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Sabbath Puns and *Okonomia* in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*

JUDITH H. ANDERSON

With the posthumous publication of Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos* in 1609, together with the six books of the 1596 edition, *The Faerie Queene* effectually had a new ending, and, with John Upton's edition of all seven books in 1758, newly explained wordplay on "Sabbaoth"/"Sabaoth" in the ending's close.¹ This wordplay, a visual and aural pun, was implicit in 1609 but for the first time attested to explicitly in Upton's notes. My article centers primarily on this wordplay, bringing it, along with the theme of sovereignty in the *Cantos*, into relation with Giorgio Agamben's genealogy of what he calls "economic theology," the development of theology regarding an immanent ordering within divinity and the cosmos.² Secondly, the article treats the ending of book 6, Calidore's conquest of the Blatant Beast and the Beast's escape into the presence of the poet, aligning it with the truly final ending, that of the partial book 7, which is an "vnperfitte" canto consisting of only two stanzas.³ Book 7 was ironically interrupted by events, we might assume, and, in effect, by Mutability herself. The editions of 1609 and 1758 nevertheless afforded a new reading experience in their mutual ending, one that is divinely comic.

SABBAOTH/SABAOTH: CONCLUDING THE FAERIE QUEENE

The final two stanzas of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, which serve to conclude *The Faerie Queene*, combine earthly motion with

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motionless eternity. Fittingly, this combination comes in a pun, a form of multiplicity favored by Spenser as an often-paradoxical form of unity, and it resides in two visually and aurally similar words, the one referring to the God of eternal rest, and the other to the God of hosts, or active armies:

But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
 With Him that is the God of *Sabbaoth* hight:
 O that great *Sabbaoth* God, graunt me that *Sabaoths*
 sight.
 (7.8.2, emphasis added)

The play on the word *Sabbath*, spelled *ao* in 1609, Upton, and later editions in the final, unstressed syllable (or two unstressed syllables) of all three occurrences and visually marked either by two *bb*'s when meaning "rest" or by one *b* when meaning "hosts," is virtually impossible to distinguish by pronunciation in English and difficult to keep straight even visually in type. I will distinguish the difference discursively in my argument, while emphasizing Spenser's punning wordplay by using the more familiar word *Sabbath* when possible for both.⁴

Before engaging the history of this Spenserian pun and its associations further, I want to review its verbal background. Spenser had training in Hebrew at Merchant Taylors' School, and he also had access to many versions of the Bible—English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew—that afforded varying transliterations and translations.⁵ A homonymic pun is doubtful in Old Testament biblical Hebrew, although a looser form of punning on the transliterated Hebrew words in English is possible.⁶ Evidence exists of a confusion in English of the two biblical words in the Renaissance period and with it an invitation to deliberate poetic wordplay. Rather than relying only on a pun in Hebrew, my assumption is that Spenser is punning visually, aurally, significantly, and allusively on the transliterated forms "*Sabbaoth*"/"*Sabaoth*" in the final lines of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* for an English audience: the presence of neither word is in question, and both appear in the first edition of the *Cantos*, namely that of Matthew Lownes in 1609.⁷

The orthographical forms of "Sabbath" in the *OED* provide evidence of its potential for punning with "Sabaoth" in English: among the numerous variations for "Sabbath" (rest) the *OED* lists are Middle English *sabboth*, "sabotte," and "sabothe" and, "by confusion with *Sabaoth*" (hosts), also numerous instances of "Sabbath" spelled "sabaothe" and "sabbaoth," the last Spenser's

version at the end of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. A telling example the *OED* offers in which “Sabbath” is fused with “Sabaoth” comes from Shakespeare’s Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, act IV, scene i: “By our holy Sabaoth haue I sworne to haue the due and forfeit of my bond.”⁸ Shylock refers to the Sabbath as the date for the repayment of his loan or else the enactment of the penalty for defaulting. Spenser’s pun evidently had a good chance of being recognized by his audience.

The *Mutabilitie Cantos* effectually summarize various combinations of rest and activity in Spenser’s epic romance that are analogous to the final pun on Sabbath and support its presence, lessening the possibility that it is merely the result of a printer’s license. These combinations are evident everywhere in *The Faerie Queene*, ranging from the poem’s metrical form, which conceptually combines stanza, deriving from Latin *stāre*, or “stand,” with verse, deriving from Latin *vertēre*, or “turn, change”; to the poem’s allegory, which combines abstraction with movement, or what Paul Ricoeur terms “conceptual peace and rest” with developing narratives.⁹ Recurrently, the *Mutabilitie Cantos* express a related, thematic concern with still movement—still indicating continuous motion or, in a paradoxical pun, motion that is motionless, or still while moving; Spenser describes the figure Nature in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, as “Still moouing, yet vnmoued from her sted” or place (7.7.13). The same concern also occurs in the 1590 and 1596 books of *The Faerie Queene*, for example, in a description of Florimell, “Still as she fledd” (3.1.16). The combination of rest and restlessness, stability and change, further pertains to the characters and contents of Spenser’s epic romance, from figures in the *Mutabilitie Cantos* to the statues and questing heroes or the Houses and surrounding narratives of books 1–6.

My immediate point is that the wordplay on Sabbath in the last two lines of Spenser’s posthumously published *Mutabilitie Cantos* is fitting, in fact perfectly fitted, to what has preceded it in the *Cantos* themselves and in the earlier books of the poem, but I want to linger further over the familiar background of this pun. Its explicit recovery only begins with Upton’s notes in his mid-eighteenth-century edition of *The Faerie Queene*.¹⁰ Upton cites “the Lord of Sabaoth” in Romans 9:29 and a verse from the popular medieval hymn *Te Deum Laudamus*, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,” or “God of Hosts, God of Armies” (*Dominus Deus Sabaoth*), and he does so in order to suggest the presence of a pun in Spenser’s concluding lines that is evident in the spelling of “Sabbath,” with two *b*’s for rest and one *b* for hosts.¹¹ He

observes that previous editions are erroneous in failing properly to distinguish between the two words.¹² Upton's point about a pun is accepted in the familiar editions of A. C. Hamilton and Thomas P. Roche Jr., as in modern scholarly editions such as the Spenser *Variorum*, and these modern editions print the first two appearances of *Sabbaoth* in Spenser's final lines with two *b*'s for the God of rest who is to grant the *Sabaoth*'s sight of the active hosts—one *b*—at the very end of the final stanza. That is, the God of sabbatical rest and peace would grant the “site” of the sabbatical hosts or armies. “Site,” Spenser's last published word, is another pun, signifying either place or vision. Again, the modern editions' printing of the sabbatical pun accords with that of Lownes in 1609, the initial printing of the *Cantos*.

Upton, also following the 1609 edition, prints the last two lines as do the moderns, but, surprisingly, in identifying and explaining the sabbatical pun, he reverses the order of the punning words.¹³ In his explanatory notes (2:665), in contrast to his text, the first two instances of “*Sabaoth*”/“*Sabbaoth*” are spelled with a single *b* and refer to the God of Hosts or Lord of Hosts, and the final instance refers to the God of rest—that is, the Lord of Hosts is to “grant ... [to the poet] a sight of that day of rest: that great Sabbath and eternal rest.”¹⁴ The significance of the difference between Upton's explanation and that of modern editors is the finality of rest for Upton and of active hosts for the moderns. The divergence of Upton's explanation from his text further attests to the fungibility of the two verbal forms of the sabbatical pun, a fungibility already conspicuous in the orthography of *Sabbath* in the *OED*, and it does so even as Upton insists on the need to distinguish their meanings. I should add that for me the very presence of the pun—that final doubleness of rest and activity in divinity, as in still movement—is what matters most, and the consonance of the final pun with the rest of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, as well as with the earlier books, is strong evidence for its presence.

In the relevant verse from Romans that Upton cites, the Geneva Bible in English lacks the specific word *Sabaoth*—one *b*, referring to hosts—but this word, which is often left untranslated, is available in the Vulgate, which continues to be a common scholarly source in the Tudor-Stuart period, and the same word is also found hundreds of other times in the Bible. That *Sabaoth*, like the Hebrew words *amen* and *haleluja*, is often left untranslated testifies to its traditional sanctity, to its resistance to a satisfying translation, and, in the specific instance of *Sabaoth*, to its breadth and variations of meaning.¹⁵ The context of its occurrence

in Upton's verse from Romans is an account of the remnant to be saved. The specific verse reads, "Except the Lord of hostes had left vs a sede, we had bene made as Sodom, and had bene like to Gomorrha."¹⁶ Geneva's gloss on this and the adjacent verses reads in part, "the fewe, which shal remaine shalbe a worke of his iustice, and shal set forthe his glorie in his Church" (Romans 9:29n, abbreviations expanded). This is an account of God's action in the world and of the realization of his glory among his saints on earth and in heaven. Elsewhere in the Bible, the sabbatical Lord of Hosts is the commander of the armies of Israel (e.g., 1 Samuel 17:45) or the Lord of all the agents and forces that he has created and sustains (e.g., Genesis 2:1; Isaiah 45:12). Part of Roche's gloss on Spenser's pun puts the point about the Lord of Hosts succinctly: "Spenser is calling on the God of the universe, the Lord of Hosts, both heavenly and earthly."¹⁷ Neither Roche nor Don Cameron Allen, the latter in a frequently cited article, interprets Spenser's prayer for a "site" as a desire merely for rest but instead, in Roche's words, for the "perfection" of earthly labors "in the full knowledge of the beatific vision," and, in Allen's words, as a place in God's Sabbath, a dwelling in repose, wherein "the great panorama of the Creation"—that is, a panoramic view of all the active hosts—is seen as God sees it from an "immovable center."¹⁸ This is a distinctly Boethian vision, resonating with Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, a source known to Spenser.¹⁹ When the pun on Sabbath—with one *b*—is thus located in Spenser's final "site," as in modern editions, but opened to biblical occurrences besides the one in Upton's singular explanation, it aligns suggestively with the divine economy, or providential government, of the universe.

The conclusion of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* is hardly their only specifically biblical passage. For salient examples, Nature appears in response to Mutability's appeal to "the God of Nature"—the God ambiguously either transcendent to, or immanent in, Nature—and Spenser associates Nature herself both with the biblical God whose face cannot be seen "but like an image in a glass" and with the transfiguration of whose Son, or image, his apostles witnessed (7.6.35; 7.7.6–7). Imaging eternity in such ways, time further resonates with its description in Plato's *Timaeus* as "a moving image of eternity," as many readers have recognized.²⁰ These are familiar connections. But the moving image of eternity also invites another far-reaching and more unsettling connection with what Agamben has characterized as "economic theology."²¹ Agamben tracks the genealogy of this theology to Greek "oikonomia," glossed as "an

immanent ordering,” and Englished as “economy,” and he follows it from Antiquity through the Middle Ages into the Renaissance and beyond (p. 1). He argues that theology, from its earliest roots, “conceives [both] divine life and the history of humanity” as an economy, an immanent ordering, and he attends closely to the relevant lexicon of Paul’s Epistles, the early Christian Fathers, and medieval theologians (p. 3). Agamben’s genealogy is extensive and vastly learned, and I can touch only on some highlights that bear suggestively, if speculatively, on Spenser’s final pun, final *Cantos*, and, beyond these, on the end of book 6.²²

Agamben stresses that even Greek *oikos*, which underlies the more conceptual term “*oikonomia*,” or immanent ordering, refers to a more complex organism than just a single-family house or even an extended family. He finds crucial comparisons of it to the administration of an army or the functioning of a ship or to a commander in battle or to the administrative apparatus of a king—each of these, I would add, a complex organization with a leader and similar to the biblical meanings of a lord of hosts (pp. 17–8, 24, and 71). He locates the *oikonomia* in the “‘economic’ administration of divine life, which extends from the heavenly house to its earthly manifestation” (p. 37). In the numerous theological documents Agamben treats, God is one, a single power, but the display of this power is triple: that is, “the Trinity is not an articulation of the divine being, but of its praxis,” or working (p. 41). The Trinity itself is therefore an economy, an “articulation and administration [both] of divine life, and the government of creatures,” which critically includes the working of providence (p. 47). The paradigm Agamben traces, which deeply marks Christian theology over centuries, appears to be a ghostly presence in Spenser’s sabbatical pun, with its two conceptions of divine life, the one of unchanging, eternal rest and the other of activity, the one transcendent to Nature, the other immanent in it, as Spenser describes “the God of Nature” in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*.

Agamben’s study increasingly attends to a kind of dualism—perhaps too dramatically, he calls it a “fracture”—in the economic paradigm, which troubles it and which, to my mind, Spenser’s *Mutabilitie Cantos* reflect as well (p. 111). Agamben explains how the conception of “the *oikonomia* makes possible a reconciliation in which a transcendent God, who is both one and triune at the same time, can—while remaining transcendent—take charge of the world and found an immanent praxis of government” (pp. 50–1). But he also finds that attempts thus “to articulate in a single semantic sphere—that of the term *oikonomia*—a series of

levels” result in a reconciliation that proves “problematic: non-involvement in the world and government of the world; unity in being and plurality of actions; ontology and history,” even while these still “continue to interact as a functional unity” (pp. 51–2): my own word “still” strikes a deliberate, mnemonic chord with Spenser’s *Mutabilitie Cantos*. Over the developing course of time that Agamben traces, he comes to discover within the conception of the Trinitarian economy a fissure “between being and praxis [that is] in the deity himself” (p. 111; cf. 52–4). This is the first seed of what eventually emerges ever more clearly as a division between God’s sovereign power and the government of the world, in which sovereignty is held to derive from God’s own. Relatedly, I think of Martin Luther’s *Deus absconditus*, or hidden God, and later of a God even more fully withdrawn and a worldly economy further untethered from divinity, its sovereign power arbitrary or empty.²³

Agamben’s conception of a fractured deity, which now inheres in his understanding of the Trinitarian economy itself, is reflected in the relation of divinity to earth. Here I will resort to a longer quotation of Agamben, insofar as it sounds very much like the Elizabethan Renaissance, especially if we remember Hamlet on the “special providence in the fall of a sparrow”: “The history of the concept of providence coincides with the long and fierce debate between those who claimed that God provides for the world only by means of general or universal principles ... and those who argued that the divine providence extends to particular things—according to the image in Matthew 10:29, down to the lowliest sparrow” (p. 113).²⁴ Agamben adds that general providence without particular providence, a position that also aligns with Aristotle and late classical philosophy, subsequently leads to deism.

From the retrospective distance of modernity, Agamben’s argument relates to Spenser’s pun on *Sabbath*, but without really compromising it. This pun, after all, has a ghostly, if highly plausible, origin in Upton’s explicit discovery of it, and it exists in Spenser’s last published poem as a prayer, not a philosophical-theological problem. What the fracture and reflected problem of the *oikonomia* as a series of levels arguably does, however, is to redirect our attention to the strange role of Jove as a sovereign power in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, a role that should derive from deity as the transcendent source of human authority. With Agamben in mind, we have renewed reason to ask what Jove’s function is in the *Cantos* and what he might represent there.

The feature outstanding in Jove's figure is his claim of sovereignty, supreme power. Three times within ten lines his sovereignty is asserted by Jove himself or by the narrator. Jove disposes himself on his "soueraigne throne," the more to project his "grace and Maiestie" before the Olympians of his court, who cower in the face of Mutability's challenge to their rule (7.6.24).²⁵ He puts on a kingly pose as he would a mantle, covering himself in glory, an early modern equivalent of acclaim in Agamben's argument, and perhaps ironically suggesting to readers that he actually has no clothes. (Agamben would have us think of glory or "Maiestie" in connection with the cultic displays, acclamations, and rallies of dictators.) Rebuking Mutability, Jove asserts his sovereignty "by Conquest of our soueraigne might [rhyming with 'Right'], / And by eternall doome of Fates decree" (7.6.33). Whether in Agamben or Boethius, Fate is subordinated to Christian Providence.²⁶ More outrageously, or comically, Jove then advises the foolish Mutability to "faine," that is, to desire, or at least to pretend, to "Haue *Ioue* thy gracious Lord and Soueraigne" (7.6.34). Considerable comedy, or more exactly parody, colors the confrontation of Jove and his bold but beautiful intruder, a beauty to which he responds in a way that would make a woman think twice about his "gracious" offer to have him above her as her "Lord and Soueraigne."

The *Mutabilitie Cantos* contain a dizzying number of powers besides Jove and the administrative apparatus of Olympians over whom he rules, while he presumes to rule as well over realms stretching from the heavens to the earth. Aside from Mutability's rival claim to sovereignty, Nature is addressed as "soueraigne goddesse" by Mutability, and considered so by Jove (7.7.16). Nature, of course, serves "the highest him, that is behight / Father of Gods and men by equall might; / To weete, the [ambiguously phrased] God of Nature" (7.6.35). At the outset of the second of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, the poet invokes his Muse, the daughter "of heauens King / (Thy soueraigne Sire)," to assist his singing the "fortunate successe, / And victory" of Jove over Mutability (7.7.1). Jove is the Muses' sire in classical myth. What is curious about the poet's avowed epideictic intention is that, while Mutability's claim of sovereignty is rejected by Nature, Jove's victory is deeply qualified by Mutability's challenges, and the poet's own feelings about Mutability's suppression are ambiguous in the end. Although he considers Mutability "vnworthy / ... Of the Heav'ns Rule," he recognizes that

ests as the object of Faunus's lecherous peeping, a parody of Mutability's rising against Jove (7.6.38). To make matters worse (or better), Faunus himself is a nature deity, one who, the poem tells us, cannot be gelded, or, effectually for a fertility god, destroyed (7.6.50). The depiction of Jove's sovereignty and the allusive ties of Cynthia-Diana-Elizabeth to him challenge—indeed make fun of—the traditional status of earthly sovereignty as an expression of the immanent divine ordering, or *oikonomia*. Mutability's clinching argument in the case she pleads before Nature is that the Olympians are themselves earthly, not only subject to motion as planets but also earth-born as myths. Their origin as gods is merely human, as is the earthly sovereignty figured by Jove.

The remaining references to sovereignty (barring a reference to a sovereign May Queen: 7.7.34) merely reinforce the competing claims of Mutability and Jove, understood figuratively as those of motion and rest, change and stasis, action and order, rebellion and rule.³² Yet enough of the curtain is lifted in the first two *Mutabilitie Cantos* to expose the mystery of sovereign power before Spenser turns in the very end to the mystery-laden sabbatical words of the Bible, the one promising rest and the other activity. Given a peek behind the curtain, I suppose that the sabbatical pun could be taken as a sardonic expression of disillusionment with worldly order.³³ But recalling the recreative tone of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* and the form of the final, punning lines, a prayer, I take the pun instead as an expression of lingering hope, of desire, and finally of faith in a divinely comic ending.

Still, the possibility exists, and it is only a possibility, that yet another pun lies in the words for *Sabbath*, namely Hamilton's suggestion, based on William Camden's *Remaines concerning Britain*, that "Elizabeth signifies 'Peace of the Lord, or quiet rest of the Lord.'"³⁴ Camden does not offer etymological evidence for his explanation, but presumably it is based on transliterated Hebrew *El* (god) and *Sabbath* as rest or peace.³⁵ Such a derivation, alluding to the knotty plural *Elohim*, a name of God in the Bible, could return us to the complex *oikonomia* of divinity, the God at once singular and triune, as Agamben examines this divine ordering. Etymologically, however, the Queen's name actually derives from Hebrew *Elisheva* (or *Elishebhā*) in the Septuagint's Koine Greek, meaning "My God is an oath" or "My God is abundance," and otherwise in biblical Greek, rendered as Ἐλισάβετ, "Elisabet."³⁶ If the pun on Elizabeth's name, as understood by Camden, is indeed present in Spenser's closing prayer, it leaves us with the same result: a choice of ironic disillusionment with the worldly

order or of lingering hope for something better. The final mystery for Spenser, as well as the basis of Agamben's genealogy, lies in language, in the status of words and their relationship to the Word. It is only fitting that Spenser's final words in the *Mutabilitie Cantos* should leave us to ponder a copious pun.

LOOKING BACK: THE 1596 INSTALLMENT

Over decades, there have been numerous pessimistic, optimistic, and mixed readings of the final stanzas of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, and many, perhaps most, have been influenced by the relatively darker, more secular books of the 1596 installment of *The Faerie Queene*.³⁷ From book 4, the first of these books, time ("the cankerworme of writs"), "haplesse fate / Or hard misfortune," and above all words, which "expresse the meaning of the inward mind" for good or ill, comfort or pain, play a conspicuous role that continues in books 5 and 6 and might be seen to culminate first at the end of book 6 and then in the final *Cantos* (4.2.33, 4.6.47, and 4.8.26).³⁸ In the 1596 installment, memorable, nightmarish figures of poisonous words are recurrent: Slander, Envy, Detraction, and their agent the Blatant Beast, the major antagonist of book 6. In book 5, the misguided Giant who tries to weigh anything from land to words materially, and Malfont, the poet with his offending tongue nailed to a post in punishment, provide further haunting images. Against these, lyric moments, most especially the vision of the Graces on Mount Acidale, are the artistic bulwarks, if so ill-fitting a noun can be used for such fleeting, visionary achievements.

Two features of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* strike me as being particularly distinctive when set against the 1596 installment of *The Faerie Queene*, namely, their dominantly comic and mythic mode—again, I would stress, dominant and crucially so.³⁹ The distinction is not that these features have never before appeared in *The Faerie Queene*'s six earlier books, in which comic parody is present from the start, as evident, for instance, in the treatment of Archimago's disguising or of Redcrosse's ungainly dragon, reduced to a tourist attraction once defeated.⁴⁰ A mythic mode is also notably recurrent in *The Faerie Queene*, but mythic figures never enter the narrative of quest, with the possible exceptions of the Cupid-like angel who comes to Guyon's aid, and Cambina, who belongs to a mythic register but enters the relatively more primary narrative. Other mythic figures, like Venus and Diana in the Garden canto of book 3, are set off in another realm and most

frequently situated in one of the Houses of the poem—Busirane's, Venus's, or Isis's, for example. Sometimes, such figures are immobile statues, still more apart from a narrative of errant questing. While virtually any generalization about *The Faerie Queene* encounters unruly exceptions, I will nonetheless reaffirm that the dominantly comic and mythic mode of the final *Cantos* is new and that it figures significantly in them, specifically to affect the response the final stanzas invite. Form in Spenser's poetry is fundamentally, not superficially, shaping.

The end of book 6, which, in a sequential reading of the whole published in 1609 and again in 1758 with the sabbatical pun made explicit, immediately precedes the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. As the immediate antecedent, it affects them, providing relevant contrast or continuity. Comic form plays a crucial, contextual role with respect to both these possibilities. In the ending of book 6, Calidore captures the Blatant Beast and leads him on a victory tour through Faerie, a distant recall of the defeat and display of Redcrosse's dread dragon in book 1. But Calidore's Beast escapes to rage once more through the world, and the bitter words of the poet emerge from the fiction to acknowledge the pain the Beast's bite has caused him. In a much earlier reading elsewhere, I suggested that this bitterness cannot simply cancel the Acidalian vision or indeed the gifts of the Muses more generally.⁴¹ In the present article, I want to stress further the role of form as a defining feature of poetic vision in book 6, as throughout *The Faerie Queene*, although ever more noticeably so in the 1596 installment.⁴² As the culmination of this installment, book 6 features numerous poetic forms that figure thematically: lyric, narrative, allegory, parody, romance, complaint, and pastoral. The cannibals' ogling of Serena features a blazon that alludes to the sonnet tradition, and the initial depiction of Mirabella, attended by Scorn and Disdain, is effectually an emblem.

The animation of the Blatant Beast, which is focal in what follows, merges elements of myth, cartoon, and beast fable. Although a product of human envy and cruelty, the Beast embodies subhuman unkindness. He is an unnatural monster, "bred of hellishe race" and begot "Of Cerberus / ... And fell Chimæra in her darkesome den, / ... Where he was fostred long in Stygian fen" (6.1.7–8). In the holy hermit's telling, the Beast is reborn as the direct progeny of Echidna, half maiden, half snake, whom the gods thrust into a subterranean cave where, with Typhœus (Spenser's Typhaon), she bore Chimæra, Cerberus, and the similarly dog-like Blatant Beast (6.6.9–12).⁴³ Taken together, the Beast's two

genealogies suggest infernal incest, insofar as Cerberus and Chimæra are both his siblings and begetters. The genealogy of the Beast belongs to a mythic mode that is fantasied, even while the Beast figures and enacts real wounds, pain, and destruction in the human world.

When Calidore, the nominal hero of book 6, reenters the narrative in canto 9 after an absence of five cantos (4–8), he is still pursuing the Blatant Beast as he was when last seen. His pursuit has taken him from the Court to cities, towns, farms, and eventually into the open fields and a company of shepherds. Effectually, if strangely, chasing the Beast has led him into pastoral. Make of this sequence what we may—truancy, escape, recreation, renewal—it is a radical shift in mode and perspective that enables the Acidalian vision and lasts until the depredations of the brigands destroy the pastoral landscape and send Calidore back to pursuit of the Beast that has been raging through all levels of society, especially the institutional clergy, in this Knight of Courtesy's absence.

When Calidore at last corners the Beast, the poem describes the knight's conquest in a dozen stanzas that recall both Redcrosse's canto-length battle with the dragon of book 1 and the energized, seemingly self-generating description of Slander in book 4 (4.8.23–7), which seeks by imitation to represent her venomous effect. But the description of the Beast's defeat also comes with important differences. In comparison to Redcrosse's dragon, this Beast, however monstrous, is a much diminished thing, which the poet tries so hard to aggrandize that his effort ends up seeming half-hearted, unless, the suspicion arises, he actually wants to create this perception or a more interesting, alternative one, a possibility subsequently to be developed. In comparison to Slander, the Beast is also less human, his tongues including those of dogs, cats, bears, tigers, and serpents, in addition to numerous "tongues of mortall men"—of deadly, deathly humans (6.12.27). Slander's breath is noisome, and her spirit poisonous, but she is never closer to animal-kind than when uttering "spightfull words" that "like the stings of Aspes ... kill with smart" (4.8.26).

Recalling Redcrosse's dragon, Calidore's raging Beast opens a hell-mouth, in the Beast's case one full of iron teeth and a thousand tongues, which get two stanzas of heated description. Again, like his monstrous predecessor in book 1, the Beast, his mouth foaming with blood and venom, rears up to seize Calidore's person, only to be knocked to the ground by the knight's intervening shield, whereupon

His shield he on him threw, and fast downe held,
 Like as a bullocke, that in bloody stall
 Of butchers balefull hand to ground is feld.
 (6.12.30)

Suddenly, we find ourselves transported to an abattoir, with a memory of Artegall's parodic imposition of barnyard justice on a murderer, who wears the head of a decapitated lady as if he were a dog that had killed a domestic goose (5.1.28–9), or, nearer to hand, a memory of the artistic slight in the first canto of book 6 by which Calidore's murderous fury is transmuted to pastoral:

But he them all from him full lightly swept,
 As doth a Steare, in heat of sommers day,
 With his long taile the bryzes brush away.
 (6.1.24)

In both earlier instances and in the present one, the poet expects us to notice the translation, which participates in a formal and thematic pattern of transference.

The Beast, down but not tamed, grinds his teeth in rage and frustration, biting, scratching, spewing venom, and generally faring “like a feend, right horrible in hew” (6.12.31). Tonally, the Beast's biting, scratching, and spitting resists heroic aggrandizement by comparison immediately afterward to “the hell-borne *Hydra*, which they faine”

That great *Alcides* whilome ouerthrew,
 After that he had labourd long in vaine,
 To crop his thousand heads, the which still new
 Forth budded, and in greater number grew.
 (6.12.32)

This technique, parodic exposure followed by aggrandizement, is similarly conspicuous in the depiction of Artegall in the early cantos of book 5, a similarity that increases its recognizability in the present context.⁴⁴

In the next stanza, 33, the Beast's thousand tongues in stanza 27 are reduced to a hundred, signaling his diminishing strength, yet he continues to spew venom until Calidore first nearly chokes and finally muzzles him, then leads him on a leash. Another epic simile follows, once more evoking Hercules, this time bringing

which this book ends, they carry extra weight. Like book 6, the *Mutabilitie Cantos* also end with the poet's voice, but they reverse the weighting that closes book 6. They continue the pattern of hope and its failure but significantly increase the proportional presence of comedy. Although the sabbatical pun with which they close holds both the possibility of hope and loss, it tilts the scale decidedly toward a comic ending that is divine. With this close, the Beast's bite at the very end of book 6 fades into a new prospect.

NOTES

¹ John Upton, "Notes on Two Cantos of Mutability," in *Spenser's Faerie Queene. A New Edition with a Glossary, and Notes Explanatory and Critical*, ed. Upton, 2 vols. (London: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, 1758), 2:659–665, 665; ECCO STC T134641.

² Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, with Matteo Mandarini, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011), p. 1. Subsequent references to *The Kingdom and the Glory* are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text and notes by page number.

³ The word "vnperfitte" appears in the heading of book 7.8 (Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita, and Toshiyuki Suzuki, rev. 2d edn. [Harlow UK: Pearson Longman, 2007], p. 712, book 7, canto 8). Subsequent references to *The Faerie Queene* are from this edition and will appear parenthetically by book, canto, and stanza. In *Creation and Anarchy: The Work of Art and the Religion of Capitalism*, Agamben relevantly cites Carlo Ridolfi to describe a painting by Titian as not having been reduced to perfection, that is, as having a certain unexpressed remainder, a "capacity to be developed," as Agamben earlier puts it (Ridolfi, qtd. in Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy*, trans. Adam Kotsko, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2019], pp. 22 and 14–5).

⁴ *OED*, 3rd edn., s.v. "pun, n.": "The use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect; a play on words." I would add that puns are not necessarily humorous. Their tonal range is wide and various.

⁵ On Spenser's education, see Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), pp. 29 and 32; on Spenser's Bibles, see Carol V. Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 10–2.

⁶ Spenser's wordplay involves separate Hebrew words, not in themselves constituting a homonymic pun, as Tamara A. Goeglein informed me in private correspondence regarding the Old Testament in Hebrew (25 November 2019). On types of punning, see n4 above. Also see the *OED*, 1st edn., s.v. "Sabaoth, n.": "A Hebrew word (lit. 'armies,' 'hosts'), retained untranslated in the English New Testament (as in the original Greek and in the Vulgate) and the Te Deum, in the designation the Lord of Sabaoth, for which in the

original Old Testament passages the English versions have the rendering 'The Lord of Hosts.' Etymology: < Latin Sabaōth (Vulgate), < Greek Σαβαώθ (Septuagint and New Testament), < Hebrew ṣəbāōth plural of ṣābā army." As Goeglein explains the *OED*, "That 'Sabbath'/'Sabaoth' are near homographic puns happens by tracing, in reverse, the *OED*'s etymological entry and by pointing to the obviously different alphabets: the Vulgate is written in the Roman alphabet, as is English; the Septuagint is written in the Greek alphabet, which transliterates the Hebrew alphabet. And so the Hebrew words become near-orthographic puns as they are filtered through the Greek Septuagint > Latin > English. The most important letters are those that become the three consonants (in English), the 's,' the 'b,' and the 'th.'"

⁷ Spenser, "Tvo Cantos of Mvtabilitie," in *The Faerie Queene* (London: Printed by H. L. for Mathew Lownes, 1609), pp. 353–63, 363; EEBO STS (2d edn.) 23083. Andrew Zurcher has recently treated "The Printing of the *Cantos of Mutabilitie* in 1609," in *Celebrating Mutabilitie: Essays on Edmund Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos*, ed. Jane Grogan, The Manchester Spenser (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press 2010), pp. 40–60.

⁸ *OED* 1st edn., s.v. "Sabbath/sabbath, forms." The *OED*'s reference is one line off from *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Shakespeare, "The Merchant of Venice," in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, with the assistance of J. J. M. Tobin, 2d edn. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997], pp. 288–317, IV.i.36–7. The *OED* offers another example from a Wycliffite Bible: "the iurney of a saboth" (Acts 1:12), and a second Shakespearean example from *Richard III* (III.ii.307, dated 1597): "Come the next sabaoth" (*OED*, 1st edn. s.v. "Sabbath/sabbath," 1a and 1b). Shakespeare, his printers, or both evidently confused the two words at issue, inviting wordplay on them.

⁹ *OED*, 2d edn., s.v. "stanza, *n.*," etymology; *OED*, 2d edn., s.v. "verse, *n.*," etymology; Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 141–57, 146.

¹⁰ The clergyman, Upton, had an Oxford A.B. and M.A. and was "an accomplished classical and literary scholar," according to the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on his father (E. C. Marchant, "Upton, James (1671–1749), schoolmaster," revised S. J. Skedd, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published 23 September 2004, last updated 3 January 2008, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.rice.edu/10.1093/ref:odnb/28009>).

¹¹ Upton, "Notes on Two Cantos of Mutability," 2:669–65, 665. The verses of *Te Deum Laudamus* in English and Latin can be found at *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Te Deum Laudamus," accessed 10 February 2021, <http://Britannica.com/topic/Te-Deum-laudamus>. See also Wikipedia, s.v. "Te Deum," accessed 10 February 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Te_Deum.

¹² Upton, "Notes," qtd. in Ray Heffner, ed. "Commentary," in *The Faerie Queene: Book Six and Seven*, by Spenser, vol. 6 of *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford, and Heffner, 11 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1938–57), pp. 183–316, 315.

¹³ For his account of editions consulted, namely, the 1609, 1611, 1617, and 1679 editions, see Upton, preface to *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, 1:v–xlili, xxxviii–ix and xli.

¹⁴ This paraphrase, preceded by "i.e." in the *Variorum* (6:315), is Upton's (2:675).

¹⁵ Compare Augustine on the word "Amen" and other sanctified Hebrew terms: Herbert Thurston, "Amen," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), accessed 1 October 2020, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01407b.htm>.

¹⁶ "The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romaines," in *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), Romans 9:27-29, SS2r-TT4r, TT2v. Subsequent references to the Bible are from this edition and appear parenthetically by book, chapter, and verse number.

¹⁷ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (Harmondsworth UK: Penguin, 1978), p. 1243.

¹⁸ Don Cameron Allen, "On the Closing Lines of *The Faerie Queene*," *MLN* 64, 2 (February 1949): 93-4, 94.

¹⁹ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. V. E. Watts (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969). Treating "[t]he relationship between the ever-changing course of Fate and the stable simplicity of Providence," the *Consolation* imagines "a set of revolving concentric circles. The inmost one comes closest to the simplicity of the centre ['the steadfast mind of God'], while forming itself a kind of centre for those set outside it to revolve round" (p. 136). The relationship of Fate and Providence, moreover, "is like that between reasoning and understanding, ... or between the moving circle and the still point in the middle" (pp. 136-7); see also pp. 163-9. On the relation of fortune to fate, see Michael Steppat, *Chances of Mischief: Variations of Fortune in Spenser*, *Anglistische Studien* 9 (Cologne DE: Böhlau, 1990), pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Plato, "Timaeus," trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 1151-211, 1167, 37d3-4. See also Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 28 (*Timaeus*); cf. p. 74 (Plotinus).

²¹ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, p. 1.

²² As Gordon Teskey characterizes Spenser's thinking in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, the poet "thought in subtle, allusive, indirect, and intuitive ways about problems too complex to be dealt with by entirely rational means, problems we might describe as demanding an associative rather than an algorithmic approach" (*Allegory and Violence* [Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996], p. 174).

²³ In *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Agamben makes much of the empty throne, an ancient and later a Christian symbol of sovereignty, which he interprets as a symbol of void: the empty throne symbolizes glory, "in its innermost self-inoperativity and sabbatism," the latter term obviously deriving from Sabbath (p. 245). Such an extremity is not realized in Spenser, although a seed of this later development arguably is.

²⁴ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, gen. ed. Richard Proudfoot, Thompson, David Scott Kastan, and H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), V.ii.167-8.

²⁵ Teskey suggests that the Olympians in Spenser's *Cantos* figure "the political unconscious of universal order," an adaptation of Fredric Jameson's phrase, he notes (*Allegory and Violence*, p. 173). See also Robert Lanier Reid, *Renaissance Psychologies: Spenser and Shakespeare*, Manchester Spenser (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2017), pp. 288–9.

²⁶ Boethius notes that "the simple and unchanging plan of events is Providence, and Fate is the ever-changing web, the disposition in and through time of all the events which God has planned in His simplicity" (p. 136). Pertinently, disposition or "*dispositio*" is a key term in what Agamben describes as Cicero's rhetorical *okonomia*, or formally ordered arrangement of verbal material (*The Kingdom and the Glory*, p. 19).

²⁷ I have omitted the comma after "tickle": the authority of punctuation in an early seventeenth-century edition, such as the one Hamilton's edition follows for book 7, is notoriously unreliable and likely to be that of the printing house. This likelihood is increased in a posthumous edition, such as that of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*.

²⁸ Compare such an outbreak of affection for earthly beauty in John Calvin's writings: "Shall the Lord haue set in flowers so great a beautie, as presenteth it selfe to our eies: shall he haue giuen so great a sweetnesse of sauour as naturally floweth into our smelling: and shall it be vnlawfull either for our eies to take the vse of that beautie, or for our smelling to feele that sweetnesse of sauour?" (*The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. Thomas Norton [London: Bonham Norton, 1599], p. 192, book 3, chapter 10, section 2; EEBO STC [2d edn.] 4423). On the ambiguities of "loath" and "vaine," see Harry Berger Jr., *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), pp. 268–73, 269.

²⁹ Chaucer, "*Troilus and Criseide*," in *Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader*, ed. E. Talbot Donaldson, 2d edn. (New York: Ronald Press, 1975), pp. 710–990, book 5, lines 1240–1.

³⁰ Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* (London: Athlone, 1970), p. 98; see also Judith H. Anderson, "Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in Spenser's *Amoretti* and *The Faerie Queene*: Reading Historically and Intertextually," in *Rereading Chaucer and Spenser: Dan Geffrey with the New Poete*, ed. Rachel Stenner, Tamsin Badcoe, and Gareth Griffith (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2019), pp. 19–36.

³¹ Margaret Christian, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart': Scriptural Tradition and the Close of *The Faerie Queene*," *C&L* 42, 2 (Winter 1993): 205–20, 210.

³² The May Queen's sovereignty rings a mnemonic bell accordant with the pastoral queen of the April Eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, namely, "fayre Elisa, Queene of shepheardes all" (Spenser, "*The Shepheardes Calender*," in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 1–213, 72, line 34).

³³ Teskey's view of Spenser's final stanzas, 7.8.1–2, is much darker: he concludes that "'the ever-whirling wheele / Of *Change*' provokes nausea and loathing. The final prayer is an act of rejection" (*Allegory and Violence*, p. 177); see likewise, Teskey, *Spenserian Moments* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 2019), p. 429.

³⁴ Hamilton, "Our New Poet: Spenser, 'well of English undefyld,'" in *A Theatre for Spenserians*, ed. Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 101–123, 110; William Camden, *Remaines concerning Britain* (London: printed for Simon Waterson and Robert Clavell, 1657), p. 96; EEBO Wing (2d edn.) C374B. The *Remaines*, first printed in 1605, postdate Spenser's death, but provide a contemporary understanding of Elizabeth's name. On Spenser and Camden, see Hadfield, pp. 38 and 59.

³⁵ *El*, "deity," refers to any god, including those of pagans. It is virtually always qualified further when referring to the God of Israel. See *Wikipedia*, s.v. "El (deity)," last edited 26 September 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_\(deity\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_(deity)); John J. Parsons, "The Hebrew Name of God – El," *Hebrew for Christians*, accessed on 14 April 2021, http://hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/El/el.html.

³⁶ *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Elizabeth (given name)," last edited 29 September 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_\(given_name\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_(given_name)); Douglas Harper, s.v. "Elizabeth," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed on 14 April 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/elizabeth>; *Wiktionary*, s.v. "Elizabeth," last edited 25 July 2020, <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Elizabeth>; see also James P. Boyd, s.v. "Elisabeth," *The Bible Dictionary* (New York: Ottenheimer, 1958), p. 39.

³⁷ For representative examples, see Donald Cheney, *Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in "The Faerie Queene,"* Yale Studies in English 161 (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 239–47; Berger, pp. 268–73; Richard A. McCabe, *The Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in "The Faerie Queene,"* Dublin Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature 1 (Blackrock IE: Irish Academic Press, 1989), pp. 208–12; Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*, pp. 176–88; Reid, pp. 282–97.

³⁸ Dozens of similar citations from each book in the 1596 installment could be offered.

³⁹ As my phrase "a divinely comic ending" earlier signaled, the terms "comic" and "comedy" apply to humor and to a happy ending.

⁴⁰ For a review of parody at the tone-setting outset of each book, see Anderson, *Spenser's Narrative Figuration of Women in "The Faerie Queene,"* Research in Medieval and Early Modern Culture (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), pp. 13–8. The comic dimensions of Redcrosse's dragon and the sequel to his defeat have often been discussed, most recently by Joe Moshenska, "Spenser at Play," *PMLA* 133, 1 (January 2018): 19–35.

⁴¹ Anderson, *The Growth of a Personal Voice: "Piers Plowman" and "The Faerie Queene"* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 198–203.

⁴² For examples, see Anderson, *Reading the Allegorical Intertext: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2008), chaps. 6 and 9, pp. 91–108 and 135–53; *Personal Voice*, pp. 154–9 and 164–73; *Spenser's Narrative Figuration*, pp. 95–119.

⁴³ Hamilton, notes to *The Faerie Queene*, by Spenser, p. 604n8 and p. 639n10–2. I have combined the hermit's genealogy with additional mythic details about Echidna's progeny: see Oskar Seyffert, *A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities: Mythology, Religion, Literature, Art*, rev. edn., ed. Henry Nettleship and J. E. Sandys (Cleveland OH: World Publishing, 1963), s.v. "Echidna"; Seyffert, s.v. "Typhæus," *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities*; Henry Gibbons

Lotspeich, "Blatant Beast," *Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*, Princeton Studies in English 9 (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), p. 43.

⁴⁴ On the irony of Artegall's early exploits, see Anderson, "'Nor Man It Is': The Knight of Justice in Book V of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *PMLA* 85, 1 (January 1970): 65–77, 68.

⁴⁵ Berger characterizes the Beast's defeat similarly, though to more scornful effect; his concern is psychology ("wish fulfillment") rather than comedy (p. 221).

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Allegorical Intertext*, pp. 83–7.

⁴⁷ In book 5.11, Arthur gets a hero's acclaim from the people that recalls the one for Redcrosse in book 1.12 and stands in contrast to Artegall's ending in book 5.12, the assault of Envy, Detraction, and the Blatant Beast. Book 5 balances the two cantos' endings against each other, one idealized and comic, the other not.