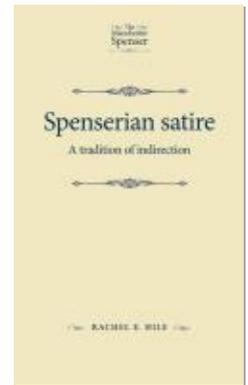# Spenserian Satire

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After the Bishops' Ban:
imitation of Spenserian satire

Spenser's death in 1599, the promulgation of the Bishops' Ban in 1599, and the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603—each of these could be expected to affect the writing of poetry in England, with Spenser's influence becoming modified by nostalgia, authors trying to interpret the text of the Bishops' Ban to determine how to respond to its directive "That noe Satyres or Epigramms be printed hereafter" (qtd. in McCabe, "Elizabethan satire," 188), and everyone watching to see what degree of oversight of the press would characterize King James's reign. The previous chapter speculated on the impact of these three events by comparing two works by Thomas Middleton from 1599 and 1604, to see the extent to which Middleton's consistent political and religious sympathy with attitudes and values associated with Spenser showed up as stylistic "Spenserianism" in these two satirical poetic works. In this chapter, I will focus on the early seventeenth century, with close attention to several works by a few members of the loose alliance generally referred to as "Spenserian poets": Michael Drayton, William Browne, and George Wither.

A poet who wished to write satirical verse in 1600 might rightly conclude from the named works in the Bishops' Ban that formal verse satire was an unsafe mode for expressing satirical meanings. The additional knowledge that the still-living Queen Elizabeth or the still-powerful Robert Cecil, son of Spenser's enemy Lord Burghley, might continue to take exception to satirical beast fables certainly combined to create a chilling effect on the production of satirical poetry in the first years of the seventeenth century. With the accession of James I to the English throne, we see authors cautiously working to find the line of satirical safety without crossing it. Certainly, beast fables did not immediately become "safe" in 1599 or in 1603. During the 1590s, beast fables were clearly seen as potentially hazardous: other than Nashe's interpolation of a short beast fable into *Pierce Penilesse His Svpplication to the Diuell*

(1592), the only other published example I know of is Tailboys Dymoke's insect-and-flower fable *Caltha Poetarum*, discussed in Chapter 4, which was published pseudonymously and almost immediately censored in 1599.

One can perceive, in authors' decisions regarding which works to publish and which to keep in manuscript, a hierarchy of "animal fable safety," with authors clearly hoping that birds and insects would be perceived as less objectionable figures to populate an animal fable than foxes, apes, and lions: as already discussed in Chapter 5, Middleton published an insect-and-bird poem, *Father Hubburds Tales*, in 1604. In the same year, Michael Drayton published a bird fable, *The Owle*, which I will discuss more fully in the first part of this chapter. In 1605, Peter Woodhouse published *Democritus His Dreame; or, The Contention between the Elephant and the Flea*, which attempted to forestall the possibility of topical readings by insisting that the animal story was the dream of Democritus, which Democritus narrated within the narrator's own dream:

> A Shadowe of a shadowe thus you see,
> Alas what substance in it then can bee?
> If any thing herein amisse doe seeme:
> Consider 'twas a dreame, dreamt of a dreame.
>
> <div align="right">(Woodhouse, The Flea, E2r)[1]</div>

Whether one agrees with Hoyt Hudson that the tale is humorous rather than satirical, or with A.B. Grosart and Arthur Sherbo that the characters do in fact glance at real people, Woodhouse (or "Woodhouse," since all we know about him is that he *may* have been a friend of Thomas Nashe; see Sherbo) takes no chances by repeatedly making the point that there is no matter here, only a dream (Hudson, "John Hepwith's," 59; Grosart qtd. in Hudson, 61; Sherbo, "Tommaso," 427).

In keeping with this idea of a hierarchy or continuum of "safer" animals to fabulize, we can gain some sense of the distance seventeenth-century readers might have perceived between a bird fable and a beast fable by the fact that just two years later, in 1607, Richard Niccols wrote two satires: he published the bird satire *The Cuckow*, but his notably derivative Spenserian beast fable, *The Beggers Ape*, remained unpublished until after his death. John Hepwith (possibly a pseudonym; see Hudson, "John Hepwith's," 40) wrote *The Caledonian Forest*, a beast fable satirizing the Duke of Buckingham, in 1628, but the poem was not published until 1641. Thus, it appears that, in the first decade of the seventeenth century,

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1 Note that the title page title differs from the in-text and running text title.

English satirists considered *Mother Hubberds Tale* and beast satires in general to remain potentially dangerous satirical forms for imitation or allusion. In this chapter, I will consider the continuing relevance of Spenserian indirection in English satirical poetry—especially animal fables and pastoral satire—in the early years of the seventeenth century.

"Spenserianism" in the early seventeenth century: the Spenserian poets

Many scholars have observed that, in the early seventeenth century, "Spenserianism" became more than a matter of poetic style, becoming instead a means of expressing a reasonably clear set of values through poetry. Decades ago, Joan Grundy, in *The Spenserian Poets*, identified the mindset of these poets as "deeply and positively conservative: they looked back to the past with a conscious and aggressive nostalgia… . [They] were aware of themselves as, in part at least, outsiders," and they valued "patriotism, the English countryside, and the cult of pure beauty" (Grundy, *Spenserian Poets*, 7). Grundy's characterization avoids explicit discussion of politics while still glancing at what are clearly political divisions. David Norbrook addresses the politics of these poets directly, but with the caution that "it is misleading to speak of a formal 'opposition' based on a coherent ideology [because] there might be opposing factions at court but they were often motivated by personal rather than political disagreements." This comment complicates Norbrook's characterization of the group as "alienated from the court and sometimes us[ing] the traditional symbolism of Protestant pastoral to voice their discontent," because they did not all have the same reasons for feeling alienated from the court (Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 175).

Still, it is useful to think of these poets as a group, and Michelle O'Callaghan analyzes the Spenserians in ways that emphasize them as a loose coalition of like-minded individuals rather than a group of same-thinking ideologues. They "engaged with Spenser in order to define their own identities and, just as importantly, to define a community" (O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, 1). Thinking about what poets signal in the early seventeenth century by adopting a Spenserian style or ethos can help us to see how they used Spenser to connect political and religious affiliations of the late sixteenth century to those of the early seventeenth century. Thinking in this way—that is, analyzing the links between what the Spenserian poets admired or missed from the sixteenth century and what they deplored in the seventeenth, and considering how Spenseri-

anism serves as an shorthand way of making these links visible—allows us to see a throughline connecting Spenser's world with the changed world of the new century, in which different players—a new monarch, a new Cecil, new favorites, new powerful noblemen—often played anew situations that Spenser had observed in his time. In this sense, although Norbrook is right to caution us against seeking "a formal 'opposition' based on a coherent ideology," we can, by thinking diachronically across the turn of the century and the turn of the monarch, see the similarities that connect the Spenserian poets, where synchronic analysis emphasizes their differences.

A few questions and answers—which, I admit, are oversimplifications—will suffice to create an overview of my argument about how diachronic thinking can help to focus some of the concerns of these poets. Who is the Protestant hero who will fight for the English Protestant cause? The Earl of Leicester → Philip Sidney → the Earl of Essex → the new King James (briefly and hopefully, before the character of his reign became apparent) → Prince Henry. Who is the enemy to be vanquished? Not surprisingly, political and religious animosities combine to create two powerful enemies: France and Spain, both Catholic, both shifting over the course of the period under discussion in terms of which seemed the greater threat. Because of how each nation was imagined, with the French danger stemming from their supposed affectedness and luxuriousness and the Spanish danger arising from their military strength and general wiliness, Spain generally had the primary place in the English imaginary of the enemy. Where do virtue and vice reside? Perhaps the question of "where," though answered by the poets, is not as important as calling attention to the fact that they were asking it at all. Although Spenser was hesitant to criticize his queen directly, his responses to this question in such texts as *Mother Hubberds Tale* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, as well as to some extent in *The Faerie Queene*, show his own awareness of the moral emptiness of some corners of the English royal court, though he balances his satirical criticisms in both *Mother Hubberd* and *Colin Clout* with high praise of some members of the court. Spenserian poets of the seventeenth century, nostalgic for Queen Elizabeth and inspired by Spenser's willingness to criticize, found little to admire in the court, finding virtue instead in the country. (As mentioned in Chapter 5, Thomas Middleton also aligned himself against the court, but with greater allegiance to the city instead of the country.)

Thus, in this chapter I will examine the ways that these early seventeenth-century poets use Spenser and Spenserian indirection to connect

their complaints of the new century, the new monarch, the new court, and the new favorites with the ideas and ideals explored by Spenser in the previous century.

Michael Drayton's *The Owl*: the rhetoric of nostalgia and poetic genealogy

By all accounts, Michael Drayton suffered a great disappointment in 1603, when his poetic celebration of the new king, *To the Maiestie of King James: A gratulatorie poem by Michaell Drayton*, failed to garner any positive attention from James. This disappointment presumably led to his anticourt satire, *The Owle*, which he published the following year, although he created deniability that the poem commented in any way upon contemporary events by asserting that he had finished the poem a year earlier but had not yet published it because he had interrupted his work to write a congratulatory poem for the new king: "(it gaue place by my inforcement) vndertaking then in the generall joye of the Kingdome, and my zeale to his Highnesse, to write his Majesties descent in a Poeme gratulatorie" (Drayton, "To the reader," A4r).[2]

Drayton himself blamed his lack of success gaining patronage from King James on his "forward pen," and the apparent corroboration of this interpretation by Henry Chettle, who chides Drayton in *Englands Mourning Garment* for celebrating James before he mourned Elizabeth, has led numerous editors and critics to accept this interpretation.[3] Jean R. Brink argues against this story by noting that other authors, including Chettle, rushed into print immediately after Elizabeth's death; that other authors failed to mourn Elizabeth poetically, with no apparent damage to their ability to gain royal patronage; and that Ben Jonson not only did not mourn Elizabeth before praising James but actually disparaged her in order to flatter Queen Anne. Brink posits that James may have objected to Drayton's somewhat officious advice that he banish "The foole, the Pandar, and the Parasite" from his court, or that—because Drayton had already lost the patronage of Lucy, Countess of Bedford—James may never have seen the poem at all (Brink, *Michael Drayton*, 14–18; Drayton, *To the Maiestie*, line 168).

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2 Drayton excised this reference to the celebration of King James's accession in the revised version that he published in 1619.

3 See Newdigate, *Michael Drayton*, 125–26, for this interpretation, including quotations from Drayton and Chettle. Grundy (*Spenserian Poets*, 10) and Hardin (*Michael Drayton*, 77) follow Newdigate.

If James did see it, he might have been offended as much by Drayton's tactless references to his parentage as by the advice on how to order his court. James's sensitivity regarding the treatment of his mother is well known to Spenserians from his banning of *The Faerie Queene* in Scotland and his unsuccessful attempts to have Spenser punished for his allegorical treatment of James's mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, in Book 5 of *The Faerie Queene.* Richard McCabe argues that James's efforts to control the message about his mother stemmed not from filial affection but from concern for his own claims to the English throne (McCabe, "Masks," 224), and presumably this sensitivity would be heightened in the period between Elizabeth's death in March 1603 and James's coronation in July of the same year, during which time Drayton published his "gratulatory poem." Cyndia Clegg analyzes James's "Achilles' heel— his sensitivity about his mother, Scotland, and his own security," noting that these issues motivated "most of the acts of personal censorship he performed as King of England" (*Press Censorship Jacobean,* 94); true, Drayton received no official condemnation for his poem, but James did not appreciate or reward it, and Drayton's treatment of James's mother may explain why.

Just as Spenser could easily have chosen to make his treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots, less inflammatory by not naming her allegorized version "Duessa," as McCabe notes, Drayton could have chosen, as John Fenton did, to skirt around references to James's parents. Like Drayton, Fenton chose to highlight James's genealogy and claims to the throne in his *King Iames, His Welcome to England*, but, most tactfully, he skips over two generations of the family tree in order to avoid direct reference to Mary and her disastrous, murderous marriage to James's father, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley:

> In time of which, this worthy *Richmonds* Earle,
> Had two young Princes, and one Princely gerle.
> *Margret* by name, from out whose lineall race
> Thou didst discend, and iustly claim'st thy place.
>
> > (Fenton, *King Iames*, B1v)

In contrast, Drayton not only provides much fuller details of James's parents' and grandmother's marriages in the poem itself, he also includes an image of James's family tree that, in its tortured efforts to illustrate how Margaret Tudor was one of James's great-grandmothers on both his mother's and his father's sides, serves to represent visually the unusualness of the marital alliances of James's immediate forebears.

Drayton's poem connects James to the royal line of Scotland by refer-ring to James V: "The fifth of that Name, *Scotlands* lawfull King, / Father to *Mary* (long in *England* seene) / The *Daulphins* dowager, the late *Scottish* Queene" and helpfully notes in the margin that Mary was "Maried whilst he was Daulphin," referring to her marriage to James Hepburn, Fourth Earl of Bothwell, the presumed murderer of her second husband (and James's father), Lord Darnley (lines 100–2). Of course the reason Mary was "long in England seene" was that she was the prisoner (or "guest") of Elizabeth for two decades before her execution in 1586. Dray-ton's attention to James's paternal line creates equally awkward thoughts in a reader's mind:

> But now to *Margarite* backe againe to come,
> From whose so fruitfull, and most blessed wombe
> We bring our full joy, *James* her husband dead,
> Tooke gallant *Anguish* to a second bed,
> To whom ere long she bare a princely gerle,
> Maried to *Lenox,* that brave-issued Earle,
> This beautious *Dowglasse,* as the powers imply,
> Brought that Prince *Henry,* Duke of *Albany,*
> Who in the prime of strength, in youths sum'd pride
> Maried the Scotch Queene on the other side,
> Whose happy bed to that sweet Lord did bring,
> This Brittaine hope, *James* our undoubted King,
> In true succession, as the first of other
> Of *Henries* line by Father, and by Mother.
>
> (lines 103–16)

Marginal notes to lines 106, 109, and 110 identify "Archibald Dowglasse Earle of Anguish," "The Countesse of Lenox," and "Henry Lord Darly [*sic*]," respectively, just in case some less perspicuous readers should lose track of the real people among the poetry. What reasonably well-informed person could read this in 1603 and not think, upon reading of the "happy bed" of Mary and Lord Darnley, of Lord Darnley's eventual murder, less than two years after his ill-fortuned wedding?

Did Drayton have reservations about the new king (such reservations as McCabe thinks motivated Spenser's portrait of Mary in *The Faerie Queene*) and thus wanted to remind readers of James's embarrassing family history? Did he describe his pen as "forward" not because it was too early, but because it was too "forward" in the sense of aggressive (i.e., the opposite of "froward") when he "taught [James's] title to this Ile in rime," that is, the genealogical details of his title to the throne? (Drayton,

To Master George Sandys, lines 20, 22). Did he *accidentally* write a poem
that James might have found embarrassing? These questions are unan-
swerable, but at any rate, the pique that led Drayton to compose the bird
satire *The Owle* was presumably at least partly created by James's lack of
appreciation for his congratulatory verse of the previous year.

I have already discussed Middleton's *Father Hubburds Tales* as a
cautiously yet clearly Spenserian poem that suggests a preference to avoid
formal verse satire after the Bishops' Ban targeted his *Micro-Cynicon* and
that tested the waters of Jacobean censorship while launching some early
critiques of courtly culture under James. That poem, entered into the
Stationers' Register on January 3, 1604, was followed shortly thereafter
by Drayton's *The Owle* on February 8: another Spenser-inspired animal
fable that avoided the animal characters that had gotten Spenser into
trouble, sticking to different neighborhoods in the animal kingdom, in
this case the birds. The more obviously derivative Spenserian beast fables,
which were not published until considerably later in James's reign (and
considerably later than their actual times of composition)—Niccols's *The
Beggers Ape* and Hepwith's *The Caledonian Forest*—do not interest me as
much as these early attempts to "bring back" Spenserian animal-themed
satire under the reign of a new king.[4]

I argue here that, in *The Owle*, Drayton contextualizes his satire
through allusions that, by and large, "skip a generation" by referencing
not Spenser but Spenser's own stated poetic forebears, especially Chaucer
and Skelton, but also, in passing, Mantuan. Drayton draws on late medi-
eval bird satires, especially as developed by John Skelton's *Speke Parott*, to
allude to Spenser without referencing him too directly. Dense networks
of allusions characterize almost all Renaissance literature, and poets use
these allusions, especially at times of anxiety, to create or clarify where
they are in the literary field, where they stand in, in Bourdieu's phrase,
that "space of positions" (Bourdieu, "Field of Cultural," 30). For example,
part of the "New Poet" Spenser's self-introduction in 1579 with *The Shep-
heardes Calender* involved connecting himself with significant predeces-
sors*, and so he mimicked medievalism in general, especially Chaucer,
and also alluded specifically to Skelton by naming his poetic alter ego
Colin Clout. As I've already noted, 1604 was, at least potentially, a more
promising time to publish an animal satire than previous years, but that
didn't mean it was an entirely safe project. Deniability is essential for the
satirist in conditions of harsh censorship, but too much deniability will

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4 For a full discussion of the Niccols and Hepwith poems, see Hoyt Hudson's discussion
   of the topical satire contained therein ("John Hepwith's").

blunt the force of the satire. For Drayton, positioning himself through allusions—to Spenser, to Skelton, to the medieval tradition of bird-themed complaints—allows him to steer a middle course between these two possibilities.

In *Spenser's Famous Flight*, Patrick Cheney builds an argument about Spenser's career path upon the widespread use of bird metaphors for poetry, providing a series of examples of avian imagery for poets ranging from the ancient Greeks up to the Renaissance (Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight*, 10–11). Cheney does not address the *Complaints* volume, and he generally gives satire a wide berth, but this work on the poet as bird provides valuable context for the medieval bird satires that Drayton draws upon. The three late medieval or early Renaissance bird poems that I will discuss here were all available in print in the second half of the sixteenth century: John Lydgate's *The Churl and the Bird* was republished in 1565, as was the anonymous *Parliament of Birds*; Skelton's *Speke Parott* appeared in an edition for Thomas Marsh in 1568. All of these draw on the poet–bird connections elucidated by Cheney to create satire and social criticism, and Drayton builds upon these as well, combining elements from each of these bird satires to create a thoroughly Spenserian poem without directly alluding to Spenser.

I will briefly discuss these three earlier bird poems before moving into a more detailed discussion of Drayton's poem and how it builds upon themes and motifs from the earlier poems. Lydgate's *The Churl and the Bird* allegorizes the experience of the poet through the tale of a churl who catches a bird singing in a laurel tree and places her in a cage in his house. The bird's location in the laurel tree helps us to identify her as a poet, and the following comment early in the poem cues the reader to seek an allegorical reading:

> And semblably poetes laureate,
>   Bi dirk parables ful convenyent
> Feyne that briddis & bestis of estat—
>   As roial eglis & leones …
>
> > (Lydgate, *The Churl and the Bird*, lines 15–18)

Upon being caged, the bird tells the churl that she will not sing; the churl threatens to eat her; she replies that she won't make much of a meal, but that if he will release her, she will reward him. He does so, and she proceeds to mock him, boasting of the magic jacinth jewel she has inside her body ("iagounce," line 232), the virtues of which sound like an idealized list of the benefits conferred by poetry: the jacinth not only gives men victory in

battle but makes the bearer rich and beloved, brings happiness to all, and
so forth (lines 236–49). The poem as a whole presents a satirical message
through animal fable; the bird represents a poet but not specifically a sati-
rist, except perhaps in her mockery of the churl for releasing her.

The anonymous *Parliament of Birds* (not to be confused with Chau-
cer's *Parliament of Fowls*) uses a fairly straightforward animal fable to
allegorize the social order. Small birds, such as the robin and the wren,
represent "the commons," and they complain to the Eagle-King about two
injustices: the king asked all the birds to donate feathers to the Crow; thus
enriched by others, the Crow changed from a "knave" to a "knight," but
now the birds want their feathers back. More troubling are the rapacity
and overreaching of the Hawk, who speaks more than any other char-
acter, downplaying the justice of the commons' claims to the King and,
indeed, arguing that they should not speak at all (Patterson, *Fables*, 50).
The Eagle-King sets both situations to right, and the poem closes with a
disclaimer of allegorical intent that nevertheless serves as a reminder to
read allegorically:

> Loke thy fethers and wrytyng be dene—
> What they saye and what they mene.
> For here is none other thynge
> But fowles, fethers, and wrytyng.
>   (*Parliament of Birds*, lines 307–10)

This is of course a satire, but the satirical voice is the narrator's voice, not
that of a particular bird speaker.

The most influential example of a bird satirist comes in Skelton's *Speke,
Parrott*, and Skelton is certainly aware of the ways that he follows and
revises these earlier bird-themed satires. In his insistent repetition of
"let Parrot have lyberte to speke," which occurs, with minor variations of
wording, three times (Skelton, *Speke Parott,* lines 98, 141, 210), Skelton
references the disagreement in *The Parliament of Birds* about which
birds have the right to speak to the king. Skelton alludes more directly
to Lydgate's *The Churl and the Bird* in his notice to the reader of satirical
intent:

> For trowthe in parabyll ye wantonlye pronounce,
> Langagys divers; yet undyr that dothe reste
> Maters more precious than the ryche jacounce.
>   (lines 364–66)

The "jacounce" or jacinth stone was, of course, the metaphor that Lydgate's
bird used to tell the churl about the riches conferred by poetry.

But whereas neither of these other two bird-themed satires had a bird satirist, Skelton's satirical narrative voice is the parrot. It is as though Skelton pondered the bird–poet connections demonstrated by Cheney and illustrated in these other satires and asked himself what kind of bird would represent a satirist. If it's obvious that the eagle will be the king and the wrens will be the commons, who will the satirist be? His answer is the parrot, a mimic and wiseacre whose comprehensive knowledge appears in his ability to speak in multiple languages but who can nevertheless deny that he truly understands what he says: this allegorizes perfectly the pose adopted by many satirists under conditions of oppressive censorship.

In *The Owle*, Drayton alludes to all of these medieval bird satires, demonstrating his "Spenserianism" not through direct reference to Spenser but rather by connecting himself to Spenser's poetic predecessors. By placing his poem within the tradition of bird satires most thoroughly exemplified by Spenser's poetic forebear Skelton, Drayton highlights the imagined poetic genealogy that Spenser created for himself in *The Shepheardes Calender*, connecting himself explicitly to poets two generations back in order to connect himself implicitly to Spenser, his more proximate inspiration for animal-themed indirect satire (on poetic genealogies in general, see Falco, *Conceived Presences*, especially his brief discussion of the genealogy "lead[ing] backward from Spenser's Colin Clout to Skelton to Chaucer," 51).

Spenser had claimed literary and satirical kinship with Skelton by naming his poetic alter ego Colin Clout; during the 1590s and beyond, poetic allusions to Spenser used this pseudonym at least as frequently as his real name, as I have already discussed. Paul McLane has analyzed the significance of Spenser's connecting himself to Skelton in *The Shepheardes Calender*, arguing in particular that Skelton's well-known animosity toward Cardinal Wolsey sharpened the force of Spenser's critiques of Lord Burghley ("Skelton's *Colyn Clout*"). I argue here that contemporaries' close association of Spenser and Skelton through the name Colin meant that Drayton could signal satirical kinship with Spenser by alluding to Skelton. As I already mentioned, bird satires were apparently seen as less inflammatory and potentially dangerous in the first decade of the seventeenth century than beast satires; Drayton also avoids the danger of connecting himself too closely to Skelton by choosing another satirical bird speaker, the owl, while still referencing Skelton's narrator by including his own multilingual parrot: this one a spy who, like Skelton's parrot, knows a *lot* about the goings-on of this bird community. Drayton's "prattling *Parrot*" spies on both his peers and the Spanish; he "had a

Tongue for every Language fit, / A cheverell Conscience, and a searching Wit" (Drayton, *The Owle*, lines 466, 469–70).

In addition to the similarities with Skelton's parrot, we can see connections as well between Drayton and the other bird satires I have discussed. Like the *Parliament of Birds*, *The Owle* engages with questions of freedom of speech, with the Eagle-King granting to the Owl "libertie of speech" and eagerly desiring to hear those things that "all the rest through negligence or feare / Smothred in silence" (lines 325, 322–23). Like Lydgate in *The Churl and the Bird*, Drayton makes it clear that his bird-speaker represents a poet. In the dedicatory epistle to his patron, Sir Walter Aston, Drayton writes,

> The Wreathe is *Ivie* that ingirts our browes
> Wherein this Nights-Bird harb'reth all the day:
> We dare not look at other crowning Boughes,
> But leave the *Lawrell* unto them that may.
> > (Drayton, *The Owle,* "To the Honourable Knight,
> > Sir Walter Aston," lines 9–12)

Richard Hardin describes the Owl as "partly the voice of wisdom, partly that of Drayton himself fulfilling what he believed to be one of the sacred roles of the poet" (*Michael Drayton*, 79). By self-consciously referencing the three medieval bird satires already discussed and also making the Owl in some sense a mouthpiece for himself, Drayton illustrates the poet–bird connections studied by Patrick Cheney.

Setting himself up as a bird-poet uses medieval tropes to prime the reader to look for allegorical meanings, but Drayton also circuitously alludes to Spenser twice. In the address "To the Reader," Drayton continues the epistle by excusing himself for writing an animal fable, noting that "the greatest Masters in this Art … haue written upon as slight matter. As the Princes of the *Greekes* and *Latines*, the first of the Frogs Warre, the latter of a poore Gnat: and VIDA very wittily of the Chest-play and Silkeworme; Besides many other that I could recite of the like kind" (Drayton, *The Owle*, 479). Given that Spenser had written a very famous, much more recent beast satire (in addition to translating *Virgils Gnat*), Drayton's calling attention to unnamed beast satirists calls Spenser to mind. Similarly, he connects himself to Spenser by elegizing Philip Sidney, who, as "the Cocke," receives sixteen lines of fulsome praise and mourning (for identifications of the Cock with Sidney, see Hardin, *Michael Drayton*, 113; Buxton, "Notes," 294n1281; Brink, *Michael Drayton*, 71–72). Drayton avoids Spenser's ambivalent, almost judgmental attitude toward Sidney's

death (as discussed in Falco, *Conceived Presences*, 88; Klein, "Spenser's *Astrophel*," 52; Steinberg, "Spenser, Sidney," 194) while still developing one of the key emphases found in Spenser's *Astrophel*: Sidney's excellence as both a warrior *and* a poet. In Spenser's description, Astrophel "both in deeds and words … nourtred was, / Both wise and hardie" (*Astrophel*, lines 71–72). Drayton precedes the remembrance of the Cock with a lengthy discussion of the virtue of joining words and deeds. The general statement "Vertue, whose chiefe prayse in the Act doth stand, / Could wish the Tongue still coupled with the Hand" leads immediately into the section on the Cock: "But in the *Cocke* which death untimely wrackt, / In him was both the Elegance and Act" (Drayton, *The Owle*, lines 1279–82). Drayton thus links himself to Spenser by noting that he writes the kinds of works that Spenser did: beast fables and elegies for Philip Sidney.

Implied criticism of James and implied kinship with Spenser prime the reader to seek—and find—allegorical identifications of the bird characters in the poem. Though the twenty-first-century reader is at too great a disadvantage to make many hypotheses, an identification of one of the characters with Robert Cecil would be unsurprising in a poet who allied himself with Spenser, the antagonist of Cecil's father, Lord Burghley. Buxton, deciphering an annotated contemporary text, identifies the Vulture as Cecil (Buxton, "Notes," 292n444), but I think it more likely that the Cuckoo represents Cecil. The Cuckoo, like Cecil, is criticized for being corrupt as well as sexually immoral, but those facts are of course too vague to enable a positive identification. Such identification comes from a jest at the expense of Lord Burghley and his anxious attention to matters of genealogy (Alford, *Burghley*, 6, 349n8). In introducing the Cuckoo, Drayton pauses to describe at length the bird's distinguished lineage, including the following lines:

> And since the *Romans* from the *Asian* Broyles,
> Return'd with Conquest and victorious Spoyles.
> The *Cuci* heere continually have beene,
> As by their ancient Evidence is seene.
> Of Consull *Cuccus*, from whose mighty name,
> These liuing Cuccos lineally came.
>
> (Drayton, *The Owle,* lines 975–80)

My goal here is not to interpret the historical allegory of this poem—John Buxton demonstrates that the allegory was difficult even for contemporaries by noting that, in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornefull Ladie*, "the disappointed Roger asks whether he had gone to all the trouble of expounding the Owl only to be jilted" (*Michael Drayton*, 291–92), and

Richard Hardin argues that for "the uninitiated reader (which class includes all of us)," the general complaints about social ills in the seventeenth century form a sufficiently coherent message of nostalgia for the past, even without adequate understanding of the allegory.[5] Instead, I have aimed to analyze the ways that Drayton uses allusions to a century's worth of bird-themed political satire in order to connect himself with Spenser and thus to signal to his reader the presence of allegory. Drayton hides these connections in plain sight by means of the complex network of subtle allusions to earlier satiric works, creating a branch for himself in the family tree of medieval and Renaissance satirists.

The making of a Spenserian satirist: George Wither, 1613–15

A decade later, it was still dangerous to write satire, and allusions to Spenser still worked in the second decade of the seventeenth century to situate a work in the literary field of satire. This section will explore the ways that George Wither used Spenserianism at the beginning of what would become a very long writing career in order to fashion himself as a bold writer who was, like Spenser, unafraid to speak the truth to those in power. Four works—Wither's *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* (1613); William Browne and collaborators' *Shepherds Pipe* (1614), which included two eclogues by Wither; Wither's *A Satyre Dedicated to His Most Excellent Majestie* (1614); and Wither's *Shepheards Hunting* (1615), which includes Wither's poems from the Browne collection among its five eclogues—together create a story arc of Wither's self-fashioning as a Spenserian satirist.

George Wither's *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* (1613), a collection of formal verse satires that was allusively Spenserian in a similar vein to Middleton's *Micro-Cynicon* (see Chapter 5), landed him in prison for four months in 1614, presumably because Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, thought the collection criticized him with its reference to the "man-like Monster" who abuses power yet duplicitously escapes detection by the king (Pritchard, "*Abuses*"). Others have considered the reasons for the delay in punishment, with Pritchard noting the evidence that Princess Elizabeth had shielded Wither from punishment immediately after the work's publication (it was registered with the stationers on January 16, 1613) (Pritchard, "*Abuses*," 344) and David Norbrook hypothesizing that

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5 Interested readers should consult Buxton's notes, which include annotations from two seventeenth-century copies of the poem, one from a copy of the poem presented by Drayton to his friend Richard Butcher (Buxton, *Michael Drayton*, 291–94).

Northampton's anxieties in spring 1614 about the upcoming Parliament (what would become the "Addled" Parliament) once again aroused his wrath about Wither's satires and made imprisoning their author seem expedient (*Poetry and Politics*, 188).

The warrant for Wither's arrest was issued from Northampton's house, and Wither remained in prison from March 20 through July 26, 1614 (O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, 173). Two important events occurred during Wither's imprisonment: the publication of *Shepherds Pipe* and the death of Northampton on June 15. Wither's contributions to *Shepherds Pipe* represent a conciliatory gesture, an attempt to soften Wither's authorial persona and to downplay the offense of *Abuses*, presumably in order to secure his release from prison. The death of Northampton, however, leads to an about-face in Wither's strategies of authorial self-fashioning, with Wither reminding his audience of the boldness of *Abuses*'s "man-like Monster" by referring to monsters in both of the works published after Northampton's death and his own release from prison: *A Satyre* and *Shepheards Hunting*. Whatever threats Northampton posed had died with him in June, and Wither's imprisonment had ended by the time he published both works (though *A Satyre*, entered in the Stationers' Register less than two weeks after Wither's release from prison, was therefore likely composed in part during his imprisonment), so the boldness of the *Satyre* and *Shepheards Hunting* seems somewhat inflated, a strategy of authorial self-representation more than a real satiric intervention into the world of politics. Throughout this story of the young George Wither's development of a public authorial persona, the importance of Spenserianism remains a touchstone, a concept and set of values that inform Wither's work in both formal verse satire and pastoral and that he uses to help him define himself as an author to his readers.

Although Joan Grundy classifies Wither as a Spenserian poet because of his personality and values, not his poetry, asserting that his satires "are not Spenserian at all" (*Spenserian Poets*, 161–62), I disagree. Just as Middleton, amid the numerous entirely un-Spenserian formal verse satires of his contemporaries in the 1590s, evidences an affinity for Spenser through allusion in *Micro-Cynicon*, Wither likewise repeatedly alludes to both Spenser and "Spenserianism" in *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* by his insistent attention to virtues (as Grundy notes, *Spenserian Poets*, 162) and by his sustained use of the beastliness of Man as a metaphoric touchstone for the work as a whole. If one can be "Spenserian" through allusion, not only through imitation, then Wither's *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* meets the criterion. Initially, Wither creates a connection with

Spenser in the same way that satirists of his day often call attention to the presence of allegorical satirical meanings in a work: by arguing that no such connection exists. In apologizing for the "honest plain matter" that he presents, he tells his readers "doe not looke for *Spencers* or *Daniels* well-composed numbers" (Wither, *Abuses*, 17). Here, just as Joseph Hall had done in *Virgidemiarum* (as discussed in Chapter 3), Wither distinguishes the rough style appropriate for satire from the smooth decorum of Spenser's non-satiric works; by doing so, however, he also alludes to Spenser more generally.

Although this is the only reference to Spenser by name, allusions and patterns of animal imagery serve to "activate" Spenser in the mind of his readers. Even twenty-five years after the publication and calling-in of *Mother Hubberds Tale*, animal fables were still very much associated with Spenser, with animal allegory serving to suggest the presence of satire. For example, Thomas Scot, in *Philomythie* (1616), complaining of the hyper-vigilance of his "wondrous witty age" in reading potentially topical allegories, writes, "If Spencer now were living, to report / His Mother Hubberts tale, there would be sport / … . / I dare not for my life in my tale, / Use any English Bird, Beaste, Worme, or Snaile" (qtd. in Clegg, *Press Censorship Jacobean*, 115). George Wither makes the human–animal divide an ordering concept for his exploration of human vices and virtues. His speaker argues in the "Introduction" for the ease with which we can know the natures of various animals:

> The Elephant much loue to Man will show.
> The Tygers, Wolues, and Lyons, we doe finde,
> Are rauenous, fierce, and cruell euen by kinde.
> We know at carryon we shall finde the Crowes,
> And that the Cock the time of midnight knowes.
>
> (Wither, *Abuses*, 43)

He then contrasts the difficulty of understanding the nature of the "Creature called *Man*," who, because of human inconsistency and mutability, is not "*semper idem* in his will, / Nor stands on *this* or *that opinion* still, / But varies" (43, 44). Man is thus *worse* than the beasts, who are at least true to their natures, whereas humans, through their own fault, degenerated from their original state, "made by God; iust and vpright by nature. / … in his likenesse fram'd," into the collection of vices that Wither will spend the rest of the work detailing and decrying (Wither, *Abuses*, 49). This sense that each of the vices to which Wither devotes an individual satire should be understood as making humans worse than animals becomes a

foundational comparison for the work as a whole, and Wither's repeated references and allusions to animals, too numerous to detail fully here, keep this comparison ever in the mind of the reader.

Wither's style in these formal verse satires tends more toward prolixity than aggression, but he occasionally does become more biting. Among the frequent animal imagery, one example stands out, because it does something similar to what I describe in Chapter 3 with Joseph Hall, who alludes to Spenser's *Faerie Queene* several times in *Virgidemiarum*, but with the twist of rendering the Spenserian imagery disgusting in order to fit the antidecorum of satire. I discuss briefly in Chapter 1 Spenser's lines from *Ruines of Time* that lament the ascendancy of Lord Burghley following the death of the Earl of Leicester: "He now is gone, the whiles the Foxe is crept / Into the hole, the which the Badger swept" (*Ruines*, lines 216–17). Wither alludes to these lines, transferring the allegory to a university setting, where older, bachelor scholars, unable to marry, engage in even more shameful acts than the younger scholars, whose vices are mere "mischiefes" in comparison:

> Thence springs it that the Townesmen are reputed,
> Thus by a common voice to be *Cornuted*.
> For I haue known that such haue dayly beene
> Where younger scholers neuer durst be seene.
> And all (vnlesse that they haue eyes like Moles)
> May see those Foxes vse the Badgers holes.
>
> (Wither, *Abuses*, 206)

Both through the university setting and through making the imagery clearly sexual, Wither pushes the anthropomorphism farther than Spenser does. The specifically sexual sense of this animal allegory, with the townsmen in the role of clean badgers being cuckolded by the foxy scholars, adds an extra frisson of disgust to the already rather gross behavior of actual foxes described by Topsell: "The wily Foxe neuer maketh a Denne for himselfe, but finding a badgers caue, in her absence, layeth his excrement at the hole of the denne, the which when the Gray returneth, if she smell (as the sauour is strong) she forbeareth to enter as noisome, and so leaueth her elaborate house to the Fox" (Topsell, *Historie*, 34).

Abuses, Stript and Whipt is obviously not a Spenserian imitation, but although he does not employ prosopopoia to create talking animals that blur the boundaries between human and animal, Wither nevertheless uses his formal verse satires to accomplish the same goal that prosopopoietic animal satires do: highlight and analyze human vice by comparing humans with animals. Book 1, satire 5, "Of Revenge," for example, calls vengeance

> a signe of *Brutish* wildenesse,
> Not fitting any but the *Tyger, Beare,*
> Or such like creatures that remorslesse teare
> What ere they light on. Cast it from you then,
> Be in condition, as in shape y'are *Men*.
>
> (Wither, *Abuses*, 89)

As in Bedell's *Shepherds Tale of the Pouder-Plott*, discussed in Chapter 3, to be "in shape" a human but "in condition" a beast creates uncomfortable classification problems. Similarly, Book 1, satire 14, "Of Cruelty," also questions the assumption that animals are more vicious than humans. All men agree, the narrator asserts, that cruelty is an "*inhumane hellish wickednesse*. / A monstrous *Passion*, so vnfitt to rest / Or harbour in a reasonable brest" (Wither, *Abuses*, 162). "Inhumane," "monstrous," and the lack of a "reasonable brest" all reference the division between human and animal, and yet "beasts, in whom it rather should remaine, / Doe for the greatest part the same refraine," while the vice appears frequently in humans (Wither, *Abuses*, 162). Over and over again, Wither considers that dividing line and the ways that humans descend into beastliness, thus going against their original and God-given nature, but no one more so than the "man-like Monster" presumed to be the source of the work's offensiveness, leading to Wither's imprisonment:

> The *Picture* of a Beast in *Humane* shape;
> 'Tis neither *Monkey*, nor *Baboone*, nor *Ape*,
> Though neere condition'd. I haue not sought it
> In *Affrick* Deserts, neither haue I brought it
> Out of *Ignota terrà*, those wilde Lands
> Beyond the farthest *Megalanick* strands
> Yeeld not the like; the *Fiend* liues in this *Ile*,
> And I much mus'd thou spi'dst not all this while
> That man-like *Monster*.
>
> (Wither, *Abuses*, 349–50)

The passage goes on to detail this man's offenses in the court—he appears "meeke, demure / Deuout, chaste, honest, innocent, and pure" when in the presence of the king but shows his true self to "meaner eyes" (Wither, *Abuses*, 350). I am interested here, though, in how Wither dwells upon the human–animal divide. The manlike monster is a "Beast in *Humane* shape," and the references to specific primates and to exotic new lands— where racism blinkered Europeans from recognizing fully their fellow humans—serve as a collage of images to meditate upon the troubling overlap early modern Europeans saw between human and beast. Wither

thus attempts and succeeds at an interesting experiment: creating a formal verse satire with significant debts to Spenser and to the rhetorical tropes of animal satire in general.

Allen Pritchard argued in 1963 that Wither owed his imprisonment to the machinations of Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, but most critics both before and after Pritchard have agreed that Wither's offense was mild, perhaps even unintentional (see especially Clegg, *Press Censorship Jacobean*, 113–16). Pritchard thus writes of "the enthusiasm of admirers who persisted in reading personal satire on Northampton into *Abuses*" (Pritchard, "*Abuses*," 345), and Clegg imagines him as a "political pawn" in Northampton's efforts to ensure the failure of the Addled Parliament of 1614 (*Press Censorship Jacobean*, 115). Michelle O'Callaghan reinforces the idea of Northampton as particularly sensitive to the possibility of print criticism by analyzing the numerous cases of defamation, or *scandalum magnatum*, that he brought to the Star Chamber between 1612 and 1614 (O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, 172–73; O'Callaghan, "Taking liberties," 156–61). In general, these analyses find two principal offenses offered by Wither's *Abuses*: explicitly anti-Spanish comments, which would have aroused the anger of Northampton, who was crypto-Catholic religiously and pro-Spain politically, and the allegory of the "man-like Monster," presumed to be Northampton.

Yet it seems to me that scholars who believe that Wither offended only unintentionally give too much credence to the claims of his lack of malicious intent put forth by himself and his friends in *Shepherds Pipe*, *A Satyre*, and *Shepheards Hunting*. I believe this primarily because the shift from the appeasement strategy of *Shepherds Pipe* to the more provoking tone in *A Satyre* and *Shepheards Hunting* can best be explained by the death of Northampton in June 1614. The possibility that Wither's self-presentation as an unusually bold and courageous author contains an element of self-aggrandizement seems particularly likely with *Shepheards Hunting,* which was entered in the Stationers' Register on October 8, 1614, but not published until the following spring (Doelman, "Introduction and notes," 14), by which time Wither had to feel fairly safe (for the moment at least—his pen would get him into trouble again in 1621, when he published *Wither's Motto*).

But in the spring of 1614, when Wither was in prison and Northampton still lived, the work that he and his friends did in *The Shepherds Pipe* to create an image of him as unjustly persecuted gives us a sense of how unsafe he felt then. William Browne and collaborators' *The Shepherds Pipe* is a fairly traditional set of eclogues that use Spenser's *Shepheardes*

Calender as a model for using pastoral to comment on contemporary politics, but the collection also subtly works to create an image of Wither as an inoffensive Spenserian pastoral poet, whose *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* was unjustly interpreted as pointed, specific satire. As a collection of pastorals by multiple poets, *The Shepherds Pipe* creates a sense of a poetic community, as O'Callaghan notes (*Shepheards Nation*, 33–35, 50–51, 61), but this also means that the collection's characterization of Wither as wronged by the justice system communicates group support. The Spenserian rhetoric of the later eclogues, and the specific real-world situations on which they comment, have been well documented by others (see, e.g., Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 186–87; Doelman, "Introduction and notes," *passim*; O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, chapter 1). I will focus on the ways in which Browne "activates" Spenser in the first eclogue, in which Wither appears as the character Roget, before turning to a consideration of how Wither's own eclogues in the collection create an image of him as a wronged and misunderstood poet who has done nothing to deserve the punishment he receives (in true pastoral style, the Marshalsea Prison becomes, in the eclogues of *Shepherds Pipe* and *Shepheards Hunting*, a cave).

The first eclogue in *The Shepherds Pipe* highlights the importance of Wither's situation by presenting a dialogue between Willy, Browne's alter ego, and Roget, the fictionalized Wither character, who complains of how others misinterpret his poetry, reading topical satire where he intends none. In this eclogue, written by Browne, the character of Roget presents a fictionalized, pastoralized version of the woes that beset Wither before his imprisonment (Willie and Roget meet "upon a greeny Ley" in this eclogue, according to the "Argument," not in the cave that will later serve as his prison). Roget complains, "If I chance to name [an] ass / In my song, it comes to pass, / One or other sure will take it / As his proper name" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 31). Roget's efforts to enjoy a pastoral *otium*, keeping his "harmless flock of sheep" safe "from wolves and foxes" are all "in vain," because of the "Wicked swains" who work against him with mischiefs such as "break[ing] my lambkins' legs / Or unhang[ing] my wether's bell" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 32). Having thus characterized Roget as a well-meaning but persecuted shepherd, Browne then moves to connect this poem to the Spenserian tradition, but in an oddly indirect way.

Willy suggests that they pass the time with poetry, and Roget complies by reciting the extremely long tale of Ionathas and Fellicula. The poem was written by Thomas Hoccleve, a contemporary of Chaucer, as Browne

informs the reader at the end of the eclogue: "THOMAS HOCCLEVE, one of the privy seal, composed first this tale, and was never till now imprinted… . He wrote in Chaucer's time" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 54). However, in the hundreds of lines before this revelation, Browne subtly leads the reader to believe that Roget's story is an interpolation of a Spenserian poem by repeated allusions to Spenser both before and after the recitation of the tale.

Willy, in asking Roget to "Make the woods and vallies ring," tells him that "on knap of yonder hill / Some sweet shepherd tune[s] his quill, / And the maidens in a round / Sit (to hear him) on the ground" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 33), thus alluding to the Mount Acidale episode in Book 6, canto 10 of *The Faerie Queene*, when Colin Clout sings while surrounded by beautiful maidens. Roget agrees to sing a song, telling Willy that he learned the song "Long agon in Janiveere / Of a skillful aged sire, / As we toasted by the fire" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 33). The reference to the month and to an old shepherd who taught him (though of course Colin Clout is an old man in December, not January) here reminds the reader of Spenser, specifically *The Shepheardes Calender*.

After Roget finishes reciting the story, Willy offers to give him "the best Cosset in my fold, / And a Mazor for a fee" if Roget will teach him the song (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 51), calling to mind the "mazer ywrought of the Maple warre" and "yonder spotted Lambe" that Willy and Perigot pledge as part of their poetic battle in "August" of *The Shepheardes Calender* (lines 26, 37). Roget once again references the Mount Acidale episode by telling Willy that the first singer of the lay "Many times … hath been seen / With the fairies on the green, / And to them his pipe did sound, / Whilst they dancèd in a round" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 52). Before the end of the eclogue, when Browne finally identifies the author of the story as Hoccleve, not Spenser, Roget alludes one last time to Spenser by telling Willy that the author was "Scholar unto Tityrus, / Tityrus, the bravest swain / Ever livèd on the plain" (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 53). This allusion serves as a bridge between the contemporary reader's probable expectation that the author is Spenser and Browne's identification of the author as Hoccleve a few lines later: whereas Hoccleve was acquainted with the living Chaucer, Spenser, who was the first to call Chaucer "Tityrus," in *Shepheardes Calender*, presents himself, and was understood by his contemporaries as, a student of Chaucer. Thus here Browne does something quite similar to what Drayton does in *The Owle*; that is, he "skips a generation" in terms of allusions, connecting himself to a forebear of Spenser in order to signal that his readers ought

to view the poem as Spenserian, and thus to bring the same reading strategies to this text that they would bring to an example of Spenser's own indirect satire.

Alluding both before and after the tale both to *The Shepheardes Calender* and to Colin Clout's experience on Mount Acidale serves to "activate" Spenser for the text as a whole, so that readers will bring the same reading strategies to this text that they brought to the eclogues of *The Shepheardes Calender.* The text repays such attentive reading, because, in the other eclogues in the collection, we find methods similar to Spenser's in *The Shepheardes Calender* for signaling to his reader to look for allegory or allusion. As with *Shepheardes Calender*, we are not able at this remove to identify with certainty all of the references to contemporary persons or events, but we can nevertheless feel confident that, for example, the very strange name "Weptol" in the second eclogue is supposed to be recognized as strange, and that the reader is to pay attention (Michelle O'Callaghan suggests that the name is an anagram for John Powlet; *Shepheards Nation*, 42). The seventh eclogue, in which Palinode tries to persuade his friend Hobbinoll not to marry the unchaste Phillis, should likely be read as a satire on the wedding of Frances Howard and Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, as many have noted (see, e.g., Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 186). Palinode reminds Hobbinoll of the time when, hunting filberts, he happened upon Phillis "Like to a new-struck *doe* from out the bushes, / Lacing herself, and red with gamesome blushes" and trying to avoid being seen, but his advice does not alter Hobbinoll's intentions (Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 96).

Significantly, though, activating Spenser in this way also creates an association between Roget, Wither's alter ego, and Spenser, as Roget is the one who "Make[s] the woods and vallies ring" with the story that Browne leads the reader to believe is Spenser's. Wither strengthens the association in his own contributions to the collection, Eclogue 9 and Eclogue 11 (which will appear in Wither's *Shepheards Hunting* as, respectively, Eclogue 5 and Eclogue 4). Both eclogues address the question of whether or not to write poetry, rehearsing concerns familiar to any reader of Spenser's "October" and using imagery that also calls to mind Colin Clout and the ladies of Mount Acidale. In each, the Wither character (Thirsis in Eclogue 9, who will become Roget when the eclogue is republished in *Shepheards Hunting*, and Roget in Eclogue 11) encourages his interlocutor to follow his muse with reference to that image: Thirsis tells Alexis that if he sings while shepherding, "Thy sheep to listen will more near thee feed, / The wolves will shun them, birds above thee sing, / And

lambkins dance about thee in a ring" (Wither in Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 114). In Eclogue 11, Roget reminds Willie of his merit by describing what happened when he sang the previous year at "our last year's revelling": "I saw the lasses cling / Round about thee in a ring" (Wither in Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 142).

Wither thus extends the work Browne had already done in the first eclogue to depict him as a Spenserian poet. He does not defend himself strenuously in his poems in *The Shepherds Pipe*; instead, he presents himself as a true poet and puts his only direct words of self-defense into the mouth of Alexis, in a lengthy speech:

> I must confess that long
> In one thing I did do thy nature wrong:
> For, till I marked the aim thy Satyres had
> I thought them overbold and Thirsis mad,
> But since I did more nearly on thee look
> I soon perceived that I had all mistook;
> I saw that of a cynic thou madst show,
> Where since I find that thou wert nothing so,
> And that of many thou much blame hadst got
> When as thy innocence deserved it not.
>
> (Wither in Browne, *Shepherds Pipe*, 110–11)

Where other poems in the collection clearly have pointed topical significance, the poems connected with Wither—Browne's Eclogue 1 and Wither's Eclogues 9 and 11—give a wide berth to contemporary England, staying safely in the past or in the world of pastoral to create an image of Wither as a dedicated poet above all else. After the death of Northampton and his release from prison, however, Wither abandons this conciliatory tone and begins the process of representing himself as another kind of Spenserian poet: the fearless poet committed to speaking the truth, even if doing so endangers him.

Wither published his *Satyre Dedicated to His Most Excellent Majestie* in early August 1614, almost immediately after his July 26 release from prison. The conciliatory voice of Wither's *Shepherds Pipe* eclogues is gone, replaced by the stridency and pugnacity that had characterized *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* (O'Callaghan, *Shepheards Nation*, 176; McRae, *Literature, Satire*, 94):

> But know I'me he that entred once the list,
> Gainst all the world to play the *Satyrist:*
> Twas I, that made my measures rough, and rude,
> Daunc'd arm'd with whips, amid'st the multitude,

> And vnappalled with my charmed *Scrowles*,
> Teaz'd angry *Monsters* in their lurking holes.
>
> (Wither, *Satyre*, B2v)

This reference to a monster early in the poem would likely remind readers of the "man-like Monster" of *Abuses.* This passage clearly depicts Wither's speaker as an intentional teaser of monsters, which surely colors reception of his next reference to monsters, when he claims to have been misunderstood by his "foe," who "doth mis-conster / That which I haue enstil'd a *Man-like Monster*, / To meane some priuate person in the state" (Wither, *Satyre*, B5r). He defends his innocence but also claims for himself the liberty to speak directly to the king, sometimes through allusive references to the same Aesopian rhetoric discussed in the first part of this chapter, as with the numerous uses of animal fable to make a point (e.g., the lion and the "horned beasts," B7v; the mouse and the lion, E8r).

As with *Abuses*, Wither includes a number of allusions that would call Spenser to his reader's mind, most significantly near the end, when he offers King James a poetic work in praise of his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, and abruptly shifts at this point to pastoral language and imagery. He knows how "to tune an Oaten pipe," and so his song in praise of the princess "shall last as long / As there is either *Riuer, Groue*, or *Spring*, / Or *Downe*, for *Sheepe*, or *Shepheards Lad* to sing" (Wither, *Satyre*, F1v). If the song does not please the court, then he will seclude himself on a mountain or in a grove, and "There to my fellow *Shepheards* will I sing, / Tuning my *Reed*, vnto some dancing *Spring*, / … . / Till the *Hilles* answere, and the *Woods* redouble it" (Wither, *Satyre*, F2v). For the Spenserian poets, the echoing woods of Spenser's *Epithalamion* (even though the Virgilian image did not originate with Spenser)*,* along with the image of ladies (or "lambkins," as in Browne's first eclogue of *The Shepherds Pipe*) circling a shepherd-poet, and references to "wolves and foxes," serve frequently to allude to Spenser. Echoing woods appeared in Browne's first eclogue of *The Shepherds Pipe*, and the image will recur in Wither's second eclogue of *The Shepheards Hunting*, when the "loud-loud *Ecchoes*" of his hunting-dog satyres "teare the Wood" (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 2.166). As in *Abuses,* Wither creates in his *Satyre to His … Majestie* a hybrid voice that combines the harsh language of the typical satirist with characteristic Spenserian allusions to animal fables and pastoral. Presumably written during Wither's imprisonment, the work focuses on Wither's desire for freedom, but the boastful emphasis on his commitment to truth, and his two references to "monsters," suggest that the death of Northampton has already freed Wither somewhat from the fears of censorship and further

punishment that must have contributed to his playing it safe in his contributions to *The Shepherds Pipe*.

In *The Shepheards Hunting*, we see Wither out of danger and working to consolidate the events and literary works of the previous two years to create a stable authorial persona as a Spenserian satirist. He presents three new poems (Eclogues 1–3), as well as his two eclogues from Browne's *Shepherds Pipe*, only slightly edited except for the addition of a long passage added to the end of the fifth eclogue of *Shepheards Hunting* that allows Wither to close the collection with Roget reiterating his talent (he has made his cave-prison "Eccho forth delights") and his courage ("And I'le fulfill what my *Muse* drawes mee to, / Maugre all *Jayles,* and *Purgatories* to") (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 5.216, 223–24).[6]

Although Wither's alter ego, Roget, makes some weak references to being misconstrued ("what we speake is tooke as *others* please"; Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 1.136), he is generally much more direct here than his character was in *Shepherds Pipe* about being a satirist and intentionally offensive, in part, it seems, because his imprisonment has enhanced his reputation among his peers. Wither's previous works had of course also been published to contribute to his career path, but with other motives as well: *Abuses* aimed at critique, *Shepherds Pipe* at mollifying Northampton, and *Satyre* at gaining Wither's release from prison. Here, however, career interests become paramount: Wither makes frequent references to fame, and he allegorically narrates the events of the previous two years of his life using an inventive combination of elements of beast satire and pastoral that firmly aligns him with the Spenserian tradition of satire. The work as a whole forms a loose narrative. The first eclogue places the work within the same fictional community of *The Shepherds Pipe*; Eclogues 2 and 3 provide an allegorized version of the story of Wither's offense, arrest, and imprisonment; and Eclogues 4 and 5, republished from *Shepherds Pipe*, create an image of Roget/Wither as a poetic leader of his community—a proponent of Spenserian poetic values and an encourager of his friends' poetic efforts.

Eclogue 1 sets the scene in Roget's cave-prison, where Willie (still representing William Browne, as in *Shepherds Pipe*) visits him to share

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6 Quotations from Wither's *Shepheards Hunting* will be cited parenthetically in the text by eclogue and line numbers. Note that William B. Hunter Jr., the editor of the edition of *Shepheards Hunting* cited here, uses the 1622 republication of the poem in Wither's *Juvenilia* as the copy-text. In the 1622 version, Wither changed the name of his poetic alter ego, Roget, to Philarete ("lover of virtue"), the poetic cognomen that replaced Roget in Wither's later work. Because the name Roget was intended to create a link with the poems in Browne's *Shepherds Pipe*, I continue to refer to this poetic speaker as Roget.

news and commiserate with him about his plight. Roget reassures him
that his knowledge of his own innocence makes his imprisonment less
painful, and he promises that, if Willie will return the next day, he will
tell his whole story. In the second eclogue, Roget fulfills his promise,
sharing with Willie and Cuddy an allegorized version of Wither's own
story: before his present troubles, Roget's special gift as a shepherd was
not shepherding proper but "hunting *Foxes, Wolves,* and *Beasts of Prey*: /
That spoyle our *Foulds,* and beare our *Lambs* away" (*Shepheards Hunting*,
2.61–62). He lists his "ten couple" dogs, "Whom by the name of *Satyres*
I doe call" (2.181, 182)—he names them all, so that the reader realizes
he calls his dogs "Satyres" because each one is named for one of the
satires included in *Abuses, Stript and Whipt*—and then describes taking
them out to hunt "monsters" (that is, the foxes and wolves that harm the
sheep). Roget interrupts his tale, because his jail-keeper calls to him, but
he promises to continue the story later if Willie and Cuddy will return.

Eclogue 3 continues the story, with a new friend in attendance, Alexis,
who will be Roget's interlocutor in the fifth eclogue (Eclogue 9 from *Shep-
herds Pipe*). Roget finishes his story, telling of a hunt that sounds similar
to Calidore's pursuit of the Blatant Beast into the countryside in Book 6,
canto 9, of *The Faerie Queene*:

> Nor crost we onely Ditches, Hedges, Furrowes,
> But Hamlets, Tithings, Parishes, and Burrowes:
> They followed where so ev'r the game did go,
> Through Kitchin, Parlor, Hall, and Chamber to.
> And, as they pass'd the *City,* and the *Court,*
> My *Prince* look'd out, and daign'd to view my sport.
> Which then (although I suffer for it now)
> (If some say true) he liking did allow.
>   (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting,* 3.52–59)

The dogs hunt so well that soon "every field lay strew'd / With *Monsters,* hurt
and slaine," including one "viler, and more subtile then the rest" (3.123–
25).[7] To Roget's chagrin, however, the monsters "laide aside their *Foxe* and
Wolvish shapes" and disguised themselves "in the skinnes of harmlesse
Sheepe" in order to gain pity for themselves by showing their wounds to
passers-by and blaming Roget and his dogs (3.135, 136). These deluded

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7 Line 3.125 in Hunter's 1622 copy-text reads "More subtile, and more noysome then the
   rest." I have substituted "viler, and more subtile then the rest" from the original 1615
   publication, because this version makes it clearer in this line and the preceding line that
   the beast that is "viler and more subtile" than the other monsters is himself a monster,
   and thus likely the "man-like Monster" that appears in *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* and in
   A Satyre to His … Majestie (Wither, *The Shepherds Hunting, Being, Certaine Eglogs*, D5v).

observers, along with others who "[keep] such *Monsters* tame / … . / … Foxes, Beares, & Wolves, as some great treasure" (3.143, 145), bring about Roget's imprisonment, despite his innocence.

The final two eclogues in the collection have little to say about Roget's present plight; instead, they work together to strengthen the sense of Roget/Wither as a poetic follower of Spenser, as Roget gives wise counsel to his friends, encouraging Willie to continue to compose poetry despite his fear of criticism (Eclogue 4) and advising Alexis on how to integrate a poetic vocation into his active life of shepherding (Eclogue 5). These eclogues' general themes of the value of the poetic vocation are highly reminiscent of Spenser's frequent comments on the topic, especially in "October." Wither highlights the similarity of topics by encouraging the reader to connect the two poems, through the similarity to Spenser's Cuddie's loss of decorum in "October," at which E.K. drily comments, "He seemeth here to be ravished with a Poetical furie. For … the numbers rise so ful, and the verse groweth so big, that it seemeth he hath forgot the meanenesse of shepheards state and stile" ("October," 182n110). Wither calls "October" to the reader's mind by having Willie call Roget back from his flight of poetic fancy in a similar moment of self-consciousness of decorum:

> I doe feare thou wilt be gon,
> Quite above my reach anon.
> The kinde flames of Poesie
> Have now borne thy thoughts so high,
> That they up in Heaven be,
> And have quite forgotten me.
> Call thy selfe to minde againe,
> Are these Raptures for a Swaine,
> That attends on lowly Sheepe,
> And with simple Heards doth keepe?
> (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 4.417–26)

These few examples are only a selection of details that illustrate the pervasive Spenserianism of the collection as a whole, bringing together beast fable and pastoral to create a hybrid form that alludes insistently and originally to Spenser. Whereas we have seen debts to Spenser in satirical poetry downplayed or obfuscated, Wither here seems comfortable paying obvious homage to Spenser in a clearly satirical work. I believe this confidence derives from the fame Wither had achieved through his recent experiences, fame that he references over and over again in *Shepheards Hunting*. Through enduring imprisonment for *Abuses*; keeping his

plight before the public through his contributions to *Shepherds Pipe*; and publishing the bold *Satyre to His … Majestie*, proclaiming his commitment to telling the truth in his poetry, regardless of the consequences (a show of bravery presumably made considerably easier by the death of Wither's enemy, Northampton, two months before the publication of the *Satyre*), Wither had earned the respect and admiration of his peers.

In his own person, Wither alludes to this newfound fame in his "Postscript to the Reader," commenting, "It is very true (I know not by what chance) that I have of late been so highly beholding to *Opinion,* that I wonder how I crept so much into her favour" (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 188). Within the fictional world of the eclogues, the shepherds wax even more effusive about Roget's new fame. In the second eclogue, Cuddy tells Roget, "at all meetings where our *Shepheards* bee, / Now the maine Newes that's extant, is of thee," which leads Roget to acknowledge the fact that if he had not been imprisoned, but rather had stayed on a mountain keeping his sheep, "My *name* should in obscuritie have slept" (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 2.15–16, 19). When Roget finishes his story, in Eclogue 3, his friends project his fame into the future. Cuddy declares, "Beleeve it, heere's a *Tale* will suten well, / For *Shepheards* in another *Age* to tell," and Willie elaborates: "thou shalt be remembred with delight, / By this, hereafter, many a *Winters night.* / For, of this sport another *Age* will ring; / Yea, *Nymphes* that are unborne thereof shall sing" (Wither, *Shepheards Hunting*, 3.162–67).

The boldness that Wither showed both in publishing *Abuses, Stript and Whipt* and in keeping his name, and his story, before the reading public as an example of a true poet unjustly punished for his work served him well by bringing him public fame at a young age (as he mentions several time in *Shepheards Hunting*). His fame in 1615, coupled with his relative safety after the death of Northampton, gave him the freedom to do what the other satirical writers discussed in this book dared not do—to create a clear claim to be recognized by his audience as not just a Spenserian poet but a Spenserian satirist.