On the Margins of *The Faerie Queene*

These paired but independent essays report on the marginalia in several copies of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The first, by Tianhu Hao, describes the annotations in a copy of the 1609 edition held by Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library, annotations that illustrate the degree to which early modern readers could actively participate in the texts they read. The second, by Anne Lake Prescott, describes notes or markings in two badly damaged copies of the 1596 *Faerie Queene*, both in the possession of the essay's author, that likewise show such participation. One of the volumes was later owned by one John Sheridan, probably an Irish barrister of that same name living in England and a member of the Middle Temple, who in 1771 wrote his ecstatic appreciation of the poet in a hitherto unpublished Spenserian stanza.

TIANHU HAO

An Early Modern Male Reader of *The Faerie Queene*

THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY RARE Book and Manuscript Library holds a 1609 copy of *The Faerie Queene* (London: H. Lownes; *STC* 23083) with written marginalia.[1] This book was once owned by Professor Jefferson Butler Fletcher (1865–1946), a Renaissance scholar and translator of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (1931). On its flyleaf is written: "Jefferson B. Fletcher Esq. 1898 with the best wishes of his friend and pupil H. O. Eaton." Fletcher served as an English instructor at Harvard University from 1890 to 1902. Later,

from 1904 to 1939, he was Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Presumably during that period one of his students presented the book to him.[2] The marginalia are not by Fletcher. On the last page of the book there are various barely legible scribbles. The legible words include "his book" (twice). Although I cannot recognize the signature of the earlier owner, I am fairly certain, on paleographical grounds, that behind the marginalia is an early modern male reader of *The Faerie Queene*.[3]

This male reader is engaged in various reading activities. He puts an asterisk beside a line, underlines words, phrases, or lines, explains an unfamiliar word, clarifies the references or allusions, and occasionally makes a commentary. He especially has difficulties with the word *wonne*, which he annotates thrice (II.vii.49.2, II.xii.11.4, II.xii.69.8). He answers the poet's rhetorical question "Who knows not Arlohill" with "In Ireland" (VII.vi.36.6), showing his geographical knowledge. He clarifies the syntax by annotating "that" ("For there is nothing lost, that may be found, if sought") as "but" (V.ii.39.9).[4] The only full-sentence comment made by this reader occurs at II.xii.22.9: "mighty & great men puffe vp wth proud disdaine." The phrase "puffe vp wth proud disdaine" is drawn from a previous line: "And the great sea puft vp with proud disdaine" (II.xii.21.7). Spenser depicts a natural scene, whereas the reader makes a social commentary, his imaginative mind working in free association. This example indicates that this reader responds to the poem personally: he writes his own social experience while reading an allegorical romance. The roles of reader and writer fuse into one another.

The reader's twenty-five marginalia in the first two cantos of Book I, and thirty-eight more in the twelve cantos of Book II, demonstrate that he is a careful reader who understands how to interpret an allegory. Paying particular attention to such lines as "Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song" (I.0.1.9) and "And learne from pleasures poyson to abstaine: / Ill by ensample good doth often gayne" (II.ii.45.4–5), he seems to be a conscious moralist. He consistently interprets the characters in the allegory in terms of the virtues and vices they represent. For instance, Una is truth, the dragon is Error, Archimago is hypocrisy, Sir Guyon is temperance, and so forth. In particular, the reader describes Archimago in different terms: *hermite*, *hipocrisie*, *magitian*, *enchaunter*. While aware of Archimago's deceitfulness, he seems to be fascinated by his multiple identities. In addition, he annotates Sans foy as faithles (I.ii.12.8), Sans loy as Lawles (II.ii.18.1), and Medina as modesty, moderatōn (II.ii.14.4). His linguistic competence allows him to grasp the allegorical characters correctly. Sometimes he does make mistakes, however. At the beginning

of Book II, he repeatedly mistakes Sir Guyon as "holynes" or "redcros k^{t}."—as if lingering in Book I—and then corrects his errors. The reader has a literary capability as well, for he explains "Two goodly Beacons" as "2. eyes" (II.ix.46.3) and "dyde in white and red" as "youthfull" (II.xii.12.5). In a word, the marginalia prove the reader to be a careful and capable one who is sensitive to the allegorical form.

This reader, moreover, copies eight pages of *The Faerie Queene* (I.iii.20–I.v.8, 13–20) and inserts them into the book to replace the missing pages. These written pages illustrate several things, most importantly the coexistence of manuscript and print, the early modern reading practice and what I elsewhere call "space economy."[5] The abbreviated words we observe include the following: y^{e}, w^{ch}, y^{t}, S^{t}, wth, Therewth, wthstand, wthout, &, Champiō, whō, y^{m} (i.e., them, I.iv.43.9). These abbreviations occur largely because of the limitation of space, for each page is divided into two columns, making the poetic lines rather crowded. Space economy often functions in the manuscript version, but it also appears in this printed book. In the line "For trũpets stern to change mine oatê reeds" (I.0.1.4), for example, the compositor shortens the words trumpets and oaten to fit them into the space.

The ways in which this reader deals with the original text indicate that he is no slavish copier but rather a spontaneous editor, an active reader and writer at the same time. Except for possible slips of the quill or eye (at I.iv.13.6, *where* becomes *were*; I.iv.38.5 confuses *And* and *An*; with I.iv.12.2, an *a* is missed), which are unintentional, the reader-writer-editor makes free and frequent changes of the text he is supposed to copy. The copied text departs from the original in many respects, including spelling (such as with *their-there*; and he sometimes changes spelling for the sake of eye rhyme: I.iii.25: *haire/teare/feare-heare/teare/feare*); tense (the line I.iii.30.5 shifts *had forgot* to *has forgot*); diction (I.iv.43.4 changes *aveng'd* to *reuenged*); and word order (I.iv.15.5, *her well they knew-they well her knew*; sometimes the change in word order destroys the rhyme: I.iv.29.6, *in foote and hand* becomes *in hand & foot*). The reader is particularly concerned with metrical regularity, for he replaces the final *e* in words like *discouered* (I.iii.21.1) and *crownes* (I.iii.31.9) with an apostrophe so as to omit one syllable, or he inserts the final *e* into words like *weened* (I.iii.21.9), *amazed* (I.iii.22.7), *returned* (I.iii.24.2) so as to add one syllable. The fact that he changes the final *e* into an apostrophe in words *ruled* (I.iv.12.7) and *perceiued* (I.v.2.6) is telling enough. Sometimes he emends the original text, almost automatically, as in the case of *fesh* turned into *fresh* (I.iv.17.3). Envy is the fifth in the line of seven

deadly sins, so the spontaneous editor corrects *first* to *fifth* (I.iv.32.9). The accumulation of the above evidence inclines me to conclude that the fluidity of texts is a rule in early modern reading practice, for the reader actively participates in the process of writing. Authorial intention is not as respected as it is in modern times; rather, readerly intention is on a par with authorial intention. Authorial intention is never seen as pure, but is mediated by such agents as the reader and the publisher in the process of its realization and materialization. Early modern reading practice is characterized by the fluidity of the text, the subjectivity of the reader, and the multiplicity of authorial intention.[6]

The University of Peking

Notes

1. Special Collections B823Sp3 Q5 1609. Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library in New York. *STC* 23083.
2. On Fletcher's career, see *Who Was Who in America* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis, 1950), vol. 2 (1943–1950).
3. Although women seem to have been the primary audience for early modern romances, men were also the readers of romances. See, for example, Robert Broun-rigg's commendatory poem to *The Cyprian Academy* (Wing B890): "Each gallant here may have his fill/Each Lady please her eye/Such are thy streames of eloquence/Such is thy poesie" (sig. A1). For a useful discussion of women readers of romances, see Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2000), ch. 1 ("The readership of Renaissance romance"), 14–19.
4. This word is in pencil, while all the other marginalia are in ink.
5. Tianhu Hao, "*Hesperides, or the Muses' Garden*: Commonplace Reading and Writing in Early Modern England" (Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, 2006), 54–62.
6. For a similar discussion of early modern reading practice in connection with the commonplace book, see Hao, 100–14.

ANNE LAKE PRESCOTT

Two Copies of the 1596 *Faerie Queene*: Annotations and an Unpublished Poem on Spenser

THIS ESSAY DESCRIBES TWO badly damaged or partial copies of the 1596 *Faerie Queene* that I recently acquired. Both have annotations, if usually minimal ones, and one has a never before published poem in Spenser's honor.

I start with the complete but much repaired volume I of what had been a two-volume set; it has a handsome but later binding and has been carefully mended. Could it be the "imperfect" 1596 put up for sale by William Collins in 1786? That would have cost the buyer ten shillings sixpence, had there been a buyer that year—the set was still for sale, at the same price, in Collins's catalogue for 1791.[1] In any case, the first page of my volume has a little crowd of names, only some of which are readily legible. The most interesting is the inscription "Shelley," in what seems a fairly late hand, but it is crossed out and there is, alas, no "P.B." or "Mary W." attached to it. There is also a date, partially crossed out, underneath a line of writing that has been entirely crossed out saying that somebody died on 9 January 1817 (or possibly 1827), at the age of two; why the erasures and crossings out? To affirm a transfer of ownership? Another name, an owner's I assume, is "T. Tayler." Not Jeremy, alas. There's also a "Will" but the following name is, alas, not "Shakespeare." And then, on the verso of signature A2, is the name "Walter Ralegh" with the date 1591. The "Ralegh" has been partially erased but remains legible. Did some forger develop a conscience? The book has other peculiarities. The title page of the volume clearly identifies itself as the 1596 edition, but one owner seems to have repaired a damaged volume by replacing presumably lost or torn pages with some cropped ones from a 1590 copy. The result is that we now leave Amoret and Scudamore in their ecstatic clinch, their romance unescaped, and then turn to some dedicatory poems and the *Letter to Ralegh*. The

jump from 1590 to 1596 is clear enough on page 15, as is the reverse jump at the end, and a number of pages in the middle are evidently from 1590 as well. As a modern note on the flyleaf puts it, this is a "mixed volume." Since I do not have the second volume I do not know how we are to get from the happy hermaphrodite of 1590 to the companionship of Britomart and Amoret at the start of Book IV.

There are, as I have said, annotations, and although few have historical interest as incisive cultural commentary (not even as amusingly foolish incomprehension), they have several points of interest. They are in several hands and, to my admittedly inexpert eye, seem relatively early. The ink is usually very faint and quite reddened.

The first point of interest is the frequency with which some reader has taken care to make Spenser more overtly sententious by converting a number of lines into "gnomes" or *sententiae* through the addition of quotation marks in the left margin. Recent criticism, and I believe rightly, has tended to make Spenser seem *less* sententious, or at least it has suggested that his treatment of the virtues—and of his queen—is as much interrogatory and explorative as it is didactic or demonstrative. It is easy to see, though, that for whoever added the quotation marks Spenser was indeed a sage and serious teacher whose narrator's statements can be converted into nuggets of wise discourse that one might cross-stitch in a sampler, embroider on a pillow, record in a commonplace book, or commit to memory. There is a dissertation to be done on passages in this and many other volumes that the reader, although not the printer, pricks out for moral or psychological emphasis. A *Garden of Gnomes*, one might entitle such a study. In this volume, for example, the already sometimes sententious narrator is made to sound more often like Polonius by having his reflections signposted: "Forgetful of his owne, that mindes anothers cares" (I.v) is selected for this stress, for example, as are "To make one great by others losse, is bad excheat" (I.v) and "The fish that once was caught, new bait will hardly bite" (II.i), among many others. The hexameter, of course, adds to the Polonian—or William Cecilian—quality, but pentameters, too, can have such finality, giving the impression of saying "don't argue" or "no irony intended." Marks single out "For greater love, the greater is the losse" (I.vii), a statement that was always true and is now, thanks to its little inky indications, a truism, and flagged as such.

Whoever put in such marks, however, was not just thinking *morally* but *rhetorically*, for he (or that not impossible she) gives the same traditional marker to, of all things, some lines by Despair. And why not? Despair is one of our literature's great rhetoricians, as darkly gifted in the art of persuasion as, say, Shakespeare's Mark Anthony

manipulating those viewing Caesar's body or Milton's Satan at the ear of Eve, and thereby demonstrating for alert readers the dangers of a smooth tongue. And so Despair's poisonously sweet lines, "Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease, / And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet grave? / Sleepe after soyle, port after stormie seas, / Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please," here become—well, what? Wisdom? In another mouth they might almost pass for such, despite their gesture at a quasi-unorthodox mortalism. Whoever put in the marks next to these particular lines was not, or not at this point, trying to separate the sententiously wise from the persuasively evil so much as noticing the intensities, the levels, the modes of language.

The same reader (if one may judge from the ink) has also, like so many who write in book margins, attempted a sort of retrieval system by adding not comments but notes on what the author is up to at a given moment. When Spenser describes Idleness, the annotator writes that this is a description of Idleness. This might seem to be an exercise in redundancy, unless one recalls that of course the volume has no index and that if one—not least if one were a tutor or student—wanted to find that bit with Idleness it might help to have the word in the margin. What might have been a brief index is thus scattered, unalphabetically, throughout the margins, the items to be retrieved when needed. Perhaps here, too, the issue is not just moral ("You lazy boy, listen to what the famous Spenser says about Idleness) but rhetorical ("Let me find it for you; yes, here it is; here's how you describe the sins to make them come alive before your eyes; we call in *enargia*, children"). That such notes come in two different inks and, from what I can tell, different hands (one in darker ink and different penmanship says, for example, "description of Dyspayrs situation") simply shows what we already knew—such annotation was common practice.

One note in the now blacker ink corrects Spenser's slip in III.ii confusing Guyon with Redcrosse (there's an argument to be made, perhaps, on how this is not a slip at all, any more than are the slippery pronouns at the start of Book II), but even more interesting are two notes that identify Spenser's sources in Ariosto. The hand does not look very late to my uninformed eye—no later than 1800, probably—but it certainly belonged to someone who had spotted and thought it worth noting connections between the two singers of knights' and ladies' gentle deeds. Next to Spenser's description of the anti-magical bugle with which Arthur's squire assaults Orgoglio's castle (I.vii.3) we read "Astolfos horne in ari[osto]." And when in stanza 7 of Book III canto I Britomart's magic spear lays Guyon low

on the grassy green, a marginal annotation cites a parallel "in orlando." Source studies, perhaps for pedagogical reasons, have begun to intrude into what seems the older annotator's world of moral compression and rhetorical arts.

The other volume, largely because it is lacking its first thirty-five pages or so (the bookseller sent me some loose pages by Spenser, but they are not the missing ones and seem to come from some other volume entirely), has little or no indication of ownership. The volume has received physical attention from its owners over the years; for example, one leaf missing from Book I has been replaced by a handwritten one that even includes the catchword. Despite such signs of care the volume is in bad shape, but it still has, together with what look to me like the original boards stiffened by some vellum with a few sheets of old letters, an ancient faded blue velvet cover (or what feels like velvet to the touch), prettily embroidered with flowers and the initials "E. T." Who might that be? I have had a number of fruitless fantasies about E. T.'s identity. Not Elizabeth Tyrwhit, who was dead. Not Elizabeth Tudor, of course; she would be "E. R." Elizabeth Throckmorton? Edward Tilney? Not unexpectedly, several friends have made suggestions involving a certain Steven Spielberg movie, but there is no evidence that this most famous E. T., despite his long alien fingers, was interested in embroidery.

The volume has a few probably post-1700 annotations of the retrieval sort: notes such as "Dispair pictured," give little indication of a response, although a global search of extant copies of Spenser might turn up interesting statistics on which passages tend to be thus flagged for later use. Fidelia and Speranza are identified as Fidelity and Hope, Humilita as Humility, and Zele as Zeal. Are such notes by a master hoping to help his pupil? Or by the pupil hoping to remember his master's explanation? Sometimes, as with the identification of z-e-l-e as z-e-a-l, we may be seeing problems with an older spelling, particularly now that English orthography had settled down. Thus Spenser's "Hierusalem" is identified as "Jerusalem the city of God," and indeed most modern editors would also want to gloss the older name; similarly, Spenser's "Ewghen" is glossed as "Yew," which again makes sense if one wishes to help students or to recall what one has learned from one's master. Here too, though, is the older interest in rhetoric: when Spenser addresses his Muse, the margin notes "The Poets Invocation." And information is recorded as well, so that "that great Champion of the antique world" is identified as "Hercules," the "eyas hauke" as the "Goshawke," the woodcut of a knight fighting a dragon is labeled "George of England," and next to "Acontius" (sig. T1) is written the whole story of that figure.[2] What is the point

of such annotations? To make the book easier to follow for the child one is tutoring, or for one's wife? As preparation for a new edition? Just for the owner's amusement? The glosses are few enough to make either possibility seem unlikely, but perhaps the owner (or borrower) had planned more.

The volume is even more intriguing, though, for what is written at the end of Book II in large bold script: "Jn Sheridan his Book" and, as though that claim to ownership were not enough, on the first page of Book IV is written again "John Sheridan his Book," this time with the date "1771." I think, although I cannot claim to be an expert paleographer, that the hand that wrote this is the same that penned the helpful information next to an allusion to Tobacco: "In the Authors time Tobacco was first brought to England by Sir Walter Raleigh."

On the facing page is a poem "by J. Sheridan," presumably the "John Sheridan" who signed his name. In form, which makes the compliment to the book's author even more clever, it is a Spenserian stanza. It reads (and reads better if "Elizabeth is given two syllables):

> Immortal poet that with stile Sublime
> Points out the way to Chastity and Love
> Thy allegories drest in Antient Rhyme
> Dictates the Sphere where all our Acts should move
> In friendly Converse as the Blest above
> Thrice happy Land. & Ever happy Queen
> Albion or England . and Eliza's name
> here Methaphorically May be seen
> Elizabeth the Worlds Glory. & old Englands fame.
>
> By Jn Sheridan

Below this, in a different hand, is written "Queen Elizabeth born 7th Sept 1535 Died March 24. 1632." That information apparently seemed problematic to another reader (or teacher), for someone has added, in pencil and in what may or may not be the same hand, a little "3" under the "5" in "1535" and a "1602" under the "1632." Modern readers might object that the supposedly corrected date of Elizabeth's death, "1602," is still wrong, but according to the older, Julian, calendar Elizabeth died on 24 March, hours before Lady Day and the official new year. Were the penned pieces of misinformation and their penciled corrections made before the calendar reform of 1752, after which Elizabeth began to have died in 1603, so to speak,

and hence perhaps before Sheridan wrote his little paean to Spenser? True, old calendars die hard, and maybe the notes were made by somebody who didn't hold with, or could not get used to, the new-fangled, foreign, and papist Gregorian system.

So far I have been able to determine, this poem appears nowhere else. Its opening line is not on the Web, nor is some earlier version of it in Steven May's first-line index of verse in books from 1559 through 1603, nor in the collection of Spenser allusions collected by Ray Heffner and others.[3] David Radcliffe, an authority on Spenser's reception, has not seen it published or quoted.[4] For Dr. Radcliffe the lines sound as though they were by a young man, and I am inclined to agree, if only because such rapture is likely to seem naïve to a parental generation. The most plausible candidate I can find, though, is John Sheridan of the Middle Temple. According to the archivist of the Middle Temple, a "John Sheridan, eldest son of John Sheridan, of Dublin, gentleman, deceased, was admitted to the Middle Temple on 13th June 1776, and was Called to the Bar here on 29th June 1781. His brother James Sheridan . . . was admitted on 18th June 1779 and was Called to the Bar here on 12th November 1784."[5] This Sheridan, then, like a number of other Sheridans from the great playwright to the gentleman lawyer John Sheridan who figures in lists of books subscribers and to the John Sheridans identified as drapers or vintners in legal documents, had a Dublin connection, which lends further interest to the several annotations in the volume's sparse marginalia that identify Irish place names.[6]

Several years after being called to the bar, the likely author of this poem published his long *Present Practice of the Court of King's Bench* (London: W. Flexney and J. Walker, 1784); he died in 1787, if he is the same "John Sheridan, Esq; barrister at law" whose death on 24 June 1787 is noted in that year's *Gentleman's Magazine*.[7] There was a Dublin edition of his book in 1792, if nothing else a reminder of the many Sheridans' usual Irish connections. And he is, I would imagine, the same John Sheridan, barrister, whom *The Gentleman's Magazine* describes as having organized a forum to help fashion, as Spenser might say, a gentleman or noble person in the virtuous and gentle discipline of public speaking. *The Gentleman's Magazine*'s long obituary for the Scottish-born London journalist James Perry, who died 4 December 1821, mentions that in 1780–82 there had been "numerous Debating Societies in every part of the metropolis," attended by those who would one day make their mark politically, "and it is not perhaps generally known, that the Lyceum was fitted up and received that title, expressly for a superior school of oratory, by John Sheridan, esq. a barrister, with the view of enabling such

young gentlemen as were destined for the Senate and the Bar to practice public speaking before a genteel auditory.'' It cost five shillings to get in, but although William Pitt himself dropped by, ''the enterprise fell to the ground.''[8]

For the John Sheridan who owned this volume, whether or not in truth the middle-aged Middle Temple barrister, the ''stile'' in which (or with which, if the word still connoted for the classically educated an writing implement) Spenser writes is ''sublime,'' a word with increasing glamour in 1771. In Sheridan's day, however, not everyone was impressed by Spenser's ''stile,'' sublime or not, and whatever the shifts in taste then getting under way or the new annotated editions of his work and a rush of parodies and imitations. ''His style,'' writes Dr. Johnson in *The Rambler*, was ''vicious,'' ''darkened with old words and peculiarities of phrase.''[9] Even earlier, after all, there had been strictures, whether Ben Jonson's notorious comment in his *Timber* (quoted by Johnson in the same *Rambler* essay) that in ''affecting the ancients'' Spenser ''writ no language'' or humbler criticisms like that of the Norfolk farmer whose manuscript denigrations Steven May has described in *Spenser Studies*.[10] And yet, if Sheridan does not, like Samuel Daniel in 1592, dismiss Spenser's ''aged accents'' and ''untimely words'' (*Delia*, sonnet 46), he does indeed imagine the poet's allegories ''drest in Antient Rhyme.''[11] He does not seem to think that Spenser merely ''affected'' the ancients, though—his poem's costume is either genuinely ancient or the allegories' creator is genuinely reviving an antique manner (one can read the line either way). If Spenser's accents are agèd, in 1771, moreover, for a growing number of English readers such antiquity was increasing its power and charm—like ruins, hermits, and, in about one more generation, ancient mariners. It is true that at least one perhaps understandably anonymous Englishman thought that Spenser might be better in blank verse (''No more my Muse her shepherd's weeds shall wear, / But change her oaten-pipe for trumpets loud, / And sing of noble deeds which long have slept: / Fierce wars and faithful loves shall grace my song''). True also that the author of those lines can note that but a few years earlier a reviewer of an earlier edition (1774) had praised his efforts as changing Spenser's ''uncouth phrases and obsolete stile'' into something more ''intelligible,'' so that ''what the Fairy Queen loses of the grotesque in this transmutation is amply compensated by the facility with which it will now be understood.''[12] Needless to say, the question of modernizing Spenser remains a matter for discussion. Sheridan shows no such distaste for the ''grotesque.''

Does John Sheridan, then, admire Spenser for being a modern who revives the ancients? His encomium does not quite fit all of the expected categories, for what the antique rhyme dresses is allegory, by 1771 a suspect mode to the likes of, say, Lord Kames (''However agreeable long allegories may at first be by their novelty, they never afford any lasting pleasure: witness the Faery-Queen, which with great power of expression, variety of images, and melody of versification, is scarce ever read a second time'') and one that in this case exploits themes or tropes contemptible to the likes of, say, David Hume (''the affectations, and conceits, and fopperies of chivalry, which appear ridiculous as soon as they lose the recommendation of the mode'').[13] Those who scorned him, suggests David Radcliffe, from whose book I take these passages, sometimes did so as a way of registering distaste for the structures and constrictions of established religion and traditional morality. To do so, of course, entails making both allegory and Spenser more conventional, stable, and conservative than they need be. For Sheridan himself, what Spenser ''points'' us to is the ''way''—an appropriately spatial metaphor for Spenser—toward chastity and love. Is Sheridan focusing on Book III (and maybe IV), or does he see love everywhere in Spenser, sustaining the other virtues? True, by 1771 ''chastity'' had lost some of its Spenserian and Miltonic moral depth and come closer to our own meaning of ''obeying the (perhaps repressive) rules relating to sex.'' It is pleasing nonetheless that what Spenser here points to ends in love and not mere good behavior.

Sheridan, then, finds Spenser an ''Immortal poet'' not only for his ''stile Sublime'' but for his guidance. By going where he points we move to another ''sphere.'' The sphere is not necessarily spatially high, like the crystal ones of Spenser's own day, for those who follow the poem's ''way'' are only ''as the Blest above'' and not yet joining the ''Blest'' themselves. Still, they are *compared* to the ''Blest,'' and are like them in ''friendly Converse.'' The poem, then, is relevantly situated after the legend of Chastity (and Love) and before that of Friendship, friendship that here reflects Heaven's own amity.

The poem now turns to Elizabeth, associating her with England but also with Albion, which in the previous century on occasion had been punningly associated with the entire United Kingdom (''Al-bi-on'' means ''all be one'').[14] Here is the same nostalgia for her ''happy'' time that many came to feel after a few years under the Stuarts. Is Sheridan depressed by George III? Does he associate Eliza's ''old'' England, as some now did, with knights and paladins, with a lost golden time of chivalry and beauty, of magic casements and fairylands as yet not quite forlorn, of a time before commerce gave

Mammon his victory and a few dark satanic mills were already being built? If so, he was more romantic about the period than Spenser himself had been, but in this he was not alone. The poem concludes by reading *The Faerie Queene* as mirroring Elizabeth. The syntax and punctuation of the last several lines are confusing. Sheridan seems to think that Elizabeth's "name" is somehow indicated metaphorically—he probably means allegorically—by the poem. Not Elizabeth, apparently, but her name. This is fair enough, if we read that name as some in her own day had done ("God's rest or peace"—Eli Sabbath), but Sheridan seems to think, also fair enough, that the name in turn means glory—not the fame sought by Gloriana's knights, but Glory itself. Or does he mean that we can perceive, in the allegory under the ancient rhymes, Elizabeth, the glory of the world, and the fame of old England? What Sheridan means by "glory" is unclear, but Spenser himself did not and perhaps could not spell it out.

John Sheridan's Spenser is not the early twenty-first century Spenser, but we too could use more "friendly Converse." It is pleasant to imagine Sheridan, barrister or not, reading an old volume with a cover almost certainly embroidered by an Elizabethan or Jacobean woman named E. T. or the wife or daughter of an E. T., and feeling moved by its ancient rhymes to think about love and friendship, although also feeling moved by pride to write elsewhere, and twice, that this is *his* book.

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NOTES

1. William Collins, *A catalogue (for 1786) of several libraries and parcels of books lately purchased* (London, 1786), 32; Collins, *A catalogue of books, books of prints, volumes of scarce tracts . . .* (London, 1791), 102. The 1596 edition figures frequently in booksellers' catalogues from 1700 to 1800, presumably some of them the same copies.

2. Other such identifications include II.ix's "fennes of Allan" as "the bogge of Allen in Ireland." On page 569 Semelee is "Mother of Bacchus" and Alcmena as "Mother of Alcides." Page 571 Hippodames is "In Homer." Page 572 Pegasus is "The Poets winged horse." Page 573 Dan Cupid is "God Cupid." Volume 2, page 44 "the Shenan" is glossed as "River Shannon in Ireland." Page 329 "Monster" is "This was that monster Spynx [sic] whom Œdipus King of Thebes made Kill itself."

3. Steven May and William Ringler, Jr., *Elizabethan Poetry: A Bibliography and First-line Index of English Verse, 1559–1603*, 3 vols. (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004); William Wells, ed., with Ray Heffner, Dorothy E. Mason, and Frederick M. Padelford, *Spenser Allusions in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, *Studies in Philology* 68.5 and 69.5 (1971, 1972).

4. In an e-mail responding to my query. I thank Dr. Radcliffe for his kindness in reading an earlier draft of this essay and for his thoughtful comments and speculations. The tone and style of Sheridan's poem strike him, he writes, as the work of a young man, and I am inclined to agree, but the John Sheridan who seems, so far, the best but hardly certain candidate for the owner of this volume, would have been around forty in 1771.

5. I quote the helpful e-mail that Mrs. LesleyWhitelaw, archivist of The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple library was kind enough to send me after I sent an inquiry. I thank her, and also Prof. Gordon Turnbull at Yale, who, out of kindness and curiosity, did a preliminary ''nominal identification'' and directed me to some relevant websites and sources for further investigation.

6. These other, socially lesser, John Sheridans turn up in a global search of Eighteenth Century Collections Online, appearing several times in Irish books on statutes. Some Irish John Sheridans more likely to be connected with the man who wrote on Spenser also appear, most of them in lists of subscribers and doubtless most of them the same person. One counselor at law, perhaps the father of the Middle Temple Barrister, subscribed in 1731 to a Dublin edition of Horace's Epistles and to a book of maxims and so forth in 1737.

7. *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London: John Nichols for David Henry, 1787): 2:640, in a list of ''considerable Persons'' who died that year. Sheridan's death is noted but there is no comment or narrative, as there is for the even more ''considerable'' among the deceased.

8. *The Gentleman's Magazine* 91 (London: John Nichols for John Harris, 1821): 2:566. The title page credits the volume to ''Sylvanus Urban, Gent.''

9. This and other strictures are quoted by Edward Payson Morton's old but valuable essay, ''The Spenserian Stanza in the Eighteenth Century, *Modern Philology* 10 (1913): 365–91.

10. Ben Jonson, *Timber: or Discoveries*, in *The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), 428, adding that he would have Spenser read ''for his matter''; Steven May, ''Henry Gurney, A Norfolk Farmer, Reads Spenser and Others,'' *Spenser Studies* 20 (2005): 183–223.

11. Daniel almost certainly did not, however, mean to be very denigrating; in his sonnet he is performing the traditional *recusatio* by a love poet who feels, perhaps a little uneasily, that he should be working on his epic. There are many ways to do this, from Ovid's complaint in *Amores* I.i that Cupid has stolen the syllable necessary for dactylic hexameter to Ronsard's hopeful suggestion that he would get on faster with the *Franciade* if better patronized. Daniel, whatever his admiration for Spenser, relegates his ''stile'' to the past.

12. *Spenser's Fairy Queen Attempted in Blank Verse, with Notes Critical and Explanatory* (London: T. and J. Egerton, 1783); the same writer had published his blank verse version of I.i in 1774.

13. David Radcliffe, *Edmund Spenser: A Reception History* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996), 75

14. Alexander Craig begs: "Let us . . . Al-bi-on" with "one King, one law" (*Poeticall essayes*, 1604), sig. C2v. In his *A Garden of Grave and Godlie Flowres* (Edinburgh, 1609), Alexander Gardyne makes the same Stuart-loyal pun: under James, he says, "Al-bi-on" (sig. B1v).

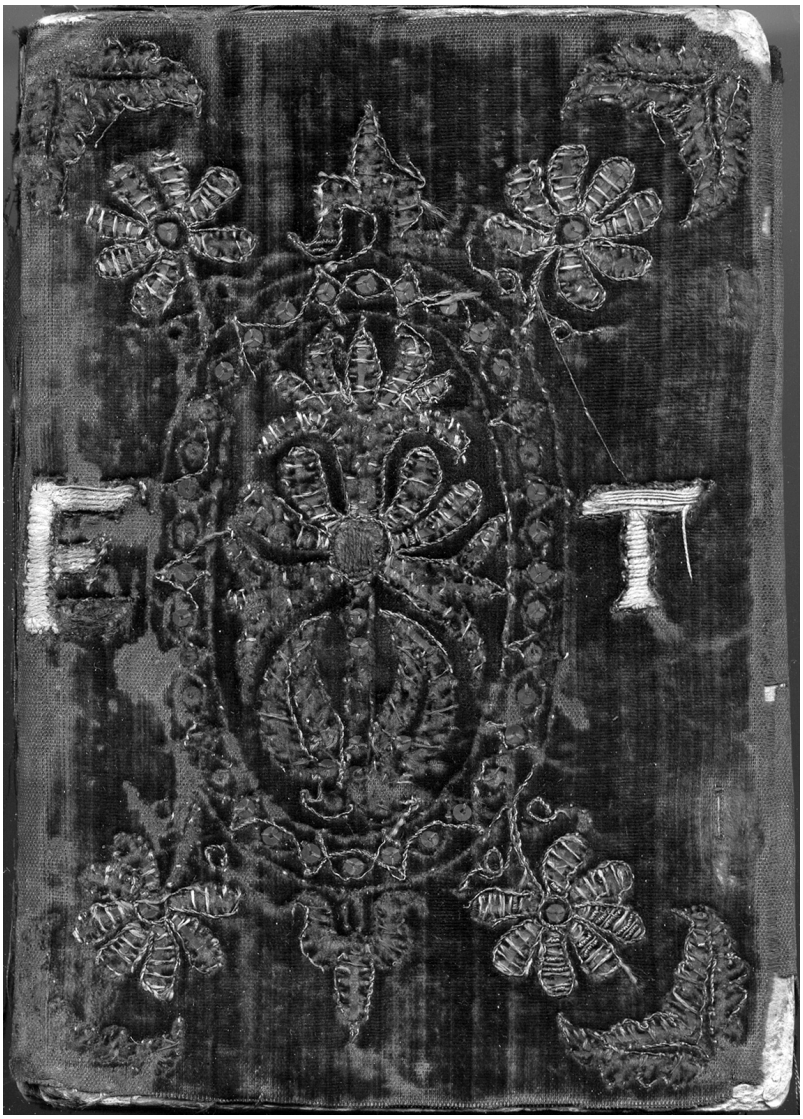


Fig. 1. The once blue cover, embroidered with flowers and bearing the initials E. T., of a badly damaged 1596 *Faerie Queene* in the possession of the author.

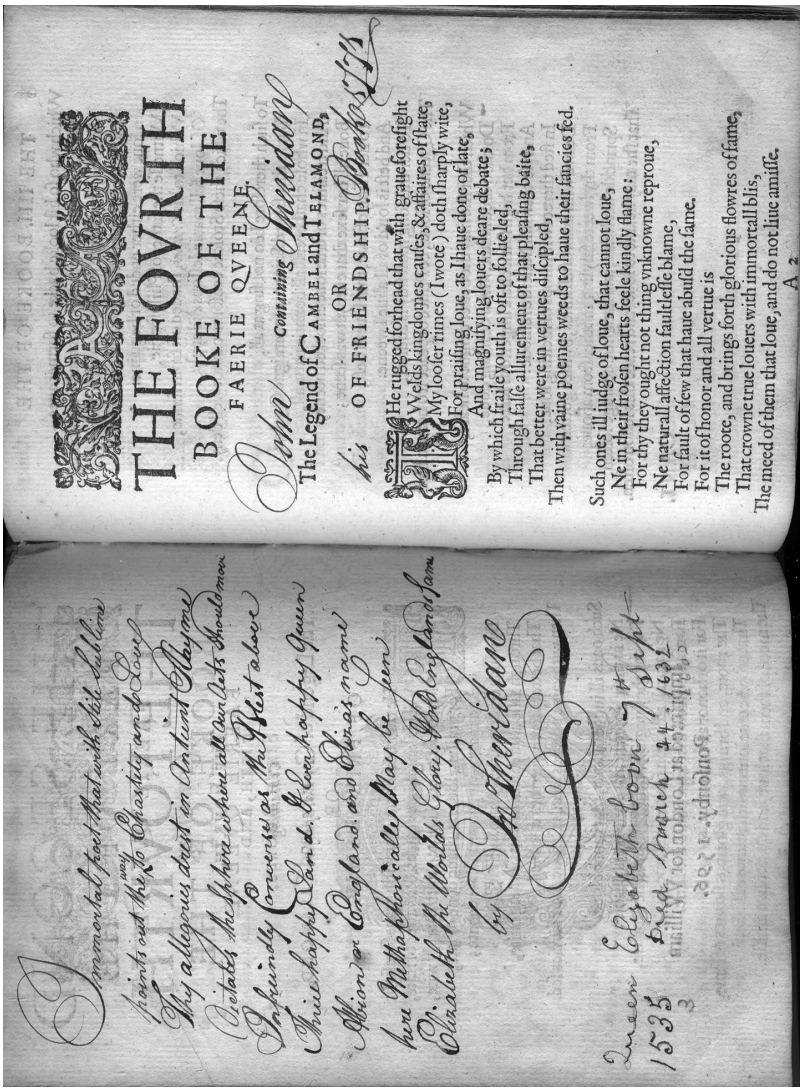


Fig. 2. A poem from the 1770s in praise of Spenser by John Sheridan, probably the Irish barrister of that name living in London, in a now badly damaged copy of *The Faerie Queene* in the possession of the author.