdated,”¹ Lewis in fact offers a way of thinking about “simplified” literary traditions that opens those traditions up to deeper study. In handwritten lecture notes from his series of lectures on *The Faerie Queene* at Cambridge University, Lewis observes that what distinguishes Spenser’s allegory is “Resophistication. Simple fairy tale pleasure sophisticated by polyphonic technique; simple ‘moral’ sophisticated by an earned iconography; and all there reacting as one another.”² In short, Spenser’s moral allegory is legitimized by the established iconography within which he is writing. Allegory, then, must be examined alongside something else in order to make sense of it. This thesis attempts to “resophisticate” allegory (and the study thereof) as a literary device worthy of consideration

¹ Jeffrey, David Lyle. *Reading the Classics with C.S. Lewis*, ed. Thomas Martin. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000. 77-80.

² C.S. Lewis, *Lecture notes*, 89 leaves (later published as *Spenser’s Images of Life*, ed. Alastair Fowler, Cambridge, 1967, held at at Weston Library, Oxford); p. 4.

across two different works of literature in two different literary eras by examining it in light of the historical context of each text. The texts on which this thesis will focus are Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and George MacDonald's *Phantastes*.

Literature Review

Research and literary criticism on Edmund Spenser is vast. Critical conversation on *The Faerie Queene* branches into every school of literary theory, witnessed perhaps most comprehensively in the dedicated journal *Spenser Studies*. Recently, in assessing New Historicist criticism of *The Faerie Queene*, Helen Cooper has observed that the “immediate political context” of the work has experienced a rise in attention (Cooper 749). In fact, most of such criticism of Spenser's epic focuses solely on the political allegory as it pertains to the exact historical moment in Elizabethan England. Historicist criticism often intersects with comparative literary studies, wherein Spenser is put in conversation with his medieval romantic or Italian classic predecessors. One such area in which this comparative angle has been fruitful is Spenser's utilization of and participation in Arthurian legend. *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, edited by Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley, includes an essay on Spenser's use of the Arthur story as “cultural capital” in which Laura A. Finke examines how patronage and national consciousness influenced the construction of the epic, while Charles Bowie Millican's *Spenser and the Round Table* puts *The Faerie Queene* in the context of the Tudor period in England and its connection with Arthurian history.

On the other end of the spectrum, structural readings of Spenser's epic, while fewer, focus on Spenser's use of Early Modern discourse theories (such as Patricia Fumerton's article on Spenser's use of *discordia concors* or Rosamund Tuve's collection of essays on logic in Spenser, Herbert, and Milton) or very specific allegorical maneuvers (such as Michael

O'Connell's *Mirror and Veil* and Janet Spenser's *Spenser's Faerie Queene*). Of course, the formalist studies that this thesis will make the most use of are those of C.S. Lewis, predominantly *The Allegory of Love* and *Spenser's Images of Life*. Brent Dawson's theories of allegory and world-building, both as a literary concept and an actual historical participation, also provide a larger framework within which to discuss these texts in tandem.

While literary criticism surrounding Edmund Spenser is extensive, there has been very little critical work done on MacDonald. Indeed, the amount of published criticism on MacDonald is less than the amount of original work he produced in his lifetime, with sixty-four major publications and around thirty-two critical pieces. A 2003 "bulletin" of the C.S. Lewis Society notes that the critical attention that has been paid him is largely due to Lewis's own popularity, and his laudatory comments of MacDonald and his work. The *North Wind* journal of MacDonald studies is where most of the critical work on MacDonald can be found; however, there is a definite want in quality of criticism on his oeuvre, leaving little to work with for those scholars who are interested in writing about MacDonald. This is not true across the board; there are a few MacDonald scholars that deal quite aptly with MacDonald's work, and most of them are mentioned in this thesis. And certainly, Roderick McGillis, William Reaper, Stephen Prickett, and John Docherty can be credited among the forerunners who got MacDonald studies off the ground. The most critical attention is paid to his fairy tale literature, though only a fraction of this deals explicitly and specifically with *Phantastes*.

This put my research in a very unique position – one of my authors had more secondary criticism than I could ever hope to read in the time I had to write this thesis, and the other had only a few critical pieces from which to draw. Only one critic³ has ever put the two in

³ Docherty, John. "Dryad Fancies and Fairy Imaginations in *Phantastes*." *North Wind: A Journal of MacDonald Studies* 24 (2005). 16-28. Print.

conversation with each other, and he does so in the context of the “imagination,” which is not the focus of this thesis. It is, then, one of the innovations of this thesis not only to discuss Spenser and MacDonald alongside each other, but also to incorporate C.S. Lewis into the conversation, not only for his study of allegory, but because Lewis knew both writers in different contexts, and his work can be used as an axis connecting all three of them. In doing so, my project will intervene into the critical conversation at two levels: on the level of content, and on the level of a literary framework by which to think about that content. To read the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* and *Phantastes* in a way that enhances our understanding of the texts themselves, the political and historical contexts into which they are operating, and the larger traditions in which Spenser and MacDonald are writing demands a combinative methodology featuring both historicism and formalism. In resurrecting Lewis’s “outdated” allegorical studies and intersecting them with historicist thinking, I will provide a new (old) way of considering these texts and the allegories that inform them.

Methodology

In his inaugural lecture as Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University in 1954, Lewis makes a claim:

I myself belong far more to that Old Western order than to yours. [...] One thing I know: I would give a great deal to hear any ancient Athenian, even a stupid one, talking about Greek tragedy. He would know in his bones so much that we seek in vain. At any moment some chance phrase might, unknown to him, show us where modern scholarship had been on the wrong track for years. Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you somewhat as that Athenian might stand. I read as a native texts that you must read as foreigners. [...] It is my settled conviction that in order to read Old Western literature aright you must suspend most of the responses and unlearn most of the habits you have acquired in reading modern literature. And because this is the judgement of a native, I claim that, even if the defence of my conviction is weak, the fact of my conviction is a historical datum to which you should give full weight. That way, where I fail as a critic, I may yet be useful as a specimen. I would even dare to go further. Speaking not only for myself but for all other Old Western men whom you may meet, I would say, use your specimens while you can. There are not going to be many more dinosaurs. (“Temporum”)

This lecture was Lewis's "interpretation of the commission" given by him in this new position ("Temporum"). As the position was created specifically with him in mind,⁴ it seems reasonable that he be the one to define it. Though modern scholarship was moving into the "historical opinion" that the "antithesis"⁵ between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was becoming less marked, Lewis's former Oxford colleagues held to the belief that the Middle Ages were "dark" years, "where every passion was subdued to a ceremonial and every problem of conduct was dovetailed into a complex and rigid moral theology," and the Renaissance was that first ray of light which shone into the great chasm of medieval thought ("Temporum"). Lewis' belief that the wall between medieval and Renaissance ideology had been "greatly exaggerated" was thus met with scorn during his time at Oxford, and his scholarly endeavors were not fully appreciated or encouraged until his move to Cambridge ("Temporum").⁶

Lewis's assertion, then, that he "belongs far more to that Old Western order" than to the modern one, actually serves two purposes, both of which will illuminate the methodology set forth in this thesis. First, while his cheeky wit might cause one to misinterpret his claims as arrogance, Lewis is actually exhibiting a great deal of humility toward earlier texts themselves. His greatest quarrel with modern readings of medieval and Renaissance literature was that it was often misinterpreted due to an insistence upon imposing modern thought onto those texts. Lewis believed that "the study of the past helps us to appreciate that the ideas and values of our own age are just as provincial and transient as those of bygone ages," and to presume that modern thought is more advanced or informed than earlier models is "chronological snobbery" (McGrath

⁴ "This new chair, Bennett believed, needed to be in medieval and Renaissance English. Perhaps more important, Bennett was quite clear who its first holder should be: Oxford's C.S. Lewis" (McGrath 311).

⁵ Lewis, quoting Professor J. Seznec's *La Survivance des dieux antiques* (London, 1940).

⁶ McGrath, Alister. "The Move to Cambridge: Magdalene College." *C.S. Lewis: A Life*. 2013.

168). By claiming citizenship to an older order, then, he is submitting himself to that way of thinking, to those philosophies, and, ultimately, allowing those philosophies to inform his understanding of his own world by inhabiting another. As his contemporary novelist L.P. Hartley notes, “the past is another country; they do things differently here” (Hartley 1).

The second purpose is actually more of a maneuver, a practice for his audience in the kind of literary criticism he is arguing for. In his *Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis says that “[t]he first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know *what* it is - what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used” (*Preface* 1). It is with this premise that Lewis begins his maneuver. He claims to “read as a native” texts that modern readers can only experience as readers of history. Therefore, if one must know “what” a thing is before he is to understand it, who better to ask than a native who experienced the “thing” in its original context? But Lewis takes it one step further. By identifying himself as a “specimen,” he is presenting himself *as a text to be read*. He is no longer the Native - he is the Thing. And in positioning himself as such, he is forcing his audience out of their presuppositions and into a reading of text that starts at *Form*. If Lewis is the physical embodiment of the Old Western order (just as Word is the physical embodiment of Thought), and his reader knows “what” he is, then to dissect him as *specimen*, as *Form*, is to do more than get a mere glimpse of courtly society, of medieval tradition, of Early Modern logic, and of any shift in thought across the period. To dissect him as specimen is to find the answer to the “what” question.

I initially chose Lewis as my methodological model because I believed that imitating his expansive analysis would be facilitative in conducting a study that would span several hundred years and scrutinize the allegorical and logical traditions of authors in two different eras of literature. I have since experienced what I would imagine a similar phenomenon to the listeners

of Lewis's inaugural Cambridge lecture – that is, I have been forced to confront him not simply as scholar, but as text. In this thesis, I will do as he advised and “use [my] specimens while [I] can.” Lewis says in *The Allegory of Love* that “To fight in another man's armour is something more than to be influenced by his style of writing” (*Allegory* 380). It would be an honor to don Lewis's armor and take up his pen, but I have learned from Patroclus and Hector the dangers of wearing another's armor for too long. Therefore, I will consider myself an academic disciple of Lewis; I will learn from him how to think like an Old Westerner.

Though he thoroughly explicates the religious and courtly allegories, following every allegory to its logical end, Lewis consciously neglects Spenser's political allegory as his “qualifications as an historian are not such as would enable [him] to unravel it” (*Allegory* 401). Lewis goes on to justify his decision to leave the political allegory untouched by contending that Spenser only included it to garner a “topical attraction,” and is thus now a “stumbling-block” to contemporary readers (401). Though I respect Lewis's work immensely (to the point, in fact, where I am mirroring his methodology), I find myself disagreeing with him on this matter. I believe the political allegories in both of my primary texts reach much farther than their own respective times. For if, as Lewis himself claims, “we shall understand our present, and perhaps even our future, the better if we can succeed, by an effort of the historical imagination, in reconstructing that long-lost state of mind for which the allegorical love poem was a natural mode of expression,” then why should we not explore *all* the allegory provided us (*Allegory* 2)?

Although the actual historical events Spenser allegorized were specific to his era, the notions of English imperialism which then informed the national identity were only just beginning to bud in the sixteenth century. Indeed, the writers on which this thesis focuses sit at three distinctive moments in British imperial history: Edmund Spenser found himself in a very

fragile but rapidly expanding English Empire; George MacDonald wrote at the peak of British imperialism, while European revolutions were simultaneously occurring; C.S. Lewis wrote and analyzed fairy stories during the decline of the British Empire. Spenser was concerned with the establishment of national identity, MacDonald with its maintenance, and Lewis with what to make of its remains. The similarities in the political situations in which these men found themselves are far too striking to be ignored – the similarities in writing even more so. Each author frames his story within a world that is Other; as Lewis is fond of saying, in each story the reader is taken out of his or her own world and put into a new one, and by spending time in that Other World, the reader may know his or her own world all the better. Thus, Early Modern readers of Spenser's epic would understand their expanding nation better for having spent time in Faerie Land; Victorian readers, imperial Britain; and twentieth century readers, standing in the remnants of their once-great empire, can perhaps glean insight into its fall.

To this end, I will contend with Lewis's declaration that this political allegory is of little importance, as well as his assumption that one must be a historian in order to fully understand it, and I will do it by using his own method of interpretation. I believe Lewis would concede that it was not simply Elizabeth's kingdom Spenser was concerned with, nor were his allegories univocal. And from Lewis's discussion of antitheses and paradoxes, the multiplicity of meaning in Spenser's allegory is never mutually exclusive. The logical conjecture, then, that the allegory of the Kingdom of England is concerned also with the Kingdom of Heaven, and vice versa, is not improbable. Therefore, the way in which I apply Lewis's methodology discussing the Kingdom of Heaven does not require me to be a historian in order to understand Spenser's (or MacDonald's) construction of the Kingdom of England.

In fact, my study will focus specifically on instances in *The Faerie Queene* and *Phantastes* in which the political and moral allegory are operating in tandem. Helen Cooper, the sixth and current successor of Lewis's position at Cambridge, points out that "[a]llegory is commonly thought of as an analytical tool, useful for dissecting human behaviour or emotion, but it is often at its most powerful when it is synthetic, combining meanings" (754). In this thesis, I will contend that for Spenser, MacDonald, and even Lewis, the construction of "Englishness" truly happens at the intersections of the political and moral allegories.

To make this argument, I will mirror in these two texts Lewis's analysis of antitheses in *The Faerie Queene*, for Lewis posits that the allegory in Spenser's epic hinges upon them. He brings out the opposing images of the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis, of art and nature, of Una and Duessa, of the House of Pryde and the House of Holiness (to name a few), and discusses at length the effect of each juxtaposition. In the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis, for example, Lewis examines Spenser's depictions of true and false love: "The one [Bower] is artifice, sterility, death: the other [Garden], nature, fecundity, life" (407). In his dissection of this single pair of opposites, Lewis discovers more antitheses hidden under its skin. Spenser allegorizes nature and art to distinguish between good and evil, respectively; he contends that Spenser uses nature as the purest, truest, most genuine form of passion and love, and art as but a "sham or imitation" of the real thing. Thus the antithesis of the Real is the Apparent. In the Castle Joyous, home of lustful Malecasta, there is a tapestry of images depicting Venus and Adonis; in the Temple of Venus, "a place 'wall'd by nature gainst invaders wrong,' we have no pictures of lovers, but the living lovers themselves" (408). Thus, the opposition of the "natural and artificial" is indicative of Spenser's Platonic notions of good as real and evil as

apparent.⁷ Within even that pair of opposites, Lewis finds yet another: the sacred and the profane. Traditionally, “sacred” love is love that is concealed - consummation of love is never explicitly stated unless it is sinful, profane. Lewis points out that Spenser subverts this tradition fully in his depictions of sacred and profane love. The “good and the real” lovers, Venus and Adonis, are a “picture of actual fruition,” while the artificial love is represented by the picture of Venus gazing at Adonis on Malecasta’s wall. Per Lewis, “The good Venus is a picture of fruition: the bad Venus is a picture not of ‘lust in action’ but of lust suspended” (414). In the Bower of Bliss, Cymochles “peepe[s]” at the naked nympts; in the Garden of Adonis, lovers “knowe” their paramours (II.v.34; III.vi.41).

The question, then, is whether the political allegory in the poem functions the same way. For example, while most of Spenser’s depictions of court in *The Faerie Queene* are laudatory, Elizabethan readers might perhaps think that the “sluggish *Idlennesse*” riding “Upon [his] slouthfull Asse” in the pageant at the House of Pryde bears a striking resemblance to one Earl of Essex (I.iv.18.6-7).⁸ But the procession in the House of Pryde is not solely a commentary on courtly life; placed in the Book of Holiness, it naturally serves as an allegorical temptation for our hero knight on his quest for holiness. The allegory is operating on multiple levels. In conducting my analysis in this fashion, I am not only mirroring and expanding upon Lewis’s methodology, but also operating within the antithetical position of the epic itself - situated in two kingdoms, seemingly mutually exclusive, yet existing and operating in tandem.

This multiplicity will necessitate an understanding and discussion of Early Modern logic, for Spenser, in writing an epic poem that has a specific argument – “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” – makes use of that logic in its construction.

⁷ Plato’s *Republic* discusses this in Books VI and X.

⁸ As noticed by a certain Cambridge academic in a conversation over coffee.

Logic comprised one third of the *trivium*, the centerpiece of discursive education in the Early Modern period. As rhetoric instructed both writers and readers on the use of ornamentation in their work, and grammar provided the building blocks, it was logic that furnished the fundamental ordering and structuring principles of all forms of writing in this timeframe.⁹ We can further be quite certain of Spenser's familiarity with these traditions, as they were ubiquitously taught at schools and universities. Spenser also had a particular biographical connection with logic courtesy of his time at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he was a contemporary with Abraham Fraunce,¹⁰ who would go on to write two of the first English vernacular logical and rhetorical instruction manuals, *The Lawiers Logike* (1588) and *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (1588). Not only were Fraunce and Spenser University contemporaries, but Fraunce makes use of some of Spenser's poetry¹¹ in his *Lawiers Logike*, so the leap that Spenser would also have made use of Fraunce's theories is not a large one. Spenser could not, of course, have studied from Fraunce's texts as a contemporary, but the precepts set down within them are representative of those taught to both men as a fundamental part of their discursive training.

With this in mind, we turn to *The Allegory of Love*, in which Lewis breaks up the "allegorical love poetry of the Middle Ages" into two parts: form and matter. Form, in Early Modern logical terms, "is a cause by the which a thing is that which it is, and therefore by the forme thinges bée distinguished" (Fraunce Sig. Gii^v). By Fraunce's definition, form can be internal or external, and external form can further be either natural or artificial. Already, even in

⁹ Gray, Hanna, 'Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963), 497-514.

¹⁰ Barker, William. "Abraham Fraunce (circa 1560-1592 or 1593)." *British Rhetoricians and Logicians, 1500-1660: First Series*, edited by Edward A. Malone, vol. 236, Gale, 2001, pp. 140-156. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 236. Dictionary of Literary Biography Main Series*, go.galegroup.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/ps/i.do?p=DLBC&sw=w&u=tusc49521&v=2.1&id=UDIUMH807155051&it=r&asid=30bfc911f74e7d3665830fd989451632.

¹¹ Alexander, Gavin, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

the thought traditions within which Spenser is writing, we see a conflict of antitheses, and even an explicit distinction of art and nature that Lewis draws to fruition later. Allegory, “which is that of a struggle between personified abstractions,” was a form frowned upon by modern writers (and is still not very widely respected) and thinkers, who held “that ‘art means what it says’ or even that art is meaningless” (*Allegory* 1). For medieval love poetry, it was “essential to this form that the literal narrative and the *significacio* should be separable” (1). However, I wonder if there is a different way of looking at this issue. Allegory is often treated as form, even by Lewis, who needed to identify it as such to be able to, in his mind, properly understand what Spenser is doing with it. But perhaps allegory is actually the matter, of which Fraunce says: “a cause is that by whose power and force a thing is caused: therefore this first place of Invention is the fountayne of all knowledge, and that thing onely is knowne, whose cause is vnderstoode” (Sig. D3^r). In his later *Art of Logic*, Milton more concisely defines matter as “the cause out of which a thing is” – the (abstract) substance acted upon by the efficient cause. If allegory itself is the matter, then, the form would be epic poetry or a fairy novel.

Lewis’s discussion of the allegory in *The Faerie Queene* depends largely on his study of the traditions that Spenser employs throughout the epic and the ways in which he manipulates them. In every piece of his academic writing, he continually cites the parent texts and literary heritage from which Spenser draws, from Virgil, to Chaucer, to Malory, and a number of in-betweens. *Spenser’s Images of Life*, published posthumously by Lewis’s former student, Alastair Fowler, is a study which focuses on the iconography of allegorical images within which Spenser was operating. From this work, it is clear that, like Lewis’s humility toward Spenser’s text, Spenser likewise humbled himself to the images and traditions he employed. Lewis’s scribbled notes on Spenser’s Cupid in Book III, canto ii, which later turned into the lecture notes that

ultimately comprise the work, mention Ovid and Alciati, the works he is referencing, as well as the book, canto, and stanzas of those works where the exact references can be found¹². He was dedicated to understanding the framework with which Spenser was engaging, adding to, tweaking, and how readers in that time would have experienced Spenser's text. In a note on Spenser's depiction of Cupid, Lewis posits of all of the traditions with which Spenser is engaging *The Faerie Queene*, "[I] don't care if S. got it direct from Alciati. It is part of a recognized iconographical system [...] (unlike that) known only to the learned."¹³ In keeping with that "Old order" way of thinking, Lewis is concerned with the images and traditions Spenser uses that readers of *The Faerie Queene*, even the "unlearned," would automatically recognize and derive meaning from. In my own analysis, I will do the same with Spenser's and MacDonald's respective uses of the Arthur story. My interrogation of Englishness hints at a cultural conception of an "idyllic" or even possibly a "pure" England, and the fictionalized "Camelot" is often a reference point for this conception, so much so that the Tudors legitimized their reign by manipulating their lineage to include Arthur (Millican 3). Though I do not have Lewis's photographic memory to assist me, I will engage with the source material,¹⁴ the literary traditions, and the "iconographical systems" that they use relating to the political allegory in *The Faerie Queene* and *Phantastes* that would have been easily recognizable to Early Modern and Victorian readers.

I also want to clarify what I mean by "political allegory." This term is often used interchangeably with "historical allegory," so a distinction of those is in order here. Lewis's assertion that to do an extensive reading of the political and historical allegory, one would have

¹² Because the referenced papers are on loan to the Bodleian from Walter Hooper, Lewis's former secretary, I was prohibited from taking photographs of these notes.

¹³ C.S. Lewis, *Notebook*, fols. 19-29 (unpublished, at Weston Library, Oxford).

¹⁴ Mainly Malory's *Le Morte de Arthur* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's accounts.

to be a historian (or at least a New Historicist literary critic) is correct, in fact. So it should come as no surprise that this is not what I will be doing. Instead, I will be treating the term “political allegory” as a *subset* of historical allegory, and focusing specifically on nationalist constructions of Englishness within these two works. This way of thinking about the political allegory is more accessible to someone who is not a historian or New Historicist, while still considering and utilizing the historical context of these texts. Because again, while Lewis may be correct about the necessity of a thorough knowledge of history in order to understand the specifics of the particular political and historical allegories Spenser employs, he is mistaken in his thinking that the political allegory is irrelevant to those who do not have such a knowledge. The political allegory facilitates the rhetoric of Englishness embedded in a discourse of nationalism that is already present within the moral allegory.

Structure

This methodology will be implemented through culturally historicized extended close readings of *The Faerie Queene* and *Phantastes*. In reading *The Faerie Queene* and *Phantastes* through the lens of Lewis colored with a shade of historicism, I interpret instances involving literal mirrors, as well as capitalizing on the Arthurian legend and chivalric traditions present within the texts. More specifically, I will conduct a close reading of Britomart’s encounter with Merlin’s mirror in Book III, cantos ii and iii of *The Faerie Queene*, as well as Arthur’s first appearance in Book I, canto vii, and his fight with Orgoglio in Book I, canto viii. In *Phantastes*, I will analyze its hero’s encounter with a magic mirror housed inside a book he reads, as well as his various encounters with armor throughout the novel. These few instances in the texts are by no means the extent of what could be analyzed, but the limited nature of this thesis mandates a limited analysis.

Each chapter is supported by material from my archival work in Cambridge, Oxford, and London as an instrumental part of this project, which will not be separated from the readings themselves but implemented into them so that they inform the interpretations of the texts. At the University Library at the University of Cambridge, I was able to examine first edition copies of *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596) and the signs of readership therein (mostly notes in the margins and the evidence of what appears to be commonplace markings), which add greatly to my close readings in the chapter on Spenser. This process was, I should say, very like what this thesis aims to do: I literally placed myself within the historical context of a Renaissance man (and his wife), and of each of the subsequent readers after (one of whom happened to be a Victorian chap) in order to, as Lewis challenges me to, think like an “Old Westerner.”

Now then, let us enter Fairy Land with this framework in mind.

CHAPTER TWO: SPENSER'S "ANTIQUE YMAGES"

Introduction

Sixteenth century England witnessed remarkable political, religious, and cultural change. The Tudor dynasty, established on a "tenuous and disputed" claim to the throne after Henry VII's defeat of Yorkist king Richard III and subsequent marriage to Elizabeth of the house of York, proved to be potent yet tumultuous (Sharpe 61). Once-powerful lords and barons were impoverished and "bitterly divided" by the conflict's aftermath, and no longer had the influence or prominence required to challenge the Crown (61). Henry VII gained the respect and support of the Church leaders by paying "attention to rituals of state and church" and holding them in high regard (62). The diminished power of the nobility and the general support of the Church meant that there was little accountability or limitation to the new King's reign. This line of monarchs began with violence in the dynastic wars, and violence continued to be a defining factor throughout the Tudor reign: Henry VIII beheaded two of his six wives as well as his secretary of state, Thomas Cromwell; Edward VI's reign saw a military rebellion against his attempts at radical religious reform; Mary I's determination to return to the Catholic Church led to the burning of many Protestant reformers at the stake, earning her the nickname "Bloody Mary." There was also uncertainty concerning legitimacy of all of Henry VIII's successors, understandably so, considering his numerous marriages. Elizabeth herself was one of those questionable heirs, and her reign often saw challenges to its legitimacy. She not only inherited a kingdom steeped in political anxiety and unrest, but was herself a part of it.

The religious upheaval that took place in the sixteenth century was very closely tied with this political turmoil. Prior to Henry VIII's reign, England recognized the Catholic Church as its authoritative religious institution, and the tenants of Catholicism were adhered to by the people of England. Henry's divorce of Catherine of Aragon and subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn in 1533 prompted the current pope, Clement VII, to excommunicate Henry from the Roman Catholic Church. Parliament passed the "Act of Supremacy" a year later, which established the king as the Head of the Church of England but subsequently "defied centuries of history and alienated loyal Catholics" (Sharpe 68). This break came sixteen years after the Protestant Reformation, and though Henry himself was not a Protestant (in fact he still held to the tenants of Catholicism), the establishment of the Church of England aligning with the Protestant break from the Catholic Church made way for a good deal of monarchical freedom in deciding what the national religion would be. The next twenty-five years were wracked with religious oscillation, which coincided with uncertainty of expectation in proper monarchical rule. Kevin Sharpe's *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* remarks that

[...] Henry's sacralization of himself posed endless difficulties, though very different difficulties, to his successors. [...] Since the claim to exercise the clerical office, to have sway in matters spiritual, was a vital foundation of Henry's post-Reformation kingship, that rendered the position of his successors extremely vulnerable. Edward endeavoured by prodigious learning and piety to show himself fit in future for spiritual leadership and supremacy. Mary, who did not of course wish to exercise the pope's authority, struggled to restore England's subjection to Rome. Elizabeth, while cautious not to transgress the codes of gender by claiming the title Supreme Head, sought to exercise that authority in reality and through others. (Sharpe 73)

The fragility of power and frustration with aligning their religious responsibilities with their political ones left Henry's successors with much anxiety about their rule, and most of them implemented some form of violent persecution for those citizens who did not comply with the established national religion.

This political and religious disquiet greatly affected Elizabethan culture. The constantly changing national mindset toward religion and widespread fear of persecution and death that followed in the wake of the monarchical inconsistencies created a culture in want of a sense of stability. And it seems that at least some of the English people found that stability in Elizabeth's reign: underneath the dedication to the Queen in a 1590 publication of *The Faerie Queene*, a sixteenth-century owner of the book has written "In the name of God amen" three times in reverence to her.¹⁵ Such a want is made manifest in various English concerns with which Spenser, in his political role in Ireland,¹⁶ had an unmediated encounter. His construction of a national epic simultaneously lauds Elizabeth and criticizes her court, and attempts to provide a more definitive picture of what Englishness actually is. In this pattern of thought and search for stability, we turn to *The Faerie Queene*.

"Fayre" Mirrors in Faerie Realms

And thou, O fayrest Princesse vnder sky,
In this fayre mirrhour maist behold thy face
And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery,
And in this antique ymage thy great ancestry.
(Book II, proem 4.6-9)

As one of the main criticisms of allegory is its often-grounding in the intentional fallacy, it will be beneficial to address C.S. Lewis's approach to this subject. Edmund Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh purports to "discouer vnto [Raleigh] the general intention & meaning" (*FQ* ed. Penguin 15). This intention, he says, is "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline [...] being coloured with an *historicall fiction*" (15, emphasis mine). The fiction is the "historye of king Arthure," and the reason for it is to protect readers from "suspicion

¹⁵ Anonymous marginalia in Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London: John Wolfe, 1590), SSS.22.27 held in the Rare Books Room in the Cambridge University Library.

¹⁶ Lewis, C.S. "Edmund Spenser, 1552-99." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 124-126.

of present time” (15). This statement of intent would insinuate that we are not meant to read in *The Faerie Queene* any critique of or comment on Elizabeth’s England. But Lewis posits that “the Letter to Raleigh printed with the First Part of *The Faerie Queene* in 1590 gives a most misleading account of the poem,” for the contents of the letter do not match up with the actuality of the poem itself (*Images* 137). It follows, then, that to discover the true design of the work, we must look elsewhere – and in keeping with Lewis’s process of analysis, the first place to go is the text itself, thus acknowledging that Spenser indeed had an intent but recognizing that a focus on it will in fact detract from a fruitful analysis. The fourth stanza of the proem to Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, then, is (seemingly) self-explanatory in understanding Spenser’s intention for his epic. The poem is meant to be a “mirrhour,” not only for Elizabeth, but for the kingdom as a whole. Helen Cooper argues that Spenser writes *The Faerie Queene*

not just as England’s national epic, but as an anatomy of the nation for his own times and in the light of how that present has come into being. He will present its own “auncestry” alongside the Queen’s, in terms of its history, its traditions, and its literary inheritance, for the body politic has a genealogy just as Elizabeth’s own person does. It is a poem at once contemporary, in its concerns with the young Anglican Church, the condition of Ireland, and foreign relations; historical and legendary - historical, in its recurrent reversion to chronicle from the founding of Britain forwards; and mythological, in its animation of the topographical structure of the nation, in the mapping of its rivers. It is a key text - it is *the* key text - in the great Elizabethan movement towards what Richard Helgerson calls “the writing of England” (Helgerson 1992, title page). (Cooper 749-750)

Thus the present English monarch “maist behold [her] face” in the “fayre mirrhour,” which reflects England “for his own time,” by conjuring up an “antique ymage” of “its history, its traditions, and its literary inheritance.” We see here that the present conception of Englishness must be understood in light of past conceptions, and it is this philosophy that MacDonald and Lewis hold to as well.

Yet we cannot, of course, ignore Spenser’s moral purpose for the poem as well as his political one, and the intersection of these purposes is where “the writing of England” truly

begins. Though Lewis does not give an explicit interpretation of this particular passage, applying the methodology of this thesis (adapted, of course, from Lewis's) to Cooper's notion of the "anatomy of the nation," will render an understanding of Spenser's "mirrhour" that will allow us not only to see, but to participate in his construction of Englishness.

In order to fully examine Englishness through antitheses and multiplicity, we must first examine agency, and the relationship between agency and bloodlines in the poem. Agency in *The Faerie Queene* is almost always tied to the logical component of *form*, in that the type of agency a thing or person has modifies that thing's or person's form, and it is a useful lens for our inquiry into Early Modern Englishness. In *The Faerie Queene*, the heroes are described as either having English blood or Faerie blood, and several of them are confused as to which they have. For Spenser (and, as I will discuss later, MacDonald), characters of purely English blood have little to no agency, while characters of purely faerie¹⁷ blood not only hold agency within themselves, they also enable the English characters to act outside of their own capacity. Fairy Land itself holds ultimate agency in Spenser's story, and the Faerie Queene Gloriana - one of Spenser's allegorical depictions of Queen Elizabeth - is the physical symbol of Fairy Land, and thus agency resides with her.

To work through an example, in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, the Red-Crosse Knight's heritage is revealed to both him and the reader. The "godly aged Sire," whom the Red-Crosse Knight meets in the House of Holinesse, informs the Knight that though called "a Faerie's sonne" his entire life, he is actually of "English blood" (I.x.48.1; I.x.64.6-7). The Red-Crosse Knight learns that he was stolen from his cradle as a baby by a faerie, and that he is actually descended from "ancient race/Of Saxon kinges" (I.x.65.1-2). The agency, in this instance,

¹⁷ When modifying "tales" or "stories" or "structure," I will use the contemporary spelling of "fairy." When attached to the nature of Fairy Land, I will use "faerie."

resides with the faerie who kidnapped him. The Red-Crosse Knight had no control over being brought into Fairy Land; he was subject to the agency wielded by one of its natives. Further, until his “purging” in the House of Holinesse, the Red-Crosse Knight thinks that he is a “Faerie’s sonne” – therefore he believes that he has agency where he in reality holds none. The repercussions of this mistake are vast, almost costing him his life on several occasions.¹⁸ It is only after he has been made aware of and come to terms with who he really is that he is able to defeat the dragon and complete his quest. After two days of fighting with the dragon and being the recipient of several injuries, the Knight is dealt yet another seemingly fatal blow. Spenser describes him as “faint through losse of blood,” and he must be healed by ointment from a tree native to *Faerie* soil (I.xi.50.3). This “losse of blood” is both literal and symbolic in terms of the idea of the Red-Crosse Knight’s agency, and it functions on two fronts. First, it can be read as a symbolic loss of his “fairy blood,” a final shedding of who he thought he was in order to embrace who he actually is. The second front is a symbolic loss of his English blood, not to become someone different, but to make way for the agency of *faerie*, to accept that he is matter subject to the forces of an external cause. For it is during his loss of blood that the “Balme” from the tree “did heale his woundes,” as Una, his fairy counterpart, prays over him, and it after his loss of blood that he can finally defeat the dragon (I.xi.50.6-7).

This idea of faerie agency is evidenced further in the proem to Book II, wherein Spenser gives a brief, belated introduction to Fairy Land, albeit after he has taken readers through one full adventure in it. In the proem, he informs the reader that

none, that breatheth liuing aire, does know,
Where is that happy land of Faery,
Which I so much doe vaunt, yet no where show,
But vouch antiquities, which no body can know. (II.proem.1.6-9).

¹⁸ I.viii.1, his entrapment in Orgoglio’s castle; I.i.14-27, his fight with Errour.

He goes on to say that those who “inquire/By certein signes” may perhaps find it, but “no’te without an hound fine footing trace” – in other words, they may find it, but they will not be able to navigate it (II.proem.4.1-2, 5). Spenser clearly explains that to fully experience Fairy Land, one must be brought there by someone or something that is native to the land. This further propels the notion that ultimate agency is held by Fairy Land itself; one cannot *decide* to go to Fairy Land, one must be brought there or shown the way. Even Spenser himself does not have the agency to lead people to Fairy Land – he can “vaunt” or proclaim its existence, but he cannot make us see it. He is our only point of access to this realm, and yet he equally can “no where show” us the way to it. This, I believe, is Spenser’s understanding that there will be readers of his epic that are not entranced by the allegory, that do not allow themselves to wonder at the world he creates, that look into the “mirrhour” and see only shadows. As readers of Spenser’s poetic “mirrhour,” then, we must submit to the agency of Fairy Land just as the heroes of the story do. This puts us in an excellent position to examine Spenser’s poetic “mirrhour” by first examining another mirror in the poem: Merlin’s mirror in Book III.

In Book III, we are introduced to Britomart, an English princess on a quest to find her true love in Fairy Land. Britomart’s actions in the beginning of her story are entirely centered on her fate. She lacks agency in almost every sense of the word. Merlin tells her that “it was not...[her] wandring eye,/Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas,/But the streight course of heuenly destiny” that caused her to look into the mirror that shows her the image of her beloved (III.iii.24.1-3). In logical terms, if it were Britomart’s “wandring eye” that caused her to look in the mirror, then she would have agency over her own matter, in the specific form of making her eye wander. But Merlin tells her that it was “heuenly destiny” that exercises its agency over her matter, causing her eye to wander intentionally to the mirror. “Heuenly destiny,” in this case, is

the external cause, impelling Britomart to act, and as matter, Britomart is subject to the force of its impulsion. It is both procreating and maintaining,¹⁹ as it both prompts her initial actions and compels her forward in search of a man who has also been subject to the whims of *faerie*.

Merlin, however, is not native to English soil. A marginal note beside III.iii.7 in a 1590 publication of *The Faerie Queene* observes in that stanza that Spenser is specifying the “native soil of Merlin.”²⁰ The place to which Spenser assigns Merlin, “*Cayr-Merdin*” is a real place in Wales, yet the name he calls it first, “*Maridunum*,” is particular to the mythical Camelot stories. In this stanza, Spenser is already blending the worlds together through the origins of Merlin, and if we take our Early-Modern reader’s view that this is indeed the “native soil of Merlin,” then Merlin’s agency begins in the *faerie* realm with the mythical *Maridunum*, yet transcends that realm into the (then) modern-day Wales. Already, Spenser is extrapolating a sense of duality even in terms of agency.

Britomart begins her quest fully aware that she is not from Fairy Land. Her “companion,” of sorts, is Merlin’s prophesy, which is not only the means by which she came to Fairy Land but also the reason she is there, and the “guide” she is following as she travels. The fact that she is aware of her origin and her nature is what allows her to be more successful in her adventures than a hero who is unaware of his lineage, like the Red-Crosse Knight. In logical terms, she is aware of her own matter, and thus does not fight the external causality driving her course. Even in the one instance in which she seems to take agency – her encounter with Scudamore and her rescue of Amoret – she still submits to “high prouidence” (III.xi.14.4). She,

¹⁹ Referring to causality, which is linked to agency. For “heuenly destiny” to be both procreating or initiating action as well as maintaining and sustaining it, there cannot be much debate about where the agency in this relationship lies.

²⁰ Anonymous marginalia in Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London: John Wolfe, 1590), SSS.22.27 held in the Rare Books Room in the Cambridge University Library.

being of Reasonable nature, knows that though she has agency to make decisions, she must rely on that which guides her through Fairy Land – Merlin’s prophesy and “high providence” – to act upon those decisions.

As previously explained in the methodology section, when there is a juxtaposition of the Real and the Apparent, it is wise to pay attention. Britomart’s encounter with Merlin is incited by her glancing into a mirror and seeing an image of Artegall (though she does not know his name yet). Upon seeing this knight in the mirror, Britomart begins “to loue his sight,” though she has encountered “But th’only shade and semblant of a knight,/Whose shape or person yet [she] neuer saw” (III.ii.18.2, III.ii.38.3-4). An image in a mirror is just that - an Image. It cannot exist without the Thing itself and is but an imitation of it. As established from Lewis’s discussion of this dichotomy, an “imitation” in Spenser, something Apparent, is generally associated with artifice and, in the extreme, evil. If the reader will remember this discussion from the previous chapter, in which Lewis analyzes this dichotomy in his comparison of the painting of Venus and Adonis in the Castle Joyous with the real Venus and Adonis in the Garden of Adonis, the *image* is “lust suspended,” whereas the *reality* is a fruition of true love.

In reading Merlin’s Mirror with this mindset, Britomart’s “love” for Artegall transforms at the very least into an artificial infatuation, and at most an obsessive lust. She can “haue no end, nor hope of [her] desire,/But feed on shadowes” and “fonder loue a shade” (III.ii.44.1-2, 9). The imagery of “feed[ing]” insinuates that what Britomart is experiencing is more akin to lust than to love. Spenser’s use of the word “fonder” is also important here. In the context of the stanza and taking into account its presence a few lines previous, the most sensical interpretation of “fonder” would be the Middle English usage, meaning “infatuated, foolish, [or] silly” (“fond”). But the Oxford English Dictionary also lists “fonder” as a variant of the medieval word

“fander,” which means “tempter” (“fander|fonder”). The juxtaposition of the presentation of Britomart as the figurehead of chastity with the language Spenser is using in this passage is jarring, and insinuates a more complex understanding of Britomart than the picture we are initially given. This reading is substantiated later in her story, when she is in the House of Busirane. The tapestries on the wall in the palace depict “pourtraicts” of the gods “and all of loue, and al of lusty-hed,” and their vivid portrayals “by their semblaunt did entreat” Britomart to fix her gaze upon them (III.xi.29.4). A.C. Hamilton’s note on this stanza defines “entreat” as to “entice others to indulge in” (note 4). Britomart is indulging in the “semblaunt[s]” of lust in the tapestries just as she indulged in the “semblaunt” of Artegall’s image in the mirror. There is a clear relationship here between “semblaunt” and “seeme,” and thus “semblaunt” and “Apparent.” It follows that Britomart’s “loue” of Artegall, then, is not the true, realized love that is depicted in the story as something Real, but rather Lewis’s idea of “lust suspended.”

This reading becomes problematic, however, when Merlin begins to describe how Britomart and Artegall’s marriage will be the foundation of the British nation, and ultimately make way for Elizabeth’s ascent to the English throne. The Brittonic rule in England cannot be a bad thing, as the reigning monarch was a descendent of that line, so Britomart’s love for Artegall cannot have been meant to be read in a negative light; it cannot be lust that establishes the Briton monarchical rule. This is where the intersection of the moral and political allegories come into play; pairing this establishment of the line of British monarchs, culminating in a representation of the current reigning monarch at the time, with the religious allegory of Britomart being representative of Chastity, keeping always in mind that Spenser is concerned with multiple kingdoms here, it becomes necessary to reconcile this reading to what we know to be true about Spenser’s views of England.

Lewis says in *The Allegory of Love* that Spenser “remind[s] us by delicate allegories that though the conflict [of opposites] seems ultimate yet one of the opposites really contains, and is not contained by, the other. Truth and falsehood are opposed; but truth is the norm not of truth only but of falsehood also” (*Allegory* 393). There are multiple antitheses at play in Britomart’s encounter with Merlin’s mirror: Real versus Apparent, England versus Fairy Land, Love versus Lust. The mirror itself is the hinge upon which all of these antitheses swing, and thus is the key to understanding which opposite “contains” the other in each of these binaries.

I have already established that the mirror exhibits *faerie* agency and holds English residency. Artegall himself is English, was “by false *Faries* stolne away,” and is now “wonneth in the land of *Fayeree*” (III.iii.26.6, 3). The mirror shows his image not as an Englishman, but as he exists in Faerie Land, a dichotomy which works in tandem with the dichotomy of the Real and the Apparent. The mirror shows Britomart a “semblant of a knight,” the Apparent Image of a Real person (III.ii.38.3). That is, Artegall’s image in the mirror, though only an image, is still a reflection of something Real. Further, the mirror is “deuiz’d” by “[t]he great Magicien *Merlin*,” making it an object of *faerie* origin and thus, like the tree balm which has agency through its faerie substance, assigning it agency in itself. Yet this *faerie* object is housed in England, both worlds encompassed within it. It shows “in perfect sight,/What euer thing was in the world contaynd,/Betwixt the lowest earth and heauens hight” – in short, images of both worlds, just like Spenser’s “mirrhour” in the proem of Book II (III.ii.19.1-3). Toward the end of the stanza, however, the mirror’s shape is described as “Like to the world it selfe, and seemd a world of glas” - it both portrays the world and *is* a world, though a “seem”-ing world (III.ii.19.9). The mirror itself provides a link between those two worlds - once again, a dwelling place for paradoxes, where both Real and Apparent can not only coexist but co-mingle, with each

antithesis weaving in and out of the other. If we take this one step further by applying Lewis's idea that one antithesis contains the other, we find that within the object of the Mirror, the Real is the opposite which contains the other, Apparent.

This idea of the Apparent being contained by the Real is a Neoplatonic²¹ one. I have already discussed briefly Plato's separation of the two antitheses and his interpretation that what is Real and Natural should be lauded, while the Apparent or Artificial only detracts from the Real, and thus should be disregarded as Lewis's "sham or imitation," often an evil one. But the philosophical movement that succeeded Plato, dubbed "Neoplatonism" in the nineteenth century, while maintaining that the Real and the Apparent were two separate concepts, held instead that the Apparent, rather than distracting from the Real, actually had the capacity to point to it: poetry should be written and read and shared because it told the truth about the world it described. Carol Kaske touches on this concept in conjunction with the Neoplatonic idea of "preexistence," the notion that there was a "preincarnate blessedness of the soul" that was made manifest in the "colonization of the body" (Kaske 162). She posits that, in regards to Britomart, the "freakish element" of falling in love with a man she has "fashioned [...] in her mind" is "an exaggeration of the neoplatonic doctrine that what is loved is the idea of the beloved in the lover's mind" (166). Essentially, then, the "heavenly destiny" that guides Britomart's glance is the Neoplatonic "preincarnate blessedness of the soul," and the object of that preexisting "potential" is but an image of Artegall, not the real thing. And while this is an astute assertion, it fails to notice that it is this "idea" that spurs Britomart on to seek the Real Artegall – that the "preincarnate blessedness of the soul" (for us, the Apparent) is indeed made incarnate (what Kaske identifies as

²¹ This thesis is not concerned with a full discussion of the Neoplatonism in Spenser's epic. Kaske's article lists several resources for study on that subject. For the purposes of this discussion, I am only employing this philosophical tradition to point out that the moral implications of the antitheses Spenser is dissecting were a part of a widely-reaching discussion.

the “colonization of the body”) in her search for and ultimate obtaining of the Real, Living Artegall himself. Thus the one is governed by, pointed to, and contained by the other.

Up to this point, I have discussed the dichotomy of Real and Apparent and how that dichotomy functions when applied to this instance of political allegory in the poem. I have claimed that agency in the poem belongs to *faerie*, and I have argued that Merlin’s Mirror is a hinge upon which the Real and the Apparent swing. I have not yet discussed what any of this has to do with nationalism and Englishness, however.

Toward the end of delivering the prophecy, Merlin says that through Britomart and Artegall’s marriage and subsequent procreation, “eternall vnion shall be made/Between the nations different afore” (III.iii.49.1-2). Historically (and according to A.C. Hamilton’s footnotes), Merlin is referring to the union of Wales and England. But allegorically, this union serves a different purpose. Britomart, fully English and fully aware of her Englishness, is driven by fate to venture to Faerie Land to find Artegall. Artegall, also English but completely unaware of his Englishness, is represented, in this section of the story, by an Image of him in Faerie Land. Britomart, then, is representative of the Real World, of England as it existed at that moment. Artegall, however, is representative of the Apparent, but not of the Apparent as something that is “less real.” We have already established that the Artegall in the mirror is an image of the Real thing. In this instance, then, the Apparent is indicative of the “not yet.” Britomart looks into the mirror and sees the image by “heauenly destiny,” and is then told a prophecy not only of her own future but the future of the English nation. The mirror, then, is the place in which the union of England at Britomart’s present moment and England in future occurs. The mirror is a steward of “faerie agency” and “heauenly destiny” at the same time. In a poem which is simultaneously concerned with national identity and Christian sanctification, citizenship to both worlds is found

in the tension between the “already” and the “not yet.”²² And in order for this union to occur, both Real and Apparent are necessary, and one must contain the other.

Myth and Mirrors in Spenser’s Arthur

The implications of the union of Britomart and Artegall reach even further when applied to the Arthurian stories from which Spenser is drawing. Again, the Arthur narrative in *The Faerie Queene* is important to examine because Spenser is using “the historye of king Arthure,” who is, according to legend, *the* King of the Britons, to “fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline,” and it is this exact duality of allegorical purpose in establishing Englishness that this thesis is interrogating (*FQ* ed. Penguin 15). Furthermore, Early Modern readers seemed to take an interest in his appearance in the epic: another note in the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* finds “Arthur” and what appears to be a commonplace symbol in the margin next to the first mention of his name, as well as the lineage of British monarchs in canto x of Book II. Though there is no one original “story of Arthur,” the circumstances of Arthur’s birth seem to remain consistent across the various renditions. Uther Pendragon lusts after the wife of Gorlois, the Duke of Cornwall.²³ Uther, in true King David fashion, has Gorlois sent to war, where he is soundly killed. With the help of Merlin, Uther transforms into the likeness of Gorlois to lay with his wife, and from that interaction Arthur is conceived.

In stanza 27 of book III, canto iii, Merlin tells Britomart that Artegall is the “sonne of Gorlois,” making him Arthur’s half-brother. A.C. Hamilton’s edition of *The Faerie Queene* notes that in posing him this way, Spenser positions Arthegall to “tak[e] Arthur’s place in the chronicle” (*FQ* ed. Hamilton, 315, note 1 on stanza 27). If we follow that interpretation, it could

²² Due credit to Mr. Chris Brooks for this phraseology.

²³ The fact that Spenser changes the lineage of the current monarch to the legitimate son of Gorlois and Igraine is indicative of his conviction of a chaste marriage be the foundation of England, rather than a moment of overpowering lust.

be argued that, in the same way that “Tudor monarchs [...] exploited their links with Britain’s Celtic pre-history as a means of [...] assuaging doubts about the legitimacy of their claim to the throne,” so Spenser manipulates the lineage of England’s reigning monarch (Finke 212). It could also be read as a criticism of the Tudor “exploitation” of their claim to the throne: in manipulating the lineage so that the patriarch of the monarchy is described as a “shadow” and is representative of the Apparent, he is subversively delegitimizing Elizabeth’s reign. While those implications would certainly be interesting to explore, I think Spenser is doing something very different.

Lewis states that “[t]he regrettable truth is that in the unfinished state of the poem we cannot interpret its hero at all,” and he is very likely correct, at least up until the “at all” (*Allegory* 419). Because Arthur’s adventure was to be the final book of Spenser’s epic (according to Spenser’s letter to Raleigh), and that book was never written, understanding the *fullness* of Arthur’s character and the subsequent implications is indeed impossible. However, by exploring the information Spenser does provide and examining it against the traditions within which Spenser is working and adapting through our expansion of Lewis’s own methods, we can perhaps begin to glimpse the notions of Englishness he is establishing. We must be conscious of the fact that Spenser is adding threads to a tapestry that has been in the weaving process since the Ancient Britons, and that the weaving is collaborative in nature – remember, the “mirrhour” that Spenser invites Elizabeth into in Proem II is one which contains England’s past and present. The Arthur Story has evolved markedly in the last 1,500 years, and as there is not room enough in

this thesis to do a comprehensive overview of the tradition,²⁴ I shall rely on the scholarship and study of those medievalists who came before me.

C.S. Lewis's close friend and fellow Inkling and medievalist Charles Williams claims, in a reproduced fragment of his posthumously published *Arthurian Torso*, that Malory's "great English presentation" of the Arthur story led to "the political effort of Henry VII to derive his dynasty from Arthur," which "distracted attention from the Grail, and there came the modified Arthur of Spenser" (*Torso* 93-94). Even without the monarchical politicizing of Arthur, Arthur's own kingship situates him as the figurehead for the Kingdom of England. It is in the various literary accounts of the Arthurian legends that we begin to see the ways in which Englishness as a national concept evolves. Certainly, with Arthur being "a synecdoche for Britain's Celtic past," the very fact of the telling and retelling, adapting and reinterpreting of the "matter of Britain" (as the Arthur stories are often considered), is evidence of the changing nature of Englishness in literature, and particularly for Spenser, his use of the legend "links him at once with the Arthurian interests of Tudor Englishmen" (Finke 224, Millican 167). He is at once participating in a transcendent tradition and speaking into his specific moment in history, using Arthur to do so. As a hybrid of both the political and moral ideal in Spenser's epic, the figure of Arthur, as it were, deserves careful consideration, even if we do not get the full picture.

The figure of Arthur in *The Faerie Queene* has very complicated agency. Like the Redcrosse Knight and Artegall, he is unsure of his origins;²⁵ and, like Britomart, he is also drawn to Fairy Land by an image of love. Though he seems to have agency in coming to Fairy Land, for he "cast in carefull mynd,/To seeke her out with labor," he clarifies that it is, in fact, a dream

²⁴ For readers interested in such an overview, Charles Williams' *The Arthurian Torso* is an insightful study. The forthcoming collection of essays edited by Sorena Higgins, *The Inklings and King Arthur* will also provide a simultaneously concise but thorough survey of the tradition.

²⁵ Though he is unaware of his specific "lignage," he knows he is not from Fairy Land (I.ix.3)

of Gloriana that inspires this ceaseless searching (I.ix.15.6-7). Worth noting is the frequency of the word “faire” (or variations of that word) in describing Arthur. “Faire” used as a description of Arthur doubles in meaning: it at once implies the traditional meaning of courteousness and is, I believe, a play on the word “fairy.”²⁶

Our very first glimpse of Arthur is that of “A goodly knight, faire marching by the way” (I.vii.29.2). If we read this with the understanding of “faire” as a variation or play on “fairy,” then our immediate assumption is that this man is, by Spenser’s own terms, a “Faery Knight;” or, at the very least, we are alerted to something that is “fairy-like” in his appearance or nature. As we read on, of course, we learn that he is in fact the legendary Arthur, making him a Briton; and yet, that is not our first understanding of him. Spenser introduces him to us as something *faerie* in nature, and does not reveal his *true* nature until two cantos later. It is, however, his armor that is *faerie* in nature. Spenser tells us that

It Merlin was, which whylome did excell
All living wightes in might of magicke spell:
Both shield, and sword, and armour all he wrought
For this young Prince²⁷ [...]. (I.vii.36.4-7)

Once again, we have a magical (and, as we will see, reflective) object forged by Merlin, which allows those of Brittonic blood agency to act within the poem.

²⁶ The OED lists “faire” as well as “fayre,” another occasional spelling of the word attached to Arthur, as one of the forms of the word “fairy” beginning circa 1300 C.E.

²⁷ This stanza goes on to say that “when [Arthur] dyde, the Faery Queene it brought/To Faerie Lond, where yet it may be seene, if sought” (I.vii.36.8-9). A.C. Hamilton’s notes regarding this stanza state that “Before ever Arthur acts in the poem, he is distanced from us by his death” (99), and certain summaries of the stanza have interpreted this as an indication that Arthur’s presence in Fairy Land is a result of his death. The “it” in the stanza, however, insinuates to me that Spenser is here referring to his armor, and is thus a foretelling of the actuality of Arthur’s death. Further, no mention of Arthur’s own death is made in his biographical account to Una and Red Crosse, and he is referred to throughout as “Prince” instead of “King.” In the Arthurian tradition, Arthur’s death comes about when he is King, and thus my reading of Arthur and understanding of his agency operates on the assumption that he is very much alive, both in Fairy Land and in England.

To further establish the agency of the armor, we must look at the similarity in language and function to Merlin's mirror in Book III. First, examining the parallel logical structure of the two objects will confirm the validity of this connection. The matter, in both cases, is the metal, the glass, and the precious stones from which these objects are made. The form is what they are made into: armor and mirror. But as they are forged by Merlin, whose own *faerie* nature imbues these objects as he acts upon them as an efficient cause bringing them into being, the form then takes on an additional *faerie* quality, going from a simple suit of armor and mirror to a *faerie* suit of armor, and a *faerie* mirror. Early Modern logic constitutes that an efficient cause is what gives a thing its agency, and that thing's form is where that agency is made manifest; by taking on *faerie* form, the matter moves from being a static thing to an active thing with goals and ambitions.

Further, the use of the word "glauncing" in both instances is notable. Merlin tells Britomart that "it was not...[her] wandring eye,/Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas" - Britomart's "glaunce" was guided by the agency present within the mirror (as established in the previous section) (III.iii.24.1-3). This is an example, then of the mirror's faerie agency at work. Likewise, Arthur's "glitterand armour shined far away,/Like glauncing light of *Phoebus* brightest ray" (I.vii.29.4-5). In the context of the logical function of "glauncing," we see that in both instances, it is indicative of causality. "Glauncing" is the same specific formal description of both activities, being applied to the same kind of faerie object: Britomart's eyes "glaunce" at the mirror, and light "glaunces" off of Arthur's armor. This identical formal description further establishes the parallel nature and function of these two objects, and is evidence for that nature being one of internal causality for the things themselves, and external causality for Britomart and Arthur.

This idea gains traction in Arthur's fight with Orgoglio in Book I, canto viii. At one point in the conflict, Arthur takes a rather hard hit and falls to the ground, and his shield, which had hitherto been covered, "Did loose his vele by chaunce, and open flew" (I.viii.19.2). The shield then emits a light of "Such blazing brightnesse" that Orgoglio is temporarily blinded. Duessa attempts to rally her champion, but Arthur cuts off his leg and kills him. Before the death blow, however, Spenser tells us that Orgoglio

Againe his wonted angry weapon proou'd:
But all in vaine: for he has redd his end
In that bright shield, and all their forces spend
Them selues in vaine: for since that glauncing sight,
He hath no poure to hurt, nor to defend[.] (I.viii.21.3-7)

A.C. Hamilton's note on this stanza defines "redd" as "seen as in a mirror," and the word "glauncing" reappears in relation to a faerie object which stewards agency (notes 4 and 6). The shield, made by Merlin, is, according to Hamilton, being compared with a mirror - and, of course, we already know of another mirror which is faerie in nature and made by Merlin.

This mirror, though, is a bit more complicated than Britomart's. Britomart's "glauncing" into Merlin's mirror was guided by the faerie agency present in the form of the mirror. In this instance, it is, simultaneously, the shield's faerie form that causes Orgoglio to look, and *not* its faerie form that causes him to look. We are told that the covering of the shield fell off by "chaunce;" it is only after the light of the shield is uncovered that Orgoglio looks at it. While the light of the shield is the source of causality in this instance, it is *the looking itself* that seals Orgoglio's fate. Once he has looked at the shield and "redd his end," he loses all agency. The agency goes directly to the wielder of the shield.

We have thus far skirted around our antitheses, the Real and the Apparent, and it is time now to address them. Arthur is subject to the agency of his armor, but in a different way than we

have yet seen with Britomart or the Red Crosse Knight. I mentioned the dangers of wearing someone else's armor - but what happens when one dons the enchanted armor that he was destined to wear? Somehow, Arthur's submission to the agency of his armor and response to that agency is much more fluid than that of Britomart or Red Crosse, to the point where he sometimes seems to exercise agency in and of himself. This is where Spenser begins to factor in the historical and political allegory, and thus where my expansion of Lewis's methodology begins. In Arthur's account of his history to Una and Red Crosse, he tells us that he is "vpbrought" by a "Fary knight," Timon, and by Merlin. Arthur, though part of the Brittonic bloodline, is raised and trained by two figures who are *faerie* in nature and in agency (I.ix.3.8-9). He has learned, then, from a young age, exactly how to submit to faerie agency in such a way that allows him to wield it; this is, of course, why his "mirror" is manifested as armor. Arthur, it seems, has embraced the dichotomy of "faerie" and "Briton" so completely that it is no longer a dichotomy. Spenser continues the intersection of opposites, as well as reminding his readers of the intersection of political and moral allegories, by playing on the *Tudor* connection to Arthur: Arthur recounts that Merlin "had charge my discipline to frame,/And Tutors nouriture to ouersee" (I.ix.5.3-4). Una responds by saying that Arthur is a "Pupill fitt for such a Tutors hand" (I.ix.6.2). Arthur had both a faerie "Tutors nouriture" in his specific upbringing, and a *Tudor* "nourituring," in the manner of the aforementioned Tudor manipulation of their connection with the historic Arthur.²⁸ And Merlin, according to the text, oversaw both "nouriturings."

In the previous section, I established that Merlin's mirror was a dwelling place for paradoxes, the union of Real and Apparent, the hinge upon which these two antitheses swing. I also established that Artegall's "Apparent"-ness was not the same kind of Apparent that Lewis

²⁸ See discussion of Artegall and Arthur at the beginning of this section.

warns us against in the Houses of Busirane or Bower of Bliss - he is not indicative of the “less real,” but of the “not yet.” Artegall and Britomart’s prophesied union is the promise of Britain Yet To Come. It is simultaneously grounded in England’s Real past, commenting on England’s Real present, and looking forward to an Apparent future.

So, here, is Arthur. While it is his armor and his “Tutors nouriture” that grant him the agency to act, these are but the Apparent, existing in Faerie Land, training him to become the Real King of the Britons.²⁹ He, like Britomart, submits to a destiny he cannot know, for “hard it is[...]to read aright/The course of heauenly cause,” and yet he trusts that “time in her just term the truth to light should bring” (I.ix.6.6-7, I.ix.5.9). Spenser portrays him, as Jon Whitman puts it, “not as a king moving toward death, but as a knight moving toward kingship” (Whitman 92). As we saw with Britomart and Artegall, it is the Real that contains the Apparent: it is the Reality of the Prophesied King that necessitates his presence in Faerie Land. We see again the tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” Further, while his title is never explicitly employed in Spenser’s epic, the very idea of a “Once and Future King” tells us that Arthur himself is a dwelling place for antitheses, a hinge upon which Real (England in the present moment) and Apparent (England Future, in which the prophesied Arthur comes to defeat the Saxons). Arthur, then, is functioning here in the same capacity as Merlin’s mirror. In fact, he *embodies* Merlin’s mirror: a living Briton, “sonne and here vnto a king,” “nouritured” (or forged, if you will) by Merlin, wearing fairy armor (also forged by Merlin), both existing and reflecting in two worlds at the same time as the Once and Future King.

Returning to Early Modern form and matter as it relates to agency and causality, we must examine Merlin’s role in this to get a full picture of the notions of Englishness that Spenser is

²⁹ A.C. Hamilton’s footnote here reads that “nouriture” in this case means “upbringing, nurture.”

trying to define. In the Early Modern logical traditions, someone or something had to be the root cause of everything, whether by internal or external causality. Merlin, in both of these instances, seems to be that root cause. It is through encounters with him and his “objects” that Britomart and Arthur are able to fulfil their destinies. Yet, in the “original” Arthur legends, Merlin is a prophet; and while his prophecies carried great weight in the political and historical sphere of Arthur’s Camelot, he himself was merely a steward of destiny rather than an enactor of it. So, too, is Spenser’s Merlin - though he is not a steward of *destiny*, but of *agency*. It is Merlin’s objects that house both worlds, and they are what allow Britomart and Arthur to act. He is, in Charlotte Spivak’s words, “a prophet and a shape-shifter, but primarily he is an artificer” (Spivak 21).

Spivak also asserts that Spenser “retains the political dimension of Malory’s Merlin,” and that “the episodes which he chooses to include in *The Faerie Queene* are those which stress the artistic and the nationalistic themes which the poet wishes to pursue in his epic” (20, 23). Conversely, Stephen Knight (referencing David Summers) says Merlin is “far from a political and historical prophet” (Knight 105). I want to argue that, while these two seemingly disagree with each other, one word in Knight’s assertion would assuage the difference: *only*. Merlin is far from *only* being a political and historical prophet. Again, we are examining the intersection of moral and political allegories in a poem that is both concerned with English nationalism and Christian sanctification - the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Heaven. If we take this definition into account, we see that Merlin’s “political” function once again transcends the current political moment, and even the current plot point in the story. For he is not *only* a steward of destiny or agency, but an artisan of antithetical mirrors, wherein two worlds can dwell. A

Merlin of that nature, then, has the ability to craft the “already” and the “not yet,” which means that anything “political” or “historical” in Merlin’s nature must then exist *outside* of that.

Conclusion

And thou, O fayrest Princesse vnder sky,
In this fayre mirrhour maist behold thy face
And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery,
And in this antique ymage thy great ancestry.
(Book II, proem 4.6-9)

The Faerie Queene is concerned with two worlds: the present, historical Kingdom of England, where the political uncertainty of a growing empire, already fragile from the upheaval caused by the Reformation, was a very real concern; and the allegorical, fantastical Kingdom of Faerie Land, where virtues and vices are personified in an attempt to show those who enter what is truly at stake. In order to examine both of these Kingdoms in tandem, Spenser, like Merlin, creates a “mirrhour,” wherein two opposing ideas - Kingdoms Real and Imagined, Seen and Unseen - can co-mingle, intertwine, and weave in and out of each other in such a way they actually influence each other. His poem is itself a realm which houses the capacity for duality.

Brent Dawson separates this paradox into world as “object” and world as “idea,” and argues that “allegory [...] as a literary mode that dramatizes the distance between ideas and things helps us to understand the contradictory relation between the world as concept and the world as fact that impacts global history” (Dawson 169). By writing this epic as an allegory, then, Spenser is bridging the gap between these two distinctive worlds and allowing us to examine the Real World in the context of the Imagined one *from within the mirror*. In his invitation to Elizabeth to “behold [her] face/And [her] owne realmes in the lond of Fairy,” he is not inviting her to look into the mirror, but to step inside of it. He places the allegorical representation of her, Gloriana, in the place where Arthur used to sit in the Camelot stories, and her place here also introduces a

possibility of the converse – that she read herself in Spenser’s figure of Arthur. As the reigning monarch of England, she is the figurehead of the nation, and she sets the precedent for what “Englishness” - the *nature* of England - is. If she is to do this, then she must, according to Spenser, examine the two Kingdoms simultaneously. The Real always contains the Apparent, as we have seen, but it is in the union of the two that any idea of true “Englishness” can be found.

This, then, is why the political allegory of *The Faerie Queene* transcends the precise moment in history at which it was written. If Englishness is found in the union of Real and Apparent, housed inside of a magic mirror where that union takes place, then *The Faerie Queene*, while certainly most relevant to its own time, in fact opens up an entirely new method of interrogating English national identity through the ages. It is with this in mind that we turn to George MacDonald and his *Phantastes*.

CHAPTER THREE: MACDONALD'S MANY-LAYERED MIRRORS

Introduction

As we shift from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age, it will be beneficial to recall Lewis's argument in his inaugural Cambridge lecture that any rift in ideological thought between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was not only less drastic than had previously been believed, but less drastic than the rift in thought between the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, respectively. Lewis separates the "histories" he is surveying into the "history of thought" and the "history of culture." For the history of thought, he "draws [the] line" of *most* radical change in thinking at the end of the seventeenth century, leading into the eighteenth; the line for the history of culture, however, he draws between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both distinctions are important for this thesis, but we will move somewhat chronologically and begin by examining the ramifications of the radical change in thought during the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment saw many scientific and philosophical advances, but Lewis argues that "the tone of the common mind remained ethical, rhetorical, juristic, rather than scientific" (*Temporum*). What he means is that while this was a time when Reason and Rationality reigned King and Queen, the dehumanization³⁰ of scientific practice had not yet begun - or, as he himself would phrase it, "science was not the business of Man because Man had not yet become the business of science" (*Temporum*). Rather, Enlightenment emphasis on Reason and Rationality opened the door for the binary relationship between Reason and Imagination that pervaded the

³⁰Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

nineteenth century. Malcolm Guite posits that the shift in thought in the Enlightenment “usher[ed] in a mistrust and marginalisation of imaginative and poetic vision” (*Faith* 2). Rather than a blending of the two, then, Victorians viewed them as dichotomous.

The Enlightenment’s division of what G.K. Chesterton calls “romance” and “rationality” carried over into the Victorian Age with Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarian philosophy at odds with the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott (Chesterton 438). Roderick McGillis posits that the Victorian era was “a predominantly empiricist and scientific culture, concerned to rationalize and, where possible, demythologize the long record of man’s awareness of the numinous” (McGillis 22). This constant division seeped into every facet of society, creating an “atmosphere of unrest and paradox” (Houghton quoting T. Arnold). Sir Henry Holland described this period of which he was a part “*an age of transition,*”³¹ a phrase that was used often by writers and thinkers of the nineteenth century (Houghton 1). Victorians were very aware that they were living in an age in which “old” and “ancestral” beliefs and institutions were fading, and “radical change” in the form of revolutions, Whig liberalism, and Benthamic agnosticism was making way for the new (2). Walter Houghton states it this way in his 1957 study called *The Victorian Frame of Mind*: “Though the Victorians never ceased to look forward to a new period of firm convictions and established beliefs, they had to live in the meantime between two worlds, one dead or dying, one struggling but powerless to be born, in an age of doubt” (9-10). The Victorian mindset, Houghton argues, was one of skepticism and “inconviction” (18).

³¹ Walter Houghton cites this in a footnote, which I will replicate in full: “‘The Progress and Spirit of Physical Science,’ *Edinburgh Review*, 108 (1858), 71. The writer (who was kindly identified for me by Professor R.D. Altick) was Sir Henry Holland. The article was reprinted in his *Essays on Scientific and Other Subjects Contributed to the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews*, London, 1862.

Another consequence of the Enlightenment was the “rejection of chivalry,” which, in a paraphrase of Richard Hurd, Mark Girourard ascribes “to the growing ascendancy of reason over imagination” (Girourard 22). David Hume dismissed the English Age of Chivalry “as ‘the most signal and durable monument of human folly that has yet appeared in any age or nation’” (Girourard quoting Hume 19). In the midst of nineteenth century societal unrest, however, and seemingly quite at odds with it, there was growing a chivalric revival that, while beginning with the reign of George III, flourished and found a new definition in the Victorian Age. Sir Walter Scott was a forerunner of this revival on the literary stage, while Queen Victoria herself made way for it in the public sphere, along with Victorian ideas of domesticity, wherein the “Victorian [...] domestic unit represented the final and most decisive stage in the long process whereby the rationale of the Western family shifted” from an economic mindset to an emotional and, Tosh posits, even a moral one (Tosh 13). Chivalry in the Victorian age “produced its own world of myth and legend,” with St. George and Sir Galahad - the patron saint of England and the Knight of Purity - leading the way (Girourard 14). Victoria’s robing room had a painting of King Arthur on its wall, and Victoria herself was once painted as the Faerie Queene Gloriana from Edmund Spenser’s epic, with Albert situated as a knight in her court. She is also depicted in paintings in “Tudor” dress, thus identifying her with Elizabeth, Spenser’s Faerie Queene *and*, as we remember from the previous chapter, the direct line of Arthur.

It is here that we will draw our connection between *Phantastes* and *The Faerie Queene*. A connection does need to be made, for it could be argued that MacDonald, in giving us quotations from the German Romantic Novalis at the very beginning of the novel, is telling us straightaway that the key to reading and understanding his story is to read it through the lens of German Romanticism. This argument is in part true, but it is not the whole truth. For MacDonald

is not writing a German fairy story, but a British one; he is not writing in the midst of societal tension and unrest in Germany, but in Great Britain. So while it is indeed important for readers to know that a “fairy-story is like a vision without rational connections,” or that “[i]n a genuine fairy-story, everything must be miraculous, mystical and interrelated,” or further still that “[t]he world of the fairy-story is that world which is opposed throughout to the world of rational truth,” it is *more* important that we know the ways in which the traditions and conventions within which MacDonald is working are adapted for a particular national audience (*Phantastes* 3). For this understanding, I will put his Victorian Faerie Queene in conversation with Spenser’s Early Modern one.

MacDonald himself engages with Edmund Spenser’s poetry in the fifth chapter of *A Dish of Orts*, entitled “Spenser and His Friends.” Noting that “the special development of the national mind” is a process in constant mutability developing over centuries, he describes the Elizabethan Age as “the period of English history in every way fullest of marvel;”³² for,

while everything that bore upon the mental development of the nation must bear upon its poetry, the fresh vigour given by the doctrines of the Reformation to the sense of personal responsibility, and of immediate relation to God, with the grand influences, both literary and spiritual, of the translated, printed, and studied Bible, operated more immediately upon its devotional utterance. (*Antiphon* 42)

MacDonald goes on to say that *The Faerie Queene*, embodying all these ideas at once, is “*the* great poem of the period,” and one which enlightens readers to that “thought and feeling of England in this glorious era” (42). Thus, in examining the multiple allegorical layers of

³² He follows this sentence, “As in a northern summer the whole region bursts into blossom at once, so with the thought and feeling of England in this glorious era.”

Phantastes in light of those of *The Faerie Queene*, we can begin to see a pattern emerging in establishing “Englishness” across the centuries.

Cosmo(s) and Mirrors

Adrian Gunther posits that “*Phantastes* is structured around a pattern of paradoxical oppositions, parallels and key transition points” (43). The reflective plot of the novel converges upon a single point: the story of Cosmo von Wehrstahl, which Anodos reads while he is in the Faerie Palace. Cosmo’s story is one which most criticism³³ of MacDonald examines, though the discussions of it are not always conducted in a way that is fruitful to a deeper understanding of the novel. Briefly in terms of summary, Cosmo finds and purchases a Magic Mirror, inside of which dwells a lady held captive there by a powerful man. She appears in the mirror to be laying on Cosmo’s couch or interacting with items in his room, but *only* within the image in the mirror – when Cosmo turns around to look at his room, she is nowhere to be seen until he turns back to the mirror. Cosmo maintains a somewhat voyeuristic relationship with the woman, arranging his room the way she might like it and watching her while she sleeps. One day he conjures her up using a magic spell, and she asks him to set her free, even from himself, by breaking the mirror. When he fails to do it quick enough, the lady and the mirror disappear. He finally finds out where the man is who is keeping the lady captive, and he kills him, simultaneously freeing the lady and getting himself killed in the process.

This mirror is the driving force of the entirety of his narrative. Adrian Gunther and Fernando Soto have already laid the groundwork for the mirrored structure of *Phantastes* as a

³³ “Critics have variously found these chapters irrelevant or obtrusive and even insisted that the book would be better without them” (Gunther 43). Gunther is here citing Robert Lee Wolff, Richard Reis, Colin Manlove, and W.H. Auden.

whole;³⁴ both of their articles (which I engage heavily with in this section) expertly extrapolate the reflective structure of the narrative. Gunther clearly illuminates the specific reflectivity of the novel's structure, pulling out specific motifs and plot devices and pointing to their counterparts both before and after Anodos's encounter with Cosmo's story. Soto likewise presents the same structure, and argues for a didactic component to the mirror as evidenced by the reflective nature of the plot. I will employ their work significantly in this section to examine Cosmo's mirror as an object in concordance with the Real and the Apparent, so as to link his mirror to the mirrors in *The Faerie Queene*.

We established that Merlin's Mirror in Book III of *The Faerie Queene* was a dwelling place for antitheses - both the Real and the Apparent are housed within the mirrors of Faerie Land. So, too, with Cosmo's mirror in *Phantastes* (and, I will argue, with all of the mirrors of MacDonald's Faerie Land). Spenser and MacDonald manage their antitheses differently, however: whereas Spenser is concerned with contrasting and separating his antitheses as starkly as possible, so that their coexistence within the mirror becomes more profound, MacDonald layers and blends his, blurring the lines between Real and Apparent in ways that force (rather than invite) the characters *and* the reader into the mirror itself. Cosmo's mirror is the most explicit example of this in the entirety of the novel, and within the chapter in which we encounter his story, there are four different levels of the Real-versus-Apparent dichotomy.

On the first level is the magic mirror itself. This mirror, once hung on the wall, reflects Cosmo's room in a way that is “not the mere representation of the room [he lives] in, but it looks just as if [he] were reading about it in a story I like” (*Phantastes* 89). In other words, it is not simply the image of something Real, as the image of Artegall Britomart encountered in

³⁴ As do John Docherty and Roderick McGillis, though less specifically than Soto and Gunther, which is why their essays are not featured in this thesis.

Merlin's mirror; it is an image of something Real that has been made Apparent in the mirror, which Cosmo says "has lifted it out of the region of fact into the realm of art" (89). Before long, a lady clad in all white appears within the mirror and begins interacting with the objects in the Apparent Room, as if she were in the Real Room (which, of course, she is not). Cosmo (and the reader through Cosmo) finds out later that she is a Real Lady, trapped inside the mirror with magic. Because she is bound to the mirror, she must interact with whatever it is that the mirror reflects. This instance, while similar to Britomart's first encounter with the "semblant" of her knight Artegall, is actually a bit more complicated. What Britomart sees in Merlin's mirror is the Apparent Image of a Real Man, housed within an object that is home to both Real England and Apparent Faerie Land. What Cosmo sees, however, is the Real Image of a Real Lady, interacting with the Apparent Image of a Real Room, and both images are housed within an object that takes what is Real and *turns it into* something Apparent. For remember, the Lady is trapped *inside* the mirror - she is "but a slave, while that mirror exists" (99). Already in the first level of MacDonald's Magic Mirror, we are experiencing a blending of antithesis that indicates how we are to read the significance of the story.

Also indicative of that significance is the second level, which is Anodos himself reading Cosmo's story in the Faerie Palace. We are told by Anodos at the onset of the chapter, before we get into Cosmo's narrative, that

Of course, while I read it, I was Cosmo, and his history was mine. Yet all the time, I seemed to have a kind of double consciousness, and the story a double meaning. Sometimes it seemed only to represent a simple story of ordinary life; wherein two souls, loving each other and longing to come nearer, do, after all, behold each other as in a glass darkly. (84)

Soto establishes the validity of Cosmo and Anodos reflecting each other by pointing out that MacDonald is here borrowing Paul's language in his First Letter to the Corinthians: "For now we

see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know, even as also I am known” (*King James Bible*, 1 Cor. 13:12). He also points out that “Cosmo (i.e. the Greek word Kosmos or ‘world’) is literally a mirror image of Anodos in this other ‘world’ reflected in the Magic Mirror” (38). The reflectivity of Cosmo’s story into that of Anodos, and vice-versa, is paramount to Anodos’s transformation from boy to man.

I established in the introductory material of this chapter that the Victorians were extremely concerned with ideas of domesticity and the home, and here I would like to diverge slightly (or, perhaps, simply step deeper into the mirror) to discuss domesticity that was specific to manhood. First, Anodos is twenty-one years of age, which, in Victorian terms, is quite a late bloomer in terms of the transition into manhood - according to John Tosh, this transition happened for most middle-class boys in the mid-teens (Tosh 107).³⁵ Second, sex in the life of a Victorian young man was considered a “rite of passage,” and a way in which to impress the other males in one’s circle.³⁶ In fact, some young men would go so far as to hire prostitutes to earn their manhood (for of course, the young women were encouraged to chastity within the “cult of female purity”).³⁷ And yet, even though Victorian male sexuality was something meant to possess and impress, the young Victorian man needed to get married³⁸ to achieve full masculinity.

³⁵ He is unclear about the age at which upper class boys began this transition.

³⁶ “Sexual intercourse amounted to a *rite de passage* to manhood, and repeated intercourse was a form of display intended to impress other males” (108).

³⁷ Tosh 107

³⁸ Tosh is very clear that “sexual initiation” was usually limited to “young men of no fixed religious principles” (122). This thesis assumes that Anodos is one such young man (though MacDonald himself of course was very devout in his religious principles) because his attitude toward the Marble Lady is one of possessiveness; he is all-too-easily persuaded by the Maid of the Alder-tree; and the scene in which he breaks the young girl’s “globe” reads very like a rape scene.

In *Phantastes*, George MacDonald inverts this notion of masculinity. Cosmo and Anodos each “love ‘ideal’ women; ‘attract’ these ideal women; lose them due to their ‘masculine’ selfishness; gain the women’s love by overcoming their own possessiveness; receive one and only one kiss from their lovers and, lastly, die violent deaths by the sword” (Soto 38). There is no instance of “conquest” or sexual interactions with the women; in fact, Soto notes that both men have to *overcome* their “possessiveness” and sacrifice their own lives in order to become men. Neither “gets the girl” at the end of his story, but both end their stories knowing more fully that “All true love will, one day, behold its own image in the eyes of the beloved, and be humbly glad” (*Phantastes* 181). In a novel concerned with Victorian ideas of domesticity, where even the idea of manhood itself was a binary opposition,³⁹ this reflective layering of Cosmo and Anodos is actually very subversive. In this second layer of Cosmo’s mirror, not only are binaries blended, but they also have the capacity to be completely redefined. MacDonald calls into question these Victorian ideas of domesticity and supplants them by showing his readers an alternative manhood.

The third level of MacDonald’s mirror is where we begin to see it intersect with Spenser’s. Anodos is reading Cosmo’s story in the Fairy Palace (which is, of course located in Faerie Land itself). Cosmo’s story takes place in Prague - a city within the “Real” world from which Anodos has come. This book, then, being housed within Fairy Land, is itself a mirror which reflects back to that world. Again, Anodos finds and reads this book inside the Faerie Palace, which Gunther says is a “harmonious blending of *nature* and *art*” – Real and Apparent’s physical manifestations, per Lewis (Gunther 45, emphasis mine). Spenser’s epic also features a Palace in which nature and art coexist: the Temple of Venus in Book IV.

³⁹ i.e. casual sex as a rite of passage, but true masculinity not obtained until marriage.

For all that nature by her mother wit
Could frame in earth, and forme of substance base,
Was there, and all that nature did omit,
Art playing second natures part, supplied it. (IV.x.21.6-9).

Likewise, the Fairy Palace in MacDonald's novel is "a palace of marble and silver, and fountains and moonshine" - it is simultaneously sculpted *and* subjected to the natural elements (Gunther 74). More than being simply the makeup of the palace, both nature and art also *reside* there: the windows in Anodos's room look out "upon an unknown landscape of forest and hill and dale on the one side - and on the other, upon the marble court, with the great fountain, the crest of which now flashed glorious in the sun" (*Phantastes* 71). Even the landscape itself is an "artistic arrangement of wood and river, lawn and wild forest" (71, emphasis mine). In *A Dish of Orts*, MacDonald posits that art's purpose should be "[t]o inquire into what God has made" (*Orts* 1). Specifically, when a person creates, he or she is acting in the imago Dei, the Image of God, within God's role as Creator. Art, then, for MacDonald, should be creations which reflect Creation, and anything less is what Lewis's "sham or imitation." In MacDonald's construction of the Fairy Palace, then, we see parallels between his structure and Spenser's.

In his outline for a series of lectures he gave on Spenser, Lewis notes that the antithesis of the Temple of Venus in *The Faerie Queene* is the House of Busirane, which is filled with "greater riches" than anywhere else in the epic, "but all empty."⁴⁰ In other words, whereas the Temple of Venus is predominantly defined by its naturality, with "Art playing second natures part," the House of Busirane is *only* filled with Art and riches, some of which depict "natural" things (like love and its fruition), but as there is no *truly* natural thing in the House, it is, in Lewis's idea, symbolic of lifelessness and death. Likewise, the lifeless counterpart of the Fairy

⁴⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Lecture notes*, 89 leaves (later published as *Spenser's Images of Life*, ed. Alastair Fowler, Cambridge, 1967, held at at Weston Library, Oxford); p. 10.

Palace in MacDonald's novel is identified by Gunther as "the dead, entombing underground labyrinth of tunnels and caves" (Gunther 45). These caves are home to a "goblin" that tries to seduce Anodos and "fairy devils" that mock him (*Phantastes* 122, 119). Anodos's journey through these tunnels occurs after reading the story of Cosmo (and thus, according to our previous discussion of domesticity, further transforming himself from a boy into a man). The temptations that ensue from both sets of creatures are focused on both his former notions of "manhood" (the Victorian definition, involving possessiveness and conquest) and "falsehood" (i.e. his previous fall to the Alder-Maiden, which I will discuss at length later in this chapter). The fairy-devils torture him with the taunting reality that "[the white lady is] for a better man; how he'll kiss her!" and the goblin woman changes her appearance to an image of "a face of resplendent beauty," entreating him to stay with her in the tunnels (*Phantastes* 120, 122). Anodos resists both temptations, telling the fairy-devils that "if he is a better man, let him have her," and instantly sees through the false beauty of the goblin woman; he describes her transformation "as a sunbeam bursts through a shapeless cloud, [...] so burst a face of resplendent beauty, as it were *through* the unsightly visage of the woman" (120, 122). His triumph over them, then, is at once the triumph of maturity over childishness *and* of Nature over Artifice, and it is only able to happen because Anodos has spent time in the mirror: both Cosmo's mirror and the Fairy Palace, functioning as a "Spenserian" mirror - one that is home to both Real and Apparent, to both Nature and Art.

The fourth and final level of MacDonald's mirror is very likely the most metanarrative moment in the book. As Cosmo is a mirror for Anodos, Anodos is likewise a mirror for us, and Anodos reading Cosmo's story is a mirror of us reading the story of Anodos. Anodos mentions that "In the fairy book, everything was just as it should be, though whether in words or

something else, I cannot tell” (*Phantastes* 84). This idea of the indefinability of a fairy-story directly parallels MacDonald’s essay “The Fantastic Imagination,” wherein he states that “A fairytale is just a fairytale, as a face is just a face” (*Fairy Tales* 5). MacDonald makes no attempt to establish *what* a fairy tale is, and instead instructs his audience on how to read one, claiming that while yes, a fairytale should be a delightful and beautiful experience for its reader, “It cannot help having some meaning; if it have proportion and harmony it has vitality, and vitality is truth [...] without the truth the beauty would not be, and the fairytale would give no delight. [...] It is not there so much to convey a meaning as to *wake* a meaning” (*Fairy Tales* 7, emphasis mine). If the reader of *Phantastes* has read this essay, of course he or she will understand immediately what MacDonald is doing; if he or she has not, then (if MacDonald is correct in his assertions about fairy tales) it will make no difference - the tale will have the desired effect, and meaning will have awoken somewhere within the reader. For “the tale is there, not to hide, but to show” (*Fairy Tales* 10). Thus Fairy Land as well as the actual, physical pages that contain it function as the final level of the mirror for the readers of MacDonald’s book.

Intersecting the clear moral allegory involved in this mirror with political allegory, then, is not difficult. I discussed MacDonald’s subversive approach to the Victorian notions of male domesticity, but he is also addressing the general public’s ideas regarding binaries. If one recalls Houghton’s assertion that the Victorian mindset was one of “inconviction,” and that these people lived “between two worlds,” then this mirrored layering makes all the more sense (Houghton 18). MacDonald is replicating the Victorian situation within his narrative, but rather than arguing for a resolution of the binary structure, he illustrates a way to operate within it. For MacDonald, it is not in the resolving of binaries or even, like Spenser, in the containment of one within the

other that truth is found. Rather, it is in the “oscillation between the extremes which together make the truth” that human life is most fruitful (Gunther quoting MacDonald 46).

He uses a fairy tale to illustrate this because, per his philosophy, a fairy tale is not something that should be defined – it should instead be experienced. So, too, humanity and truth, according to MacDonald, who in the 1850s is writing not only into a binary society, but into the nineteenth century’s “age of science” (Houghton quoting Morley 11). It was the age which began “our essentially mechanistic attitude toward reality” when, as Lewis puts it, humanity began to be the “business of science [...] when Darwin starts monkeying with the ancestry of Man, and Freud his soul” (Guite 4, “Temporum”). None of these writers, including MacDonald, are against scientific discovery; in fact, Soto’s article “Mirrors in Macdonald’s *Phantastes*: A Reflexive Structure” discusses quite extensively the ways in which “MacDonald was interested in the more theoretical aspect of his era’s Science” (Soto 34). MacDonald is simply arguing, via narrative, that the Victorian approach to science, which operated in the same binary fashion as the rest of the Victorian state, is incomplete – for “if we have only parts and no whole, we have departed from the path of wisdom” (Guite 4). Again, by layering and blending binaries through not only narrative form, but *fairy* narrative form, MacDonald is demonstrating that “oscillation between the extremes which together make the truth,” in an effort to propose a more holistic pursuit of truth and knowledge.

Rust, Revival, and Nationalism

While all of this has opened up the door to the ways in which MacDonald is speaking into the political situation of his time, we still have not reached an understanding of MacDonald’s attempts at nationalism. To do this, it is useful to examine the ways in which MacDonald utilizes the Victorian chivalric revival, both in terms of the way Victorian notions of

chivalry function within the novel, as well as the way MacDonald engages with the Renaissance notions of chivalry in order to place him within this tradition.

The growing British Empire undergirded much of the literary and philosophical thought in the nineteenth century. Industrialization and imperialism combined to garner a sense of “pride in the power of man to conquer nature” which “passed into pride in the *Englishman* to subdue the earth, both material and human” (Houghton 44). MacDonald’s citizenship within the British Empire would have given him insight and experience from which to draw, and to speak into the political situation he saw there, though he was a Scotsman (Lewis XXVII). In fact, MacDonald himself was quite concerned with British imperialism; in a now-archived letter⁴¹ to his brother James regarding the political situation in Ireland at the time, MacDonald asserts his opinion that “nothing else will do but re-conquest, and fresh constitution.”⁴² Furthermore, Victoria’s residence in Balmoral Castle explicitly included Scotland within the British metropole, and was a favorite site for the performance of both royal domesticity and royal medievalism. Thus the political allegory, while not quite as explicit as Spenser’s, is very much present, and its intersection with the (much more explicit) moral allegory will help us understand MacDonald’s ideas of Britishness in Victorian England in the same way that the same intersection in *The Faerie Queene* helps us understand Englishness in Elizabethan England. To do this, I will examine Anodos’s encounters with knighthood and chivalry, once again in the context of episodes with mirrors. I will also return to the previously discussed ideas of Victorian male domesticity, combining these notions with MacDonald’s use of the Victorian chivalric revival.

⁴¹ George MacDonald, *Letter*, (unpublished, in the Archives, Kings College London); 1/1/61, “I wonder what you think.”

⁴² In order to paint the most accurate and robust picture of MacDonald I can manage (as Lewis would) I feel incumbent upon me to state that he was simultaneously incredibly sympathetic to the Irish people, and said that they “do well to be angry.”

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, chivalry in the Victorian age “produced its own world of myth and legend” (Girourard 14). Morality and “Chivalry as a code of conduct” could “be distinguished from the armour which the knights wore” (16). MacDonald capitalizes on this convention in Anodos’s encounter with the Knight of the soiled armor, whom he meets multiple times in his journey throughout Faerie Land. Their first meeting occurs immediately after Anodos reads a story about Sir Percival, Sir Galahad, and “the damosel of the alder-tree” (*Phantastes* 16). In the story, Galahad’s armor is “silver, clear and shining” which “shone like the moon,” whereas Percivale’s armor is “wondrous rosty to behold, ne could he by any art furbish it again” (16). Percival, in the story, is “beguiled” by the “fair words and false countenance” of the Alder-Maid (16). When Anodos meets the Knight, the Knight’s armor is covered “from crest to heel [...] with a light rust” (40). In fact, Anodos tells the reader explicitly that the Knight reminds him of “the legend of Sir Percival in the rusty armour” (40). We soon learn that the Knight “put [his armour] off; and as it befell to [Sir Percival], so has it befallen to [him]” (41).

The first level of the armor is similar to the first level of Cosmo’s mirror: the actual, physical armor itself. Armor in MacDonald’s novel functions differently than it does in Spenser’s epic, or at least the way it functions in the instance of Arthur’s armor in the previous chapter of this thesis. This armor is not of *faerie* origin, and is thus just regular armor. And yet, it seems to have protective qualities beyond just the physical – when the Soiled Knight “put it off,” he, too, was beguiled by the Alder-Maid. Further, when both the Soiled Knight and Sir Percival fall to her temptations, the repercussions are manifested on the armor itself. He experiences inward guilt: Anodos tells us that his “head drooped, and the whole frame was bowed as with inward grief” (41). But his inward shame finds its physical embodiment on his armor, on the

protection that he removed. And this shame in the form of rust cannot be removed simply by polishing: in the story of Sir Percival, Anodos learns that he cannot “by any art furbish⁴³ it again,” and the Soiled Knight tells him that his armor could not “be furbished, but by the blows of knightly encounter” (16, 41). This implies that the only way to remove the rust – the outward manifestation of inward guilt – is to atone for those actions – via subsequently worthy, or “knightly,” actions – which initially caused the armor to rust. Atonement must come in the form of risking one’s body, the Real, in an encounter with evil, Spenser’s (and Lewis’s) Apparent.

We are never told what precise activities Sir Percival and the Soiled Knight partake in that cause the rust, for Anodos never finishes Sir Percival’s story, and all we are told of the Soiled Knight’s encounter with the Alder-Maid is that “as it befell [Sir Percival], so it has befallen [him]” (41). We also are not quite told what happens to Anodos when the same fate befalls him; he recounts that the Alder-Maid tells him a tale

which brings back a feeling as of snows and tempests; torrents and water-sprites; lovers parted for long, and meeting at last; with a gorgeous summer night to close up the whole. I listened till she and I were blended with the tale; till she and I were the whole history. And we had met at last in this same cave of greenery, while the summer night hung round us heavy with love, and the odours that crept through the silence from the sleeping woods were the only signs of an outer world that invaded our solitude. What followed I cannot clearly remember. (46)

The language here is ambiguous, with the air “heavy with love” and all his talk of things “blending” and “meeting.” Reinforcing that ambiguity is the fact that Anodos “cannot clearly remember” what happens after the Alder-Maid’s story. Whether there was any consummation or not, it is fairly safe to say that the mood of this scene is meant to be sexual. The assumption, then, that the rust on the armor of Sir Percival and the Soiled Knight is the result of some sexual transgression.

⁴³ furbish (v.): To remove rust from (a weapon, armour, etc.); to brighten by rubbing, polish, burnish. (OED)

This transgression functions in two ways. As to the first, MacDonald is operating within the medieval romance tradition, but subverting its most prominent convention, courtly love, in order to further undermine the ideas of male domesticity, which I discussed previously. As to the second, he is prompting a discussion of the Real and the Apparent. The Alder-Maid, though taking the form of a beautiful woman, turns out to be “only hollow, as if made of decaying bark torn from a tree” (46). She seduces and traps by the same “art” that Spenser’s Malecasta does. Thus, the transgression of Sir Percival, the Soiled Knight, and Anodos is not merely being seduced by the Alder-Maid; it is being seduced by Apparentness, by the Un-Real, by an image, a “semblant.” And when one falls, and his armor becomes rusty, it also becomes unreflective – this is why Anodos cannot yet see himself in the armor the way that he later sees himself in Cosmo’s book. It cannot produce an image of something Real, because it was “put off” for something Apparent. And, in the putting-off, the knights were not able to see reflected in the armor the truth of what the Alder-Maid really was. Armor in MacDonald’s novel, while lacking the *faerie* agency that Spenser gives Arthur’s armor, is still a dwelling place for paradoxes: its function is to protect both physically *and* spiritually (the knights “put off” their armor, and in doing so fall to temptation); spiritual failings of the knight manifest physically; and that physical manifestation causes an inability to function as a mirror.

The next time Anodos meets the Soiled Knight, “his armour did not shine half so red as when [Anodos] saw him first. Many a blow of mighty sword and axe [...] had swept from its path the fretted rust” (60). They travel through Faerie Land together for two days, until Anodos’s shadow causes him to distrust the Knight. Anodos does not see the Knight again until after his time spent in the Faerie Palace, and after he has read Cosmo’s story. This time, he encounters the Knight through a door from Faerie Land back into the “real” world, or at least into a world that is

not Faerie Land. The Knight is with the Marble Lady (the object of Anodos's love and affection), and neither of them can see Anodos. Indeed, Anodos cannot even see himself – not in the mirror anyway. He instead sees himself reflected in the now-shining armor of the Knight: “though the mirror reflected not [his] form, [he] saw a dim shadow of [himself] in the shining steel” (138). We learn that the Knight saved Anodos from the evil Ash-tree on the same night that Anodos is seduced by the Alder-Maid.

This explains a bit why the Knight's armor was less rusty the second time that Anodos encounters him. If the soiled armor cannot be “furbished, but by the blows of knightly encounter,” then participating in such chivalry as saving a defenseless man – even one that does not, in reality, deserve saving, because he was warned twice about the Alder-Maid – from an evil Ash-tree would begin that furbishing process. Further, Anodos is able to see a “dim shadow” of himself in the Knight's armor, though not in the mirror. This has vast implications for the function of the armor. If Anodos's journey through Fairy Land is about him learning, growing from boy to man, and he has *just* begun to learn how to see himself in every lesson (from Cosmo's story), then for him to *see* himself in the Knight's armor means that he is seeing himself in something chivalrous. This armor, once rusted, has been cleared of all semblance of transgression and once again shines “like polished glass” – like a mirror – and Anodos, who has begun to submit himself to the humility to learn from stories, sees himself in the armor and listens to the chivalrous deeds of the Knight, allowing them to be reflected onto himself (138).

As in Spenser, we have throughout *Phantastes* a repetition of the “shadow” motif, both in word and image. Anodos, toward the beginning of his journey through Fairy Land, attains his own, literal shadow in “the house of the ogre” (54). His shadow kills all natural life upon which it falls, causes him to doubt the true, kind nature of the Knight, makes ordinary the wonders of

Fairy Land, and overwhelms him with a lust for the musical globe of a young maiden with whom he travels, until the globe breaks and the girl runs away, weeping. Anodos recognizes the wicked nature of his shadow, calling it his “evil demon,” but he cannot control it; rather, it controls him. This fits directly into Lewis’s assertion about Spenser’s use of the Real and the Apparent – that which is Natural or Real is good, and that which is Apparent or Artifice is evil. This Apparent thing, however, is not external, as in the case of the Alder-Maid. This Apparentness is a physical representation of the internal; it is *Anodos’s* shadow, *his* wickedness and artifice.

In this instance, then, when Anodos sees his “dim shadow” reflected in the Knight’s armor, it is significant. It could be that Anodos is seeing reflected the wickedness still present within himself, manifested in his shadow. But MacDonald does this elsewhere,⁴⁴ and is doing something very different with this encounter. As I pointed out, Anodos has just left the Fairy Palace, and has thus just crested the wave of his journey from boyhood into manhood, via Cosmo’s story and the mirror therein. I have also established that the Knight’s armor is shining so brightly because, by his own account, the rust was indeed removed by “the blows of knightly encounter” with the evil Ash tree. It is now fully reflective of the Real. Anodos, still having yet to atone for his continual falling to Apparentness, is seeing “a dim shadow of [him]self” in a mirror that is only reflective of the Real because it has overcome Apparentness. In *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart seeing Artegall’s “shadow” was indicative of the “not yet,” of an England *as it will be*. Here, the Knight’s armor is functioning in the same way. Anodos’s “dim shadow” is

⁴⁴ Anodos himself exhibits knightly behavior when he helps two royal brothers fight off giants from their father’s kingdom. The brothers perish in the battle, but Anodos lives and is rewarded with a knighthood. Upon entering an enchanted forest after this, his shadow disappears, but manifests as a real “knight,” resembling himself, only “greater and fiercer” (160). Anodos looks at him and sees “the reflection of [his] countenance in the center late of shining steel on his breastplate” (160). This, then, is the reflection of Anodos’s internal wickedness, on an Apparent surface made Real.

indicative of the “not yet;” what he sees is not his wicked shadow, but the “shadow” of the man he is becoming.

Just as Artegall’s “shadow” in Merlin’s mirror, Anodos’s shadow in the Knight’s armor also has both moral and political implications. As we have stated multiple times, the Knight’s armor, once rusted, is only able to be refurbished by knightly actions. This is of course a moral allegory for the Christian idea of the “slaying” of sin. There is another layer to this, though: according to the Puritan faction of Victorian Christianity, “in addition to the inner struggle is the battle against your enemies, political and private as well as national, *who are His enemies, too*” (Houghton 213). The Puritans equated political and moral triumphs as both pleasing to God. But the equating of patriotism and morality was not simply a Puritan idea, it was an ideology that permeated all of Victorian Great Britain. Kingsley called patriotism a “righteous and God-given feeling,” and with that attitude came “the glorification of English heroes” that would “fight for their country and their Queen” (Houghton, quoting Kingsley, 324-5).

The fact, then, that Anodos sees his reflection in the Knight’s armor, but *not* in the mirror standing in the room, suggests that MacDonald may be employing this political and moral “English hero.” This is supported by his final sacrifice at the end – he is dying for the Knight and the Lady, whom he loves, but he also dies to save all of the people of Fairy Land, adhering to the idea that “patriotism aroused heroic attitudes of devotion and self-sacrifice,” a notion which was often “utilized for moral purposes” (Houghton 324). Further, his sacrifice consisted of him destroying the Apparent: the people of Fairy Land are being religiously sacrificed to a “wooden image” upon a throne, which is hiding a very large, very Real wolf-creature. Anodos tears down the image (destroying the Apparent) and strangles the wolf, getting himself killed in the process. His final sacrifice, then, is a culmination of every mirror, every juxtaposition of the Real and the

Apparent, and the ultimate victory of Real *over* Apparent. The Knight's armor, then, functioning as a mirror, takes on the same form as Merlin's mirror in Book III of *The Faerie Queene*. It shows Anodos, there in the present moment, as a "dim shadow" of what he will become: a chivalrous knight who will fight – indeed, die – for the Faerie Queen, Fairy Land, and the Knight and White Lady.

Conclusion

My mind soon grew calm, and I began the duties of my new position, somewhat instructed, I hoped, by the adventures that had befallen me in Fairy Land. Could I translate the experience of my travels there, into common life? This was the question. Or must I live it all over again, and learn it all over again, in the other forms that belong to the world of men, whose experience yet runs parallel to that of Fairy land? These questions I cannot yet answer. (*Phantastes* 184)

Just like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, MacDonald's novel is also concerned with two worlds: the real, present, growing British Empire, caught in the tensions of binary oppositions around every corner; and the allegorical Fairy Land, which gives form to those binaries and forces the reader, through Anodos, to confront them head-on. Both Spenser and MacDonald use the motif of a "mirror" to force antitheses together and, in the Neoplatonic tradition, force their protagonists through the Apparent into the Real.

I want to return now to the notion of form and matter. For Spenser and MacDonald were writing very different works: Spenser, an Early Modern epic poem with both moral and nationalistic goals; and MacDonald, a Victorian novel in the form of a German Romantic fairy tale, its purpose never stated in the same way Spenser's was. But, if we recall Brent Dawson's assertion that "allegory [...] as a literary mode that dramatizes the distance between ideas and things helps us to understand the contradictory relation between the world as concept and the world as fact that impacts global history," then we can see that, though different in form, the matter of these two literary works is the same. Both works invite the reader into their respective

mirrors in order to examine his or her Real World within the context of the Imagined one. Both writers tell the reader explicitly, and then show him or her narratively, how he or she is to react to time spent in Faerie Land. Though writing into two different political points in English history, Spenser and MacDonald both use the same “literary mode,” one which transcends those points and interact with their respective worlds on the rhetorical level.

I have now proven that not only was MacDonald concerned with the extension of British imperialism, but that his literary interaction with it in *Phantastes* followed the same form as Spenser’s interaction with Elizabethan England in *The Faerie Queene*. Both writers were also aware of their readership, in that they each wrote to the person or persons with the most influence in their respective cultures. Spenser wrote to Elizabeth, as the figurehead of the English nation; MacDonald likewise wrote to the monarch of his England, but the “monarch” of the nation in the Victorian age was in fact the sovereign power of the state, or the middle-class readership. Queen Victoria herself was considered the queen of the middle-class. Drawing these connections through an adaptation and expansion of C.S. Lewis’s methodology positions us to turn Lewis’s analysis on Lewis himself, a task which I will endeavor in the conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis, I mentioned that throughout the research and writing process, I had come to encounter C.S. Lewis as he invited the listeners of his inaugural Cambridge lecture to encounter him: as an artifact, as text. Doing so not only helped me to read *The Faerie Queene* and *Phantastes* as cognates, but also begin to notice that though the form may be different across these texts, the matter itself is the same. Spenser and MacDonald both indulged in what Lewis calls “the art of myth-making” (*MacDonald* XXIX). Lewis points out in the preface to his anthology⁴⁵ entitled *George MacDonald* that “Myth” itself is experienced not in the reading of the words; for, as he points out, there are multiple versions of every myth ever told. For Lewis, “Myth” is what happens in the soul of the reader, or listener, if the story is being passed down orally. He says it this way: “In poetry the words are the body and the ‘theme’ or ‘content’ is the soul. But in myth, the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul [...] It is in some ways more akin to music than to poetry” (XXXI). One can see the influence of MacDonald’s thinking on Lewis in this assertion.

The myth – or matter – of these texts is the Matter of Britain. Spenser and MacDonald are both attempting to speak into a specific moment in British history, but do so in a way that transcends that specific moment. For “Englishness” is not something that can truly be defined, as we have seen; it is something that is *found*, is experienced by stepping into the respective mirrors. It is something that is learned through the myth and matter of poetry and books. In the

⁴⁵ This same essay doubles as the introduction to the version of *Phantastes* that this thesis employs.

same way that MacDonald does not try to define a “fairytale,” neither does he nor Spenser try and define “Englishness;” they simply show the reader, narratively, what it looks like. This is the beauty of allegory, for while the argument can of course be made that any interpretation of allegory is simply made-up, as the allegory itself is made-up, it is only allegory that can define in narrative what is undefinable in language. This shared approach at “world building” is why Spenser and MacDonald should be read as cognates, though the forms in which they write differ from one another. It is, if my readers will excuse the pun, the “matter” that matters.

To demonstrate this, I am going to proceed into the twentieth century and actually engage with Lewis as text. In the third book of *The Space Trilogy*,⁴⁶ *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis is giving narrative form to the ideas that he puts forth in his much more theoretical *The Abolition of Man*. Malcolm Guite posits that “Lewis had a lifelong engagement with the ‘matter of Britain’” and notes that *That Hideous Strength* contains an “explicit Arthurian narrative in a modern context” (Guite 10). This final episode in the story of Dr. Elwin Ransom follows Ransom and his company (named Logres) in a battle for the very heart and soul of England. This company calls themselves Logres, and Ransom the “Pendragon,” but the most explicit conjuring of the Arthur story is when “Merlin himself is revived and becomes a living link between the original court of Arthur and the new Logres” (Guite 11). Cecil Dimble, a member of the company, explains that

something we may call Britain is always haunted by something we may call Logres. Haven’t you noticed that we are two countries? After every Arthur, a Mordred; behind every Milton, a Cromwell: a nation of poets, a nation of shopkeepers: the home of Sidney – and of Cecil Rhodes. Is it any wonder they call us hypocrites? But what they mistake for hypocrisy is really the struggle between Logres and Britain. (*Strength* 367)

⁴⁶ Otherwise referred to as *The Cosmic Trilogy* or *The Ransom Trilogy*.

Lewis is here giving verbal form to that which Spenser and MacDonald only demonstrate narratively; he is, in a sense, “explaining the joke.” And while normally, if one has to explain a joke, it means that the joke was in fact not very good, in this case we are quite lucky that he does.

According to this excerpt from *That Hideous Strength*, England is actually “two countries” – the country of “Logres” and the country of “Britain” – and understanding the difference between these two countries will help us understand the mode of thought that all three of these authors were operating within. For Lewis, Logres is “a place from which to re-assess and critique contemporary Britain” (Guite 11). Britain is England as it presently is; Logres is “the vision of what it might have been or what might yet be” – much like Merlin’s mirror in *The Faerie Queene* and the Knight’s armor in *Phantastes* (Guite 11). This awareness of the duality of the nation, then, is the very thing that informs these texts. When these writers find themselves at a point in history in which the national identity is in turmoil, they find it incumbent upon themselves to “re-assess” – and entreat readers to re-asses – the nation by returning to a point in English history where its identity was secure. But this point in history is nonexistent – the idyllic England they are hearkening back to is not a temporal moment that can be pointed to by a year or even an age. What they are trying to return to, then, is a sort of mythic England that has simultaneously always and never been, in that it exists as narrative. It is an idea, a cultural touchstone. Benedict Anderson’s idea of “imagined communities” is helpful in understanding that “the nation is an imagined community that had to be invented. [...] The invention of a nation required an array of representations through which the national community can be imagined” (Finke paraphrasing Anderson 225). Spenser, MacDonald, and Lewis are all working with this imagined community, whose mythic forbear – Camelot, Logres – may or may not have ever existed, but whose idea is cemented in the British consciousness and imagination.

Moreover, each writer presents a different representation of their respective nation: Spenser, coming out of a period of great instability and unrest, wrote an epic poem which urged the reigning monarch to examine her kingdom from within the mirror, and within that mirror be reminded of the line from which she claims to have come. MacDonald, in an age that was turning to mechanistic utilitarianism and cold rationalism, wrote a novel whose subtitle is “A Faerie Romance for Men and Women” to invite the common Briton into the mirror, examine the state of Britain from within, and be reminded that self-sacrifice is something that cannot – and *should* not – be subjected to science. And Lewis, writing in a time when intellectual prowess and technological advancements are more important than humanness, resurrects the actual figure of Merlin to force both characters within the story and readers without to confront “the vision of what it might have been or what might yet be.”

We notice, then, through this cross-period study, that though Englishness is mutable, there is often a call to return to what Spenser calls a mirror and what Lewis calls Logres, the place from which to re-assess the current state of England. And it is this call that transcends the specific political moment of each of these texts. Brent Dawson’s work on allegory and globalization asserts that “[i]f a world is an order exceeding the particularities of place and name, then only through such an excessive movement beyond the particular can there be any possibility, however minimal, of a world” (Dawson 176). Spenser, MacDonald, and Lewis are all participating in this idea. It is through historical specificity combined with allegorical non-specificity that the “idea of England” they are participating in is built. Allegory acts as a counterweight in three precarious moments in British history, and it is through these allegorical connections that Englishness – itself a myth, in the Lewisian sense of the word – is made stable.

Finally, recalling once again Dawson's separation of world into "concept" and "fact that impacts global history," we must recognize that, in participating in the literary world building and allegorical "idea of England," all three of these writers are also impacting the physical, concrete world building of England at their respective moments in history. It is by engaging in both simultaneously that they transcend the temporal. In their respective literary mirrors, Kingdoms Real and Imagined – Elizabethan, Victorian, Modern, or Faerie – coexist, co-mingle, and weave in and out of each other, constructing Englishness within the tension of antitheses.

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