

Spenser's Green World

Alfred K. Siewers

Abstract Northrop Frye's 60-year-old theory of a "green world" tradition in early English literature can be adapted productively today to environmental literary criticism, which enables an understanding of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* as an environmental text. Understood today in light of ecocritical theory including ecosemiotics, and placed in a more cosmopolitan context than Frye's theory allowed, *The Faerie Queene* can be re-read with the landscape of the archipelago centered on the Irish Sea as its central character. The iconographic mirroring emphasized in its proems and the Mutabilitie Cantos can be unpacked as reflecting a view of cosmic networks expressing a triadic semiotics at odds with both Scholastic and modern scientific metaphysics--a kind of apophatic theological transformation of Derridean notions of deconstruction, all in accord with notions of environmental phenomenology and ecosemiotics today. The contrast between the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis, unfolding into the famous scenes on Mount Acidale and Arlo Hill, reveals an eco poetic landscape increasingly rooted in Spenser's encounter with Ireland. The resulting ecocritical reading relates earlier Insular literary roots and non-Augustinian patristic influences on the poem to efforts in environmental humanities to subvert the totalizing metaphysics of Western science today.



Spenser's Green World

About 60 years ago in a famous essay, literary critic Northrop Frye argued that England had produced in the late medieval and early modern period a distinctive type of comedy that he called "the green world drama." Frye argued that this was a fourth specific type of comedy in Western cultural history, the earlier ones being Greek Old and New Comedy, and medieval Christian comedy, which he identified with Dante's *Commedia*. He was of course speaking of comedy in the Classical sense of involving resurrection or rebirth of one type or another. Using examples from Shakespearean plays—mainly the comedies and romances (as well as Falstaff's involvement in the histories), but most notably *A Midsummer Night's Dream*--and also Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*--he argued that the English literary "green world" from its basis in rural folk traditions shaped an experience of two overlapping worlds.¹ Frye wrote that "the conception of a second world bursts the boundaries of Menandrine comedy" yet without "eternal forms or divine revelation" in any Dantean or Scholastic sense, involving "a wonderful contrapuntal intermingling of two orders of existence" making "us wonder if it is not the normal world that is the real Saturnalia," while letting "each world seem unreal when seen by the light of the other."² It is in fact *The Faerie Queene* that Frye cites (though briefly) as exemplifying this "wonderful contrapuntal" by its intermingling of the world of English history with the "green world" of Faeryland.³

It is my thesis that Spenser's "green world" (as described earlier by Frye) can be re-read productively with an ecocritical approach that recognizes the environment of the Irish Sea archipelago (the British Isles centered around the Irish Sea) as the central character of the poem, but also the poem's use of "overlay landscape" (what Frye called the contrapuntal motion of two worlds) as shaping an archipelagic model for eco-poetic practice of landscape today. As the poem increasingly becomes grounded in Irish landscape, culminating in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, it embraces a triadic approach to symbolism--intermingling text, physical landscape, and Otherworld or Faerie landscape related to non-Augustinian Christian traditions--that parallels the triadic model for

environmental semiosis (meaning-making) in the new field of ecosemiotics. By highlighting those parallels, the "green world" tradition becomes more than what Frye sketched out two generations ago. It shapes a text that can be read as challenging the binary environmental semiotics of both medieval Scholasticism and of secular science as a metaphysical system. As this tradition is exemplified by Spenser, to revise Frye, "both worlds [the human and the green world] seem more real by light of the other." The basis of ecosemiotics is just such a realization of how sign-making is definitional of life and spans human and non-human forms, even, some argue, to non-sentient life forms that nevertheless still "sign."

Read in this light, Spenser's environmental green world or triadic overlay landscape also relates to concerns of contemporary environmental phenomenology with developing an ecological grounding for language. This relationship reveals itself in the poem's way of paradoxically providing an earth-grounded response from apophatic theology to the uncertain border of language and physicality highlighted by Derridean deconstruction. This study will examine a correlation between Spenserian mirror imagery--in the deep structure of the poem expressed in its proems, *Mutabilitie Cantos*, and overall setting--and non-Augustinian patristic traditions of iconography, the latter especially from the Christian Dionysian tradition and derived both from early Irish and English literary backgrounds and Spenser's circle of Reformation scholarship. I will examine the progressive grounding of the poem in the Irish landscape, as demonstrated in the sequence from the conflicting Bower of Bliss and Garden of Adonis to Mount Acidale and Arlo Hill, as part of this mirroring iconography. Finally, the English literary "green world" exemplified by *The Faerie Queene* will be considered as a potential help for what the polemic *The Death of Environmentalism* called a fatal lack of cultural imaginative engagement in today's environmental movement.⁴ Environmental philosopher Bruce Foltz has called this problem a lack of modern cultural habitation in the earth, and sums it up in this way:

[W]hat if it is scientific objectivity (as metaphysics, and hence as irretrievably bound up with technology and control, reflected

strikingly in the cybernetic notion of 'ecosystem') that is itself at the root of the problem? ...[I]t is not a matter of giving up technological devices or of not paying heed to scientific findings, but simply of refusing their claims of metaphysical ultimacy. Even more important, however, is seeing that for those who would learn how to re-inhabit the earth, it is only poetic discourse and modes of sensibility—not as something rarefied but as they infuse the everyday—that are capable of bringing about and maintaining the new relations that the earth itself and all the modes of nature call for...⁵

Ecopoetic traditions expressed in *The Faerie Queene* provide a model for understanding how “poetic discourse and modes of sensibility... infuse the everyday” in ways relevant today for encouraging a cultural re-inhabiting of the earth.

Into the Woods

First, this enterprise involves re-reading Spenser's work ecocritically with setting as its focus, as described by Lawrence Buell in his criteria for ecocentric reading.⁶ Setting in the work can be read contiguously with contexts beyond the text, both cultural and environmental, as in Timo Maran's notion of “nature-text.”⁷ This notion parallels the environmental philosopher Evan Thompson's concern with *ecopoeisis* as involving a shaping of the human mind reciprocally with its ecosystems, and thus potentially an environmental empathy cued by cultural narrative.⁸ Ecosemiotics further explains ecopoetics as fostering a triadic relationship with nature for human symbolism, rather than a dyadic process, in *semiosis* or meaning-making.⁹ Thus, instead of a binary of culture versus nature, or archetype and analogue, we have a three-way interrelation of text, nature, and (following Frye) the “green world” in *The Faerie Queene*.

Within the poem itself, from Canto One of Book One, the text shapes a framework of woods as prime setting for its “green world.” Paul Piehler noted how this prevalence of woods throughout *The Faerie Queene* reflects the greater prevalence of forest in Ireland rather

than England in Spenser's day, although the process of deforestation of Ireland had spanned centuries and was well advanced, so it may reflect Spenser's antiquarian impulse as well.¹⁰ But this is our first indication that the landscape of Ireland—contiguously interwoven with the other islands and elements of its archipelago, whose center floating in the Gulf Stream can never be clearly either land, water, or air—will be the central character of this romance epic. That in turn raises the likelihood that Spenser's central feminine figures, who are associated with the "green world" of the forest-land entwined with Britain, Ireland, and Faery, reflect to some degree a familiar theme of early Irish (and derivative Middle English) literature associated with the indigenous "Otherworld" in non-Augustinian Christian contexts—namely the sovereignty goddess of the land, interwoven with Marian typology.¹¹

Our first experience of the woods is the sinister setting of Error's Den. Yet as Book One unfolds, we also find figures of noble animals and savages in the woods who can be a help as well, and we realize that the frame of forestland entwines a contiguity of Faery, biblically inspired Eden-lands resonating with *translatio imperii* from Byzantium, probably the Eden Valley in the Lake District of England, and ultimately the neighborhood of Spenser's estate in wild Munster.¹² Indeed, the opening book of Redcrosse Knight in the Wandering Woods, the knight of holiness and his relation with the veiled Una, fuses a significant biblical tradition of overlay landscape with the British islands. This fusion is seen in Canto Ten of Book One when the knight's discovered human lineage as *Georgos*, interpreted as ploughman, remains melded with his previously believed identity as an elf and his unfolding identity as the historic St. George (who actually lived in Asia) fighting the dragon to become patron saint of England. Thus, London, Elizabeth's center with the wandering woods of Windsor nearby, Cleopolis as Gloriana's fairy capital, and the New Jerusalem are integrated in the ultimate Otherworld landscape of the poem. This dynamic landscape cannot be objectified, and it places off-center the metropolitan cultural zone of England, amid a strangely forested landscape larger than any royal park, somehow contiguous with the Holy Land—all like Spenser's self-imagined situation in Ireland. Cleopolis as London is "real"

geography to the audience for Spenser's poem at court, and yet increasingly unreal to him in the realm of Faery that he experiences as home in Ireland, which is thus triangulated to the fairyland of native Otherworld traditions as well as the New Jerusalem of biblical beliefs undergirding them.

The progressive uncovering of *The Faerie Queene's* setting as Ireland can further be seen in a series of emblematic central places in the poem that also function as performative practices of place in the experience of the reader. The contrast between the Bower of Bliss in Book Two and the Garden of Adonis in Book Three illustrate this sequential "grounding" in the first half of the work, following upon what has already been briefly noted from Book One. When Sir Guyon, the knight of Temperance, and his companion the Palmer, figure of Reason, voyage by boat to the Bower of Bliss, they travel far from the contiguous forest framework of Faery into the sea and arrive at an artificial world of manmade nature. The sea is filled with peril:

The waves come rolling, and the billowes rore
 Outrageously, as they enraged were,
 Or wrathfull Neptune did them drive before
 His whirling charet, for exceeding feare:
 For not one puffe of wind there did appear,
 That all the three [with the boatman] thereat woxe much afraid,
 Vnweeting, what such horroure straunge did reare.
 Eftsoones they saw an hideous hoast arrayd,
 Of huge Sea monsters, such as leving sence dismayd. (2.12.22)¹³

The numerous temptations and dangers on their sea voyage differ from the often paradise-like image of the "desert in the sea" fostered by early Irish monastic literary culture. The latter translated the Eastern Mediterranean desert of holy ascetics like St. Antony (who reportedly compared the desert to a spiritual sea in which monastics swim) to Northwestern Europe's archipelago (stretching from the main islands of Britain and Ireland to smaller islands around them and up towards Iceland).¹⁴ The Latin term *desertum* became identified with the sea in a way that evoked spiritual riches,

and the Irish Otherworld-in-the-sea appeared memorably in *Immram Brain* or "The Voyage of Bran."

I have suggested elsewhere how the image of the spiritual sea, which signified divine Nature in the sense understood by Eastern church fathers and by the early medieval Irish philosopher John Scottus Eriugena, was translated ecopoetically from Eastern deserts to other regional landscapes (notably the forests of what became Russia and the sea of Europe's northwest islands), and a similar process works poetically here in the shift from desert to archipelagic forest.¹⁵ Indeed the forest functions as a kind of archipelagic sea melding geographies and elements, like the earlier desert image, but adapted to Spenser's situation in Ireland. It spans lands with both angelic and demonic denizens, as the forest of adventure does in earlier French Arthurian romances. When Guyon and the Palmer pursue the heart of evil, they leave the forest frame to encounter on an actual sea intensified opposition from various evils. Demonstrating Frye's green-world tradition, *The Faerie Queene* continuously brings the forest of Arthurian romance into imagined historical geography (as did Malory earlier). Spenser likely was influenced by the deforestation of Ireland around him to imagine the forest as an ancient Otherworld. Still, the perils of the sea on the voyage to the Bower of Bliss suggest a continually emerging focus on the landscape of Ireland in the poem because of the embedded insight that there is a corrupting culture beyond the waters that border the natural world of the forest. The woods offer a poetic landscape of resistance to the Atlantic colonialism emanating from the metropolis, one directly identified with Spenser's persona as rustic Anglo-Irish poet on the periphery of English civilization.

Out of the Woods into the Bower of Bliss

Throughout the work Spenser clearly is neither happy with the artificiality of the court in the metropolis of empire, with its objectifying courtly love, nor with the threat from the Spanish Empire, with its (from his perspective) objectifying idolatry. Both are, of course, located across the sea from Ireland. The forest, an environment that is "given" rather than made, expresses, by contrast, a "natural" embodied place of learning through spiritual experience

of potentially good and bad encounters with life, the latter including conflict with materialist beings who do not engage in cosmic semiosis but merely objectify other beings and the world in virtual fancy. The Bower of Bliss, across the sea and away from the forest framework, focuses Spenser's emerging ecopoetic landscape of Ireland by differentiation and by being a manmade simulacrum of nature—the ultimate cultural objectification of the world. It is a binarized world of archetype and analogue:

A place pickt out by choice of best alive,
That nature's work by art can imitate:
In which what euer in this worldly state
Is sweete, and pleasing vnto liuing sense,
Or that may dayntest fantasy aggrate,
Was poured forth with plentifull dispence,
And made there to abound with lauish affluence. (2.12.42.3-9)

Its weak outer gate is limned with ivory, a frame of interiorized dreams. And what goes on within the Bower is a semiosis of binarized gazing, of subject beholding and possessing object. There is no environmental semiosis because the process lacks an embodied triadic relation of sign with object and with interpretant (or cultural context). The counterfeit Genius here is a weaver of illusion, the enabler-guide to *The Matrix* so to speak, not the Genius of natural procreation to be found later in the Garden of Adonis, where the poetry conveys (in C.S. Lewis' words) "the deeper truth—that Change is but the mode in which Permanence expresses itself, that Reality (like Adonis) 'is eterne in mutabilitie.'" ¹⁶ By contrast, the world of the Bower of Bliss lies in an Augustinian eternal present involving passive memory of a static all-enveloping time horizon filtered through a transcendently self-reflective narrative. It is always an artificial summer there (as if climate-controlled), whereas in the Garden of Adonis it is spring and harvest seasons at once (almost like a day of Irish weather!), the latter implying a subjective "activist" memory engaging multiple temporal dimensions, the "time-plexity" of environmental phenomenology. ¹⁷ The poem compares the Bower with Eden's pleasures; all entwined with the

experience of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The latter symbolized a knowing without discernment for the Greek and Syriac patristic writers whose works were popular in circles of Reformation scholarship connected with Spenser through Cambridge. The Fall stood for an objectifying gaze that had turned the world into object (2.12.52).¹⁸

Thus the maidens in the fountain display themselves for Guyon's gaze until he is pulled back by the Palmer, whose role as "reason" extends to the classical and patristic sense of reason as a balanced harmony or, in terms of my argument, a practice of a grounded semiotics. Their encouragement of an objectified gaze provides the contrast:

Now when they spyde the knight to slacke his pace,
Them to behold, and in his sparkling face
The secrete signes of kindled lust appeare,
Their wanton merriments they did encrease,
And to him beckned, to approach more neare,
And shewd him many sights, that corage cold could reare.
(2.12.68.4-9)

The reader, too, is potentially entrapped in objectification in this Canto, as one maiden "rather higher did arise, And her two lilly paps aloft displayd," and Guyon's lustful reaction is indicated (2.12.66.6-7). Acrasia herself, the enchantress in the garden, is described holding her lover in such a dyadic objectified gaze (and mode of interpersonal semiotic) as well:

There, whence that Musick seemed heard to bee,
Was the faire Witch her selfe now solacing,
With a new Lover, whom through sorcere
And witchcraft, she from farre did thether bring:
There she had him now laid a slombering,
In secret shade, after long wanton ioyes:
While round about them pleasauntly did sing
Many faire Ladies, and lasciuious boyes,
That euer mixt their song with light licentious toyes. (2.12.72)

From the painted flowers to the sheer body-veil of Acrasia, the semiotic mode of aesthetics in the Bower of Bliss is what we today might call extreme naturalism, representative, "realistic" art that is not iconographic but a "picture show" as Spenser might term it. It draws the eye in, so that the self becomes captured in the art, unlike early medieval models of exteriorizing iconography expressed by different schools in Irish illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells as well as in Byzantine iconography. The Bower's "picture show" is "unhealthy" in Lewis's view, a bland binary of "only male prurience and female provocation."¹⁹ Its cued dyadic visuality involves a coding of the environment to be interpreted interiorly by the individual in a "private" body, ultimately inspired by Augustinian and Scholastic emphases on interiorized binary semiosis.²⁰ By contrast, iconographic modes, evident in the Garden of Adonis, parallel in visual practice the Otherworld stories that formed the basis for the Anglo-Celtic "green world" tradition in which Spenser writes, as well as the alternative visual practices of the Byzantine world. Using an inverse perspective, they cue a kind of textual stereographic effect where the story/image metonymically relates to physical geography existing in a place between audience and text, in which the symbolism forms itself more relationally (and, following ecosemiotics, triadically, in text/object/"Otherworld"). As Gordon Teske put it, "Spenser's allegorical rhetoric... is designed to provoke the reader, at every level, to conceptualize spatially a narrative experienced in time," which takes the text beyond allegory, and even the so-called "picture theory" of language, to experiential and relational iconography.²¹ Both the visual and textual expression of this kind of iconography grew from a theology and cosmology evident in Spenser's work, whether through the long-lived Insular "green world" tradition tracing back to the Celtic Otherworld, or to Spenser's probable Greek patristic sources or influences, or most likely both.

The Garden of Adonis and Cosmic Semiosis

The Garden of Adonis draws heavily on the iconographic theology and cultural perspectives on nature lying behind this “overlay landscape” effect, as Harold Weatherby’s work details.²² It draws us closer to the realization in the final books of *The Faerie Queene* that its focus is the landscape of Ireland, although it is one in a series of iconographic mirrors moving the reader experientially toward that focus. It is as if we, like Redcrosse Knight at the beginning of the poem, are wandering through a virtual sense of reality and the poetry is grounding us beyond that solipsistic simulacrum. In effect this reflects the view of the Greek patristic writings that inform Spenser: the Fall was a kind of objectification of the world, not the cause of Augustinian-style Original Sin. The way out, according to this tradition of exegesis, is through a process of cosmic semiosis known as *theosis*, empowered by Christ’s Incarnation. *Theosis* thus enables us to become gods, achieving our “dominion” or sovereignty over nature (as in Genesis) by being able, in the image of God, to read and experience the cosmic symbolism of Nature instead of exerting a dominion of tyranny or material control and exploitation. In the process, we realize ourselves in that cosmic symbolism, in the *logoi* of the *Logos*, which are also the energies of the Triune God--both the basic essence and harmony of all things and their redemption through that process of cosmic semiosis or *ecopoiesis*. Networks of non-human “hierarchies” of life that we plug into through such reading/experience of the *logoi*-energies (*logos* having a range of meanings including word, story, purpose, harmony, energy) are “spotless mirrors” of activities of the unknowable divine essence, its activities and emanations in the natural world, according to the Christian Dionysius. The latter influenced early Christian writers from St. Maximus the Confessor to the Irish philosopher Eriugena, in a tradition widely available to and read by Spenser’s Cambridge circle.²³ Engaging with that cosmic symbolism in embodied practice makes possible a non-Augustinian patristic version of Foltz’s “re-inhabiting the earth.” In the relation of cosmic images and mirrors to *logoi* lies a cosmically ascetic

connection between words, ideas and images that constitute ecopoetics.

The whole Garden of Adonis section begins to realize this ecopetic effect of intermingling poem with cosmic symbolism, proceeding to its culmination in tandem with ever closer cues to the Irish landscape focus of the text in the subsequent Mount Acidale and Arlo Hill scenes. Unlike the Bower of Bliss, the Garden seems to be contiguous, if distantly, with the woods inhabited by Belphoebe and Diana, and equatable with the "gardins" of Adonis mentioned earlier in the poem as the Elfin Eden. Indeed Adonis was taken to be etymologically related to Eden, which in many ways forms the prototype (especially through the theological cosmology just sketched above) for literary Insular overlay landscapes. Early exegetes identified its rivers (the name of one of which probably lies in Guyon's name) with geographically known watersheds. As with Spenser's fairyland as a whole, the geographic relation of the landscape to the dynamic confluence of those rivers was ambiguous in contemporary postlapsarian terms, but the identification remained. Indeed, the Celtic Otherworld as the progenitor of fairyland often seems to be described as a prelapsarian place, as Celticist John Carey notes.²⁴ In the Garden of Adonis's "fruitful soyle of old," the poet's persona indicates he has found experience of Paradise, referencing likely in part his experience of love with his wife celebrated later (in Irish contexts) on Mount Acidale (3.6.31). The lead-in to the section on the Garden involves the virgin births of Belphoebe and Amoret (the latter growing up in the Garden), which prepares the way for the paradisiacal fecundity and transfigurations of the physical world described in the Garden. This is "the first seminary/Of all things that are born to liue and die,/According to their kinds" – yet subject to marvelous transfigurations (3.6.30.406). If the Bower of Bliss reflects the objectifying effect of an immature and disobedient eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, then the Garden of Adonis echoes in part the Tree of Life identified by Greek patristic writers with both Christ, the *Logos*, and "contemplation" – the Tree being the *Logos* whose branches were filled with *logoi* like birds.²⁵

But when the genuine procreative Genius there "letteth out to wend,/All that to come into the world desire," are the "naked babes"

really leaving the Garden, or are they coming into the Garden from the chaos “in the dark wombe of the world,” described as hateful yet also perhaps correlating with the creative divine darkness of the Dionysian apophatic writings (3.6.32, 36)? Is the Garden, like the Celtic Otherworld, also the world when semiotically experienced? St. Ephrem the Syrian and St. Gregory of Nyssa articulated an Eastern patristic view of Paradise as being atop a mountain encompassing the earth, an analogue to the early Irish Otherworld that also is related to the “divine energies” cosmology.²⁶ The release and return of the “naked babes” and others choosing to go into the world could also be considered a process of metamorphosis and transfiguration within the Paradise overlaying the earth when its cosmic semiosis is experienced, the “thousand year” process being a reference to the era of the Church in the seventh millennium. (3.6.33). The changes described can also be read as a type of the resurrection and renewal to be experienced by all Creation:

Ne needs there Gardiner to sett, or sow,
 To plant or prune: for of their own accord
 All things, as they created were, doe grow,
 And yet remember well the mighty word,
 Which first was spoken by th' Almighty lord,
 That bad them to increase and multiply

 That sustaunce is eterne, and bideth so,
 Ne when the life decayes, and forme does fade,
 Doth it consume and into nothing goe,
 But changed is, and often altred to and froe. (3.6.34:1-6, 37:6-9)

The command to multiply in Genesis, as explicated by St. Basil of Caesarea in the Greek exegetical tradition, was taken again to be a process of cosmic semiosis or embodied meaning-making rather than one of necessarily physical population growth, especially if unbalanced.²⁷ The prelapsarian sense of procreation expressed a cosmic semiotic (or ecosemiotic) relation of form and substance, change and stasis combined, articulated most fully in the non-Augustinian tradition by St. Gregory of Nyssa, whose work like those

of many other writers in that tradition was accessible to Spenser's circle.²⁸ The virgin births of Belphoebe and Amoret express this. In his landmark study of patristic influences in Spenser, Weatherby tries to make a fine point between influences on the poem of Augustine's view that there was sex in Paradise, and Gregory's view that sex emerged in the Fall from the foreshadowing division of human beings into male and female, a separation to be overcome in a cosmic return to God (as in the hermaphroditic figure of Nature in Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos*).²⁹ But really all four segments that involve procreation related to the Garden in Canto Six of Book Three (the solar virgin births, the cycles of life through the garden, the discussion of substance and form, and the story of Venus and Adonis and their offspring) together are consistent with the non-Augustinian practice relating an ascetic cosmic semiosis--within or without marriage--to fecundity and transfiguration. This becomes especially evident in the poem's culminating description of Nature as divine, in the context of the Eastern patristic doctrine of the divine energies (*logoi*) in Creation. For Spenser indeed, unlike Plato, "change is a means of regeneration rather than decay."³⁰

Time does trouble the Garden of Adonis, though. Greek patristic writers, more complexly than Augustine and Latin Scholastics, teased out the notion of overlaying human time, created eternal time (perhaps that of the Garden), and the everlasting non-time of God, as Nature. This mix was reflected in the earlier Irish Otherworld tradition. In the Garden, spring and harvest always mingle (6.3.42). The time-plexity of activist memory expressed here fits with the other criteria for environmental phenomenological or eco-poetic writing: layers of landscape. In the poem Eden, and ultimately Ireland through mirroring with other aspects of the poem to come, merge with a practice of nature arising from the text. The transfiguration-yet-stasis in the Garden discloses that practice identifying itself with personal cosmic semiosis through poetry. Lewis called it "the deeper truth—that Change is but the mode in which Permanence expresses itself, that Reality (like Adonis) 'is eterne in mutabilitie.'"

Reflecting in part patristic readings in which the Song of Solomon's erotic love cosmically meant the embodied love of Christ

or divine Wisdom (in female grammatical form) for the bride that is the Church (often identified with the earth), in the Garden there is "immortal blis" in which "Franckly each Paramor his leman knows," including among non-human beings as well, such as the blossoms that climb the trees (3.6.41-42). The tree as a cosmically erotic symbol, related to Spenser's woods, echoes how Greek patristics identified the Tree of Life as the "All Tree" or "every tree" based on the Septuagint text, as well as with the *Logos* and contemplation, in the sense of *theoria* as participation in active cosmos semiosis.³¹ In effect we are in a cosmic rhizome that is also a cosmic tree in the Garden of Adonis, combining the immanent and transcendent as does the Cross as Tree of Life, while contradicting Deleuzean distinctions between those two modes.³²

A garland of myrtle trees on the mount in the middle of the Garden bestows a kind of marvelous dew reminiscent of the sap of the Tree of Life in Book One. In the thickest part of that grove, sexually symbolic of phallus and pudendum, lies an arbor made "not by art," mirroring or shadowing the pavilion of the hermaphroditic Nature in the Mutabilitie Cantos. Here we have a Paradise by *theosis* within mortality that is still not fully realized cosmically as in the Mutabilitie Cantos. There, however, it will be fully identified with the landscape of Ireland, thirty miles from the poet's home, after the Faerie Queene or sovereignty goddess of the land has become identified with Spenser's wife Elizabeth on Mount Acidale. In the meantime, Venus and Adonis in their love in the Garden of Adonis form an incarnational image of love and resurrection transfiguring death:

All be he subject to mortalitie,
 Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,
 And by succession made perpetuall,
 Transformed oft, and changed diuerslie:
 For him the Father of all formes they call:
 Therefore needs more he liue, that liuing giues to all. (3.6.37.4-9)

Commentators have noted how Adonis here seems to be identified with matter rather than form, a twist on conventional identification of men with form and women with matter in relation to procreation, even as he still is called "father of forms."³³ The ambiguity makes sense in relation to the Incarnation. An ambiguous intermingling of matter and form reflects the complex coming together of Christ and His Church, the Pauline husband who would lay down his life for his family and the wife who is to obey him, and, as Lewis observed, that of substance and form. Cupid, perhaps here the offspring of the couple, is presented as grounded and balanced in the Garden, unlike his role in virtual environments such as Busirane's castle. In fact, we seem to have an intergenerational family portrait including Cupid's and Psyche's daughter Pleasure, who is raised with Amoret, who will leave the garden for fairyland's apparently contiguous court and then for adventures in her faithful love for Scudamore. The love of Venus and Adonis, as the dynamic of the Garden itself, is again a triadic semiotic with Cupid as putative offspring. But the canto also closes with a cosmic thread by mentioning that next will come more on the story of the love of Florimell and Marinell, the love of the earth and the sea. The text itself relates the physical world of "wild" Munster in Spenser's home region to the green world of fairyland or Paradise, and it does so not through Scholastic analogy but through a non-Augustinian patristic mystery of energy that is cosmic semiosis. The participatory experience of *meaning* transpersonally on earth relates to the story of Creation that is the source of the poem's iconographic theology.

Mirrors of Landscape

Book Three of *The Faerie Queene*, in which the Garden of Adonis rests, begins with a proem about iconography. It tells us that this book is about Chastity, "fairest vertue" "shrined in my Soueraines brest," so that the need for fetching it "from Faery" is questioned, as Ladies looking to the Sovereign as exemplar

Neede but behold the pourtraict of her hart,
If pourtrayed it might bee by any liuing art. (3.P.1.2-5, 8-9)

That's the rub, for "liuing art may not least part expresse, / Nor life-resembling pencil it can paynt" (3.P.2.1-2). It requires instead an iconographically transpersonal mirror,

That I in coloured showes may shadow itt,
And antique praies vnto present fitt"\. (3.P.3.8-9)

Spenser asks Sir Walter Raleigh for "A little leaue vnto a rusticke Muse/To sing his mistress prayse," referring to that Anglo-Irish neighbor's symbolic rendering of Elizabeth as Cynthia, requesting that that figure in turn not refuse

In mirrours more than one her selfe to see,
But either Gloriana let her chuse,
Or in Belphoebe fashioned to bee:
In th'one her rule, in th'other her rare chastitee. (3.P.5.2-3, 6-9)

In four out of the six proems to the books, we see reference to mirrors (the first three and the last), and in the culminating *Mutabilitie Cantos* as well, the latter referring to Nature's face as a kind of radiant glass. These mirror references, central to the poem's function as iconographic text, reflect the influential Dionysian notion already referenced of cosmic hierarchies as direct networks of the radiance of the divine energies in the cosmos--not vertical hierarchies or personal ladders as interpreted by Scholasticism and modernity, but networks of energies that are essentially semiotic in a deeply ecological sense. Those shining mirrors iconographically reflect cosmic networks rather than solidifying interiority.

It is the proem to Book Two, on temperance, that makes explicit the necessary relation between such mirror-iconography and the landscape of Ireland, which the multiple mirrors described in Book Three then extend through the explicit connection between Gloriana the queen of fairyland and Belphoebe of the forests. In the second proem we read of how some may question the "antique history" therein,

Sith none, that breatheth liuing aire, does know
Where is that happy land of Faery. (2.P. 1.6-7)

Yet, the poem counters, "That of the world least part to us is red": the world is a mystery, in which many new regions are recently "discovered" (to the English at any rate), such as the Amazon valley in South America and Virginia in North America (2.P.1.2). "

Why then should witless man so much misweene
That nothing is but that which he hath seene?
.....
Of faery lond yet if he more inquire
By certain signes here sett in sondrie place
He may it fynde. (2.P.3.4-5, 4.1-3a)

In other words, the process of encountering the realm of faery is one of engaging signs in semiosis and one related to the land, a cosmic semiosis again, not merely an objective experience of the senses:

And thou, O fayrest Princess vnder sky,
In this fayre mirrhour maist behold thy face
And thine owne realms in lond of Faery,
And in this antique ymage thy great auncestry. (2.P.4.6-9)

Here, too, the poem is a mirror, but one for both the face of the Sovereign and her realms, the mirror being fairyland, an ancient image of the ancestry of the Sovereign. The poem becomes much more than a paean to Queen Elizabeth but unfolds here as a landscape, and its imagery likewise multiplies while still related to the land, as noted in the proem to Book Three. The proem for Book One refers to the queen both conventionally as a goddess, "heavenly bright," and as "Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine" (4.1-2). So the queen herself is, like the poem, an image of grace and majesty divine, as ultimately in the Dionysian networks are all beings. The proem asks that the poetry be raised, apparently by Clio the muse of history in an acknowledgement of the overlay landscape aspect of the poem,

To think of that true glorious type of thine,
 The argument of mine afflicted stile:
 The which to heare, vouchsafe, O dearest dread a while.
 (1.P.4.7-9)

The verse addresses the goddess, but who is her true glorious type? And who is the goddess? Is Gloriana the "true type," a poetic fulfillment, of Elizabeth? Or in ambiguously not addressing the queen by name, is the verse addressing Gloriana as either typed or fulfilled by Elizabeth? The ambiguity shapes Frye's "green world" effect. As the further explication of this mirroring in the following two original books of the poem points out, it relates inextricably to a landscape that by the end of the final three books is clearly Ireland's. In the famous high medieval and early modern notion of "the king's body," the land was thought of as the body of the monarch. Yet here the iconography suggests that the monarch is the body of the land, an icon-mirror of the land rather than a naturalistic picture of it. The personification of the non-human, in giving the land a communicative and speaking face, supports again a poetic process of cosmic or environmental semiosis (or, as Lewis put it, "For the symbolist it is we who are the allegory").³⁴

The proem to Book Six includes a summation of this process prior to the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. It starts with the voice of the poet talking about his own walking through "the delightfull land of Faery," on ways "no one can find, but who was taught them by the Muse," with an apparent pun on both metrical and literal foot (6.P.1.2, 2.9). It is on the balance between the two feet (so to speak) that the landscape of the poem ultimately rests ecosemiotically. The poem asks for disclosure of the "sacred nursery of vertue" derived "from heauenly seedes of bounty soueraine" planted in the earth (6.P.3.1,7). The verse suggests that courtesy is the fairest flower in that nursery, and, as Book Six unfolds from romance epic to pastoral, that virtue seems to extend to harmony with the countryside as well. Unlike Virgil's imperial pastoral, however, this landscape is not that of the state. In Canto Ten at Mount Acidale it is the country lass with whom the Irish country poet is enamored who replaces the queen as sovereign, while throughout the work fairyland as an overlay

landscape—like its ancient progenitor the Celtic Otherworld—remains a subversion of any totalizing objectification of the land, political or otherwise. Still, the proem notes in its fifth stanza, today we can only really see true courtesy as if through a glass or mirror that superficially (as in a dyadic self-reflecting mirror's view) deceives, or objectifies.

But where shall I in all Antiquity
 So faire a patterne finde, where may be seene
 The goodly praise of Princely curtesie,
 As in your selfe, O soueraine Lady Queene,
 In whose pure minde, as in a mirrour sheene,
 It showes, and with her brightnesse doth inflame
 The eyes of all, which thereon fixed beene;
 But meriteth indeede an higher name:
 Yet so from low to high vplifted is your name.

Then pardon me, most dreaded Soueraine,
 That from your selfe I doe this vertue bring,
 And to your selfe doe it returne againe:
 So from the Ocean all riuers spring,
 And tribute backe repay as to their King.
 Right so from you all goodly vertues well
 Into the rest, which round about you ring,
 Faire Lords and Ladies, which about you dwell,
 And doe adorne your Court, where courtesies excel. (6.P.6-7)

The mirroring here iconographically evokes a virtue from the image that itself earlier is described as an image of grace, and so, ultimately, the image of God in all human beings that in Greek patristics connects as well to the natural world. The poetic mirroring lets such empathetic courtesy flow in relations, like rivers, returning again to the ocean. This is triadic mirroring of poem, queen, and landscape (as the latter unfolds in the Book). The poetic imagery of the ocean here echoes the desert-in-the-sea of early Irish Sea literatures and recalls the latter's parallels to the poem's image of the woods, from which now emerge the clearings (in the quasi-

Heideggerean sense of gathering of place as dynamic ecopoetic experience) of the Mount Acidale and Arlo Hill scenes that weave together the landscapes of fairyland and Ireland. The sequential mirrorings of the poem's iconography again is a process of poetic grounding in the landscape, not through a metaphysics of scientific objectivity, but through an ecopoesis of embodied semiotic participation.

Such, too, is the meaning behind the piping of the rustic Irish poet Colin Clout on Mount Acidale in Book Six. Across the last three books of the poem as a whole, the iconographic narrowing of focus to Ireland's landscape as the grounding of the verse includes the pageant of the rivers in Book Four. Rivers are emblematic of Spenser's work as a poet of nature across his career. In the pageant, the poem seems to justify the addition of the Irish rivers as if they are unwanted guests to some, but they nonetheless join in celebrating a cosmic dimension of friendship and marriage, an environmental empathy leading to the union of Florimell and Marinell as earth and sea. In Book Five, the theme of justice is played out notoriously in relation to the political situation in Ireland, which rises to form the central background of the poem. But in the final scene of Book Six, Mount Acidale, a Classical Greek provenance complete with Graces yet centered on a rural Irish poet and his love, foreshadows in its ecopoetic landscape Arlo Hill (or Munster's own Mount Galtymore) as the culminating scene of *The Faerie Queene* as a whole.

Ecopoetics on Mount Acidale

In Canto X of Book Six, the elfin knight of courtesy, Callidore, continues the pastoral detour from his quest on behalf of the Faerie Queene and from dyadic "painted show," and instead focuses on his love for Pastorell in the countryside. The poem tells us:

Ne certes mote he greatly blamed be —
 From so high step to stoupe vnto so low.
 For who had tasted once (as ofte did he)
 The happy peace, which there doth ouerflow,
 And prou'd the perfect pleasures, which doe grow

Amongst poore hyndes, in hils, in woods, in dales,
 Would neuer more delight in painted show
 Of such false bliesse, ad there is set for stales,
 T'entrap vnwary fooles in their eternall bales.

While wandering in this landscape, Callidore comes to a place bordered with a wood whose trees form “spredding pauillions” in which “all that euer was by natures skil, Deuized to worke delight, was gathered there,” including nymphs and faeries sitting by the fountain. As the annotations in Hamilton’s edition observe, at last “the aboriginals of the heavily colonized faery land make their debut”; we finally see the fairy population apart from individual questing knights.³⁵ Yet all this is near the “spacious plaine” atop Mount Acidale, a name and site from Classical Greek mythology associated with Venus and the Graces, as the poem explains. The knight finds a shepherd piping to a troupe of dancing ladies. The objectifying gaze of the courtly lover, reactivated even as he is in temporary pastoral retirement, leaves him envying his own eyes, we are told, as they see:

An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
 All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight. (6.10.11.8-9)

In the middle of them dance the three Graces, who in Christian mythography become faith, hope, charity overlaid on their Classical names and roles explicated by Colin. In the middle of the moving circle (described in terms that echo the description of the mirroring of Elizabeth in Book Six’s proem), “enchaced” as if a gem on a ring, is a Damzell. The whole is described as the constellation of Ariadne’s crown, the Corona Borealis. In the ultimate ecosemiotic move, nature and art intertwine in the dance.

The piper in the midst is the Irish rustic Colin Clout, an Irish poetic persona of Spenser. We are asked, “Who knowes not Colin Clout?” just as later in the Mutabilitie Cantos we will be asked who knows not Arlo Hill, which is an Irish site bearing Spenser’s poetic moniker (6.10.16.4). Colin’s beloved “is present there with [him] in place,” and the place is indeed a quasi-Heideggerian place of

happening--of the fourfold convergence of earth, sky, mortals and immortals, central to Heidegger's ecopoetics (6.10.17.8).³⁶ The lady in the center is advanced to be one of the Graces. Callidore, overcome by his objectifying gaze, forgets his resolution to remain hidden and moves toward the group, which suddenly vanishes in a manner reminiscent of Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale," leading an irate Colin to break his pipe. The coming into place of the landscape cannot be forced by Callidore: "For being gone, none can them bring in place,/But whom they of them selues list so to grace" (6.10.20.405). Whether the graces were dancing two facing away or two facing toward Colin (or the reader/audience) remains an issue of contention among scholars, although the best answer seems to be both: The text describes a dynamic encircling and mingling of pagan and Christian iconography of the Graces, involving a dance in which we both give more than we receive and receive more than we give, itself a quasi-ecological symbol amid the pastoral. The shepherd, still speaking as Spenser's persona, begs forgiveness of Gloriana, the Faerie Queene and Elizabeth's alter ego, for singing the praise of his own beloved, "That when thy glory shall be farre displayd/To future age of her this mention may be made" (6.10.28.8-9).

Deep Ecology on Arlo Hill

The final ascent of *The Faerie Queene* is to Arlo Hill, Spenser's poetic name for Mount Galtymore near his home in Munster, where, after traveling through the heavenly spheres with the Titaness Mutabilitie, the poem comes to a dynamic rest grounded in Ireland's landscape. There we hear of another incident of an objectifying gaze set in the woods, that of the foolish Faunus who had surprised Diana, sovereign of woods and forest, while bathing. The result is abandonment of the place (and by extension Ireland) by the nature gods and spirits who pixilated it in olden times, yet Faunus still kept faith with his vow to help the river Molanna join with the river Fanchin. The description of the place before this violation evokes the early Irish Sea zone amid which the archetype of the literary "green world" evolved, "when IRELAND flourished in fame / Of wealths and goodnesse, far aboue the rest / Of all that beare the British

Islands name... the best and fairest Hill that was in all this holy-Islands hights" (7.6.38.1-3; 7:37:6-7). The poem merges Galtymore, the highest mountain in the Galtee mountain range (Spenser's Mole) with the name of the glen of Aherlow below, known as a hideout for unruly rebels and, according to the poem, thieves and wolves. Yet it is here to Arlo in its ancient age, before the objectified fall of the place into a grid bereft of cosmic semiosis due to binarized physical literalism, that divine Nature comes at the end of *The Faerie Queene*. Here Spenser again implicates the objectifying gaze of Elizabethan courtliness as well as an un-semiotic naturalism in the form of Faunus. The effect of this gaze can be paralleled somewhat with that of the alleged idolatry of Scholasticism subscribed to by the Spanish imperial conquistadors and by (in the poet's view) the Catholic Church's manipulation of the Irish people. Yet all still line up ironically in Spenser's verse with his own colonial regime's objectifying ethos and his ambivalence about Elizabeth and her court. Further, the binarizing semiosis of Callidore or Faunus can just as easily be interpreted today, engaging in Buell's ecocritical re-reading of early texts, as the modern Western metaphysics of science: a human culture lacking ecopoetics in Foltz's terms, or without what Aldo Leopold would call a land ethic.³⁷ In the poem's landscape-subversion of the rule of the court and the metropolis lies its validation of a native poetic experience of landscape, echoing Spenser's appreciation (if combined with colonial lack of understanding and condescension) for native Irish poetics in his notorious and unpoetic *A View of the Present State of Ireland*.³⁸

So Nature appears on Arlo Hill, the goddess-yet-hermaphrodite (perhaps echoing the feminine form of the term wisdom in the Song of Solomon, *sophia* in the Septuagint, nonetheless identified with Christ), clearly divine and placed above the Classical gods, paralleled with Christ as the Divine Wisdom or Eriugena's Nature including God--in effect, as Weatherby notes, the uncreated energies personified. She is described as the ultimate triadic mirroring or "image in a glass" (herself as textual sign, the natural world, and the cosmic semiosis of the ecopoetics that is the context for interpreting her):

That well may seemen true: for, well I weene
 That this same day, when she on *Arlo* sat,
 Her garment was so bright and wondrous sheene,
 That my fraile wit cannot deuize to what
 It to compare, nor finde like stuff to that,
 As those three sacred *Saints*, though else most wise,
 Yet on mount *Thabor* quite their wits forgat,
 When they their glorious Lord in strange disguise
 Transfigur'd sawe; his garments so did daze their eyes. (7.7.6.9,
 7.1-9)

We here reach the seventh stanza of the seventh canto of the work, whose open-ended (or unfinished) nature parallels that of Spenser's professed master Geoffrey Chaucer in that foundational English poet's overlay landscape of *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's work ended not in the interior of the cathedral at Canterbury but, in the insular "green world" tradition, perpetually outside on the road and culminating in the Parson's Tale, which cues an experiential ascetic (and hence embodied) penitence on the part of the reader, even including an image of the Tree of Life. Likewise Spenser's romance-epic-turned-pastoral ends not in the Faerie Queene's court as expected with her marriage to Arthur, but out on Arlo Hill in Ireland with Divine Nature, in a poetic process of cosmic semiosis that also richly suggests theosis and ecosemiosis, in what seems almost a non-Western conjunction of text and place. The earth beneath her feet (again perhaps the poetic pun) strewn with flowers, and roots gathered from brooks there by Nymphs, "richer seem'd then any tapestry,/That Princes bowres adorne with painted imagery" (7.7.10.8-9). Mole, the mountains, attires himself with an "Oaken girlond" for her (7.7.11.5). A parallel is drawn between the celebration there and that at the birth of the Graces (which according to Classical mythology included the reconciliation of Jove and the culture-bearer Prometheus, here originator of elves and fairies). In Dionysian terms she is described as "Still moouing, yet vnmoued from her sted; Vnseene of any, yet of all beheld" (7.7.13.304). Before her Mutabilitie now draws the pageant of time, human and natural, its cycle suggesting the eternity of unseen powers in and around the

earth, as Jove suggests in arguing with Mutabilitie, who retorts that even fair Cynthia, figure of Elizabeth, is subject to change.

At the very end of the Book Seven fragment Jove by the comments of the narrative persona is confirmed in his "imperiall see," but this poetic confirmation is accomplished by Nature, the cosmic sovereignty goddess, whose "selfe did vanish, whither no man wist" (7.7.58-59). In Nature's actual decree, it is not Jove who is confirmed, but "all things" who express both steadfastness in their "first estate" as well as change, "turning to themselves at length againe,/Do worke their own perfection so by fate," and so paradoxically "they raigne over change, and doe their states maintaine" (7.7.58.6-9). This is an embodiment in the Irish landscape of the Galtees, Spenser's home region, of the cosmic "spotless mirrors" of the Dionysian hierarchies or networks of *logoi*-energies or divine willings in nature. By embodied participation in those networks of meaning, objectification is subverted and healed. Human experience enters into a transpersonality akin to the self-realizing (in Spenser's terms, dilating) of deep ecology. The modes of time interweave with the mode of non-time in the uncreated semiosis that is cosmic theosis:

For, all that moueth, doth in Change delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight.
(8.1.2.6-9)

The poem ends with a prayer that the God of the Sabbath, or "rest," grant the poet-reader that sight of the Sabaoth, or "hosts." In other words: From the peace of cosmic semiosis (at one with the divine *logoi*-energies), may we see or immerse ourselves in the dynamic hierarchy (mirrors-images-radiant relations) of the iconographic landscape of the divine energies moving through Creation. In such "eterne in mutabilitie" we ground our minds in our hearts and connect with the cosmic networks around us.

Models for Ecosemiosis

Peirce's triadic semiotics forms the basis for interpreting a text such as *The Faerie Queene* as ecosemiotic when it emphasizes both in its language and deep structure a relation of poetry, object (environment) and interpretant (context or landscape).³⁹ In this the ecosemiotic model roughly parallels Julia Kristeva's poetic interpretation of the psychoanalytic triad as the Imaginary (formation of the subject in text-image), the Real (that which is beyond language), and the Symbolic (the webs of context, linguistic and supra-linguistically symbolic, spanning the human and non-human). A dynamic intermingling of the three marks a poetic text on the edge of language and what Kristeva terms the semiotic. In turn, Kristeva's model relates to her analysis of the Trinitarian formulation of the Greek patristic traditions that influenced both the origins of the "green world" in monastic Irish literary culture, and Spenser's Reformation milieu.⁴⁰

The Trinity as mystery beyond-knowledge nonetheless expresses a cosmic semiotic model in premodern Christian cultures roughly paralleled by Kristeva's triadic model of poetic semiosis. This includes the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, echoed in Kristevan poetics by the Real, the Logos-Icon as the Imaginary, and the Symbolic as nexus of transpersonal connections of meaning in the wake of the Incarnation. Kristeva analyzed changes around the time of the Crusades in Trinitarian theology in Scholastic Europe (which grew from Augustinian semiotics) as leading to a dualistic semiotics, reflected in Western attitudes toward nature. The Father and Son in effect were melded, and the Holy Spirit was objectified in relation to that new subjectivity. The triad, then, became a dyad of archetype and analogue, bolstering what Kristeva called individual autonomy and equality, while undermining what she termed the identity with difference that forms the cosmic empathy needed for eco-poetics. In the end *The Faerie Queene's* triadic eco-poetics resists that Western dualism, which lies at the basis of both modern fundamentalist views of a programmed Augustinian Creation and the "geocentric" worldview of Neo-Darwinism.

The latter modern Western models all involve conceptual grids of archetype and analogy (even genotype and phenotype) for constructing the physical world in relation to the human subject,—what Spenser terms a manipulatable “picture show” in place of a sense of *ecology* as (in one translation of the neologism’s etymologically Greek roots) “story of home.” By contrast, *The Faerie Queene* presents a landscape evoking energy rather than analogy, through its dynamic triadic structure of textual iconography: Verse, the Irish environment, and the fairyland/green world of divine logoi-energies in Creation. In its final lines it takes its place after Eriugena’s early medieval philosophy of nature in *The Periphyseon* (whose parallels to *The Faerie Queene* Weatherby and others have noted), as the late poetic climax to early Irish Sea hexameral traditions of Creation—the cosmological basis for the Celtic Otherworld and its later green-world literary reflections in English.⁴¹ In this sense, the Otherworld’s after-life as Spenserian green world reflects long-lived Celtic linguistic patterns in the deep structure of English as it developed from Chaucer’s time onward, the trope suggesting cross-linguistic and enduring paradigms of archipelagic landscape influenced by elemental interminglings of the Insular environment as suggested above.⁴²

The triadic relational ecopoiesis of the poem resonates in both the poetical meta-structure and micro-structure of the work, correlated with its iconographic shaping of landscape setting and theme, and the land of Ireland as its central character. Frye outlined its architectonics in terms of the sequence of its books exemplifying three private and three public virtues, each of the triads a balance of a physical, a spiritual and an integrative psychosomatic virtue.⁴³ The Mutabilitie Cantos in effect span those two triad halves as a larger triad. Other schemes also suggest how the six full books form thematic pairs, with especially chastity and friendship in Books Three and Four spanning the two halves suggested by Frye. Meanwhile Lewis proposed that the Spenserian stanza itself functions as a kind of ecopoetic mantra for the landscape of Ireland that is also a fairyland (and hence un-objectifiable by English queen, Spanish king, local brigands, or, from our standpoint, modern metaphysical science). Lewis argued that, as with the Graces on Acidale, the Spenserian stanza itself turns back to center where two

rhymes lap together, with a pausing falling to the final alexandrine, the archipelagic “effect of a wave falling on a beach.” Entwined with this triadic stanzaic structure and landscape, “A brooding solemnity—now deeply joyful, now sensuous, now melancholy, now loaded with dread—is characteristic of the poem at its best,” the reader in the nature-text experiencing multiple layers of cosmic landscape-in-process through poetics as a type of *logoi* or harmonies of the cosmos.⁴⁴ In the effect of that wave falling upon the beach, perhaps we hear a distant echo not only of the early Irish Paradise/desert-in-the-sea, but the hesychastic heartbeat prayers of desert ascetics in cosmically grounded erotic and liturgical ecopoiesis. In this elvish writing, claimed as therapeutic by survivors of even the most blasted environments of modern warfare,⁴⁵ readers can dwell ecopoetically not just in Spenser's archipelagic Elizabethan islands and in poetic Classical or patristic Greek Islands, but on an earth realized ultimately as a whole inhabited archipelago itself:

And all the earth far vnderneath her feete
 Was dight with flowers, that voluntary grew
 Out of the ground, and sent forth odours sw eet,
 Tenne thousand mores of sundry sent and hew,
 That might delight the smell, or please the view:
 The which, the Nymphes, from all the brooks thereby
 Had gathered, which they at her foot-stoole threw;
 That richer seem'd then any tapestry,
 That Princes bowres adorne with painted imagery. (7.7.10)

Alfred K. Siewers is Associate Professor of English, Coordinator of the Nature and Human Communities Initiative at the Environmental Center, and Senior Fellow of the Environmental Residential College at Bucknell University. Author of Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape (Palgrave, 2009) and co-editor of Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages (Palgrave, 2005), both in the New Middle Ages series, his articles on medieval literature have been published in Viator, Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies, and Peritia. He was a visiting scholar at the Early Irish Department at University College Cork, Ireland, in 2005, and prior to coming to Bucknell in 2002 was a visiting lecturer at the University of

Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, where he earned his Ph.D. in English following his M.A. in Early British Studies from the University of Wales at Aberystwyth.

¹ Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," in *English Institute Essays, 1948*, ed. D.A. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 66.

² Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," 70, 71-72.

³ Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," 70.

⁴ Michael Schellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, *The Death of Environmentalism* (2004), http://www/thebreakthrough.org/images/Death_of_Environmentalism.pdf, 34.

⁵ Bruce V. Foltz, *Inhabiting the Earth: Heidegger, Environmental Ethics, and the Metaphysics of Nature* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1995), 176.

⁶ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 6-8.

⁷ Timo Maran, "Towards an integrated methodology of ecosemiotics: The concept of nature-text," *Sign Systems Studies* 35 (2007): 269-93.

⁸ Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Science of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 170-75, 188-94.

⁹ On biosemiotics, ecosemiotics, and Peirce, see Jesper Hoffmeyer, *Biosemiotics: An Examination into the Signs of Life and the Life of Signs*, Approaches to Postmodernity 2, trans. Jesper Hoffmeyer and Donald Favareau (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2008), and Kalevi Kull, "Semiotic ecology: different natures in the semiosphere," *Sign Systems Studies* 26 (1998): 344-71.

¹⁰ Paul Piehler, "Woods," in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 733.

¹¹ See Dean A. Miller, "Byzantine Sovereignties and Feminine Potencies," in *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 250-63.

¹² The Byzantine relation, romantically appealing to some early Reformation Protestants, is suggested by reference to Elizabeth as empress and St. George's implied rescue of imperial Christendom with an Eastern identification in Book One. On the English geography of Book One of *The Faerie Queene*, see Terence Clifford-Amos, "'Certaine Signes' of 'Faeryland': Spenser's Eden of Thanksgiving on the Defeat of the 'Monstrous' 'Dragon' of Albion's North," *Viator* 32 (2001): 371-416.

¹³ Quotes from *The Faerie Queene* are from A.C. Hamilton et al., *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, 2d ed. rev. (Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2007), informed by Thomas P. Roche Jr.'s edition (London: Penguin, 1987), and by Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood and Frederick Morgan Padelford, eds., *The Works of Edmund Spenser, A Variorum Edition, The Faerie Queene*, 6 vols. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1934). Citations from the work are given in numbers for book, canto, stanza, and (when needed) line.

¹⁴ Athanasius, "The Life of St. Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus," in *Classics of Western Spirituality*, trans. Robert Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 93 (par.85).

¹⁵ On the sea in the desert and Eriugena, see Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape, The New Middle Ages* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 356.

¹⁷ See the discussion of narrative and time in 11:23 and throughout Book 11 in Augustine, *Confessions*, Oxford World's Classics, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 233-34; also John Romanides' discussion of the Augustinian present in *Patristic Theology: The University Lectures of Fr. John Romanides*, trans. Alexios Trader (Thessaloniki, Greece: Uncut Mountain Press, 2007), 274. Edward S. Casey explains activist memory vs. passive memory in *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 15. On time-plexity, see David Wood, "What is Eco-Phenomenology?" in *Eco-Phenomenology, Back to the Earth Itself*, Environmental Philosophy and

Ethics, ed. Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), pp. 211–33.

¹⁸ On Spenser's non-Augustinian patristic influences, see Harold L. Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 332.

²⁰ Phillip Cary, *Augustine and the Invention of the Inner Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Andrew Louth, "The Body in Western Catholic Christianity" in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 129.

²¹ Gordon Teske, "Allegory," in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 16–22.

²² Harold L. Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory*.

²³ Paul Rorem, trans., *Pseudo Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 157. On the accessibility of Greek patristic writings (drawing also on Syriac traditions) to Spenser, see Harold L. Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory*, 3–21. The popularity of apophatic theology in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may have influenced Spenser as well, although in patristic contexts more appealing to early Protestants than Scholastic ones.

²⁴ John Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun, Religious Speculation in Early Ireland* (Andover, MA: Celtic Studies Publications, 1999).

²⁵ Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 138–39.

²⁶ See St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, trans. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 54; Hymn 1.6–7, 79–80.

²⁷ See St. Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae in hexaemeron* in *Basile de Césarée: Homelies sur l'hexaemeron* 2d ed., Sources Chrétiennes 17, ed. S. Giet (Paris: Cerf, 1968), trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *The Hexaemeron*, in *Letters and Select Works*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 8, 1895 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 52–107; *Basile de Césarée: Sur l'origine de l'homme*, Sources Chrétiennes 160,

eds. Alexis Smets and Michel von Esbroeck (Paris: Cerf, 1970), trans. Nonna Verna Harrison, in "On the Origin of Humanity" Discourses 1 and 2, in *On the Human Condition*, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005).

²⁸ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Opificio Hominis*, *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Graeca* 44, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1865), trans. Henry Wace, *On the Making of Man*, XVI, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers*, second series, vol. 5, 1892 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

²⁹ Harold L. Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory*; see final chapter.

³⁰ Note on 3.6.33.9 in A.C. Hamilton et al., *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, 2d ed. rev., 347.

³¹ John of Damascus, "Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," trans. S.D.F. Salmond, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 9, 1899 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 29, 30.

³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 2, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3–25.

³³ For a brief history of commentary on this passage, see notes on 47.8-9 in A.C. Hamilton et al., *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, 2nd ed. rev., 350.

³⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 45.

³⁵ Note on 6.10.7.6 in A.C. Hamilton et al., *Spenser: The Faerie Queene*, 2d ed. rev., 668.

³⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2000); "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 163–80; Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Graham Harman, *Heidegger Explained: from Phenomenon to Thing*, *Ideas Explained* 4 (Chicago and LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 2007), 131–35.

³⁷ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, 21; Aldo

Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁸ "...bee they any thinge wyttye or well favored, as poems shoulde bee?... Yea truly; I haue caused diuers of them to be translated unto me that I might understande them; and surelye they savored of sweete witt and good invencon, but skilled not of the goodly ornamentes of Poetrie: yet were they sprinckled with some prettye flowers of their owne naturall devise, which gave good grace and comlines unto them, the which yt is greate pittye to see soe good an ornament abused, to the gracinge of wickednes and vice, which woulde with good usage serve to bewtifie and adorne vertue. This evill custome therefore needeth reformacon." Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland in The Historie of Ireland*, in *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund Spenser*, v. 9, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London: privately printed, 1884), 119-20.

³⁹ See Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Julia Kristeva, "Dostoevsky, the Writing of Suffering, and Forgiveness," in *Black Sun, Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 175-217.

⁴¹ Harold L. Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory*, 81.

⁴² John McWhorter, *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold History of English* (New York: Gotham, 2008), 61.

⁴³ Northrop Frye, "The Structures of Imagery in *The Faerie Queene*."

⁴⁴ C.S. Lewis, "Edmund Spenser, 1552-99," in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, 1966 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 132.

⁴⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 359; Andrew Hadfield, "Introduction: the relevance of Edmund Spenser," in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-12, at 1.

Demonstrating Frye's green-world tradition, *The Faerie Queene* continuously brings the forest of Arthurian romance into imagined historical geography (as did Malory earlier). Spenser likely was influenced by the deforestation of Ireland around him to imagine the forest as an ancient Otherworld. Still, the perils of the sea on the voyage to the