Figuring Justice: Imperial Ideology and the Discourse of Colonialism in Book V of *The Faerie Queene* and A View of the Present State of Ireland

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Summary: Edmund Spenser is a vocal spokesman for the colonization of Ireland. In *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, he provides one of the most sustained imperialist articulations in Elizabethan England. And in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, he promulgates a vision of justice that is necessary for containing individual and social dissent, as well as for consolidating monarchical authority. Spenser wants a similar form of relentless justice applied to controlling the recalcitrant Irish, but discovers that his implacable imperialist policy stands in direct opposition to Queen Elizabeth's own.

In Book V of *The Faerie Queene*,¹ Spenser allegorizes the mechanisms by which justice is exercised and enacted in civil society. The presiding genius in this Book is Astraca, the goddess of justice who is also the mythological embodiment of Elizabeth Tudor. Astraca has been responsible for educating Artega, the man who will sire the line leading to Queen Elizabeth and the image Britomart encounters in a magic mirror in Book III. When Astraca fled from the world's corruption, she left behind her groom Talus to serve Artega. Artega's and Talus' task is to ensure that justice is not violated in the world Astraca left behind. Book V shows Artega progressing ritually through a series of adventures, meting out justice on the bodies of the unjust. In allegorizing the workings of Justitia, Spenser meditates on its relationship to Clementia. What place does mercy have in the dispensation of justice? Book V recognizes that mercy is an important component in any consideration of justice, but it ultimately supports the use of the sword as a necessary condition for controlling the recalcitrant Irish.
for preserving social and civil order. Spenser’s Talus represents the executive power of Justitia unmediated by Clementia. The harsh enactment and exercise of power is needed to correct the lawlessness of characters like Pollente and Munera who abuse power and wealth, and by the giant who advocates a false mean between truth and falsehood.

Spenser’s conception of justice expressed in Book V can be read as a poeticization of the vision of justice given in A View of the Present State of Ireland. Taking the form of a dialogue between two men, A View was most probably composed in 1596, the year in which the second installment of The Faerie Queene was entered on the Stationers’ Register. Central to Book V and A View is how the meting out of justice is tied directly to legitimizing the monarch’s authority. Spenser is never completely at ease with the concept and implications of mercy, finding in it the source of much of the troubles plaguing English society and the Ireland England wishes to colonize. While paying lip service to the laudable virtue of the Queene’s mercy, he criticizes, for example, her half-hearted endorsement of actions that will effectively control the state of lawlessness in neighbouring Ireland. Therefore, the exercise of justice necessary for social stability and order is, for Spenser, central also to the project of English imperialism and colonialism. Spenser is the unabashed apologist for the use of force to order and consolidate England’s imperium.

I

Spenser’s preoccupation with the relationship between justice and mercy as aspects of imperial authority is expressed cogently in the allegorization of Mercilla’s judgment in Duessa in Book V of The Faerie Queene, and it would be appropriate for us to begin our discussion by recapitulating some of the salient features of this relationship. Spenser’s portrayal of the iconic Mercilla is first and foremost encomiastic; England is described as a “happie land” (V.ix.30) that has enjoyed the fruits of a peaceful reign; in Mercilla’s court, “the name of warre” is never spoken, “ioyous peace and quietnesse” reigns, and judgments are meted out (V.ix.24). This pax anglicana is disrupted by Duessa, whose treachery involves nothing less than the attempt to dethrone a monarch and subvert England’s ordered realm. A transparent allegory of the trial of Mary Queen of Scots, this episode impresses upon its reader that even though Mercilla/Elizabeth embodies the princely virtue of mercy, the demands of justice must be met for the good of the commonwealth to prevail. The monarch must dispense justice to protect the security of the state.
One recalls the Mercilla/Duessa allegory when Spenser invokes Elizabeth as “Her sacred Majesty” who is “by nature full of mercy and clemency” (p. 105) in A View of the Present State of Ireland. In A View, Spenser’s Irenius provides at length an account of the Queen’s mercy:

I wish that there be a general proclamation made, that whatsoever outlaws will freely come in and submit themselves to Her Majesty’s mercy shall have liberty so to do, where they shall either find that grace they desire or return again in safety; upon which it is likely that so many as survive will come in to sue for grace, of which who so are thought meet for subjection and fit to be brought to good may be received or else all of them, for I think that all will be but a very few, upon condition and assurance that they will submit themselves absolutely to Her Majesty’s ordinance for them, by which they shall be assured of life and liberty and be only tied to such conditions as shall be thought by her meet, for containing them ever after in due obedience. (pp. 122-123)

The reference to Elizabeth’s mercy, like Spenser’s allegorical representation of Mercilla, is encomiastic. This praise does not, however, exempt Elizabeth from blame in recalling Lord Grey from Ireland because of his harsh regime. Spenser’s A View inscribes an indirect critique in its defense of Lord Grey. Irenius portrays Grey as a gentle and temperate man who resorted to violence in Ireland only because “the necessity of that present state of things enforced him to” (p. 106). Lord Grey had no choice but to check the calamity that followed in the wake of the Desmond Rebellion and to punish the Spaniards at Smerwick who “were only adventurers, that came to seek fortune abroad and serve in wars” (p. 108).³

Another allusion to Elizabeth’s recall of Lord Grey de Wilton from Ireland is found in Book V, canto xii, of The Faerie Queene. In praising the former governor’s role in breaking the force of the rebellious Fitzgeralds of Desmond, Spenser writes about the part played by justice in reforming “that ragged common-weale” (V.xii.26) of Ireland. In this last canto of Book V, justice is shown to operate beyond the confines of England. In Ireland, where people “vsed to rob and steale, / Or did rebell against lawfull government” (V.xii.26), Talus “did inflict most grieuous punishment” (V.xii.26). Spenser’s technological version of God’s omniscience, the Talus who “could reucale / All hidden crimes” (V.xii.26), is recalled. Artegall is also compelled to return to the Court. Spenser allegorizes his understanding and defence of Grey’s administration in Ireland by depicting Artegall battling against and killing Grantorto (whose name suggests “great wrong”), freeing Irena from tyranny
and imprisonment. rescued by Artegall, Irena, whose name etymologically means "peace," enjoys only a short lease of joy. Spenser points to envy to explain the unpopular response to Grey's administration in Ireland. Envy's "nature is to grieue, and grudge at all," That euuer she sees doen prays-worthily" (V.xii.31). Like Milton's self-consuming Sin, Spenser's Envy "feedes on her owne law vnnaturall, / And of her owne foule entrayles makes her meat" (V.xii.31). Significantly, Envy's close ally is Detraction, who primarily "waeue[s] false tales and leasings bad, / To throw amongst the good, which others had disprad" (V.xii.36). In the logic of Spenser's allegory, Lord Grey is the victim of envy, backbiting, and slander. His task, like Artegall's, is to free peace from the clutches of tyranny. He "sorely punished with heauie payne" (V.xii.25) the people who were involved in tyrannizing Irena; and he was preoccupied with the task of dispensing "true Iustice" (V.xii.26) and the question of "How to reforme that ragged common-weale" (V.xii.26). Unfortunately, that task remains incomplete and the Blatant Beast with "his hundred tongues" (V.xii.41), Envy and Detraction's very own pet, significantly survives to escape even Calidore's clutches in Book VI and to roam the world striking terror at the conclusion of Spenser's epic poem. When the mechanisms of colonial administration and justice are withdrawn, anarchy logically ensues.

In portraying Artegall's recall, Spenser reveals his feelings that Grey had been unfairly treated by Elizabeth. In A View Spenser criticizes the people who accuse Grey of being "a bloody man" (p. 106) and of treating the Irish as "no more than dogs" (p. 106). This criticism is implicitly aimed at the Queen herself. Strategically placing Eudoxius' account of the criticisms levelled against Grey after the description of the devastation and famine caused by the Desmond Wars, Spenser argues that "the necessity of that present state of things enforced him to that violence" (p. 106). Spenser shared Ludovick Bryskett's view that Grey's "Iustice is a terror to the wicked, and a comforte vnto the good, whose sinceritie very envie it self cannott touche, and whose wisdome might, in the oppinion of the wysest that consider his proceedinges, governe a whole Empyre." His portrayal of the relationship between justice and the establishment of civil order links Book V to A View of the Present State of Ireland. In the latter text, bringing about civil order cannot be extricated from the cause of British imperialism. Stanza 26 of Book V, canto xii shows Talus in Ireland. The force of justice required for the smooth functioning of society also serves to disseminate the immeasurable benefits of culture and civilization to a savage people. In stanza 39 of Book V, canto xi, Spenser refers
to Ireland as "the saluage Ilands." And in A View Irenius proposes different ways to tame the savage Irish.

Arguably, the most devastating critique of Elizabeth’s recall of Grey and of those opposed to his actions in Ireland is found toward the conclusion of A View. There Irenius offers a passionate defence for the right of the Lord Deputy to possess "more ample and absolute" (p. 168) authority. Set against the historical and political context of Grey’s removal from Ireland, Spenser’s portrayal of Elizabeth’s mercy possesses both positive and negative significations. The exercise of mercy shows the monarch tempering the otherwise cold justice of the law. But it also suggests the Queen does not fully appreciate the hard reality of controlling a rebellious and intransigent people like the Irish.

In A View, Spenser’s portrayal of Elizabeth’s mercy is mediated by the presence of a political world in which the Queen is not shaping events with sufficient determination and veracity. He suggests that Elizabeth does not understand the difficulty of administering an Ireland that is culturally backward and vehemently hostile toward the English. In reading Spenser’s views on the Irish question, it is important that we do not confuse his politics with one that is dominant in the Elizabethan court. In fact, Elizabeth did not share Spenser’s desire to bring a recalcitrant Ireland to heel through brutal means. Indeed, in 1582, she accepted Grey’s repeated requests for resignation from his duties in Ireland because she did not support his reputedly severe and harsh governance there. On a larger scale, there is also the Queen’s ineffective protection of the Protestant Church’s interests abroad. Immediately following the Mercilla-Duessa episode, Spenser proceeds to allegorize the regaining of Antwerp (V.x.38-39) and the defeat of Catholicism in Arthur’s killing of Geryoneo. This allegory in cantos x and xi rewrites the facts of the Netherlands campaign. Spenser allegorizes Leicester’s Calvinist expedition as a triumph of Protestant honour. When the Queen sent Leicester with an army of 7,000 men to assist the provinces after Antwerp’s fall to the Spanish forces appeared imminent, he arrived too late to prevent the catastrophe from taking place. Spenser believed Elizabeth had failed to intervene decisively and free the Low Countries from oppression by Catholic Spain. That the Queen did not give her uncompromising support to combat the threat posed by Catholic Spain and the Habsburg powers in Europe proved scandalous to the militant Protestants. Like Leicester, Walsingham, and Sidney, Spenser was drawn to the larger international concerns of the reformed religion. And like Essex, he would like to have seen Elizabeth pursue a more interventionist and militant foreign
polcy. Instead he saw, as Ralegh did, that Elizabeth "did all by halves," and her defence of the Netherlands was as inconclusive as her subjugation of Ireland. Confronted with these frustrations, Spenser wrote Book V to express his own version of history. Arthur's defeat of Geryoneo, therefore, can be read in terms of Spenser's recuperation of the narrative history through an alternative poetic narrative. What could not be achieved in history can be experienced vicariously through allegory. If Spenser's rewriting of history redeems its failures, it also identifies the Queen as the source of those failures.

Spenser's disappointment with Elizabeth's handling of England's foreign policy registers itself in an epic text whose ostensible design is to celebrate the Virgin Queen. The different aspects of Elizabeth's glory are figured in such symbolic identities as Una, Belphoebe, Britomart, Mercilla, and Gloriana. But even as Spenser's multiple mirrours refer to the positive figurations of the Queen's royal identity, they also point to demonic variations of those figurations. Doublings proliferate in Spenser's romance narrative — Lucifera and the Faerie Queene, Malecasta and Britomart, Radigund and Britomart. The presence of these demonic variations means that the Queen can never remove from her gaze patterns of what the royal court could degenerate into. If Elizabeth, for example, finds Gloriana set before her as a mirror of majesty, she cannot help but look at the demonic counterpart of that majesty fugured in Lucifera. Even though it is a poem of praise to Elizabeth, The Faerie Queene extends its educative function as mirrour and ensample to the Queen. Encomium is given in a narrative that also relegates blame and delivers warnings.

Spenser's poetic and political vision then possesses an internationalist dimension, linked to and endorsed by his belief in England's role as protector of the Protestant Church's interests abroad. At different moments throughout The Faerie Queene, Spenser calls attention to Elizabeth's failure to protect these interests. Viewing himself as the English Virgil writing in praise of the Elizabethan Golden Age, Spenser finds he cannot simply celebrate the idea of national greatness, if a central requirement in consolidating that greatness — the expansion of an overseas empire — is lacking in some way. That is why he links imperial authority and English greatness to the expansion of the empire. The metonymic relationship Spenser sets up between Elizabeth's power and the expansion of the English imperium creates an epic of praise even as it situates the threats posed to the consolidation of the imperium. It is important once again to recognize that Spenser's views on empire building do not coincide with Elizabeth's at different points. There is in reality no unified Elizabethan world picture defining England's international ambitions in the
latter half of the sixteenth century. Indeed it is highly probable that the conflicts existing between Spenser’s and the court’s views on the Irish question brought about a censorship that led to the printing of A View only in 1633, well over three decades after its most likely date of composition in 1596.9

As an epic romance, The Faerie Queene is directly linked by Spenser to the design and ambitions of empire building. In choosing the specific mode of the Arthurian romance, Spenser affirms England’s greatness by conflating its contemporary “sundry place” (II.Proem.4) with its “famous antique history” (II.Proem.1). Despite his recognition that the creation of this poem may be viewed by readers as “th’abundance of an idle braine” (II.Proem.1) and “painted forgery” (II.Proem.1), Spenser defends his creative efforts by pointing out that the imagination can exert a powerful influence over material reality. England, Spenser’s argument implies, can be “that happy land of Faery” (II.Proem.1) even though, of course, no one has yet seen it. Not to have seen something does not negate its existence. Not to have seen “Faeryland” does not mean England is not the great realm of legend and history, just as not to have heard of Peru, the Amazon, and Virginia does not mean these places do not exist. For it was only as late as 1540 that the Amazon was first sailed and 1584 that Sir Walter Ralegh, Spenser’s intimate friend, presented to Elizabeth those lands he had discovered in North America. The Proem to Spenser’s Legend of Temperance is not a defence of the substantive nature of the imagination, its ability to translate fictions into reality, but a specific exhortation for England to recognize that there is an empire out there in the larger world waiting to be carved out. The imagination, in other words, has a utilitarian function. “Faeryland,” as Maureen Quilligan puts it, “is located in the place of the questing human imagination, a peculiar Renaissance creature that does not [...] confine its quests to mental realms alone but sallies out to seek new continents.”10 Spenser locates England’s colonial interests at the point in which the world of the imagination intersects with reality. In the twenty-second stanza of Book IV, canto xi, he exhorts the British to follow Ralegh’s urgings to colonize in South America. Ralegh’s “The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana” (1596) asserts that wealth can be obtained in the Americas, if only England recognizes the urgent need to enter into and compete for land in which the Spaniards and the French have already made incursions.11

In spite of the anxieties he betrays in responding to Elizabeth’s foreign policy and the ways in which she conducts affairs at court, Spenser cannot ultimately free himself from the imperial ideology to which he subscribes and
in which he is inscribed. His criticisms of the Queen are made to serve the interests of advancing the Protestant cause and increasing England’s territorial boundaries. The justice that Spenser celebrates when it works to protect the security of the state and to crush crime and rebellion legitimizes and consolidates the monarch’s authority. Administering God’s law on earth, the prince cannot be touched by the law. Francis Bacon shares Spenser’s understanding of monarchical authority when he writes: “Let judges also remember that Solomon’s throne was supported by lions on both sides: let them be lions, but yet lions under the throne, being circumspect that they do not check or oppose any points of sovereignty.” Accepting implicitly the royalist premise that the monarch is God’s anointed on earth and the custodian of justice in time, Spenser subscribes wholly to the homily, Concerning Good Order, and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates (1547), which identifies rulers and magistrates as the guardians of civil order:

Take away Kings, Princes, Rulers, Magistrates, Judges and such estates of GODS order, no man shall ride or goe by the high way unrobbed, no man shall sleep in his owne house or bedde unkilld, no man shall keepe his wife, children, and possession in quietnesse, all things shall bee common, and there must needes follow all mischiefe, and utter destruction both of soules, bodies, goodes, and common wealthes.13

This homily endorses a hierarchical view of human society with its macrocosmic correspondence in the universe, telling the common people that supporting the authority of their ruler protects them from crimes committed against their bodies, properties, and souls. In this hierarchical society, the subject always remains the possession of the monarch.

That Spenser makes explicit his recognition that the poet operating in society can never be freed from his subject position enforces the status of his epic poem as a gift made by a loyal servant to his Queen even as it destabilizes the monarch-subject relationship. For any suggestion that textual production is enabled by pressures exerted from without has the effect of compromising the constructions of poetic praise. One obvious reminder of the poet’s relationship to the world of court politics is given in Spenser’s allegorical representation of the nailing of the poet Bonfont’s tongue to a post in Mercilla’s court. This painful example jostles the otherwise cohesive allegorical framework of Mercilla’s grand court and her just reign. If acknowledging the poet’s subject position ratifies the hierarchical conception of society, it also disrupts encomium by suggesting that poetic praise is given under the conditions of
censorship, surveillance, and control.

In an instance of deep historical irony, Spenser's depiction of the royal monopoly of the authorial voice materializes in James VI's demand that he be punished for allegorizing Mary Queen of Scots as Duessa in the Mercilla/Duessa episode. This demand can be read as James' attempt to rewrite the narrative of history by making Elizabeth disavow symbolically her support for and approval of Queen Mary's execution. If the Queen should punish Spenser as he demanded, he would obtain the symbolic affirmation that he enjoyed the privileges of sovereignty; James could then extrapolate from this concession that Elizabeth supported him as her successor to the English throne. James' response to Spenser's allegory clearly shows that ownership of the poetic text does not belong solely to its author; the text can serve as a pawn in the contest of power between monarchs. Like all other subjects in society, the poet is conceptualized here as possession, one that compromises encomium and identifies the social conditions and political pressures that enable and shape textual productions.

Spenser's preoccupation with power and its social articulations is expressed even further in the episodes of Artegall's encounter with Pollente and Talus' with Munera. Here royal possession assumes the form of a physical sign imprinted on the body of the subject. In canto ii, Spenser significantly describes Artegall as the knight "Who now to perils great for iustice sake proceeds" (V.ii.1). Following his encounter with Sanglier, Artegall meets Pollente at the start of canto ii. Alluding to the monopoly patents granted to corporations, Pollente, whose name means "powerful" in Italian and puns on the word "poll" (tax), is Spenser's allegorical sign for the abuse of political power. Pollente extorts from both rich and poor travellers who wish to cross over his bridge. Artegall's encounter with Pollente ends in the latter's decapitation, an account Spenser describes in vivid and graphic detail:

But Artegall pursewd him still so neare,
With bright Chrysaor in his cruell hand,
That as his head he gan a little reare
Aboue the brincke, to tread vpon the land,
He smote it off, that tumbling on the strand
It bit the earth for very fell despight,
And gnashed with his teeth, as if he band
High God, whose goodnesse he despaired quight,
Or curst the hand, which did that vengeance on him dight.

His corps was carried downe along the Lee,
Whose waters with his filthy bloud it stayned:
But his blasphemous head, that all might see,
He pitcht vpon a pole on high ordayned;
Where many years it afterwards remayned,
To be a mirrour to all mighty men,
In whose right hands great power is contayned,
That none of them the feeble ouerren,
But alwaies doe their powre within iust compasse pen.

(V.xii.18-19)

Of particular interest in Spenser’s description of Pollente’s execution is the example ArtegaIl makes of Pollente. ArtegaIl fixes Pollente’s head on a pole for all to see. There this head, Spenser tells us, remained for many years to serve as “a mirrour to all mighty men.” The mirrour which reflects the true state of nature is also Spenser’s synonym for example. Defending Lord Grey’s regime in A View of the Present State of Ireland, Spenser’s Irenius explains the importance of setting up examples to instil fear into those inclined to become rebels. Lord Grey “spared not the heads and principals of any mischievous practice or rebellion, but showed sharp judgement on them, chiefly, for ensample sake, that all the meaner sort, which also were then generally infected with that evil might by terror thereof be reclaimed and saved, if it were possible” (p. 107; italics mine). In Book V, ArtegaIl exhibits the ghastly spectacle of Pollente’s head as “mirrour” and “ensample.” His act finds its political and social analogy in the power the prince exercises over the body of the subject.

Spenser’s depiction of Pollente’s punishment points to a discursive field in which the manufacturing of body parts is loaded with heavy symbolism. Directly linked to the capital crime of treason, spectacles of dismemberment were designed to remind the citizenry of their subject position in the body politic and to serve as grisly warnings. Thomas Wyatt’s plans to overthrow the government of Catholic Queen Mary, for example, resulted in his imprisonment, torture, beheading, disembowelment, and quartering; the different parts of Wyatt’s quartered body were displayed in gibbets in various parts of London. In the Stuart period, an indirect attack on the Caroline court and its theatricals lost William Prynne both his ears.15 Curt Breight summarizes the pervasiveness of mutilation as punishment and symbolism in Renaissance England:

Although there were more executions for treason in the 1530s than in the whole of Elizabeth’s reign, discursive productions of treason — arrest,
trials, executions, displays, pamphlets, sermons—pervaded the sociopolitical environment of the entire second half of Elizabeth’s reign and the first few years of James’s government. In this sense the overall numbers are less important than the regularity of and the attendant discourse about treason cases after 1580—i.e. the almost annual parade of demonized conspirators to the scaffold, frequently preceded and/or followed by ideological disputes between the regimes’s apologists and its opponents.16

London Bridge frequently displayed body parts, exhibits promoted by the royal court to create paranoia and undermine dissent. It was always useful to produce traitors for almost yearly executions; this ritual helped to strengthen the prince’s literal and symbolic authority. Enabling the mechanisms of justice to function in civil society, the legalistic, martial, and technological Talus in Book V of The Faerie Queene significantly forms what James Nohnenberg describes as “the whole police power of surveillance, investigation, detection, apprehension, arrest, arraignment, and punishment.”17

Spenser’s response to the authority the monarch holds over the body of the subject may complicate the narrative of his encomiastic performance in The Faerie Queene, but it never translates at any point into anti-royalist rhetoric. The recognition that the poet must negotiate carefully the potentially explosive minefield of court politics does not detract from his implicit faith in an inviolable royalist ideology. When Spenser reveals his disagreement with the Queen’s handling of foreign policy, for example, he does not interrogate the Queen’s authority; rather, he wants to contribute toward building up the English imperium, which can only be attained through a more distinctly interventionist foreign policy. The terror wielded by the monarch to crush dissent and procure compliance is a principle understood by Spenser as central to the creation and consolidation of social order. Significantly, Spenser’s Irenius advocates terror as a means of procuring discipline. In envisaging an Ireland with no expressive form of idleness, Irenius, for example, wants all stragglers who roam aimlessly to be picked up by the sheriff. He wants this straggler to be punished with stocks for a first offence and with whipping for a second. Should a straggler be apprehended a third time, he is given “the bitterness of the martial law” (p. 160). Meted out by the marshall, this martial law, which can involve the death penalty, will “work that terror in the hearts” (p. 160) of loafers that mere whipping fails to accomplish. The terror of death serves as an efficient deterrent; but capital punishment fulfills the more practical and utilitarian purpose of ensuring that the jails are not packed to overflowing.
That justice makes spectacles and examples of the bodies of the condemned is not confined to the Pollente episode. Munera, Pollente’s daughter, is also subjected to the same fate. When Talus starts battering down the gate of Munera’s castle, she attempts to appease him by bribing him with bags of gold. Talus cannot be bought with riches and, representing a justice that penetrates all the secret places (V.ii.25), he discovers Munera hiding “Vnder an heape of gold” (V.ii.25). Once again Spenser describes graphically Talus’ violent treatment of Munera:

Yet for no pity would he change the course
Of Justice, which in Talus hand did lye;
Who rudely hayld her forth without remorse,
Still holding vp her suppliant hands on hye,
And kneeling at his feete submissiuely.
But he her suppliant hands, those hands of gold,
And eke her feete, those feete of siluer trye,
Which sought vnrightnesseous, and justice sold,
Chopt off, and nayld on high, that all might them behold.

(V.ii.26)

Where Artegall has just a few moments earlier fixed Pollente’s head on a pole to serve as a lesson, Talus now nails Munera’s dismembered limbs “on high, that all might them behold” (V.ii.26). Recalling for the reader Artegall’s action, Talus’ treatment of Munera symbolizes an important aspect of the prince’s demonstration, wielding, and exercise of power. Spenser conceptualizes justice as imperial virtue, grounding its significance in the governance of the body politic. In canto iv, for example, Talus, “that great vpon groome,” is described as Artegall’s (or justice’s) “gard and gouernment” (V.iv.3). Spenser’s use of the word “gouernment” to describe Talus links the executive force of justice to rulership. Significantly, he refers to “the right hand of Justice” as “powre” (V.iv.1). Justice must “be perform’d with dreadlesse might” (V.iv.1).18

Because the monarch is the originary source of justice in civil society, “it is capital crime to devise or purpose the death of the king” (p. 21). The indisputable head of the body politic, the monarch is not subject to laws. In A View, Spenser’s Irenius says that it is “in the power of the prince, to change all the laws and make new” (p. 141). We encounter a radically different tenor in Milton’s figurations of justice. For the republican and antiroyalist Milton, an inverse relationship governs monarch and subject. The king holds his position in society only so long as he fulfills his God-given function and ensures the subjects’ welfare. Subject to law, the monarch who betrays the people whio
delegated power to him to protect "the Common good of ... all"19 must be brought to justice. The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates equates justice with "the Sword of God" (Yale III, 193); Milton writes:

be he King, or Tyrant, or Emperour, the Sword of Justice is above him, in whose hand soever is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion, and so great a deluge of innocent blood. For if all human power to execute, not accidentally but intendedly, the wrath of God upon evil doers without exception, be of God; then that power, whether ordinary, or if that faile, extraordinary so executing thet intent of God, is lawfull, and not to be resisted.

(Yale III, 197-198)

Unlike Milton who, in equating justice with the sword of God, argues for the subject’s right and obligation to dethrone the tyrant, Spenser puts the sword of justice in the monarch’s hand. In A View, he links "the nature of treason" to "the royal estate or person of the prince" (p. 35); "practising with [the prince’s] enemies to the derogation and danger of his crown and dignity" (p. 35) constitutes treason. Spenser’s politics cannot accomodate Milton’s contractual model of kingship.

II

In interpreting the expression of Spenser’s colonial views in his writings, we often find ourselves aligning with one of two general positions: Spenser is the preeminent English poet of empire,20 or he is responding realistically to the threat posed by Irish rebelliousness and intransigence. I now wish to relate the colonial theme in Spenser to the contradictions encountered in his definition of the colonialist project and also to views held on the subjection of Ireland supported by the Elizabethan court. Arguably, a major force disrupting Spenser’s attempt to produce a powerfully coherent blueprint for the colonization of Ireland is the absence of a sustained and consensual court ideology concerning the Irish question.

Spenser’s A View begins by providing an exposé of the degenerate state of Ireland and a critique of Elizabeth’s “soft” attitude toward its control and subjection. Spenser argues that because the state of Ireland is beyond any hope of recovery, it must be salvaged through the logical project of colonization. The Irish lack of coherent system of laws which is the foundation of all civil societies and do not even possess a definable ethnic identity. Spenser’s Irenius begins his dialogue with Eudoxius by asserting that the Irish do not understand the basic nature and function of laws, and have never learnt obedience to them.
If laws serve to restore and secure order in society, a people without laws have no access to the benefits provided by a legal institution. Even the task of imposing good and sound laws in Ireland is doomed to failure for a society that cannot understand their significance. Once Irenius has established that laws are central to any civilized society and culture, Ireland, with its absence of a coherent legal system, is immediately categorized as uncivilized.

Spenser’s Irish are not only barbaric and uncivilized, they do not possess an identifiable ethnic or national identity. The origins of the people who have come to be known as the Irish are lost as a result of different ethnic interactions. Spenser’s Irenius gives an elaborate exposé of the impurity of the Irish race. Tracing their ancestry to the Scythians (whom Spenser equates with the Scots), the Irish have intermingled racially with the Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, and Saxons. The interminglings that took place between English and Irish did not result in improving the Irish. Instead they led to the assimilation of English families of high station into Irish life and culture. Adopting Irish ways, these English families became barbaric. Spenser negates Irish identity when he suggests that there is no such thing as a Celtic speaking people. In order to reinforce this absence of identity, Spenser proceeds to argue that there is no such character as a real Spaniard. If the Spaniard is ethnically indistinct, then the ineluctable logic follows that the condition of ethnic impurity is exacerbated for the Irish who intermingled freely with the Spaniards in the early history of Ireland. The Spaniards are portrayed as the most bastardized race in history.

Ireland’s uncivilized, anarchic, and nationally indistinct state is a thematic constant in both Spenser’s A View and The Faerie Queene. In the “Mutabilitie Cantos,” for example, the ambition of the titaness Mutability to control the gods in addition to her dominion over the world leads to a gathering of the gods in council. Nature is invited to hear and adjudicate Mutability’s plea on Arlo Hill, a setting which refers to Galtymore, the highest peak in the mountain range near Spenser’s home Kilcoman in County Cork. The reference to Ireland in Colin Clout’s digressive tale about Arlo is significant because it enacts the myth of lost glory and degeneration. Ireland is a society caught irreversibly in a state of chronic regression. Canto vi, stanza 38, accepts that “IRELAND flourished in fame” for her learning throughout Northern Europe for the sixth to the ninth century; that was when Cynthia/Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt, frolicked and played unhampered on the grounds of Arlo. When the voyeuristic Faunus views Diana naked at her bath with the help of Molanna, he is punished. But even worse than the retribution visited on Faunus is Diana’s
decision to abandon her old haunt, a departure that brings “an heavie haplesse curse” (Mutabilitie.vi.55) upon the place. Because of this curse, Ireland is filled with wolves and thieves up to this day. Combining the Ovidian stories of Actaeon and Diana, Calisto’s punishment, and Alpheus’ love for Arethusa, Spenser’s mythologizing of Diana’s departure from Arlo reduces Ireland to a cultural wasteland. Spenser does the reverse of what a celebrant of British greatness like Alexander Pope will do years later when, in celebrating the Peace of Utrecht, he portrays Windsor Forest as the hunting ground of monarchs as well as a haven of the Muses. The presence of the Muses establishes not only the forest’s timelessness, but its possession of a cultural heritage as great as that of classical Greece or Rome. In his “Mutabilitie Cantos,” Spenser tells us that Ireland lost that heritage a long time ago.

If Ireland cannot be recuperated in any way, then it might be well for a civilizing power to consider the possibility of recreating the entire realm of Ireland anew. There is much discussion of this re-creation in A View, one that can be described as the Machiavellian fantasy of founding a new society ex nihilo. In examining the lives of Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus, Machiavelli writes in The Prince: “And examining their deeds and their lives, one can see that they received nothing from fortune except the opportunity, which gave them the material they could mould into whatever form they desired.” In the last chapter, he stresses: “no other thing brings a new man on the rise such honour as the new laws and the new institutions discovered by him.” In The Discourses, Machiavelli writes that anyone who proposes to set up “una potestà assoluta” must renovate everything; men who steer a middle course face the grave danger of losing their authority (Discourses I.26-26). Articulating an anti-Machiavellian perspective, Spenser’s Eudoxius finds all forms of radical innovation perilous (p. 94). In contrast, Irenius advocates the complete overhauling of Irish society because “it is vain to prescribe laws where no man careth for keeping them, nor feareth the danger for breaking them” (p. 94). He wants “all the realm . . . first to be reformed and laws . . . afterward to be made, for keeping and continuing it in that reformed estate” (p. 94). Finding that Ireland is a state that progresses from evil to greater evil, Irenius calls first for a transformation of human nature. Once this transformation is effected, a system of laws can then be introduced.

While Eudoxius and Irenius have spoken at length on the importance of laws to civilized society, their responses to how and when these laws are to be introduced differ. Eudoxius cannot conceive of the beginnings of a new society apart from erecting laws and ordinances. Irenius advocates first using the
sword to eradicate those evils that make the erection of good laws and ordinances extremely difficult to start with. He defends the use of the sword: “for all those evils must first be cut away with a strong hand before any good can be planted, like as the corrupt branches and the unwholesome boughs are first to be pruned, and the foul moss cleansed or scraped away, before the tree can bring forth any good fruit” (p. 95). Later in the text, the proposal to clean up the filth in Ireland is replaced by the staggering statement:

For the English, having been trained up always in the English government, will hardly be enured unto any other, and the Irish will better be drawn to the English than the English to the Irish government. Therefore, since we cannot now apply laws fit to the people, as in the first institution of commonwealths it ought to be, we will apply the people and fit them to the laws, as it most conveniently may be. (pp. 141-142)

Because the Irish are completely intransigent, no effort should be wasted on civilizing them. Put simply, England should use whatever means it has in its disposal to force the Irish to conform to its laws and accept whatever plans it has for that society.

The exercise of violence as an intrinsic aspect of colonial policy is advocated in A View even though a dialogue is formally instigated to discuss its viability and morality. The dialogue set up between Irenius and Eudoxius creates the effect of a fruitful discussion taking place, even though the reader is fully aware that Irenius’ voice is Spenser’s. Predictably, Spenser makes Eudoxius question Irenius’ assertion that use of the sword is necessary to England’s colonization of Ireland: “Is not the sword the most violent redress that may be used for any evil” (p. 95)? Articulating the Spenserian perspective, Irenius argues that the use of military might is impressive when no other remedy is available for reforming the evils of Ireland. Force and violence occupy an important place in Irenius’ schemes for the subjugation of Ireland. Irenius, for example, imposes a twenty-day limit for the Irish rebels to surrender, a period of grace not extended to the rebel leaders. He wants to kill the ringleaders and their followers who do not capitulate at the right moment.

Even as Spenser’s A View supports a colonial policy that makes use of force in Ireland, it finds itself unable to carry out that program to its logical conclusion. The inability of the text to sustain its relentless imperial logic stems from particular anxieties, such as the sudden need to ensure that reader sensibility is not harassed as well as the simple incapacity to conceptualize a systematic program of annihilation. For schemes of the magnitude and
sensitivity Spenser articulates and propagates cannot exist independent of reactions generated in the Elizabethan court. One of the most interesting moments in the text in which a trenchantly argued position gets radically revised is Irenius’ re-writing of the literal meaning of force:

for by the sword which I named I do not mean the cutting off of all that nation with the sword, which far be it from me that ever I should think so desperately or wish so uncharitably, but by the sword I mean the royal power of the prince, which ought to stretch itself forth in her chief strength, to the redressing and cutting off of those evils which I before blamed, and not of the people which are evil; for evil people by good ordinance and government may be made good, but the evil that is of itself evil will never become good.

(p. 95)

Here we find that literal signification is suddenly forced into a metaphorical framework, a backpaddling that suggests that Spenser felt the need to deal with the ethics of his proposition or to accommodate a court audience which might be averse to such violent schemes.24

The colonial energies of Spenser’s text cannot be questioned, but too often these energies are read and interpreted as a reflection of policies endorsed by the court. Elizabeth’s court is divided in its responses to the colonization of Ireland. The tensions one finds in Spenser’s A View can be attributed to pressures exerted on the production of the text by opposing views found in the court. Ludovick Bryskett had identified Lord Grey as the embodiment of justice required to salvage a lawless Ireland. Then Sir Walter Ralegh, in conjunction with Lord Burghley, drew up a plan to confiscate 4,000 acres of Munster and distribute this land to English tenants, on the basis of Ralegh’s proposals for settlement in the New World.25 The colonial ambitions shared by Burghley, Ralegh, Bryskett, and Spenser were not accepted by everyone. It is worth remembering that Spenser’s A View was written in response to Queen Elizabeth’s vacillating and placatory policies in dealing with the Irish question.

In general, Elizabeth’s attitude toward Ireland was more defensive than aggressive. Elizabeth simply wanted to ensure that Ireland would not become a jumping off point by her enemies.26 Renwick comments on the permanent strategic problem posed by Ireland:

England was at war with Spain, and the flanks of England rest beyond the narrow seas, in the Low Countries and in Ireland. Nobody has ever wanted Ireland very badly, but no English government could feel secure while the long western seaboard was open to invasion from across St. George’s
Channel, and every foreign enemy — Scots, Spanish, French, German — has attempted to open that flank.

Not liking wars, Elizabeth was also never keen on spending vast sums of money. It is especially significant, for example, that England never occupied any territory claimed by Spain after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. England had the resources to win victories, but Elizabeth recognized that she did not possess the financial means required to retain any conquest. The Spanish and Portuguese possessions still remained intact when James I made peace with Spain in 1604. The reluctance to ransack her coffers for money to be spent on wars also influenced Elizabeth’s attitude toward Ireland. The revolt that smouldered for several years in Munster with James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald’s rebellion was made possible because Elizabeth could not afford a major expedition. Only after Ireland threatened to become independent with assistance from King Philip of Spain, who sent money and even another armada to support the cause of Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, did Elizabeth dispatch the Earl of Essex to Ireland with about 20,000 men. Before commissioning Essex to remove the threat posed by Tyrone, Elizabeth had already spent one million pounds on Ireland.27 And Essex, to Elizabeth’s tremendous anger, lost nearly 300,000£ in his march about Ireland to subdue Tyrone. That the expenses of the Irish war proved to be a great embarrassment for Elizabeth is evidenced in a letter she wrote to Henry IV, the French monarch, in December 1600, pressing him to pay back the money she lent him for his wars. Shortly after in January 1601, she sent him another letter once again pressing for repayment of the French debt.29

One would expect that, in his efforts to convince the Queen and her court that the complete subjugation of Ireland provides the most viable answer to the Irish question, Spenser would have taken the opportunity to play up anti-Catholic feelings in A View; he had, after all, attacked Catholicism quite openly in The Faerie Queene. Interestingly enough, unlike The Faerie Queene, A View relegates the religious question to the background. Even though A View uses the word “reformation” in referring to the schemes it propagates for reconstituting Ireland, invoking invariably the cultural antagonisms existing between Protestantism and Catholicism registered so trenchantly in The Faerie Queene, it does not work with the strict theological significations of the term. In A View, the word “reformation” signifies in a primary secular sense. If all of Ireland, as Spenser writes, including its poets who are the traditional custodians of culture and values, is caught up in the disastrous love for “lewd
liberty’ (p. 74), then a “thorough reformation of that realm” (p. 75) is needed.

Spenser’s A View is more concerned with ordering secular affairs than with religious and theological ones. This particular emphasis announces the overtly political dimensions of the text and its status as a blueprint for the English colonization of Ireland. Even the important and sensitive issue of religion is not allowed to intrude into and detract from the imperial project of subjugating Ireland. Irenius declares: “Little have I to say of religion, both because the parts thereof be not many, itself being but one, and myself have not been much conversant in that calling, but as lightly passing by I have seen or heard” (p. 84). He repeats himself toward the end of A View:

For religion little have I to say myself, being (as I said) not professed therein, and itself being but one, so as there is but one way therein, for that which is true only is and the rest are not at all; yet in planting of religion thus much is needful to be observed, that it be not sought forcibly to be impressed into them with terror and sharp penalties, as now is the manner, but rather delivered and intimated with mildness and gentleness, so as it may not be hated before it be understood, and their professors despised and rejected.

(p. 161)

Irenius argues that salvaging a diseased body must precede saving a diseased soul. The metaphor of cleansing the diseased body of Ireland runs through Spenser’s text. England is figured as a physician; and any recuperation of Irish society involves first excising the original body. Reforming the soul of Ireland can only follow after the complete dismantling of the social body. Because Irenius is much more concerned with overhauling the entire social fabric of Irish society, he can only respond to the subject of its religion in remarkably general terms.

In addition to “reformation,” the word “liberty” also functions in A View as a pejorative term. Anticipating Matthew Arnold’s critique of those who favor and practise the liberty of doing as one likes, Spenser applies the term to the rampant lawlessness ravaging Irish society. The Irish love for “liberty” (or “libertinism”), Spenser writes, extends into their literary expressions. While celebrating what is good and virtuous in their lays, the Irish poets sing in praise of boldness and lawlessness.

The authority Irenius assumes in speaking about Ireland and its history derives from the vantage point of the colonialist articulating from a position of privilege and superiority. Invoking Herodotus, Spenser’s Irenius depicts himself as a historian, traveller, anthropologist, and commentator of culture. All these identities are defined from a colonialist perspective: there is, most
importantly, no attempt made by Irenius to render an accurate portrayal of Irish culture. Irenius does not pretend to be a careful handler of his sources. He confesses to Eudoxius that because the Irish chronicles cannot be relied upon to yield an accurate portrayal of historical truth, his reading of Irish history involves a rewriting of his sources:

but unto them [the writings of the bards and chroniclers] besides I add my own reading and out of them both together with comparison of times, likeness of manners and customs, affinity of words and names, properties of natures and uses, resemblances of rites and ceremonies, monuments of churches and tombs, and many other like circumstances, I do gather a likelihood of truth; not certainly affirming anything, but by conferring of times, languages, monuments and suchlike, I do hunt out a probability of things which I leave unto your judgement to believe or refuse.

(p. 39)

Irenius’ bold declaration that he has no compunction whatsoever rewriting Irish history highlights the openly imperialist thrust of Spenser’s text. It is clear that he does not want to compromise his position concerning England’s legitimate subjugation of Ireland.

Throughout most of A View, Irenius presents the picture of a rebellious and intransigent Irish to persuade the English that it is necessary to bring them under tight control. This theme cannot, however, sustain itself without interruption. Toward the end of A View, for example, the portrait of the Irish who must be made to fit an English system of laws is softened. The Irish can be made to “become somewhat more civil” (p. 151). The focus of criticism now falls on the English-Irish, that detested product of intermingling. And yet, in spite of the fact that Irenius has spoken so much about the potential and actual evils of mingling, the English-Irish interactions appear to be an option Spenser must entertain:

And therefore, since Ireland is full of her own nation that may not be rooted out, and somewhat stored with English already and more to be, I think it best by an union of manners and conformity of minds, to bring them to be one people, and to put away the dislikeful concept both of the one and the other, which will be by no means better than by this intermingling of them, that neither all the Irish may dwell together, nor all the English, but by translating of them, and scattering them in small numbers amongst the English, not only to bring them by daily conversation unto better liking of each other, but also to make both of them less able to hurt.

(p. 153)

Eudoxius’ response to Irenius vision repeats what the latter has been saying throughout much of the dialogue, that the Irish and the English can never merge
without producing disastrous results. His reiteration of Irenius’ political position is especially ironic as Spenser’s spokesman for Irish colonization now produces a counter-narrative that undermines the thrust of his own general discourse. The shift in Irenius’ position provides an instance of how the desire to create a new society *ex nihilo*, following the lines of Machiavelli’s deep fantasies, runs aground when confronted with the economic reality of obtaining support for and actualizing the colonial enterprise. Spenser is forced to recognize that it is difficult to sustain the view that Irish nature is completely impervious to acculturation just as it is impossible to realize the fantasy of recreating a new Ireland out of nothing.

One of the most vocal expressions of Spenser’s forced recognition that any colonial project must work with existing structures is found toward the conclusion of *A View*, where the use of military force to compel submission is replaced by a program of ordering the work patterns of the Irish and improving the shambled lay-out of the land. The earlier emphasis on violence is mitigated as the text now focuses on domestic life and geographical planning. At this point, the reader must interpret the nature of the shift. Has Spenser discovered that he is unable to push his program of military action in Ireland to its logical conclusion? Or does this shift represent yet another strategy in the overall thrust of the narrative toward procuring absolute control over Ireland? The answer is found in an interweaving of these two possibilities, for Spenser’s inability to sustain his program of militaristic intervention means he has to produce an alternative program, one which does not in this case erase the English ability to enact surveillance and control. Irenius advocates promoting the practice of husbandry because he believes this would help to civilize the Irish; he also speaks as a humanist when advancing the importance of education:

> in every country or barony [the Irish] should keep another able schoolmaster, which should instruct them in grammar and in the principles of sciences, to whom they should be compelled to send their youth to be disciplined, whereby they will in short time grow up to that civil conversation, that both the children will loathe the former rudeness in which they were bred, and also their parents will, even by ensample of their young children, perceive the foulness of their own brutish behaviour compared to theirs, for learning hath that wonderful power of itself that it can soften and temper the most stern and savage nature.

(pp. 158-159)

Education fosters discipline, which is necessary to break the Irish love of “liberty”, translated by Irenius as “licentiousness” (p. 152). The project of
civilizing a savage people through education cannot be separated from Spenser’s preoccupation with the need to install a network of surveillance and control in Ireland. Once garrisons are put in place, securing the presence of a military machine to fall back on in times of rebellion and violent unrest, then discipline can be exercised by redefining the geography and infrastructure of the land. Irenius propagates clearing pathways through woods, building market towns by the highways, repairing ruined churches, and erecting schoolhouses. Clearing pathways in the woods controls the activities of robbers; setting up watch stations along the straits obstructs rebel movements; erecting market towns promotes greater civility. The difference between having the presence of a military machine and procuring control of the infrastructure of a land is the difference between the open expression and concealed exercise of power.\(^{30}\) Spenser knows that power is exercised most effectively when the body of the individual is controlled by documentation and made subject of analysis. In Spenser’s England, as we have seen, this power is expressed symbolically in the spectacular rituals of torture and execution.

As a blueprint for the colonization of Ireland, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* performs the rhetorical function of arguing for an imperialistic English foreign policy, but it does so by criticizing openly as well as indirectly opposition encountered in the court. It supports the actions and practices of Lord Grey, and concludes its polemic by calling for greater autonomy for the Lord Deputy to carry out his duties in Ireland. Exclusive right should be given to the Lord Deputy to exercise power when “present occasions” (p. 168) demand it. Without giving him “more ample and absolute” (p. 168) power, Ireland’s reformation cannot be carried through to its conclusion. Irenius argues that time is an important factor that must be contended with in governing and administrating a hostile land. It is not always “possible fr the council here [in England] to direct a governor there [in Ireland] who shall be forced oftentimes to follow the necessity of present occasions and to take the sudden advantage of time, which being once left will not be recovered” (p. 168). Invoking Machiavelli’s animadversions on Livy in *The Discourses* (II, 35),\(^{31}\) Spenser outlines the repercussions of interfering with the Lord Deputy’s duties — possible defeat for the colonial administration. Significantly, the Machiavellian context Spenser invokes is the context of war. Livy had written that apart from the power to initiate fresh wars and confirm peace treatises, the Roman Senate gives to its consuls, dictators, and army commanders full discretionary powers. Wars are won or lost depending on the degree of discretionary powers enjoyed by the commanders. The force of the analogy is
powerful enough. Grey’s need to control the anarchy in Ireland is no different from operating under conditions of war. The court may have men who possess considerable experience in matters of governance and war, but they do not operate directly in the field of action. To be in this field is to be placed in the position of having to make snap judgments in response to circumstantial exigencies. The luxury of waiting for orders to filter down from above after lengthy deliberations does not exist.

III

In Book V of *The Faerie Queene* and in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Spenser’s conception of justice is tied up immediately with the establishment of civil order and the expansion of the empire. When he associates Elizabeth’s mercy with an antique past, or when he contrasts it with the ideality of an interventionist foreign policy, Spenser wants the Queen to recognize that England’s expansionist ambitions are essential for creating a powerful monarchy. That is why the exercise of martial force is central to Spenser’s figurations of justice: only force can quell rebellion and ensure obedience. For Spenser, justice is also exercised by putting in place a well-defined system of surveillance and control. Book V and *A View* reveal how such strategies are well understood by the monarch who instills fear, undermines dissent, and procures consent. These strategies operate in England, and they are also proposed by Spenser for enabling English colonial rule in Ireland. When Spenser addresses the subject of civil order and social stability in *The Faerie Queene*, he never separates their enforcement from a consideration of the consolidation of the English imperium. When he writes about enacting the demands of justice to secure this order and stability, he wants to extend that justice to control an intransigent Ireland. In Spenser’s writings and political thought, *justice* functions as a synonym for *power* in its raw and highly polished forms.

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Notes


4. Readers have responded to the unfinished state of *The Faerie Queene* in different ways. Balachandra Rajan argues that as an “unfinished” poem, *The Faerie Queene*’s resistance to closure is signature of its particular ontological identity. Rajan’s mystification of the poem by giving it a life of its own is not convincing, but his summary and reading of editorial features and decisions in the 1590, 1596, and 1609 versions of the poem provide useful information on the history of its publication and development. Cf. *The Form of the Unfinished: English Poetics from Spenser to Pound* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 44-84. Patricia Parker relates the poem’s incomplete state to the digressive mode of Spenserian allegory in *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 54-113. Making use of poststructuralist notions of deferral, Patricia Parker argues that this mode constitutes a form of the medieval and Renaissance concept of *dilatatio*. Spenser achieves “dilation” in his romance narrative through repetition and doubling, where fragments of one episode proliferate into others.

5. Quoted by Renwick, p. 213.

6. We are led to wonder whether a similar disappointment is registered in the Mercilla/Duesa episode, when Spenser appears to associate Elizabeth’s mercy with the virtue of a bygone age. Spenser’s suggestion that mercy is displaced at the present time compromises encomium in this episode. For a detailed analysis of this disruption of encomiastic praise, cf. especially Thomas H. Cain, *Praise in “The Faerie Queene”* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 144-145. Cain’s *Praise* provides a useful study of Spenser’s ambiguous celebration of Elizabeth in *The Faerie Queene*.


14. Jonathan Goldberg puts it this way: "James’s complaint to Elizabeth is extraordinary because the poet’s words have become the mediating terms in the struggle for power between the two monarchs — James continually wanting assurances that his mother’s treason did not bar his way to the English throne, Elizabeth recalcitrantly withholding her wishes for a successor": cf. *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 2. Goldberg discusses at some length James’ response to the Mercilla/Duessa episode and Spenser’s representation of power in Book V and *A View* (pp. 1-17).


24. Too often, readers of *A View* find Spenser's endorsement of England's use of the sword to subdue the Irish consistent and uncompromising throughout the text. In a recent study, for example, Andrew Hadfield, in "Spenser, Ireland, and Sixteenth-Century Political Theory," *Modern Language Review*, 89 (1994), argues that "'The royal power of the prince' is what makes the metaphor of the sword possible; it stands as the master trope, free from the contingent nature of other analogies and representations. The 'sword' must reassert its right to rule Ireland and clear the ground for the legal reform which cannot take place without its effective sanction" (p. 5). This view misses out on important fissures in Spenser's text, fissures that draw our attention not only to the difficulties encountered in articulating a coherent colonialist program, but also to the presence of an extra-textual court politics which *A View* must engage.


26. Ibid., p. 159.

27. Ibid., p. 160.


30. Interestingly, Spenser understood well before Michel Foucault that *discipline* can be enacted by the State through different social institutions. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1977), Foucault writes about how the architectures of the camp, hospital, and school have served to facilitate surveillance and exercise control in the interests of the State. According to Foucault, *discipline* is "the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as subjects and instruments of its exercise" (p. 170). Foucault also argues that control over detail generates real power: "A meticulous observation of detail, and at the same time a political awareness of these small things, for the control and use of men, emerge through the classical age bearing with them a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data" (p. 141). Institutions like schools and hospitals make possible the description, anatomy, documentation, and hence control and domination of the individual.


32. Cf. note 6 above.

33. This essay first suggested itself to me when I participated in Professor Richard Strier's Summer Seminar of the (U.S.) National Endowment for the Humanities — "Renaissance and Reformation in Tudor-Stuart England" — at the University of Chicago in 1991. I must express my debt to Professor Strier who introduced me to the politics of Spenser's *A View*, and whose generous sharing of ideas gave me much needed material for writing the essay.