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Besides Good and Evil

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I

When a good character behaves badly in *The Faerie Queene*, no experienced reader is surprised. It is the most basic of the poem's implied promises that such breaches in the allegory, as when Holiness behaves impiously or Temperance intemperately, will be healed by the narrative, as the story travels toward the horizon at which identity and action converge. The contract is not less strong for being so frequently violated. After all, deferral is what gives the resolution meaning, and somewhere up ahead there still waits a notional harmony that will resolve and explain any present dissonance.[1] (Book 12? Book 24?—that, we will never know.) In the meantime, however, not all problems are foreseen by the prophetic scheme, and among them is what happens, and what should we make of it, when a bad character behaves kindly. The narrative utility of misplaced beneficence is less obvious. Perhaps such moments open the possibility of conversion, from evil to good? Yet *The Faerie Queene* is not a poem of conversion.

Not a poem of conversion, because no character in *The Faerie Queene* is ever brought across the line that divides good from evil, nor is there much ambiguity about where any given character belongs. It is true that there is no personification of those basic poles—no Good and no Evil—as there is no Space, and only a bathetic decoy for Time in the Garden of Adonis.[2] That said, the heroes of each book are self-evidently good, and so are Una, the Palmer, and Merlin; Charissa, Medina, and Belphoebe. Duessa,

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Acrasia, and Busyrane, on the other hand, the left hand, are obviously evil, as are Sansjoy and Mammon. Even the equivocal cases do not provoke all that much hesitation. Satyrane and Glauce are good; Paridel is evil. The reverse, at least, would be obviously wrong. Dividing them that way is a habit of reading and an almost universal habit of criticism. (Critics speak routinely of "the cosmic organization of evil forces," of the possible "conversion of characters from evil to good," and so on.[3]) The basic intelligibility of *The Faerie Queene* seems to depend upon such categorical assignments, and they can be assumed, at least as a starting point, without much argument.

But then, *The Faerie Queene* has no starting point, no more than it has an ending. There is only what happens in between. Among the more disorienting of its meantime effects are expressions of kindness from the wrong direction. They may not be common, but they define a problem that Spenser raises pointedly in the first three books. Specifically, bad characters who behave kindly toward one another. The kindness the satyrs show to Una, or that the witch shows to Florimel, can be written off as a temporary sign of a visitor's good influence, but it is a different matter to watch the evil characters tend one another's wounds, grieve for one another, and care for one another in scenes where no representation of good is on hand to secure the grand antithesis. Care does not discover the true good nature of Duessa and Night, for their nature is evil and the poem gives no indication of an intent to redeem them. (*The Faerie Queene* is no Calvinist epic, but John Calvin is strong in its conscience.) Nor are such idylls simply cases of the reader's error, taking an evil character for good, such as the initial misrecognition of Archimago as a kindly hermit. The impression of care is not wrong. It is also never corrected. Instead, such moments seem to test the poem's dependence upon the very categories of good and evil, and to test the categories' dependence, in turn, upon narrative. Spenser is exploring something that might be called the temptation of care, and its particular challenge to the poem's moral architectonics.

II

About the evil of Sansjoy there can be no doubt: it is written in his name, as in the names of his brothers, Sansfoy and Sansloy. Sansjoy behaves with unflagging bad temper, and his combat with Redcrosse in the House of Pride diagnoses the hero's too solemn sadness.[4] If the two are matched, however, that does

not mean that there is a corresponding spark of virtue or honor discovered in the Saracen. It is the hero's identity that is under anatomy. Sansjoy's evil is held constant, and his redemption is never at stake. When the battle is done, therefore, Redcrosse's joyless opponent becomes allegorically expendable, and one might expect him to be discarded like his brother Sansfoy before him. But no: the narrative, which has so far kept company with Redcrosse and Una only, returns to Sansjoy as he lies wounded on the field under cover of a sheltering shade, and then takes up with his protector, the evil Duessa, as she leaves his side for the coast of heaven. She travels east to meet Night head on.

The encounter has its comedy. Duessa is dressed for the House of Pride, "sunny bright" (1.5.21.1) with gold and jewels, and her gaudy radiance, coming from the wrong direction, confuses Night. (Night is used to chasing a retreating day.) Still Duessa manages to detain the ancient hag long enough to tell the story of Sansjoy's defeat and how "the pray of fowles in field he lyes, / Nor wayld of friends, nor layd on groning beare" (1.5.23.3–4). She suffers the ancient, anthropological insult of unburied kin, Antigone's complaint, and Night is moved: "Yet pitty in her hart was neuer prou'd / Till then: for euermore she hated, neuer lou'd" (1.5.24.8–9). Still, she does not recognize Duessa until the enchantress identifies herself: "I that do seeme not I, *Duessa* ame" (1.5.26.6). The joke is not bad:

> Then bowing downe her aged backe, she kist
> The wicked witch, saying, In that fayre face
> The false resemblaunce of Deceipt, I wist
> Did closely lurke.
>
> (1.5.27.1–4)

Night can only recognize Duessa by being, as it were, deceived; or, even better, by seeing the false resemblance of deceit, which functions for these habitual deceivers as a kind of happy double negative. Milton draws upon this scene when he stages the low comedy of Satan and Sin's reunion in the second book of *Paradise Lost*.[5] He is sometimes thought to be expressing his disapproval of personification allegory, but he could equally well be extending Spenser's parody: for recognition scenes in romance are typically the property of good characters, turning the plot toward reconciliation and reintegration, putting the world together. The kiss between Duessa and Night is another form of perverse solidarity for an unexpectedly happy family.

Something else is recognizable in the meeting of Duessa and Night: the confusion of identity itself, recognizable in the sense that it happens to the best of us. It does not happen so often, however, to the worst of us, at least in fiction. Evil tends to enjoy an epistemological advantage over good, sometimes because the villains have made the plan, sometimes because they exercise supernatural powers of surveillance. Spenser is at pains to show that the world of his poem does not work this way. By canto 5, Archimago, disguised as Redcrosse, has already been knocked from his horse by Sansloy, who does not recognize him until he pulls off the stricken wizard's helmet. Such accidents will turn out to be as common among the evil as they are among the good. In this, the villains are surprisingly like the heroes.

So this little family seems to enjoy a kind of comic, familiarly imperfect solidarity, with which readers might sympathize if we did not know better. Knowing better gets harder as the episode continues. Duessa and Night return to Sansjoy's body:

> His cruell wounds with cruddy bloud congeald,
> They binden vp so wisely, as they may,
> And handle softly, till they can be heald.
>
> (1.5.29.6–8)

They put him in the chariot, and they carry him down to the underworld. The language is strikingly mindful, even tender: bind up "wisely" and "handle softly." Passing by ranks of astonished ghosts and damned sinners, who leave off their endless labors to gawk at the interlopers, Night and Duessa seek out the physician Aesculapius and they open the Saracen's wounds before him:

> Whome hauing softly disaraid of armes,
> Tho gan to him discouer all his harmes,
> Beseeching him with prayer, and with praise.
>
> (1.5.41.4–6)

"[S]oftly" again. Aesculapius is persuaded to go to work partly by appeal to his pride, which is the sin under closest scrutiny in these cantos. (He once dared try to restore life to Hippolytus, usurping a power of the gods.) The language of tender attention continues all the same. There is no certainty in the outcome: will Sansjoy live or die? Which is to say that there is for this little society, if not quite a proper plot, then an eddy of uncertainty, the

tug of an inset comedy or tragedy. What invests that uncertainty with meaning, indeed with feeling, is a network of expressions of care that are obdurately exempt from the paranoid semantics of book 1's doubleness and seeming. Care: quite ordinary, directed toward the comfort, and to the survival, the life, of an injured surrogate son.

III

In a scene such as this, is the sense of evil starting to slip away? It will be worth trying to state how readers ordinarily encounter the moral and eschatological poles of the poem. One way is semantic. Book 1 inducts the reader into a wordscape that is thoroughly moralized, where pervasive vocabularies of being and seeming, unity and division keep us constantly alert to spiritual perils. It is never altogether clear how or how far this language is available to the characters, whether we are to imagine a phenomenology interior to the poem by which it would be possible to perceive, without access to the text as text, that this maple is not inward sound or that hermit is not to be trusted.[6] But for readers, at least, good and evil are not so much judgments rendered as they are features of semantic experience. Augustine, in *Of the Citie of God*, entertains the idea that God made "the worldes course, like a faire poeme, more gratious by *Antitheti[que]* figures": "Thus as these contraries opposed doe giue the saying an excellent grace, so is the worlds beauty composed of contrarieties, not in figure, but in nature. This is plaine in *Ecclesiasticus*, in this verse: *Against euill, is good, and against death is life, so is the Godly against the sinner: so looke for in all thy workes of the highest, two and two, one against one.*"[7] He might well be describing *The Faerie Queene*. Good and evil are potentially in every detail; they inflect the world—and, for Spenser, the poem—in a way that defines what the idiom of a later age would call the poem's aesthetic power, a perpetual play of antithetical concepts across its verbal surface.

The other way to know evil is through the narrative, the story that brings the characters into contact and combat and that organizes event and affect alike in relation to possible endings. As Thomas Aquinas puts it, from another corner of Spenser's tradition, "good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of the contrary."[8] Good is an end for action and also an end for storytelling. Surveying the tradition of medieval romance from a modern vantage, Fredric Jameson argues that the polarity of good and evil is the genre's defining characteristic: "Not metaphysics

but ethics is the informing ideology of the binary opposition" that structures the quest.[9] Though it is Jameson's project to expose that opposition as a historical contradiction, he recognizes its tenacious explanatory force. There are critics who take the distinction to be even more fundamental, lying underneath history itself. Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* argues that "it belongs to human agency to exist in a space of questions about strongly valued goods, prior to all choice or adventitious cultural change."[10] Those goods define what Taylor calls a moral space, within which narrative is possible. He maintains that "[t]o understand our predicament in terms of finding or losing orientation in moral space is to take the space … as ontologically basic."[11]

Taylor states the basic narratological proposition that the intelligibility of a narrative depends upon the definition of an objective that will also function as a criterion for completeness.[12] Yet there is something more, a sense that the telos of the narrative must be aligned with a moral ontology fundamental to human experience, and, more generally, that life can be understood, indeed only understood, in narrative terms, pointed toward that good or falling or wandering away from it. Alasdair MacIntyre, a thinker in a similar tradition—Catholic and Aristotelian, like Aquinas—adopts the quest as a figure for this moral orientation. For MacIntyre, as for Spenser, the shape of the quest is the shape of a life: "without some at least partly determinate conception of the final telos there could not be any beginning to a quest. Some conception of the good for man is required."[13] *The Faerie Queene* cannot be wholly resolved into its own quest narratives, however important they are to its structure. There is a Calvinist undertow of skepticism toward the idea that the quest's travails might add up to the perfection of its end. All the same: the poem thinks, in some moods, like Taylor and MacIntyre do, and the expectation of a completed quest holds its elements together, if anything does.

IV

Such a strong ontology of good and evil must raise old doctrinal questions, the questions proper to theodicy, of where evil comes from and how it could arise in the creation of a God both all-powerful and all-good. Where is the evil in the story? Is it an opposite horizon, one that fatally and finally bisects earth and heaven? That prospect, or retrospect, approaches the ancient heresy known as Manichaeism: the belief that there are two deities, good and evil, God and the devil, contending on equal terms.

The idea is not defended in any strong form in Spenser's England. Augustine's beautiful antitheses may seem to court it, but his source in Ecclesiastes assesses both terms to God's works, and elsewhere Augustine himself disputes Manichaeus eloquently and influentially.[14] Calvin reminds the reformers in a later age: "There rose vp also one Manicheus with his secte, whiche made themselues two originall beginninges of thinges … If our mindes should be entangled with this error, God should not kepe whole hys glory in the creacion of the world."[15]

The canonical answer to this heresy, for Catholics and reformers alike, is the idea that evil is not an equal opposite of good, but rather an absence of it, a privation. Augustine once again bequeaths an influential account, one that harmonizes with the strain of Neo-Platonic thought so important to Spenser. "[E]vil," he writes in his *Confessions*, "is nothing but the removal of good until finally no good remains."[16] The Platonism here reflects the *Republic*'s understanding of human good as a function of proximity to the form of the good: there can be greater or lesser distances, more or less good, but no demonic adversary waits at that dark backward horizon.[17] Calvin writes, "But forasmuch as the deuil was created by God, let vs remembre that this malice which we assigne in his nature, is not by creation but by deprauation. For what so euer damnable thyng he hath, he hath gotten to him selfe by his owne reuoltyng and fall."[18] There is no other strong pole toward which the will is magnetized, only a falling away, a "swaruing out of kinde" as he elsewhere calls it.[19] The figure of swerving bends back to the question of narrative, to the true path and its infinite digressions. Such swerving must suffice to know evil on earth, measuring the distance from God without reckoning nearness to the devil. "Neither must we suppose that there needeth one rule to know the good, and another the euill by," Richard Hooker comments, "For he that knoweth what is straight, doth euen thereby discerne what is crooked, because the absence of straightnesse in bodies capable thereof is crookednesse."[20]

In many ways *The Faerie Queene* seems to take the doctrine of privation to heart, to work steadily against the polarization, the Manichaeism, that Jameson diagnoses as the fundamental ideology of the romance quest.[21] The tropes of evil in book 1 are duality and seeming, which could well be understood as divisions and deprivations of the unity of God's creation. The Sans brothers are named for their deficiencies, while Satan, sovereign prince of lies, is invoked only trivially, whipping the lazy sins along in the House of Pride.[22] Still, the career of the word "evil" is a com-

plicated one. It can fall like a passing shadow across some bit of business in the poem, when characters are "euill ledd" (1.4.19.7), or events transpire in an "euill hour" (1.6.42.2). It can also come into sharp focus as a basic category of experience. Witness the banquet at Malbecco's castle, in book 3, where Paridel will seduce Hellenore while Britomart, oblivious, tells her dinner-table tales of Troy. The narrator introduces the episode with an apology for the bad behavior to come:

> But neuer let th'ensample of the bad
> Offend the good: for good by paragone
> Of euill, may more notably be rad,
> As white seemes fayrer, macht with blacke attone.
> (3.9.1.1–4)

The passage recalls Augustine's sense that evil may function for purposes of (mere) aesthetic contrast. Perhaps black, like a shadow, is just an absence. Then again, it is evil that is the paragon, the anchoring term, "th'ensample of the bad." Perhaps the best to be said is that evil's status is ontologically confused: there is a kind of vernacular Manichaeism in the lines, not wholly subject to theological discipline. A trap set cunningly for the reader? But that maneuver, treating every lapse as a lure, can be an easy out for the critic concerned to protect doctrine. A still stronger version of freestanding evil emerges at another moment of explicit reflection, in book 2. There, at the beginning of the eighth canto, an angel visits and commits the unconscious Guyon to the Palmer's care with the following words:

> Yet will I not forgoe, ne yet forgett
> The care thereof my selfe vnto the end,
> But euermore him succour, and defend
> Against his foe and mine: watch thou I pray
> For euill is at hand him to offend.
> (2.8.8.3–7)

Guyon has just fainted, after his three days underground in Mammon's cave; he lies defenseless, an exhausted Everyman, while the vengeful Cymochles and Pyrochles bear down fast upon him. The threat is evil: not the adjective, but the noun. The narrator asks: "And is there care in heauen?" (2.8.1.1). The angel's answer is yes, and at this moment in *The Faerie Queene*, unique for such divine intervention, nothing less than heavenly care, direct from on high, will do.

Spenser's poem is constructed in relation to this polarity at every level: its diction, its narrative, its ideas. Though it adapts some of the doctrinal defenses against the assumptions of a vernacular Manichaeism and invents some of its own, it courts that doubleness, too, and exploits it for the purposes of narrative intelligibility. Good lies vulnerable by the entrance to the cave and evil approaches. Such a difference provides the auspice for understanding *The Faerie Queene* as a system of pointed contrasts, *in bono* and *in malo* as Carol Kaske has it, borrowing the scheme from a tradition of biblical interpretation.[23] Angus Fletcher employs a comparable framework, what he calls "'parody,' whereby … a demonic image provides a travesty of an apocalyptic image."[24] He allows that it is not always possible to know in which direction the parody points. Even so, such binaries are part of every reader's management of the poem's immensity. When the demonic image is also an image of care, the binaries are undone from the inside. Let "care" serve for what Night and Duessa show when they carry the wounded Sansjoy down to the underworld. The word's worldly trouble and temptation return with particular clarity two books later when Florimel—"As fearing euill, that poursewd her fast" (3.1.16.2)—finds herself in the house of the witch and her son.

V

The story of Florimel's precarious refuge begins with a domestic touch, a wisp of smoke over the treetops that leads her to "A little cottage, built of stickes and reedes, / In homely wize" (3.7.6.1–2). The scene recalls the beginning, two books before, of Una's sojourn in Corceca's house: on the road Una meets her host's daughter, who carries a jug of water home to her blind mother. The narrator goes on to wean the reader from sympathy for that act of filial devotion, revealing the pair's complicity in the violence of Kirkrapine. A similar correction happens, more briskly, in the witch's cottage. In the same stanza in which we glimpse the smoke from her home fires, we are told of "her diuelish deedes / And hellish arts" (3.7.6.7–8). And then, as suddenly, Florimel arrives, and there arises an unlikely sympathy:

> Few trickling teares she softly forth let fall,
> That like two orient perles, did purely shyne
> Vpon her snowy cheeke; and therewithall
> She sighed soft.
>
> (3.7.9.2–5)

As in some combats in the poem, a momentary confusion obtains about who is weeping here: host or guest? The familiar word "soft" appears again, as well as "softly." The snowy breast is Florimel's, we quickly realize, but "that vile Hag, all were her whole delight / In mischiefe, was much moued at so pitteous sight" (3.7.9.8–9).

This transformation, too, is familiar, and in itself poses no great challenge to the true north of the poem's moral compass. The witch is temporarily and partially converted by the influence of Florimel's virtue, much as the satyrs fall to worshipping Una in book 1. The same thing happens to the witch's son, a conspicuously unpropitious lover for the beautiful visitor:

> The wicked woman had a wicked sonne,
> The comfort of her age and weary dayes,
> A laesy loord, for nothing good to donne,
> But stretched forth in ydlenesse alwayes.
>
> (3.7.12.1–4)

And yet he is smitten and moved to many tender industries on Florimel's behalf. There is a characteristically Spenserian tension between the severity of the narrator's judgments and the generosity of his description: the "wicked flame" of desire burns in his bowels, "[a]nd shortly grew into outrageous fire" (3.7.16.1–2). Yet the issue is a gentle regimen of gifts, garlands, and songbirds taught to sing her praises: "[M]any resemblaunces / To her he made, and many kind remembraunces" (3.7.16.8–9). Again, perhaps his new kindness only measures Florimel's good influence. But the lines that introduce him precede her arrival: he was already a good son to his mother, "[t]he comfort of her age and weary dayes." There was, even then, a bond of care between the two, which seems to be independent of Florimel, whether she is taken as an index of virtue or as its inadvertent agent, independent both of the principle of contrast and of the possibility of conversion.

Another plot is struggling to be born: a marriage plot. An unexpected shift in the diction, in the semantic experience of the scene, opens up a new way for the story to go. That plot does not come to term, as it happens, since Florimel slips away from the fatherless witch family's hospitality, and, after all, marriage to that lazy lord would block her path to her destined husband, Marinel. Still, there is another curious eddy of affect here, turning against the poem's main current. It persists in the witch's attempts to assuage her son's suffering with tears or charms or herbs or counsel. It mostly dissipates when she decides that

the right thing to do is to fashion a horrible magical beast to hunt Florimel down and kill her. Something is left over, all the same—not least the son, whose "many resemblaunces … and many kind remembraunces" never lapse back into manifest evil. He resembles his good guest rather closely and cannot forget her. The bond of care that holds this little family together seems to be quite sturdy and quite independent—independent of the Florimel plot and independent, one might even say, of the reader, who happens upon it much as Florimel does and leaves it when she does. The glimpse we get is not a lesson in any obvious way. It is a kind of accidental care, accidental to the poem's teleology, which resembles and remembers any and all other moments of care in the poem, and yet it seems to have to do with nothing but mothers and sons and itself.

VI

The independence of care? Dependence is care's essence: consider the dependence of the wounded upon the healer, the sufferer upon the comforter, or the interdependence of people who care for one another in friendship or in love. The independence at issue cannot be internal to the concept. It is rather a detachment from larger frameworks, from the cosmic teleology of good and evil.[25] Variations on that detachment can be heard elsewhere in the culture. The word "care" is used with a morally muted pragmatism by humanist educators, whose project meant much to Spenser as a fashioner of gentlemen. In the treatises on schooling written by his old schoolmaster, Richard Mulcaster, "care" is a word for the master's diligent attention to the well-being of his scholars, "[t]he maisters care in his generall teaching."[26] Here care is comparable to the care of parents for their children and of rulers for their subjects, and it also serves for the diligence of a good student. Spenser's friend Lodowick Bryskett handles the word similarly in his *Discourse of Ciuill Life* (1606). There too, "good instruction and diligent care of education" are the chief subjects, and analogies are made readily to agriculture ("if mans care and industry be not applied to manure the earth diligently") and to politics ("his benignitie he declared to them by his liberalitie, and by shewing more care of the publike good then of his owne").[27]

Evil in such contexts requires no metaphysics and barely any theology. When Bryskett's interlocutors speak of evil, they are usually concerned to argue, following Plato, that it arises from confusion about the proper good, and "that no man willingly was

wicked, because the habite of vice was not voluntarily receiued by any man."[28] The interest in habit testifies to Bryskett's desire to make a useful synthesis of Plato and an Aristotelian ethics of practical virtue. It is "by the ill habit, contracted from his child hood" that the evil-doer goes astray; "no man was willingly vicious, since, euill couering it selfe vnder the cloke of goodnesse, he was induced to do euill, thinking to do good: and so the opinions of both Philosophers concurre."[29] As Mulcaster admits, however, the word "care" does have another tributary. We use "all our care," he writes, "to auoide care."[30] That second "care," the care we take care to avoid, is the suffering, need, or want that is the more usual property of the theologians. This rhetoric of fallen care is mostly stronger in *The Faerie Queene* than is its humanist pragmatism. There is the "hidden care" that afflicts Una, counterpart to Redcrosse's solemn sadness (1.1.4.8); Britomart's "clowdy care" in her lament to the sea (3.4.13.8); and the "[m]atter of doubt and dread suspitious, / That doth with curelesse care consume the hart" throughout (3.10.59.5–6). When Care is personified in book 4, it is as a blacksmith who forges iron wedges: "Those be vnquiet thoughts, that carefull minds inuade" (4.5.35.9).

Original care, care as the affective sign, the feeling of original sin, allows for the recognition of a more radical independence in the concept. For care is its own complement, its own answer. That answer is not the wise, attentive, preventative care of the humanists, but something more in the nature of consolation or simply comfort. Not a public virtue, that is, but a private one. There is the "carefull Nourse" (1.10.35.9) in the House of Holiness, or heavenly grace, whose "loue is firme, her care continuall" (1.8.1); there is the angel of book 2, whose providential visit answers that question, "And is there care in heauen?" Such care is not so much prudence to avoid care, as Mulcaster would have it, as it is care for the care always already with us. It illuminates the structure of the concept in a way that makes clear its difference from the polarity of good and evil. The antithetical senses of care are also complementary. A lack is answered with a plenitude, a hurt with a salve; care and care fit together in a symbiotic embrace.

That fit, that answer, care sealed to care, is like the moment in Milton's "Lycidas" when the angels comfort the drowned figure of Edward King "And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."[31] The comfort seems less once-and-for-all than a perpetual play of sorrow and solace, the tears forever falling and forever being dried. Or, closer to home, like Venus tending Adonis in his Garden, "for he may not / For euer dye, and euer buried bee" (3.6.47.1–2).

The Garden rests in dialectical equipoise at the center of book 3, characterized not by immaculate health, but by perpetual, affectionate convalescence. Within its walls *The Faerie Queene* is most alien to its own dynamics of quest and to what might be called the metaphysics of its morals. The difference of the Garden from the rest of the poem is guaranteed by the perfect forgetfulness of any soul that passes through. If there is some sense in which its recirculating energies sustain and irrigate the other books, the amoral sufficiency of Adonis's wound and Venus's embrace is nonetheless carefully contained.

The idylls with which I am concerned escape that containment. Care does not depend on being good; it floats free of the teleology, of the quest narrative. In consequence the clarity and distinctness of evil itself is at risk and that risk is at large. Semantically, the poem's repertory of warning signs gives way to the language of sympathetic attention. Narratively, the larger teleologies are held in abeyance. The episodes are small, but the stakes are high. *The Faerie Queene* is a poem constructed by means of a majestic dialectic of similarity and difference, the master trope for which is analogy.[32] The defeat of Errour is like the dragon fight; the House of Holiness is like Alma's Castle; book 1 is like book 6, book 2 is like book 5, and book 3 is like book 4. Spenser's accomplishment lies not least in cultivating appetite and talent for perceiving such architectures. For the appetite to be sustained, however, there must be an abiding difference that prevents the whole edifice from collapsing into monologic reverie. Analogy, to be analogy, needs a gap to leap. The interdependent functions of the good-and-evil polarity secure that difference on the most basic terms. Something singular happens, therefore, when it is the evil characters who treat each other so well.

To put it in terms of another analogy: when they do, evil is like good, not only parodically, not only across the instructive difference of *in bono* and *in malo*, but also in a manner more like the likeness of family. What if likeness, as a structural function, could not be distinguished from kindness as a mortal affect? The most ordinary, sympathetic attention might bring the great house down.

VII

Once more then to the rescue of Sansjoy, the episode most purely dedicated to this problem. As so often in the poem, however, it is not necessary to go backward to revisit it, or not only

backward, for his rescue returns—in structure and in many details—with the wounding of Marinel in book 3. Marinel is felled by Britomart, the Knight of Chastity, while he is patrolling the jewel-strewn shore that his mother, the nymph Cymoent, has charged him to guard. (He is one of many characters in book 3 who are endangered by an excess of maternal care; it is her protectiveness, keeping him from women's charms, that puts him in the way of Britomart's quest.) When Cymoent hears of his injury, she and her attendants hasten to his side in her chariot and the grisly sea monsters stand "gaping" as they pass, just as the fiends stare with chattering teeth at Night's mortal cargo (3.4.32.9). When she arrives, she "softly gan to search his griesly wownd," just as Duessa and Night "handle softly" the wounds of Sansjoy (3.4.40.2 and 1.5.29.8). Marinel's mother and the "auncient Grandmother" Night take up the wounded men in their chariots and bear them down under the sea and to hell, respectively (1.5.22.2). There Marinel is tended by "*Tryphon* of sea gods the soueraine leach," as Sansjoy is tended by Aesculapius. It is another scene of care, and an analogy, or a parody, communicating—but in which direction?—with its precedent (3.4.43.9).

Whatever the vector between them, there is an unmistakable heightening of the second episode's sensitivity to wounds, acute enough the first time around. Each description in book 3 is a few adjectives more vivid, a few lines more prolonged, and the vulnerability spreads outward through the whole landscape or seascape, or along the tender margin between the two:

> Soone as they bene arriu'd vpon the brim
> Of the *Rich strond*, their charets they forlore,
> And let their temed fishes softly swim
> Along the margent of the fomy shore,
> Least they their finnes should bruze, and surbate sore
> Their tender feet vpon the stony ground:
> And comming to the place, where all in gore
> And cruddy blood enwallowed they fownd
> The lucklesse *Marinell*, lying in deadly swownd.
>
> (3.4.34.1–9)

Cymoent and her sister nymphs arrive in a chariot drawn across the sea surface by fish, but they disembark before they make land. They mean to avoid bruising the fishes' fins in the shallows, even though they will hurt their own tender feet crossing the stones. The poem's alertness to the vulnerability of its every

being has reached a painful point. In this mood, even a chariot is forlorn when it is left empty by its disembarking passengers. ("[F]orlore" is the past participle of "forlese," but already has its modern sense of "bereft.") Care and the call for care are activated wherever the attention settles.

Marinel and Cymoent are not evil characters. They are not obviously good, either, not at first encounter, playing out their mother-son psychodrama on the sidelines. Marinel is the destined husband of Florimel, and has a role in the allegory of marriage and fertility in the middle books, but that role is slow to emerge, and if the thematics of sex and risk align him with Britomart, still he appears first as a threat to her.[33] What brings the whole scene to bear most directly on the problem of evil is Britomart's relation to it. Or lack of relation, for her encounter with Marinel is notoriously casual. She is lamenting her plight in a complaint to the sea when the knight, playing his sentinel's role, charges toward her. She converts her "clowdy care" not into its integral and eponymous complement, but into a "wrathfull stowre," and knocks him to the sand to wallow in his gore. Then she continues on her way: "The martiall Mayd stayd not him to lament, / But forward rode, and kept her ready way / Along the strond" (3.4.13.8, 3.4.18.1–3). Her indifference is the most important fact of the encounter.[34] The amplification of care in the aftermath asserts the basic irrelevance of such attentions to her quest. It is as though the poem were quickened into a fantastical, compensatory sensitivity by her apparent exemption. "Sensitive" and "tender" are other words, like "care," that are on both sides of suffering and comfort, the painful wound and the attentive healer.[35] It is not clear what difference care could make to the main business of the poem. Instead, it is yet another eddy, spinning off into the shallows.

So what is good, what is evil here? Britomart, whose place in the book aligns her with the quest structure and its narrative orientation to value, behaves like one of the marauding Saracens from book 1. The dynamic of care is left to minister hysterically to what is left in her wake. Her further career in book 3 is one of persistent indifference or misconstruction or blank wonder. She fails to understand any of the schemes afoot in Malbecco's house, and in Busyrane's she is much taken with the spectacle but unable to make any sense of it ("she oft and oft it ouer-red, / Yet could not find what sence it figured" [3.11.50.4–5]). She is prepared to dispatch Busyrane with signature efficiency when Amoret stays her hand. She does not care for anyone in book 3; her chastity

interdicts that kindness, that analogy, even more radically than does Guyon's temperance in the book before. Which is to say that she does not quite complete, but far advances a severance of care from narrative in the poem, allowing or obliging it to develop as something independent of the poem's teleology. Insofar as that teleology gives us good and evil, care is besides them both; it is distracting and irrelevant, a distraction more fundamental than any sensuous delay.[36]

VIII

Elsewhere I have argued that the motive principle of *The Faerie Queene* is panic: a panic responsible not only for any number of local reversals and retrenchments, but also for the ostensibly achieved composure of its architecture.[37] The poem, on this view, is propelled by perpetual overreaction to its own overcommitments, and all commitment is, sooner or later, overcommitment. No judgment does not seem in retrospect to have been disastrously and even perfectly wrong: so Redcrosse's flight from Una in discovery of his own lust; so the narrator's hastening from plot to plot; and so the turn from the severities of justice to the flatteries and polite negligence of courtesy. Even the sequence of the poem's books, so persuasively systematic when viewed from an elevation, can be read on the ground as a series of anxious, undialectical self-corrections. The problem touches ultimate values at every scale, good and evil as the master figures for the potential polarity of all experience. Getting things wrong takes on a soteriological importance, whether as cause or sign. The experience of panic is the sudden recognition that what had seemed good is in fact evil. The poem seeks immediate remedy in a new opposite, an opposite of evil which must therefore—must it not?—be good.

From this endless work, if panic can be called work—it is, at least, a great expense of energy—care emerges as a kind of exemption. It does not always insist on independence from the poem's framework of values. One could call Arthur's patient questioning of Una a kind of care, and certainly there is care in the House of Holiness or in Belphoebe's nursing of Timias. Such care might as well be called good. But when it does stand outside—when we see that it can stand outside—it makes a point that can be generalized across the poem: care is essentially amoral. Not in a Nietzschean way, beyond good and evil as a species of strong self-assertion. But neither in a way that is subject to his diagnosis of Christian

goodness as a sublimation of resentment.[38] Rather, besides good and evil, irrelevant to both of them, cosmically unorganized and unaffiliated. The sufficiency of care to care, of comfort to need—of sensitivity to sensitivity, tenderness to tenderness—offers a kind of repose and a complacency that is otherwise unavailable in the grips of the poem's passionate vacillations. And more than a respite. It makes a query into the condition of those vacillations, the way that good and evil entail narrative, or narrative entails good and evil; the way the complex drives the poem, and what it takes to slip them both. So little, really.

There are few enough such moments in the books of 1590.[39] Arguably there are none in 1596. The best candidates, moments such as the adventitious confederations of knights in the tournament in book 4, Radigund's feminine empire, or the reformed marriage of Crudor and Briana, never truly escape the poem's judgment.[40] Perhaps that absence testifies to the changed status of the heroes in the later books, who come to embody virtues in which the poet has diminishing confidence. Perhaps it reflects the turn from private to public, care being a private business (notwithstanding the humanist extension of the concept from family to school to state, from father to master to monarch). In 1590, however, these idylls of evil have a small but telling role to play. Readers are accustomed to thinking of sensuous deliquescence as the characteristic Spenserian threat to the quest, moments of potentially endless enjoyment that tangle delight and solace together. But those distractions are typically laced with the language of evil, and the poem's conscience is semantically active even before the story reacts in the person of a punishing Orgoglio or a righteous Guyon. The patient tending of wounds is a much more challenging affair, its indifference to the quest more fundamental, and the poem's resources for containing it much scarcer. Care is pointed toward health, toward life. It forgets death; or, at least, it forgets the death that dictates the urgency of the quest, the death that is the condition of immortal succession—death that is the mother of beauty and of meaning. By opposing itself not to evil but to death, care is careless of the good, too—careless of good and evil, and the ultimate good they are supposed to do us.[41] Too much care of life is a greater danger than any pleasure, if someplace good is where you are meant to go.

NOTES

[1] Spenser criticism has offered many versions of this progressive vision. For example, see David Lee Miller's claim that the quest for Gloriana will "fuse political, erotic, and economic motives" (*The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 "Faerie Queene"* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988], p. 27); Harry Berger Jr.'s description of the "Spenserian Dynamics" as an "evolutionary model … at least as a theoretical ideal which eros at all levels of existence tries to actualize" (*Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988], p. 27); or James Nohrnberg's account of the analogical accumulation of the poem into the figure of Arthur, "the once and future king … in whose greater mind the virtues of all the other knights reside" (*The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene"* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976], p. 39). Gordon Teskey formulates the basic opposition between allegory and narrative elegantly in *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), p. 23.

[2] Time beats his "flaggy winges" through the Garden of Adonis, accidentally blighting whatever he encounters, but, in the gathered time that prevails in the garden, he has none of the cyclical or prophetic authority he enjoys in the poem at large (Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, rev. 2d edn., Longman Annotated English Poets [2001; Harlow UK: Pearson Longman, 2007], book 3, canto 6, stanza 39, line 7). Subsequent references to *The Faerie Queene* are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text by book, canto, stanza, and line number; character names correspond with the spellings used in the text of this edition. It is interesting to consider the limits to the poem's powers of abstraction. Life and Death wait for the Mutabilitie cantos to make an appearance; there is no personification of Narrative itself, though it is interesting to consider what one would be. (Perhaps a shark, always moving to keep itself alive, or a many-armed Shiva or Kali?)

[3] Berger, p. 64; Nohrnberg, p. 673.

[4] As Susanne Lindgren Wofford puts it, "The poem's psychomachian battles confirm the identity between two knights rather than distinguish them" (*The Choice of Achilles: The Ideology of Figure in the Epic* [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1992], p. 285).

[5] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2d edn. (London: Longman, 1998), book 2, lines 727–870. Thomas P. Roche Jr. considers the relationship between these scenes in "Spenser, Milton, and the Representation of Evil," in *Heirs of Fame: Milton and Writers of the English Renaissance*, ed. David A. Kent and Margo Swiss (Lewisburg PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 14–33, 24.

[6] Both are moments from the first canto of book 1, the famous catalog of trees (1.1.8–9) and the encounter with Archimago (1.1.34).

[7] Augustine, *Of the Citie of God*, trans. John Healey (London, 1610), p. 422; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 916. On Spenser's familiarity with Augustine's works, and his debt to his theology, see James Schiavoni, "Spenser's Augustine," *SSt* 20 (2005): 277–81. See also J. Christopher Warner, "Afterword: Augustinian Epic in Romance Epic—Reflections on Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," in *The Augustinian Epic, Petrarch to Milton* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 183–94.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 2 of *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1945), pp. 774–5. Aquinas is part of that company that Spenser summarizes as "*Aristotle and the rest*" in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh ("Letter to Raleigh," in *The Faerie Queene*, pp. 713–8, 716); his *Summa Theologica* remained an influential text in the Cambridge curriculum through the sixteenth century. See Victor Morgan, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 2:447–8, 494–5; and Gerald Morgan, "Thomas Aquinas," in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. Hamilton (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 50.

[9] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), p. 114. Jameson builds his account from Northrop Frye's treatment of romance in *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 186–205.

[10] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), p. 31.

[11] Taylor, p. 29.

[12] Among many loci for such a claim, see Tzvetan Todorov, "The Two Principles of Narrative," in *Genres in Discourse*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 27–38, 29–30.

[13] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d edn. (Notre Dame IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 219. MacIntyre famously disapproves of the ideals of moral autonomy developed out of Kantian ethics. Taylor finds more to work with in modern ethics, but he endorses MacIntyre's quest metaphor (see Taylor, pp. 17 and 48).

[14] See Augustine, *The Manichean Debate*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park NY: New City Press, 2006).

[15] Jean Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion* (London, 1561), F4v; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 4415. Calvin is very attentive to what I call later in this article "vernacular Manichaeism," the temptation to dualism implicit in rejection of the flesh. "To take too low a view of the body is to be in danger of falling into the error of the Manichaeans," as his biographer François Wendel writes (*Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet [New York: Harper and Row, 1963], p. 286).

[16] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth UK: Penguin, 1961), p. 63.

[17] Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1992), pp. 34–6.

[18] Calvin, F8v.

[19] Calvin, G1r.

[20] Richard Hooker, *Of the Lavves of Ecclesiasticall Politie, Eight Bookes* (London, 1604), p. 60; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 13713.

[21] C. S. Lewis observes that, in *The Faerie Queene*, "evil does not usually appear as energy"; in contrast with Milton's "lawless and rebellious energy," Spenser tends to represent evil as disease or deprivation or "a temptation to relax" (*Spenser's Images of Life*, ed. Fowler [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967], pp. 66 and 70). Sean Kane, in *Spenser's Moral Allegory* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1989), offers an account of the poem as "the apprehension of a Christian Platonist of the old order confronted by the alarming

reassertion of the classical ideal of perfectibility through virtue" (p. 5). Kane reads Spenser's abstention from the dialogue in Lodowick Bryskett's *A Discourse of Ciuill Life* as a mark of the poet's refusal of a humanist fascination with power; *The Faerie Queene*, he argues, prefers a conception of reconciled hierarchy (pp. 9–13). For a recent and summary account of the Platonism of the poem, see Jon A. Quitslund, *Spenser's Supreme Fiction: Platonic Natural Philosophy and "The Faerie Queene"* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2001).

[22] Spenser describes the scene:

> And after all vpon the wagon beame
> Rode *Sathan*, with a smarting whip in hand,
> With which he forward lasht the laesy teme.
>
> (1.4.36.1–3)

[23] See Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 18–64.

[24] Angus Fletcher, *The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 34–5.

[25] A concept of care is central to Martin Heidegger, for whom *Sorge* (care as anxiety), *besorgen* (to attend to, to mind), and *Fürsorge* (care for others) together work out *Dasein*'s mode of being in the world (*Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper Perennial, 2008], pp. 225–55). See also George Steiner's account of the concept's place in Heidegger's thought in *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 99–105. To say that this mode consists in varieties of care is to preempt an account of a neutral, disinvested, and unobligated knowledge; we are always already involved in a relation of care to the world. It is interesting to consider what a Heideggerian reading of *The Faerie Queene* would offer. It would likely encourage us toward the idea that the poem knows itself best at moments when its metaphysics fall away to bring care into the open. Spenser, no philosopher, is less sure of care's priority or ubiquity, but the poem might be said to intuit the threat of something like a Heideggerian care to its theological and political commitments.

[26] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions* (London, 1581), p. 227; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 18253.

[27] Bryskett, *A Discourse of Ciuill Life* (London, 1606), pp. 114, 119, and 86; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 3958.

[28] Bryskett, p. 177.

[29] Bryskett, pp. 177–8.

[30] Mulcaster, *The First Part of the Elementarie* (London, 1582), p. 25; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 18250. Mulcaster now and again takes a view of evil that sounds notably Manichaean. Consider his comparison of knowledge to vice, acknowledging that they may cohabit in the same person, but insisting that they are still contending forces: "as the good qualitie cannot transubstantiate the euill, so can not the euill change the others substance, tho it foullie disfigur the form thereof, which is so much the worse, bycause of such a companion, whom the qualified partie, as subiect vnto both hath matched so togither, being in natur most different, tho vnited in the person, as a common harbour to two great enemies, whereof the one seketh the subuersion of the other" (*Elementarie*, p. 45).

[31] Milton, "Lycidas," in *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. John Carey, 2d edn. (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp. 237–56, line 181.

[32] See again Nohrnberg's *The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene"*. Nohrnberg is only the most systematic of many critics, including Wofford, Berger, and Fletcher, who explore how correspondences large and small, from the level of the stanza to the level of the book, define a truss work of affinity that sustains the whole structure at its commanding height in English poetry.

[33] This ambiguity may have something to do with the famous narrative crux that attends Marinel's injury. Early in the book, Britomart encounters the fleeing Florimel, whose flight begins when she hears of Marinel's hurt; only later does Britomart herself inflict that injury, which was supposed already to have happened. Perhaps there is meant to be something belated or contrived about the knitting together of two plots that intersect, as a matter of narrative, only in a blind accident. On risk and sexuality, see Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of "The Faerie Queene"* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), pp. 141–2.

[34] I have discussed Britomart's exemption before, in relation to the problem of what characters learn or do not learn, in *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 167–71. Catherine Nicholson, however, points out to me in conversation that Scudamour's predicament, "wallowed / Vpon the grassy ground" (3.11.7.3–4), echoes Marinel wallowing on the strand; and there, at least, Britomart does stop, to take up Scudamour's cause if not to tend his suffering.

[35] Here is one difference between care and sympathy or compassion, those other, problematic terms for shared affect. The problem is whether they refer to the contagion of affect—such as Guyon's suffering with Amavia—or represent a posture toward suffering that is not itself suffering. Neither sympathy nor compassion has the sense of activity implicit in care, nor its complementarity, though both do sometimes threaten the characters' moral judgment. Should we sympathize, for example, with Tantalus in Hell?

[36] Is the lesson modified in books 4 and 5, with the beautiful pageantry of the marriage of the rivers and the ultimate marriage of Florimel and the resurrected Marinel? Perhaps this is the good that ultimately comes of Cymoent's care, a good for Britomart in the sense that it improves and reconciles the world in which her prophetic destiny will unfold. But the redemption for the purposes of the plot is a promise unfulfilled in the six books Spenser wrote.

[37] See Jeff Dolven, "Panic's Castle," *Representations* 120, 1 (Fall 2012): 1–16.

[38] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), pp. 24–56.

[39] Joseph Campana is among the critics who are attentive to such moments of care, noting, for example, Duessa's "oddly touching grief for Orgoglio," which he likens to "her compassion for Sans Foy" (*The Pain of Reformation* [New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2012], p. 68).

[40] That claim is arguable in the last case; I argue in *Scenes of Instruction* that Crudor and Briana are the first instance in a pattern of reform that can be sustained only by averting your eyes from the relapse of its aftermath (pp. 219–20).

[41] The emphasis here on mere life, outside of a moral framework, may remind modern readers of Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life. He joins Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault in his attention to the Greek distinction between "*zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or group" (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998], p. 1). See also Arendt's *The Human Condition*, 2d edn. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 313–20. Agamben treats bare life as the condition of a human being stripped of political rights and responsibilities. He is most interested in it as an effect of exile from the modern state. Care, as I have explored it here, is an intimate situation, but Spenser is also concerned, in his own terms, that *zoē* might displace the political and theological *bios* that is articulated by the poem's allegory. Perhaps *The Faerie Queene* has a small role to play in a prehistory of modern biopolitics.