# "Not the Faerie Queene": Letter from the Editors

By Claire Falck (Rowan University) and Victoria Florio Pipas (Harvard University)

Can we ever quit *The Faerie Queene*? Could we ever want to? The evidence is doubtful: Spenser makes it clear as early as Book One that when it comes to the Faerie Queene herself, one encounter, even an imagined one, is enough. Arthur's dream vision of the "royall Maid" who lays herself beside him on the "verdant gras" before vanishing with the parting identification that "She Queene of Faeries hight," emphasizes how ravishing the Faerie Queene (or perhaps *The Faerie Queene*) appears, even—or especially—as a negation of her (or its) self.[1] Arthur lingers in passionate detail on the absence of the Queene of Faeries and the impression she has left:

> When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd,
> And nought but pressed gras where she had lyen,
> I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd,
> And washed all her place with watry eyen.
> From that day forth I lou'd that face diuyne;
> From that day forth I cast in carefull mynd,
> To seeke her out with labor, and long tyne,
> And neuer vowd to rest, till her I fynd,
> Nyne monethes I seek in vain yet ni'll that vow vnbynd.
>
> (I.ix.15)

Arthur, in his retelling, gazes at the "place deuoyd," whose "pressed gras" is only a trace

[1] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 2nd ed., ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (London: Routledge, 2013), I.ix.13-4. Hereafter, the poem will be cited from the Hamilton edition.

of the Faerie's Queene's lost presence, or perhaps the image of Arthur's newfound quest. It is, of course, both ironic and inevitable that we must turn to a moment in *The Faerie Queene* for an image of the poem's own negation: *The Faerie Queene*, despite, and perhaps because of, its capacity for riotous creation, has always been irresistibly fascinated by what exceeds or escapes it. Here, as throughout his corpus, Spenser gives attention to absence, loss, remains, ruins, and residue, and betrays his endless interest in opposites, negations, and traces left behind.

This issue of *Spenser Review* takes up the topic, "Not the Faerie Queene," to ask its authors and its readers what we might find left in a "place deuoyd" of the Faerie Queene or *The Faerie Queene*. When this topic first occurred to us in an early brainstorming session, we were thrilled at the sheer outrageousness of the concept. Our second, more considered reaction was curiosity: what kind of issue would such a theme create? What sort of positive reality would form itself in the negative space? It has been a genuinely exciting process to help bring together the essays featured here and to observe the ways, both unique and congruent, in which the authors of this issue survey Spenser outside, around, before, beyond, after, and in the shadow of *The Faerie Queene*.

Perhaps the most fundamental consequence of temporarily removing *The Faerie Queene* from the field of vision is letting us better view Spenser's other works. Spenser's non-*Faerie Queene* works are often, as Elisabeth Chaghafi and Richard Danson Brown observe in their essay in this issue, "relegated to a kind of eternal secondariness." As editors of a forthcoming standalone edition of *Complaints* for the Manchester Spenser series, Chaghafi and Brown are well-positioned to offer a strong case for the value of a close study of these non-*Faerie Queene* works, and particularly for a fresh appreciation of the "singularity" of *Complaints* as a book. In their essay "'Looke backe, who list': Reassessing the 1611 Folio Text of *Complaints*," Chaghafi and Brown explore the differences between the 1591 Quarto and 1611 Folio editions of *Complaints* through a searching analysis of the differences between the Quarto and Folio editions, encompassing textual nuances of spelling, punctuation, and meter as well as the cumulative effects of those differences on reader comprehension and experience. In doing so, they persuasively argue that the 1611 Folio of *Complaints* deserves more attention than it has yet received from Spenser critics and editors, and suggest further avenues of exploration for the importance of *Complaints* in understanding how Spenser was received

by his contemporaries and immediate successors.

In keeping with this engagement of Spenserian materiality, Jessica Beckman's study of Spenser's pastoral poems argues that their "unutterable material features" leave a legacy of not only lyrical but also material possibilities for subsequent generations of English pastoral poets. Beckman's essay, "Unspeakable Pastoral," provides a view of Spenser-cum-Colin Clout in his capacities as both a "shepherd-courtier" and a "poet-shepherd," roles which color his full career in terms of what cannot be uttered by an Elizabethan court poet. Through a close engagement with the unspeakable aspects of Thomas Blenerhasset's *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582) and William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613), Beckman demonstrates how the pastoral articulates in its materiality that which it is forbidden to say in the voices of its shepherds.

The next two pieces in the issue, Rebeca Helfer's "A Little Love? Remembering the *Amoretti*, Forgetting *The Faerie Queene*," and Thomas Herron's "'Endlesse Moniment': Elizabeth Boyle, Funerary Monuments, and the Easter Message of *Amoretti*," fruitfully operate in tandem to re-examine the love poetry and its various representations of a faerie queene departed. Both Helfer and Herron take as their objects of study *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, poems which, they argue, monumentalize their female subjects in modes at once in conversation and at odds with the portrayal of *The Faerie Queene*'s monarchical subject. Specifically, the pair of essays offers opposing material models–presence and absence, signified respectively by lingering Petrarchan ruins and empty Christian tombs–for thinking through Spenser's representations of his beloved both in her life and after her inevitable death. Helfer's approach to the art of memory at work in the love poetry is architectural: she counterposes the palatial structure of *The Faerie Queene* and "the little rooms of the *Amoretti*" to argue that both works call on the Petrarchan conceit of ruination, which leaves poems and structures fragmented or "unbuilt" to paradoxically insist on their permanence. Thomas Herron, in turn, revisits *Amoretti and Epithalamion* with attention to its monumental counterpart– not only the epic *Faerie Queene*, but also the Faerie Queene's monumental grave, i.e., the "altar tomb" of Elizabeth Boyle. Herron ingeniously calls on both the material culture of early modern altar tombs and the rhetoric of resurrection in Easter liturgy to illustrate the materiality and theology at work in erecting a monument for Elizabeth, and resurrecting her for eternity in *Amoretti and Epithalamion*.

While technically outside of the themed essays of this issue, two exceptional reviews by Craig Berry and Andrew Hadfield provide exciting windows onto the future of Spenser studies and of literary scholarship more broadly. Berry's review-cum-tour of the *EarlyPrint Project* is an important introduction, by one of its creators, to an invaluable digital tool for philological inquiry into Spenser and other early modern authors. Andrew Hadfield's review of John Guillory's *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study* (2022) provides a view into the book's analysis of the bounds that demarcate the field of literary criticism. Guillory's collection of essays, Hadfield estimates, might be best understood as a sort of tripartite handbook or guide to the discipline, the canon, and the profession, proving enlightening to scholars both young and old.

The final two essays in this review deal with perhaps the most Protean portion of Spenser's corpus, *The Mutabilitie Cantos*. Given its subject matter and its vexed, unstable, and potent connection with *The Faerie Queene*, the *Cantos* are an ideal vehicle through which to explore the concepts of doubleness, alterity, ontology, and mystery implicit in this issue's theme. Both of our final writers engage with the *Cantos* by aligning them with works by other writers, and, in doing so, do otherwise shadow the absent-present epic. Morgan Souza's piece, "Mutability and Mystery: Tracing Figurations of Nature in Edmund Spenser's *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie* and Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*," analyzes the figure of Nature in the *Cantos* against and alongside Bacon's conception of nature in the *Novum Organum* through the lenses of visibility and mystery. Souza's probing analysis reveals that in Spenser and Bacon, who write at the fulcrum of the rise of the new science, we might observe the era's shift from an unknowable Nature, imbued with the divine authority to order the universe, but whose mystery humanity can and must never dare to understand, to a Baconian nature at once hidden and knowable, whose "veil" must be pulled back by an enterprising humanity in order to stave off chaos in the fallen world.

In the appropriately final essay of this issue, James Nohrnberg provocatively interrogates the very concept of finality by theorizing the understudied literary form of the sequel. In "Poetics of the Abbreviated Sequel as Personalized Rebuttal: Reflections on the Disputatious Arguments of the Formally Similar Pieces Following on Spenser's Six Chivalric Legends and Milton's Twelve Book Epic," Nohrnberg classifies *The Mutabilitie Cantos* and John Milton's *Paradise Regained* as brief or "abbreviated" sequels to the

"diffuse" epics *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*, developing an intricate and compelling reading of each as both a rebuttal and an inversion of its predecessors, as well as an opportunity for each author to reflect, and reflect on, the autobiographical mirroring within both the first and sequel texts. In probing the concentric structures of cycles, doubles, and mirrors underlying the sequel poems, Nohrnberg's analysis leads us to new ways of thinking about the long shadow the sequel form casts forward and backward, and the extent to which anything can ever be fully lost, left behind, finished, or negated in literature.

The conclusion to our work on this issue leaves us with the parting thought that, as Protean as Spenser and his Faerie Queene are, so too might our issue's theme, in another turn, have revealed a very different face– as many different faces, perhaps, as there are unexplored facets to the Spenserian corpus. We look forward to the future of the *Spenser Review*, which will continue to benefit from both the voices of future scholarship and from the indelible impressions of those past scholars who, like Arthur, "cast in carefully mynd, / To seek her out with labor, and long tyne, / And neuer vowd to rest, till her [they] fynd" (I.ix.15).

**Notes from the Book Reviews Editor, Tamsin Badcoe:**

In addition to the longer review essays by Craig Berry and Andrew Hadfield, this issue contains a selection of book reviews that between them address a rich range of topics and engage with the matters, modes, and present state of literary criticism. Kat Addis, in her review of Urvashi Chakravarty's *Fictions of Consent: Slavery, Servitude, and Free Service in Early Modern England* (2022), asks us to attend to the paradoxes at the heart of English conceptions of freedom, while Peter Auger, in a review of Michael Ullyot's *The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Early Modern England* (2022), responds to the charged but fragile dynamics shown to exist between exemplary rhetoric and the reception of ideals. Daniel Blank's review of John Drakakis's *Shakespeare's Resources* (2021) then invites us to think about the vital materials that pass between authors' hands and minds as resources for creativity, and Andrew Duxfield's review of Jane Hwang Degenhardt's *Globalizing Fortune on the Early Modern Stage* (2022) addresses the manner in which global travel and commerce charged theatrical practices with newly forged understandings of risk. Shannon Kelley offers a reading of Jessica Rosenberg's *Botanical*

*Poetics: Early Modern Plant Books and the Husbandry of Print* (2022), which traces sensitive connections between the "vertues" of printerly labors and plant life, and Bernice Mittertreiner Neal's review of Caroline Bicks's *Cognition and Girlhood in Shakespeare's World* (2022) reveals the capable, vigorous, and disruptive cognitive work of early modern adolescent girls. Anna Reynolds works with Laurie Maguire's *The Rhetoric of the Page* (2020) to consider readerly encounters with the latent signifying potential of blank spaces and the printerly conventions that determine their locations, and finally Naya Tsentourou offers a review of Tessie Prakas's *Poetic Priesthood in the Seventeenth Century* (2022) that meditates on the sacred meaning-making of poetic invention and its radical capacity to act as a mode of ministry.