



Unspeakable Pastoral

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In the first eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*, readers meet a shepherd who refuses to sing. His renunciation is at once extremely straightforward and heavily symbolic: finding that the woman he loves “hateth as the snake” his “shepherds devise,” Colin Clout determines that “both pype and Muse, shall sore the while abyе.”¹ The narrator finishes the couplet that ends the stanza, explaining that Colin then “broke his oaten pype, and downe dyd lye” (72). We have often interpreted Colin’s pipe-breaking as an “anti-pastoral” act, the first in a “series of rejections” that foreshadow his fictional progression from pastoral towards georgic and epic poetry.² Certainly, the syntactical sleight-of-hand that replaces Colin’s voice with the narrator’s delicately anticipates the pastoral’s conventional polyvocality, since it is a mode that at least narratively comes into being through the songs and juxtaposed perspectives of a rustic coterie. Yet in the case of Spenser’s *Calender*, it is not only the narrator who frames and contextualizes Colin’s refusal. The emblem that follows the eclogue insists that hope remains for Colin (“*Anchôra Speme*”) (80), while the woodcut preceding it displays a broken set of bagpipes

¹ Edmund Spenser, “Januarye,” in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 65, 71. All citations refer to line numbers in this edition unless otherwise noted.

² Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 77-78. Cullen draws upon A.C. Hamilton, “The Argument of *Spenser’s Shepheardes Calender*,” *ELH* 23.3 (1956): 171-82.

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rather than reed pipes, suggesting iconographically that what should be discarded is Colin's misdirected eroticism rather than his vocation.³ Since this special issue of *The Spenser Review* invites us to explore "everything that is not *The Faerie Queene*," my contribution asks what might change if we took Colin's pipe-breaking as a symbol, not for his restless ambition, but for the emergence of a different strain of the pastoral, one which subverts the central myth that its poetics have been and may still be spoken and sung. In the short space of this essay, I speculate on the possibility of an "unspeakable pastoral," a *topos* in which lyric performance is resisted, inhibited, or withdrawn, in Spenser's *Calender* and two of its imitators, Thomas Blenerhasset's *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582) and William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613). I use these insistently material texts to reconsider a palimpsest in "Colin Clouts Come Home Againe" (1595), and to suggest a continuity between Spenser's material poetics and his lyric experiments.

I. Sovereignty in *The Shepheardes Calender*

In order to begin sketching this *topos*, I dwell here on one rich example from "Aprill," in which we learn what Colin relinquishes when he destroys the conventional instrument of the pastoral. Hobbinol explains, "Hys pleasaunt Pipe... / He wylfully hath broke, and doth forbear / His wonted songs, wherein he all outwent" (14-16). The play on "pleasaunt Pipe" links Colin's piping to the circumscription of the "pleasance," a word that in its most literal sense connotes the "enclosure or secluded part of a garden."⁴ Within the pastoral's self-conscious fiction, David R. Shore explains, the shepherds' piping dramatizes their ability "to create in and out of the pleasance an imaginative world in which every objective feature has subjective value."⁵ In other words, the pipe emblemizes the shepherd-poet's power to make the world signify.

The metaphor of cultivation latent in the machinery of the pastoral contains within it the implication of sovereignty or control over the imaginative landscape that the shepherd-poet creates from the pleasance. Explaining how Colin outstripped ("outwent")

³ Patrick Cheney, "Spenser's Pastorals: *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 87.

⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "pleasance, n.1, sense 5", July, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1019052973>.

⁵ David R. Shore, *Spenser and the Poetics of Pastoral: A Study of the World of Colin Clout* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 108.

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his fellow poets, Hobbinol chiastically links “wherein” to “outwent,” extending the conceit of poem-as-pleasance by framing it as a space “wherein” a poet might “go forth.”⁶ This construction recalls a commonplace of sixteenth-century lyric, in which the power to rule over the fictional space of poetry provides solace against the disenfranchisements of courtiership. The sentiment appears everywhere from Edward Dyer’s famous verse, “My mind to me a kingdom is,” to Philip Sidney’s solipsism in the *Arcadia*, “My sheepe are thoughts, which I both guide and serve.”⁷ As Paul Alpers observed many years ago, Spenser and his contemporaries conceited their poems as minds, kingdoms, and Arcadias to invoke notions of *demesne*, the legal concept of possession and land ownership, and to enact for themselves a proxy-realm of (imagined or fictitious) self-governance.⁸ Moving towards this fantasy of autonomy, Alpers writes, Spenser constructs his pastoral as a “domain of lyric,” an imaginative space governed by the poet and the lyrics’ own internal logics (94).

Colin himself intones in “June” that Chaucer, “whilst he lived, was the soveraigne head / Of shepheards all” (83-84). Yet Hobbinol radically suggests that Colin has relinquished the very sovereignty that the shepherd-courtier’s pastoral lyric aims to consolidate. He certainly cedes control over the meanings of his actions when they are explained by a narrator and expositor, and when his songs are surrounded by woodcuts and emblems that are both overdetermined and inescapably dialogic. But we might understand the resulting topography as one in which the poet’s lyric domain, which Alpers also calls the “domain of song” (“Pastoral” 94), does not encompass the whole of the *Calender* but purposefully sits within it, as if within a landscape whose delineated borders might still be contested and negotiated.

Hobbinol’s remarks in “Aprill” seem designed to reintroduce the convention of poetic sovereignty in order to strategically enact its withdrawal. Spenser never forgets that a queen’s encomium must maintain the imbalance of power between the poet and his monarch, even if, as he writes, “her upraising, doest thy selfe upraise.”⁹ Since Colin has broken his pipe and no longer sings, Hobbinol’s determination to sing the “laye / Of fayre

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “outgo, v., sense 1”, July 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4033844690>.

⁷ Edward Dyer, “My mind to me a kingdom is,” in *Sixteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. Gordon Braden (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 136. Philip Sidney, “My sheepe are thoughts, which I both guide and serve,” in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 39.

⁸ Paul Alpers, “Pastoral and the Domain of Lyric in Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calender*,” *Representations* 12 (1985): 95.

⁹ Edmund Spenser, “Colin Clouts Come Home Againe,” in *The Shorter Poems*, 355. All citations refer to line numbers in this edition.

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Elisa” (33-34) distances Colin from the poem’s central transformation, which progresses from past visions (“I sawe *Phoebus* thrust out his golden hedde, / upon her to gaze”) (73-74), to present ones (“I see *Calliope* speede her to the place, / where my Goddesse shines: / And after her the other Muses trace”) (100-02). The visions culminate in Elisa’s placement as the fourth of the Graces, certain to “reigne with the rest in heaven” (117). The change in tense from past (“I saw”) to present (“I see”) enables the poem to forever iterate Elisa’s apotheosis, so that even the imperative (“Let that rowme to my Lady be yeven”) (114) never belongs to a single poet’s memory, but to the shared present of the speaker and audience. The song also takes pains to identify Elisa as the child of Pan and Syrinx, a parentage that makes her, as Ronald Bond observes, “identical with the oaten reeds.”¹⁰ This reappearance of the pipe may diplomatically be read in two ways, in one sense signaling that Elisa has become an instrument for the poet’s creative powers, and in another signaling Elizabeth’s innate and sovereign power to make the world signify.

Significantly, “Aprill” begins to exceed the threshold of lyric expression and build towards a moment in which nothing else can be said. The events are explained by E.K. in his gloss: Hobbinol becomes so overwhelmed by Elisa’s divine similitude and Colin’s song that he can only express the “worthinesse of [this] conceipt” by invoking Virgil or by falling into “soddein silence” (“Embleme” pg. 84). The events that E.K. describes form a continuous narrative, but the *Calender* treats them like a pleasance, dividing and redistributing these events between the domains of lyric and emblem. The eclogue does not end with Hobbinol’s astonished response. Rather, Thenot briefly asks whether “thilk same song” was “of *Colins* owne making,” (154) and then the shepherds turn homeward, as if in explicit retreat back into the space of the eclogue. Their invocations (“*O quam te memorem virgo?*” and “*O dea certe*”) (162-5) stand alone as emblems. Because their responses equate Elisa with the disguised Venus of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, they pay double compliments to Spenser and to Elizabeth. Yet taking these responses out of narrative context and presenting them as a set of emblems allows them to lightly indicate again the queen’s innate divinity and signifying power. From here, we may still wonder why E.K. remarks that the emblems’ invocations replace what would otherwise be Hobbinol’s “soddein silence.” This concluding detail structurally recalls Colin’s estranging silence

¹⁰ Ronald Bond, “Introduction to ‘Aprill,’” in *The Shorter Poems*, 69.

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with which the eclogue opens, and from within this frame we discover what real and threatened silences can mark: the withdrawal of lyric's sovereign power over meaning, and the negotiation of that power between more than one authority.¹¹

The signaling power of the unspeakable pastoral may help us conceive of Colin's refusal to sing as an essential conceit, one that justifies the *Calender's* material complexity as part of the pastoral experiment, in addition to the metaphors it supports about belatedness, exile, temporality, canonicity, and literary fame. What appears to be Colin's rejection of the pastoral altogether might instead be viewed as a sign that the pastoral's veil of *otium* will be interrupted by a kind of *negotium*, with its attendant meanings of negation and negotiation, in ways that mark a struggle between multiple stakeholders over meaning. The interruptions and inhibitions that mark this *topos* will necessarily take on local meanings, as they do among the *Calender's* more critically contested sites. The most obvious of these is Colin's disappearance after his song in "December," when he hangs up his pipes and bequeaths his final words to someone else: "Adieu good *Hobbinol*, that was so true, / Tell *Rosalind*, her *Colin* bids her adieu" (155-56). He disappears without an emblem, which can mean a lot of things.

II. Apotheosis in *A Revelation of the True Minerva*

Most of us know that the *Calender's* insistently material poetics run contrary to the conventions of an era in which lyric poetry was often composed to be sung, and that the pastoral resurgence that follows the *Calender's* publication often emphasized the performative dimensions of the mode.¹² But the first imitation of the *Calender* to appear in print ingeniously reimagines the material complexity of Spenser's text. Thomas Blenerhasset's encomium for Elizabeth I, *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582), contains the first imitation of the April eclogue and a set of the earliest pattern poems printed in English. Josephine Waters Bennett notes that the *Revelation* is "semi-dramatic" and intricately tied to the iconographic traditions of court performance, since Blenerhasset composed the poem after Elizabeth's royal progresses in 1575 and 1578, and

¹¹ A discrepancy between the emblems and E.K.'s gloss deepens the rift: the emblems actually present Thenot, Hobbinol's listener, as being the first to invoke Virgil, which means that two neighboring areas of the text offer two different stories about how the shepherds received Colin's song.

¹² See Sukanta Chaudhuri, *A Companion to Pastoral Poetry of the English Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 33-50; Stephen Orgel, *The Reader in the Book: A Study of Spaces and Traces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 6-7.

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its episodes allude specifically to the 1581 tournament staged during the protracted negotiations around Elizabeth's proposed marriage to the Duc d'Alençon.¹³ In the first part of the poem, the classical gods seek a mortal to replace the missing goddess Minerva, while the second part praises Elizabeth when she is discovered to be the worthiest candidate. This latter part outwardly declares its debt to Spenser by opening with a metrical imitation of the intricate stanzas of Colin's lay. This imitation has supplied critical evidence of the *Calender's* influence upon Spenser's contemporaries as a work that ushered in a new era of vernacular pastoral and lyric experimentation.

Yet Blenerhasset's adaptation of "Aprill" displays his indebtedness to Spenser's *Calender* not only in terms of metrical and rhetorical style, but also in terms of its material poetics. When the queen is visited by the Graces and virtues, their heavenly speech is marked by metrical variety. The poet intervenes in pentameters, "Proceed my *Muse* assist thy seruaunt nowe, / Able his penne to publishe forth her praise" (F1v) before Euthumia, the goddess of merriment, speaks to Elizabeth in a series of shaped stanzas that morph from birds into spheres. The first bird-shape (possibly the "Phoenix rare" [E4v] of Elizabethan iconography) closes with a couplet that indicates the paradox of the Grace's descent and Elizabeth's apotheosis: "nowe I must dwell / with thee, because thou doest excell" (F1v). The shape that follows—either a lozenge or a sphere—ends with the suggestion of their spiritual congress: "*Euthumias* noble name / I yeelde to thee / my dignitie" (F2r). A set of wings follows that inverts the first bird-figure and indicates Elizabeth's power over heavenly bodies: "onely to you I bowe," Euthumia breathes, "and bende, and bind my selfe, my selfe vnto your will, / Your [wil?] that is my worke, my worke that to fulfill" (F2r). The syntax and evolving shapes of Euthumia's stanzas rely on chiasmus to represent a benevolent act of spiritual binding. In doing so, they gesture towards a divine process that cannot be replicated by human song. The process culminates in an irregular stanza attesting to Elizabeth that "amongst the gods thou shalt remaine / for euermore" (F2v).

¹³ Josephine Waters Bennett, ed. *A Revelation of the True Minerva*, by Thomas Blenerhasset (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1941), vii, ix. All citations of Blenerhasset derive from this edition.

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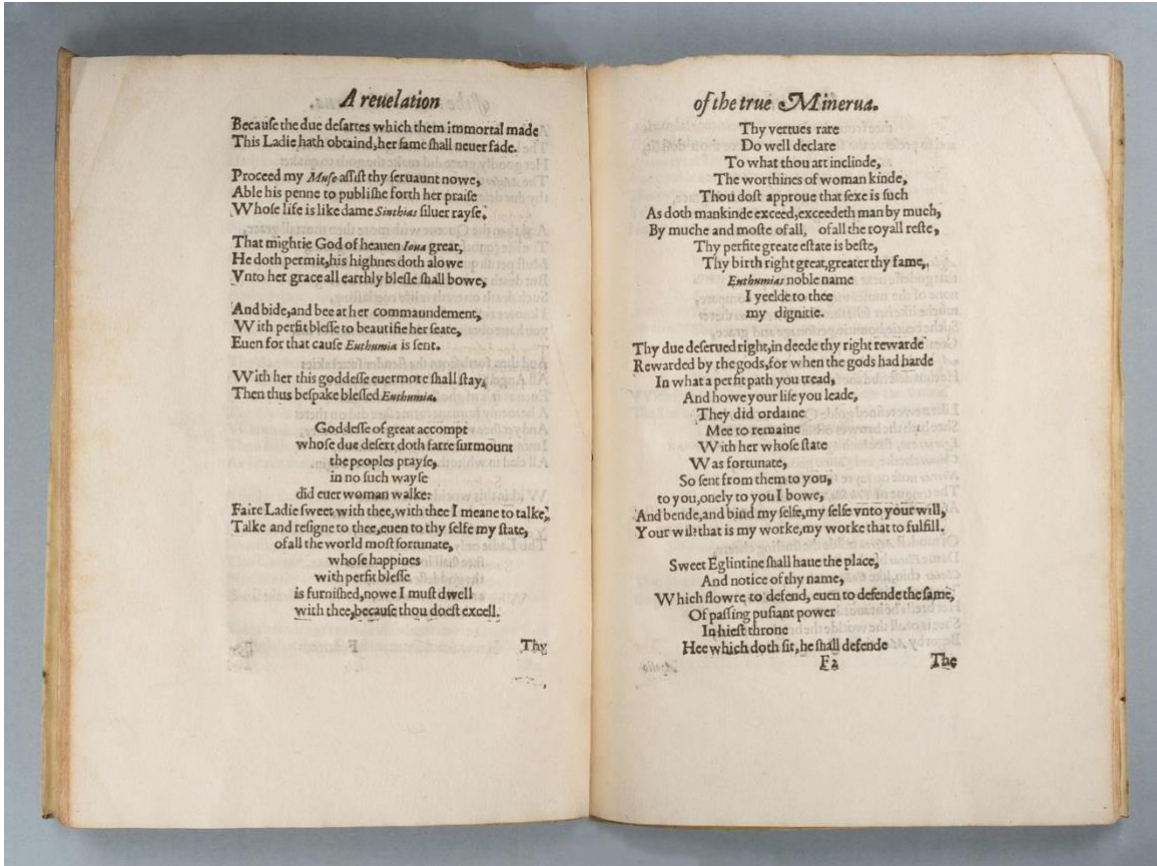


Fig. 1. Thomas Blenerhasset, *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582), F1v-F2r. RB 31244, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

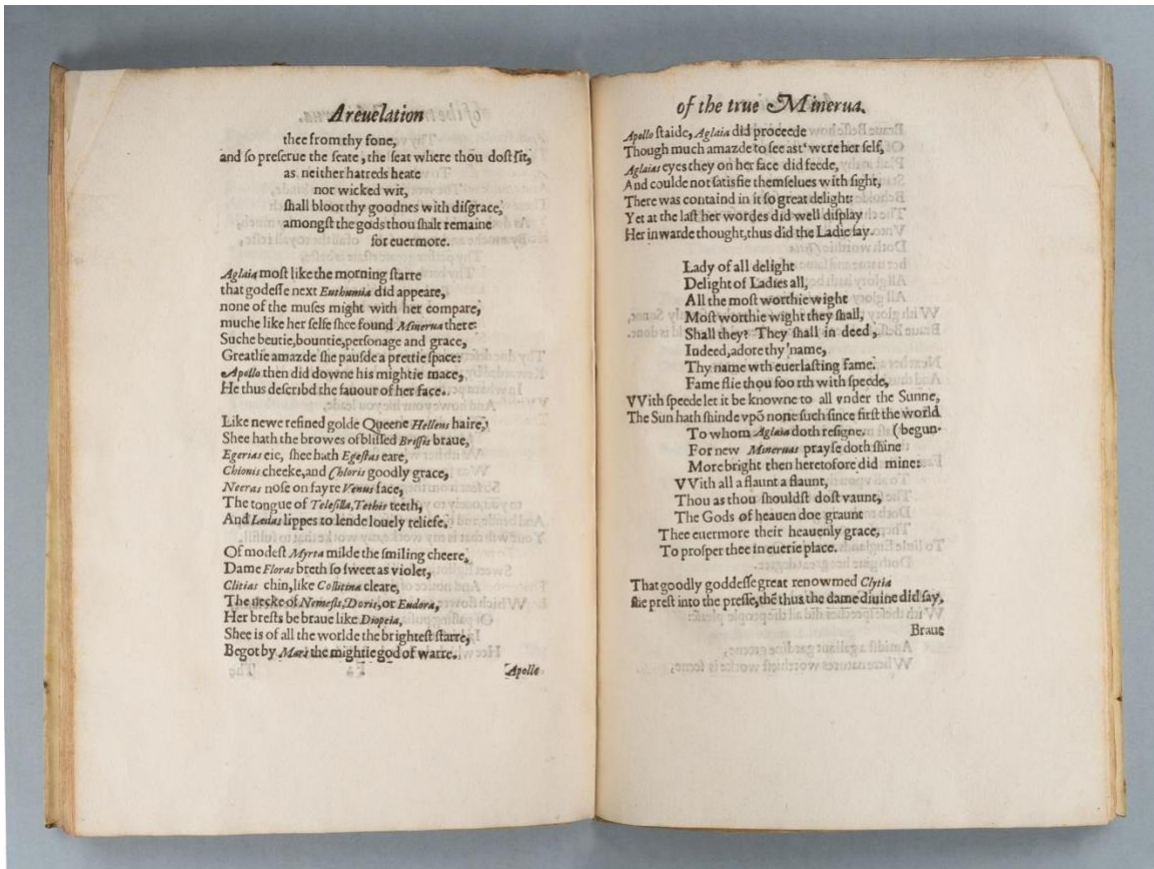


Fig. 2. Thomas Blenerhasset, *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582), F2v-F3r. RB 31244, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The fluid movement between distinct stanzaic forms in the latter half of the *Revelation* replicates both the descent of divine beings in Elizabeth’s honor and, simultaneously, the process of her apotheosis. The figure poems, while expressly providing what George Puttenham called an “ocular representation” of poetic tropes,¹⁴ combine with the fiction of speech and song to represent an inscrutable event. Much like George Herbert’s later and better-known sacred figure poems, in which theological conditions such as grace are immanent from the beginning of the poem’s structure while they are unfolding syntactically, the final figure poem prophecies events that culminate at the stanza’s end. The muse Clio, who presides over history and lyre-playing, offers a figure that combines memory and song in the shape of an hourglass. The muse begins in praise of Elizabeth’s songs: “Macthlesse for musick once I was,” sings Clio, “none could my note come neere, / nowe thou dost passe, / thy voyce most cleere” (G1r). If in “Aprill”

¹⁴ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 191.

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Spenser suggests Elizabeth's innate connection to the "pleasaunt" pipe, Blenerhasset presents Elizabeth as if she were a poet-shepherd, who "From healthfull lights and lounges belowe doth send, / Such sweete and pleasant harmonie, / The gods their ears doe bende" (G1r). Clio describes Elizabeth's voice in the present tense ("nowe"), but the queen never speaks in the poem, and it is the success of her now-absent mortal song that brings the reward of immortality: "to thee / I *Clio* heere / Doe giue eternitie" (G1r).

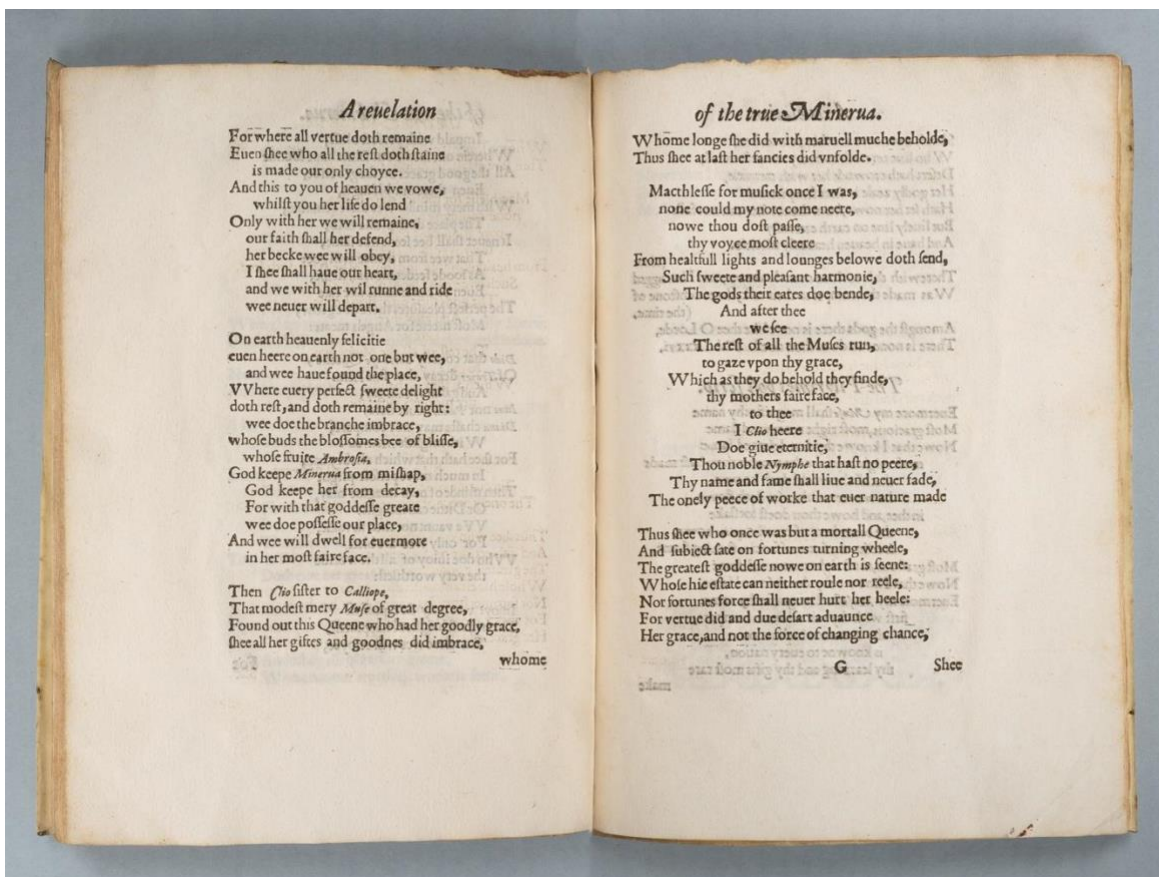


Fig. 3. Thomas Blenerhasset, *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582), F4v-G1r. RB 31244, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Clio's temporal paradox suggests that Elizabeth's former song blends with the muse's divine one. As an attribute of Elizabeth's apotheosis, this blending reimagines a particular model of pastoral song—the elegy—through which a shepherd can be deified by other shepherds' songs. The model derives from Virgil's fifth eclogue, in the elegies sung by Menalcas and Mopsus for the deceased Daphnis; Renato Poggioli observes that "by turning the panegyric into a literal apotheosis, Vergil also turns Menalcas' song from a lament into a hymn . . . [to] a new and minor god, whom only shepherds may now call

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their own.”¹⁵ Just as Spenser’s “Aprill” lightly indicates Elizabeth’s innate divinity, the *Revelation* deifies the queen by imagining her voice and soul commixing with those of the gods. Tellingly, the poet only reasserts himself to announce the completion of the process: “Thus shee who once was but a mortall Queene, / And subject sate on fortunes turning wheele, / The greatest goddesse nowe on earth is seene” (G1r). To capture this inscrutable process, it seems the *Revelation* creates an impossible song, one which signifies aurally and visually, but hardly at the same time. This unutterable doubleness is the trick of every pattern poem, but in Blenerhasset’s poem these contraries reinscribe the energy of *negotium*—as the settling or unsettledness of signification itself—in order to express the unimaginable event at its core.

III. Monuments in *Britannia’s Pastorals*

William Browne’s *Britannia’s Pastorals* (1613)—a long poem of tragicomic pastoral, satire, and elegy in three unfinished books—offers a more curious counterexample to these material poetics. In the first book, which is a work of national chorography akin to Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* (1612) masquerading as pastoral romance, the tuning of shepherds’ songs to the landscape naturalizes the imperial voyeurism that motivates the poem.¹⁶ When these shepherds “vnto the waters fals / Chanteth the rusticke Pastorals,”¹⁷ they do so less to conjure an idealized world than to naturalize an ideological project in which songs celebrating England find sympathy in the landscape itself. It proves all the more strange, then, when a group of twelve shepherds’ posies appear in the poem as a set of increasingly elaborate engravings comprised of shepherding crooks, combs, and lovers’ knots. The only appearance of such a device in all three books, the engravings conclude an episode in which the lovesick shepherd Doridon stumbles across a scene of pastoral revels. In an explicit invocation of the *Calender*, Doridon has been mourning the loss of Colin Clout, remarking,

Who when he sung (as I would doe to mine)
His truest loues to his faire *Rosaline*,
Entic’d each Shepherds eare to heare him play,
And rapt with wonder thus admiring say:

¹⁵ Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 76.

¹⁶ See Michelle O’Callaghan, *The ‘shepherds nation’: Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612-25* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 86-146.

¹⁷ William Browne, *Britannia’s Pastorals* (London: Thomas Snodham for George Norton, 1613), G3r. All citations derive from this edition.

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Thrice happy plaines (if plaines thrice happy may be)
Where such a Shepheard pipes to such a Lady.

(H1v)

Doridon's lament frames Colin's songs in the language of the sublime, which moves stones to weep and arrests the "rapt" shepherds with "wonder" and admiration. He soon encounters shepherds and shepherdesses engaged in revels that build towards this sublimity, transforming the pleasance by dancing in "a Roundell seated on a plaine / ... Enuiron'd round with Trees and many an Arbour, / Wherein melodious birds did nightly harbour" (H4r). The scene unfolds in terms pointedly shared by movement, poetry, and image: the dancers move in "crooked measure" (H4r) and "the best of formes" (H4v), "closing in a round" so sweet the gods might descend to earth. The synesthetic quality of these revels suggests a progress towards divine experience, with the presentation of gifts and emblems to come serving as "offring[s] at the shrine" of love (I3v).

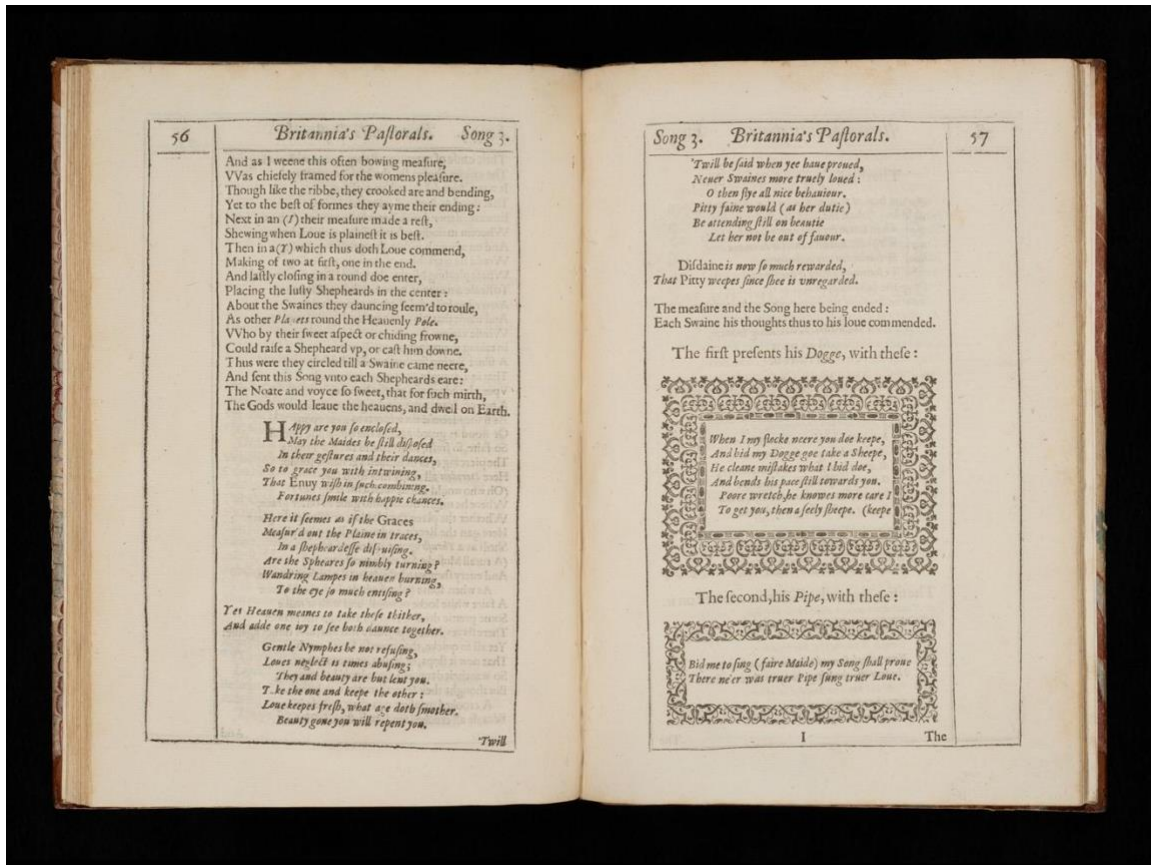


Fig. 4. William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* bk. 1 (1613), H4v-I1r. RB 83042, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

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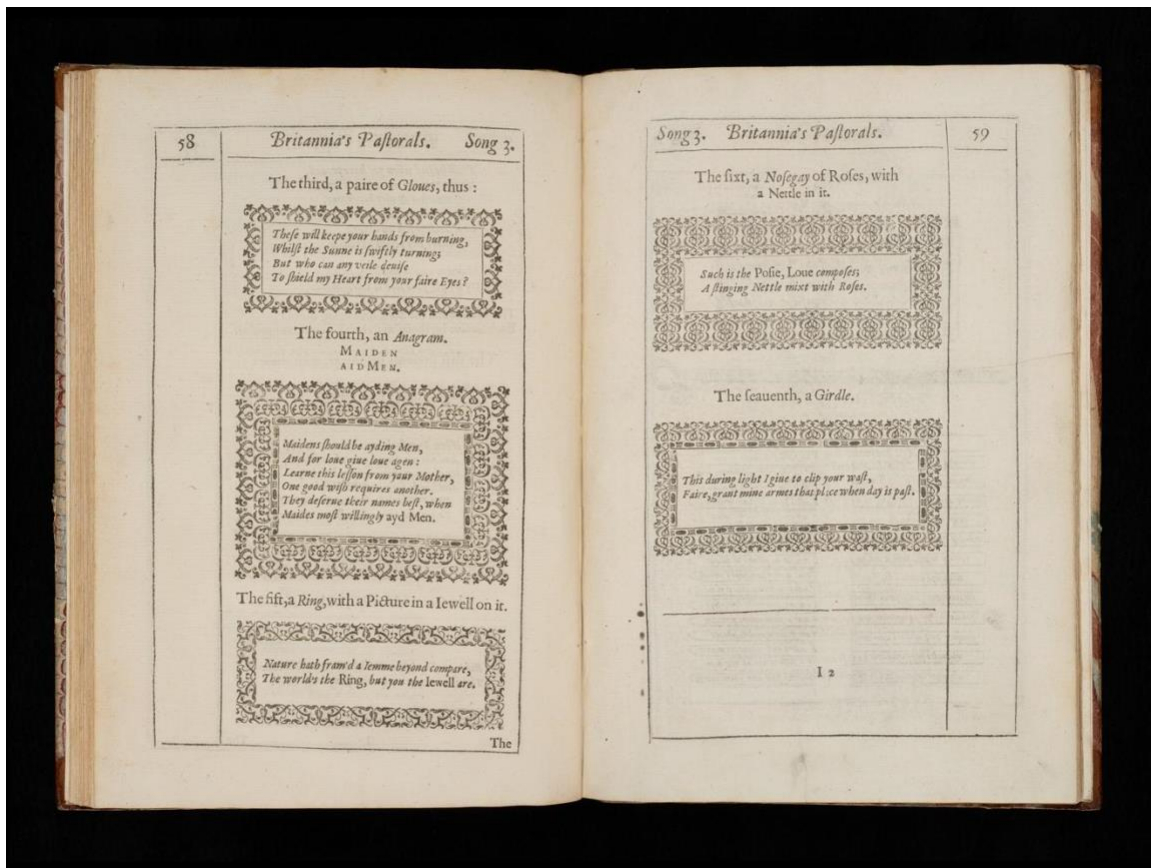


Fig. 5. William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* bk. 1 (1613), I1v-I2r. RB 83042, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

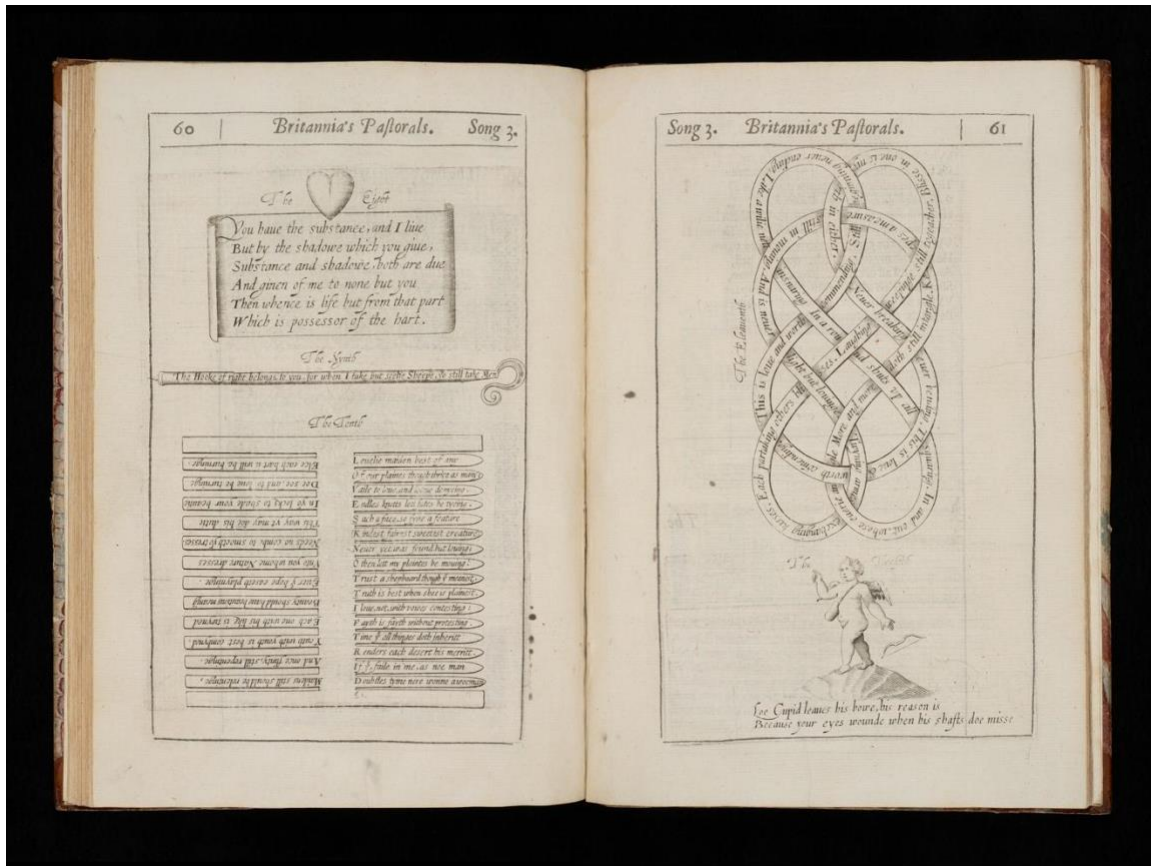


Fig. 6. William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals* bk. 1 (1613), I2v-I3r. RB 83042, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

But the emblems are surprisingly deflating: one anagram transforms M A I D E N into A I D M E N, noting in the poem below, “*They deserue their names best, when / Maides most willingly ayd Men*” (I1v); an acrostic insists, “*LOVES KNOTT, IF TRID / MAYE BE VNTIDE*” (I2v). We are perhaps meant to understand their visual grandness as approximating the transcendent song towards which the scene has built, although this interpretation must lean upon the pastoral’s inherent ability to justify even the most naïve poetry with its fictional musicality (*Pastoral Poetry* 48). In comparison with the sublimity of Colin Clout’s songs, these visual tricks and pedestrian complaints won’t move the stones to weep or the shepherdesses to love. I do not think that Browne intended the nearly unbearable irony when he called these verses and these ladies “*beauties . . . stil’d diuine*” (I3v), but the early mention of Colin’s songs to Rosalind suggests they could be read as mutually fruitless. The posies monumentalize the erotic games and trifles of

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courtship,¹⁸ and because they recall these exchanges without advancing the broader poem, they stall the narrative so completely that only a manufactured *alarum* can break its stasis. Then, if the posies do not succeed in representing some transcendent love, they perhaps enable a no less significant effect, encouraging readers to linger in an earthly *otium* that continuously reinscribes itself through their time and touch.

IV. “Colin Clouts Come Home Againe”

I have suggested that the unspeakable pastoral as a *topos* not only inhibits conventions of song or speech but also signals a place in which signifying power is being actively negotiated. While I think these negotiations provide both an engine and justification for the material complexity of the *Calender*, I would like to end with a thought experiment over another moment in which Colin Clout purposefully declines to sing. In “Colin Clouts Come Home Againe,” Spenser’s hero truncates the retelling of his encounter with the Shepherd of the Ocean (a loosely veiled Sir Walter Raleigh), by reciting only one of their two songs: his own lay about a nymph and a river, whose secret marriage so angers the nymph’s father that he destroys the river. Although Thestylis begs, “What dittie did that other shepheard sing?” (160), Colin offers instead this palimpsest:

His song was all a lamentable lay,
Of great unkindnesse, and of usage hard,
Of *Cynthia* the Ladie of the sea,
Which from her presence faultlesse him debard.

(164-67)

These details have led a number of critics to suggest that the absent song alludes to a draft of Raleigh’s unfinished poem, *The Ocean’s Love to Cynthia*. The holograph fragments of this poem comprise a case study in Raleigh’s disenfranchisement, as well as in the insufficiency of lyric tropes to address it, which leaves him ever seeking “sume sweeter wordes, sume more becumming vers” that might “witness my myshapp in hygher kynd.”¹⁹

¹⁸ On the haptic eroticism of these object-poems, see Erika Mary Boeckeler, “Comb Poems,” in *Dynamic Matter: Transforming Renaissance Objects*, ed. Jennifer Linhart Wood (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), 55-80. The engravings’ intrusion also bears some resemblance to the framed epitaph in Sidney’s *Arcadia* that marks the death of the lovers Argalus and Parthenia.

¹⁹ Walter Raleigh, “The 21st and last booke of the Ocean to Scinthia,” in *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh: A Historical Edition*, ed. Michael Rudick (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), lines 9-10.

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I agree in part with David Shore's assessment that Colin does not sing the Ocean-Shepherd's song because it is "clearly a work outside the pastoral canon and expresses conflicts and aspirations which could not accord with life within the pleasance" (*Poetics of Pastoral* 109). But if Colin's refusal to sing in fact marks the song as a contested site, it also should direct us to the terms being negotiated. Simply, Colin has already sung the Ocean-Shepherd's song because his tale discreetly alludes to Raleigh's scandalous marriage in suitably pastoral guise. Reasserting the lyric as his sovereign domain, Spenser chooses for his parable a river that flows through his own Irish lands; since the Bregog flows partly underground, the Ocean-Shepherd rightly calls his sorrow an "undersong" (169), or a subordinated or subdued melody.²⁰ Folding the Ocean-Shepherd's song into the now-overlapping *topoi* of Spenser's real home and Colin's fictional one is perhaps only a small reclamation of power. The effort nevertheless invites us to consider how the two songs might refigure the same subject, one in the mode of disenfranchised love lyric and the other in the imaginatively autonomous pastoral. The absence of one, however, disturbs the balance of competing perspectives by which the pastoral safely entertains its conventional and subversive positions. A missing or impossible song, by contrast, turns our attention away from these harmonies and towards the discordant, contingent, and unfinished work of symbolism itself. Colin's refusal to sing invites us not to look beyond the pastoral but to look at it again, for all the things that have not been said.

²⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "undersong, n., sense 1", July 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8768747125>.