# A STUDY OF THE NATURE OF THE NARRATOR'S ASIDES IN SPENSER'S THE FAERIE QUEENE

A THESIS

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# PREFACE

In scholarly work surrounding Spenser's The Faerie Queene, one can find very little written about the forgotten character, the narrator. In true narrative technique, the oversight would be commendable; however, Spenser's narrator merits attention because of his unique intrusion into the narrative. The present study involves an investigation of the characteristics and nature of the narrative asides in The Faerie Queene, and a resulting statement concerning the personality of the narrator.

In order to provide a basis for this investigation, I have made a preliminary statement regarding the development of the narrator's role, followed by a detailed examination of the various types of narrative asides found in The Faerie Queene, concluding with a study of the personality of the narrator.

I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Charles E. Walton, Department of English, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, for his kind assistance and untiring effort in the preparation of this study and to Mr. Richard L. Roahen, Department of English, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, for his assistance as second reader of this thesis.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROLE OF SPENSER'S NARRATOR

Edmund Spenser's lengthy narrative poem, The Faerie Queene, is a complex and confusing piece of Renaissance literature. One of the major problems confronting the reader of The Faerie Queene is a delineation of Spenser's use of the narrator. In a traditional narration, the narrator rarely ventures his opinion, nor does he interrupt the narration with personal asides. Yet, Spenser's narrator in The Faerie Queene frequently and consistently offers his own didactic commentary, digresses from the narrative with his own lengthy similes, and intrudes with a show of concern for the destiny of the characters.

Theories have been offered to account for this variation of narrative technique, and it is necessary for one to examine carefully the theories which are presented. Although some critics have speculated that Spenser himself is speaking through the narrator's parts, one has reason to question, if not negate, this simple explanation. It goes without saying that Spenser was giving his own opinions and philosophies through the narrator. However, this fact does not fully account for the break in narrative form that this narrator uses. Spenser's narrator's role is not defined explicitly, but it does make a significant contribution to the poem so

that a conclusion about the role and the personality of the narrator can be evolved from a study of the narrator's asides. The narrator is, evidently, a man who loves to talk, to entertain, to jest, to moralize, one capable of experiencing a deep feeling about his story, enough so, at least, to become involved and very much concerned with the destiny of his characters. He readily embellishes the narrative, consistently expands it, and often further illustrates certain episodes.

To understand Spenser's use of this narrator, one must look, first, at the possible sources from which Spenser may have drawn his narrative technique. Thus, one must first come to an understanding of the role of the narrator in classical literature, after which he may then examine Spenser's use of the narrator and the nature of the narrator's comments determining the influences which these asides have on the narrative as a whole.

Spenser derived his narrative theme and technique from a combination of sources representative of many classical writers. His ethical theme is attributed to Aristotle, although only lip-service can be given him. In his dedicatory letter to Raleigh, prefixed to the publication of the first three books, Spenser states that he had planned to draw upon Aristotle's twelve virtues for his ethical themes. In reality, Spenser was not overly concerned about his sources for the

virtues.[1] One notes, for example, his somewhat casual reference to "Aristotle and the rest."[2] Jusserand feels that Spenser was merely adding validity to his work by stating that his ethical values were taken from Aristotle, since this philosopher was an authority widely recognized and respected in the Renaissance.[3] The subject of "moral virtues" was also popular in the Renaissance.[4] Neither was it a theme difficult to support, for Spenser's audience did not question the validity of holiness, temperance, courtesy.[5] Investigating the basis for the virtues which Spenser selects, one discovers that, from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Spenser makes use of the main underlying principles found therein, but not Aristotle's specific ethics themselves. Indeed, Aristotle shows that moral virtues consist or exist in a mean or a middle state between two extremes.[6] Clearly, Spenser's narrator carefully complies with this view in his many narrative asides wherein he presents his personal attitudes of virtue. But

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[1]Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery, p. 77.

[2]R. E. Neil Dodge (ed.), The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser, p. 137.

[3]J. J. Jusserand, "Spenser's Twelve Private Morall Vertues as Aristotle Hath Devised," MP, III (January, 1906), 373.

[4]Ibid., p. 378.

[5]Douglas Bush, Prefaces to Renaissance Literature, p. 98.

[6]Jusserand, op. cit., p. 374.

Aristotle does not draw up a list of twelve virtues; rather, he leaves these abstractions in a semi-developed state, some serving as branches of others.[7] Thus, when one tries to establish a point of correspondence between Aristotle and Spenser, he meets with confusion. Hence, scholars have concluded that the six virtues that Spenser utilized in The Faerie Queene (Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy) are mainly those of Spenser's own devising. Only Temperance truly and plainly corresponds to Aristotle's categories.[8] Spenser develops these virtues, portraying them as knights, who, through experience, attain to a level of perfection in that virtue which they represent. Furthermore, Spenser was not particularly interested in an analysis of individual characters, but rather in an explication of the principles of good and evil symbolized in each of his characters.[9] In the presentation of the symbolic virtues themselves, he wavers between the viewpoints of the ancients and the moderns in an attempt to produce a work of art conceived of in the epic-narrative pattern.[10] In the final analysis, The Faerie Queene is both a "mosaic of traditional materials" and

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[7] Loc. cit.

[8] Ibid., p. 375.

[9] Josephine Waters Bennett, The Evolution of "The Faerie Queene," p. 106.

[10] Ibid., p. 253.

a brilliant original work, linking English and European poetry in the themes and narrative devices which had been perfected by poets of renown for hundreds of years.[11] Tuve states that

> often in some portion of The Faerie Queene where Ariosto is the undoubted immediate source, of plot motif or character, Spenser's altered tone and different narrative impulse show how the very changes of his source fit him into the mosaic of this English development.[12]

Detailed source hunting, however, may be dangerous, because there are instances of similar techniques in literatures, not necessarily the result of influence. For example, Jusserand points out that authors schooled in the same manner who merely happen to write in the same techniques are following a coincidental and natural result.[13] Therefore, it is unwise to conclude that every similarity constitutes an influence. To prove an influence, one must know and recognize unmistakable similarities; in many cases, a study of this kind cannot be accomplished with The Faerie Queene.

The traditional education of young men of the Renaissance must be taken into consideration when one searches for literary source material. Renaissance educators contended that, if boys studied and recited the utterances of the Greeks

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[11]Douglas Bush, Mythology and Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, p. 87.

[12]Tuve, op. cit., p. 341.

[13]R. C. Neil Dodge, "Sermon on Source Hunting," MP, IX (October, 1911), 212.

and Romans, they would, without a doubt, speak and write like their models. Consequently, the classic ancients were honored and worshiped, and a doctrine of learning by imitation was followed religiously.[14] Since the scholars of the Renaissance favored a study of the ancients, it is not surprising that one finds similarities between the ancients and the material of Spenser's poem.

There is value, nevertheless, in searching for probable source materials for The Faerie Queene, because a familiarity with this body of literature facilitates a reader's comprehension of the narrator's handling of various episodes in The Faerie Queene. Hence, one sees the evidence of an influence of Plato's Phaedo upon Spenser's descriptions of the rivers in Hell.[15] Furthermore, one realizes that the descriptions of mural painting and tapestries in which Spenser takes so much delight have their own literary tradition that may be traced to Ovid.[16] Friedmann states that

> stylization of poetic rhetoric in which landscape settings are described in Spenser comes from a long tradition of such descriptions which E. R. Curtius has traced in many variants back to Homer as one of many topics in the

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[14]Bush, op. cit., p. 93.

[15]Frederick Morgan Padelford (ed.), The Faerie Queene, Book I, p. 234.

[16]Bush, op. cit., p. 110.

rhetorical transmission of literary materials to the Renaissance.[17]

The golden chain philosophy which the narrator alludes to reaches back to Homer, thus supporting the narrator's obvious familiarity with the ancients. With reference to this problem, one scholar argues that Spenser was ambitious to be an English Vergil,[18] and one agrees that there is a valid argument for this view, since Vergil also describes a national hero who moved through a series of adventures leading to an ethical achievement. However, narrative technique is vastly dissimilar between The Faerie Queene and the Aeneid. In considering this technique, one discovers that Spenser's trick of connecting his stanzas is more closely related to Ariosto's technique in Orlando Furioso rather than to Vergil's practices in the Aeneid.[19] Hughes, however, believes that, with the exception of the sixth book, there is little concrete evidence in The Faerie Queene of an influence from Greek romances, although there is a pictorial quality of an extraordinary extent throughout the work, more characteristic of Greek literature than of Western romances.[20]

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[17]A. E. Friedmann, "Diana-Acteon Episode in Ovid's Metamorphoses and The Faerie Queene," CL, XVIII (Fall, 1966), 289.

[18]Bennett, op. cit., p. 248.

[19]W. J. B. Owen, "Orlando Furioso and Stanza-Connection in The Faerie Queene," MLN, LXVII (1952), 5.

[20]Merritt Y. Hughes, "Spenser's Debt to the Greek Romances," MP, XXIII (August, 1925), 72.

The most recognized influence of technique is related to Ariosto's methods in Orlando Furioso. Warton qualifies it, pointing out that Ariosto's knights are concerned with examples of their prowess and their heroic actions, whereas Spenser's knights are engaged in avenging injustices and in rendering just services to the distressed.[21] There is not, of course, a consensus of opinion among the critics concerned with the composition of The Faerie Queene. For example, Baldwin describes the poem as a moral allegory which holds together a choppy narrative, but, in general, he feels that Spenser's over-all scheme is not that of narrative.[22] On the other hand, Bennett feels that an analysis of the content indicates a spasmodic habit of composition which brings together short, unrelated narratives derived from many different sources.[23] However, one thinks that the use of episodic construction does not necessarily reflect a choppy or spasmodic construction. In any case, Spenser was undoubtedly following, consciously or unconsciously, narrative conventions to be found in classical literature.

Probably, the most valid conclusion concerning Spenser's source and technique in The Faerie Queene is offered by Lewis,

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[21]Quoted in Padelford, op. cit., p. 320.

[22]Charles Sears Baldwin, Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice, p. 130.

[23]Bennett, op. cit., p. 4.

who states that the poem is a fusion of two kinds of poetry: the romantic epic and the medieval allegory.[24] He argues that the poem incorporates more than epic form and goes beyond the range of medieval allegory. It is the fusion of these two techniques which gives The Faerie Queene its impact. An examination of these two types of literature substantiates Lewis' opinion. Nellish, also, points out that ". . . beyond the immediate associations of the narrative lie the controlled and doctrinal associations of conventional allegory that give depth and discipline to the moral history."[25] It is important, therefore, for one to realize how The Faerie Queene fulfills the classification established in both of these techniques. First, an epic represents and reflects life and manners at all of the various levels of a given culture.[26] The Faerie Queene, in its epic narrative sense, is a told narrative as differing from a dramatic epic that is acted,[27] and, as such, it fulfills these criteria as a reflection of Elizabethan life and manners. An epic, also, emphasizes the tastes and pursuits of the ruling class in contrast to those of the middle and lower

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[24]A. Bartlett Giamatti, The Earthly Paradise and The Renaissance Epic, p. 231.

[25]B. Nellish, "Allegory of Guyon's Voyage: An Interpretation," ELH, XXX (June, 1963), 93.

[26]William Macneile Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, p. 166.

[27]Henry Thew Stephenson, Narrative Writing, p. 41.

classes. Furthermore, a stock epic situation usually includes the following five steps: (1) an opening, (2) the narration, (3) the prophecy, (4) the catalogue, and (5) the descent into the underworld.[28] By helping to incorporate these criteria into The Faerie Queene, Spenser's narrator makes the poem a "special degree of national poetry."[29] If one considers Spenser to be the English Vergil, one must also study the poem in connection with Vergil's epic structure in Books I and II, which reach a parallel concern for narrative unity, continuity, and logic.[30] Even in his own day, one recalls, Spenser was referred to as an epic poet. Tillyard surmises that, when Spenser eventually comes to be considered both great and popular, he will again achieve this long since forgotten status.[31]

Spenser's epic inheritance may be traced to two main sources that exemplify the motifs of the grand romance and the image of questing: (1) Ariosto and his theme of illusion and reality through magic, and (2) Tasso and his tradition of heroic duty.[32] From Orlando Furioso, Spenser establishes his predetermined narrative logic which, in relation to the episodic

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[28]W. J. B. Owen, "Narrative Logic and Imitation in The Faerie Queene," CL, VII (Fall, 1955), 327.

[29]Dixon, op. cit., p. 146.

[30]Owen, op. cit., p. 326.

[31]Eustace M. W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background, p. 293.

[32]Giamatti, op. cit., p. 237.

nature of his poem, is relegated to a second place.[33] Giamatti lends his support to the theory that The Faerie Queene is written in the tradition of a romantic epic, arguing that the poem is ". . . essentially part of the tradition of the romantic epic, especially because Spenser himself offers [one] evidence of his preoccupation with the Italians, both outside of his poem and within the poem itself."[34] Dixon feels that the poem is an extraordinary kind of epic that substitutes moral allegory for ironical humor.[35] In writing an epic, therefore, Spenser has chosen deliberately to compete with the chief epic poets, Homer, Vergil, Ariosto, and Tasso, with all of whom he was familiar. It is also clear that he was aware of the conventional requirements for the epic: to be patriotic and exemplary.[36] All of these concepts he incorporated into his poem.

That The Faerie Queene celebrates English national development may readily be seen, because it is clearly an epic that is based upon English virtue and valour, as well as, in its political tone, an epic of the English Wars in Ireland.[37]

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[33] Owen, op. cit., p. 325.

[34] Giamatti, op. cit., p. 236.

[35] Dixon, op. cit., p. 148.

[36] Tillyard, op. cit., p. 262.

[37] Ibid., p. 159.

In its simplicity, Spenser's language is, paradoxically, lofty enough for epic form.[38] Yet, one finds a dissenting scholarly voice concerning the epic form of The Faerie Queene. Tillyard, for example, feels that, although The Faerie Queene reaches for epic quality, it falls short in that it cannot fulfill two requirements of epic technique: (1) Spenser does not see the various aspects of life, and (2) Spenser does not speak for all the English people.[39] Perhaps, some of the reasons underlying the questioning of epic form lie in a second technique which Spenser utilizes in The Faerie Queene, namely, that of the moral allegory.

The fact that Spenser fuses two kinds of literary technique in The Faerie Queene emphasizes his facility in using both methods. For example, the medieval allegorical technique unlocks the variances of narrative form in The Faerie Queene, causing much confusion in scholarly ranks when The Faerie Queene is examined only as an epic. The epic form is the "backbone" of the poem. The medieval allegorical technique shapes the poem into something more than a mere epic, giving the narrative what order it possesses. It is only this developmental technique that imparts the quality of ordered richness to the poem.[40] In his control of the narrative by means of

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[38] Ibid., p. 264.

[39] Loc. cit.

[40] Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass, p. xvi.

this moral allegory, Spenser shifts attention alternately between story and allegory. In the first two books, the allegory is primary and, therefore, controls the narrative.[41] It is the imagery of the allegory, here, which makes the poem unique in comparison with other forms of narrative. When allegory is combined with narrative, there results a tension; but when this tension is correctly channelled, a poet like Spenser can create dynamic effects. But allegory is difficult to handle. Coghill states that it is meant to be "perceived imaginatively" and not "explained."[42] Indeed, Spenser and Dante probably are among the few artists who masterfully utilize allegory. One sees quite clearly how Spenser's narrator may be fitted into this allegorical pattern. For example, he advocates learning, piety, sometimes humility, and a celebration of the past. He intrudes into the narrative to invoke the Muses, to refer to Elizabeth, and to add his own comments concerning progress and the meaning of narration. Following the medieval allegorical tradition, Spenser's narrator is consciously didactic and, at the same time, rhetorical. The importance of this allegory and its effect upon the reader is reflected in the following statement by Scholes:

> A great part of the pleasure of allegory is doubtless to be accounted for by the ingenuity of an artist who can

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[41] Bennett, op. cit., p. 138.

[42] Nevill Coghill, Visions from Piers Plowman, p. 108.

> actually sustain both a fiction and a complex idea. But a different pleasure is derived from those quiet moments when the intellectual and fictional actions come to a temporary halt and the poet amuses himself by amplifying and refining the implications of them both through the application of essentially static detail.[43]

Spenser undoubtedly strengthens his poem by his skilled combinations of these methods of allegory and epic narration.

The main basis for Spenser's use of allegory is taken from a medieval allegorical tradition consisting of three levels of interpretation. The first is the simple meaning, the mere narrative itself, or the sensus litteralis. The narrator of The Faerie Queene fulfills his obligations to this level in a very satisfactory manner. The second is the level of transferred meaning, or the parable sense into which the allegorical meaning fits, known as the sensus allegoricus. The third is the level of moral meaning which is "peppered" throughout the poem or assigned to a conclusion, known as the sensus moralis level. In addition, a fourth level, the sensus anagogicus or the level of religious allegory, may also be frequently detected in The Faerie Queene, but Spenser's overall allegorical method treats this level, and it is not confined to the narrator's intermittent asides. The nature of the narrator's asides and their effect upon Spenser's narration encompass the second and third levels of medieval allegorical interpretation.

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[43]Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, p. 142.

## CHAPTER II

## THE NARRATOR AS THE DIDACTIC COMMENTATOR

As mentioned earlier, medieval allegorical techniques influence the narrator's asides in The Faerie Queene. The first level of medieval allegory, the sensus litteralis, or the level of literal meaning, is easily delineated and need not be discussed, here. The level that relates to the narrator's intrusion into the narrative with didactic and moralistic comments, the sensus moralis, is the most frequently used by Spenser's narrator. When the narrator launches his didactic commentary on events, he usually becomes quite a pompous fellow. The range of his topics on which he comments is also widely varied. For example, he expounds upon the glories and pitfalls of love. He illustrates the magnificence of knighthood and exhorts those in his audience who are members of the cult to take heed of the allegorical meaning within Spenser's narrative. Occasionally, he also demonstrates a rare insight into the actions of characters in given situations. Furthermore, throughout this commentary, one detects the narrator's unique personality.

There are many examples of didactic comments uttered by Spenser's narrator in The Faerie Queene. It is as if the narrator steps back from his primary task of narration and, shaking his head, offers serious, moralistic instruction to

his listener. Often this advice is couched in a one-line statement which, when carefully considered, will change the meaning of the narrative. For example, when the Redcrosse Knight encounters the monster at the Den of Errour, for a brief time the battle goes hard for the courageous knight. Eventually, the monster gets the upper hand and manages to wrap her tail around the knight in what is described as a dangerous strangle hold. At this point, the narrator, assuming a didactic manner, intrudes: "God helpe the man so wrapt in Errours endlesse traine." (I.I.xviii.9) Here, he implies that, even though the Redcrosse Knight represents Holiness, he is not beyond failing and, hence, not always equipped with divine help. In another instance, the narrator demonstrates the value of steadfastness in virtue when, as the Redcrosse Knight and Una come upon Archimago's hermitage, they do not sense an evil atmosphere. Unaware of the inherent evil, the two sleep well, because, as the narrator points out, "The noblest mind the best contentment has." (I.I.xxxv.4) He, also, implies, here, that Una and Redcrosse are noble, thus, intentionally influencing the listener's understanding of these characters.

Another didactic intrusion that takes a slightly different turn occurs in the narrator's evaluation of the character's moral standards, for he does not hesitate to pass judgment on character and situation. The moralistic views which he holds are made clearly apparent by means of these

intrusions into the narrative. Unashamedly, he praises virtues and condemns vices. For example, he not only lauds the virtues of the Redcrosse Knight and Una; he also condemns the evil that he alone observes in Sansjoy during a confrontation between the Redcrosse Knight and Sansjoy. He does not trust his listener to speculate upon the condition of the wicked knight's soul, but pointedly explains: "At last it [the soul] flitted is / Whether the soules doe fly of men that amis." (I.II.xix.8-9) A similar handling of the narrator's asides may be observed at a point in the narrative in which he assures his listeners that, although Una is in a precarious circumstance, she can, nevertheless, endure the pain of separation from the Redcrosse Knight and the news of his death, because "The lesser pangs can beare, who hath endur'd the chief." (I.VI.xxxvii.9) Una has suffered much physical and mental torment in her search for the Redcrosse Knight, yet when Archimago tells her of her lover's supposed death, she can endure this cruelty, because she has been conditioned to pain by her previous hardships. The narrator, thus, exploits Una's moral nature. Moreover, he is equally impressed with the virtues of Sir Guyon. For example, when Guyon is attacked by two pagan knights and successfully engages them, the narrator indicates that Guyon deserves a double portion of praise: "So double was his paines, so double be his praise." (II.II.xxv.9) But the narrator hastens to add that an act of bravery

does not belong solely to the hierarchy of knights, pointing out that it is a common trait of all mankind in his discussion of the bravery of a lowly valet in the presence of a wicked knight. As the courageous young man leaps into a lake to save his hapless lord, the narrator comments: "So love the dread of daunger doth despise." (II.VI.xlvi.2) Furthermore, the wisdom of Solomon is emphasized when the narrator relates an incident that parallels a Biblical episode. Artegal, representing justice, decrees that two feuding knights may cut in half the body of the lady whom each claims as his love so that each may have his just share of the loved one. As in its Biblical analogue, justice is here served when the true lover protests in order to save the lady's life. The narrator lends affirmation to this situation, observing, "True love despiseth shame, when life is cald in dread." (V.I.xxvii.9)

The narrator's comments which deal with the subject of womanhood reveal his masculine prejudice and reflect a traditional Renaissance viewpoint concerning women's place in society. For example, when Artegal is forced by Radigund, the Amazon warrior, to become her slave after she has defeated him by trickery in battle, the narrator shudders and turns the situation into an object lesson: "So hard it is to be a woman's slave." (V.V.xxiii.5) In the same manner, he comments upon the inadvisability of listening to women's advice and warns mankind of its effects: "So readie rype to ill, ill wemens

counsels bee." (III.X.xi.9) However, he is not consistently uncharitable toward women, admitting that there are some charms belonging entirely to the fairer sex and that the knights in the narration are often susceptible to these female attractions. Even the somewhat invincible knight, Artegal, is conquered, revealing his vulnerability and an ingrained compassion for women. For example, after having defeated Radigund, Artegal experiences a moment of compassion brought about by his fascination for Radigund's beauty. Relaxing his guard for a moment, he suddenly finds himself the vanquished, not the victor. Here, the narrator observes that the outcome really was not Artegal's fault, but only a natural reaction: "No hand so cruell, nor no hart so hard, / But ruth of beautie will it mollifie." (V.V.xiii.5-6) Similarly, the overwhelming power of female beauty is, again, demonstrated in an earlier episode involving Una, who represents truth, and the lion, that represents reason. Even though these two in a natural state of affairs would have been mortal enemies, Una's beauty proves to be her salvation, and the narrator exclaims, "O how can beautie maister the most strong, / And simple truth subdue avenging wrong!" (I.III.vi.8-9) On the other hand, for all of his masculine hauteur, the narrator presents a surprising case for the support of women's rights. For example, after Artegal's unfortunate encounter with the superior Amazon women, the narrator interrupts the tale to deliver a lengthy didactic

commentary in which he presents his opinion of the merits of great, noteworthy women. Almost like a traitor to his own sex, he carefully and diplomatically points out that men write and speak often of their own glorious achievements and grandly ignore the rights of women who equally contribute to humanity through their actions of valor and unselfishness. Furthermore, he surmises that men are exceedingly selfish because of their jealousy of the weaker and, hence, in their opinion, the less worthy sex. He bravely advocates the inclusion of the accounts of great women in the annals of history and supports contemporary praise awarded to those worthy of such honors:

> Here have I cause in men just blame to find,
> That in their proper praise too partiall bee,
> And not indifferent to woman kind,
> To whom no share in armes and chevalree
> They doe impart, ne maken memoree
> Of their brave gestes and prowesse martiall:
> Scarse doe they spare to one, or two, or three,
> Rowme in their writtes; yet the same writing small
> Does all their deedes deface, and dims their glories all.
>
> But by record of antique times I find,
> That wemen wont in warres to beare most sway,
> And to all great exploites them selves inclind:
> Of which they still the girlond bore away,
> Till envious men, fearing their rules decay,
> Gan coyne streight lawes to curb their liberty;
> Yet sith they warlike armes have laide away,
> They have exceld in artes and pollicy,
> That now we foolish men that prayse gin eke t' envy.
> (III.II.i-ii)

Even though women have earned their "place in the sun," the narrator thinks that they have not been awarded a true degree of recognition.

Spenser's narrator also shows a rather amazing insight into personalities and situations. Often, he can quickly point out the solution to a difficult problem, but, then, it goes without saying that usually his solutions are somewhat obvious. Perhaps, the raison d'être for these is to point up the ridiculous natures of given situations. For example, in the episode in which two quarreling knights are reconciled by the persuasion of Phaedria, the narrator is quick to recognize the value of negotiation: "Such powre have pleasing wordes; / Such is the might of courteous clemency in gentle hart." (II. VI.xxxvi.5-6) The diplomacy of words also fascinates him, and he makes it clear that he believes in the power of positive persuasion. For example, when Sir Guyon praises Artegal in Britomart's presence, Britomart cannot pretend she loves Artegal, but she is secretly heartened to hear her love so praised, as the narrator observes:

> For pleasing wordes like to magick art,
> That doth the charmed snake in slomber lay:
> Such secrete ease felt gentle Britomart,
> Yet list the same efforce with faind gainesay:
> So dischord ofte in musick makes the sweeter lay:
> (III.II.xv.5-9)

He also reminds his listeners that the joy which Una experiences is more profound because of the adversity to which she has been subjected.

Frequently, in his didactic comment, the narrator feels strongly compelled to express his own opinions and does so by interrupting the narrative and inserting a discussion on the

topic with which he has been concerned. For example, such an explanation is inserted into the episode of the evolution of friendship between two knights, Triamond and Campbell. The narrator pauses, just before he tells of Triamond's reconciliation with Campbell, to caution his listeners to be careful about condemning a forthcoming reversal of events. He reminds one that, often, enemies become faithful friends when they consider a troublesome situation. He explains that in a similar episode Triamond and Campbell became steadfast friends:

> It often fals, (as here it earst befell)
> That mortall foes doe turne to faithfull friends,
> And friends profest are chaungd to foemen fell;
> The cause of both, of both their minds depends,
> And th' end of both, likewise of both their ends:
> For enmitie, that of no ill proceeds,
> But of occasion, with th' occasion ends:
> And friendship, which a faint affection breeds
> Withoug regard of good, dyes like ill grounded seeds.
> (IV.IV.i)

The narrator proceeds with his tale, after having satisfied himself that his audience has understood his purpose in making the analogy. Later, in the same manner, he delivers another sermon on the difficulty of virtue when speaking of Sir Guyon's succumbing to temptation. Here, he admits that, since the heroes are human, they are susceptible to human frailty, but he feels compelled to point out that Sir Guyon's failure was to be expected:

> A harder lesson to learne continence
> In joyous pleasure then in grievous paine:
> For sweetnesse doth allure the weaker sence
> So strongly, that uneathes it can refraine

> From that which feeble nature covets faine;
> But griefe and wrath, that be her enemies,
> And foes of life, she better can restraine;
> Yet Vertue vauntes in both her victories,
> And Guyon in them all shewes goodly maysteries.
> (II.VI.i)

Indeed, Spenser's narrator sermonizes with little provocation. He has a sincere concern not only for situations, but also for the destiny of characters. For example, the episode involving Sir Guyon and his temptation at the House of Temptation illustrates the narrator's unsolicited attention. He feels, here, that the events require an explanation for the existence of monsters that tempt Sir Guyon and for Guyon's reasons for submitting to trial. He adds that his listeners could profitably take heed of his advice and avoid the same type of trap:

> Of all Gods workes, which doe this world adorne,
> There is no one more faire and excellent,
> Then is mans body bothe for powre and forme,
> Whiles it is kept in sober government;
> But none then it more fowle and indecent,
> Distempred through misrule and passions bace:
> It growes a monster, and incontinent
> Doth loose his dignity and native grace.
> Behold, who list, both one and other in this place.
> (II.IX.i)

He senses the cause of the problem, but uses the illustration mainly to demonstrate the philosophy of the Golden Mean and does not suggest how one who is similarly misled may be rescued from a fallen state.

Some of the narrator's didactic comments presumably are directed to a particular segment of his audience. At times,

he addresses all knights concerning the responsibilities of their station in life. Moreover, he points his remarks to the ladies, gently chiding them for their faults. Even the social phenomenon of love captures his attention. A case in point is an episode in which the narrator exhalts the Redcrosse Knight as a model for all knights. He points out carefully that the Redcrosse Knight is not perfect, but that his weaknesses make him a prime example of potential virtue, simply because he is humanized by his faults. As he addresses all knights, he says:

> Young knight what ever, that dost armes professe,
> And through long labours huntest after fame,
> Beware of fraud, beware of ficklenesse,
> In choice and chaunge, of thy deare loved dame,
> Least thou of her believe too lightly blame,
> And rash misweening doe thy hart remove:
> For unto knight there is no greater shame,
> Then lightnesse and inconstancie in love:
> That doth this Redcrosse Knights ensample plainly prove.
> (I.IV.i)

He feels, also, that he can justify this glorification of the Redcrosse Knight, because this particular man has gone through a multitude of trials and has proved himself honorable. Furthermore, he believes that a knight will, at all times, avoid fraud and fickleness and be careful about the sort of friends whom he chooses. He thinks that knights need to cultivate the virtue of courtesy. Later in Book VI, he explains that courtesy is a desirable quality in all knights; indeed, he exclaims that all persons of all ranks or stations in life will profit from the cultivation of courtesy, the culmination

of all honor:

> What vertue is so fitting for a knight,
> Or for a ladie whom a knight should love,
> As curtesie, to beare themselves aright
> To all of each degree, as doth behove?
> For whether they be placed high above,
> Or low beneath, yet ought they well to know
> Their good, that none them rightly may reprove
> Of rudenesse, for not yeelding what they owe:
> Great skill it is such duties timely to bestow.
> (VI.II.i)

When he specifically addresses ladies in his audience, most frequently he advises them on matters of love. Here, his didactic comments follow a very traditional Renaissance concept of love. With his evident masculine distrust of women, he implies that all women are crafty and somewhat cruel in subtle cunning. Therefore, his address to women also includes an appeal to their sense of fair play when they exercise their enchanting wiles upon helpless men. His masculine superiority prompts him to threaten the fair ladies by warning them that, if they abuse this influence upon men, which, he implies, is given them through the generosity of men, all men will come to regret their good deeds and strip them of the power which they so flagrantly abuse:

> Ye gentle ladies, in whose soveraine powre,
> Love hath the glory of his kingdome left;
> And th' hearts of men, as your eternall dowre,
> In yron chaines, of liberty bereft,
> Delivered hath into your hands by gift;
> Be well aware, how ye the same doe use,
> That pride doe not to tyranny you lift;
> Least, if men you of cruelty accuse,
> He from you take that chiefedome, which ye doe abuse.
> (VI.VIII.i)

Having delivered this cynical warning to the ladies, the narrator is, then, overcome by a sense of chivalry and promptly smooths over his rather sharp words with honeyed phrases, declaring the beauties and wonders of the fairer sex. Even so, he cannot bring himself to be completely flattering, ending his commentary, once again, with a warning about the abuse of the power of love, as follows:

> And as ye soft and tender are by kynde,
> Adorned with goodly gifts of beauties grace,
> So be ye soft and tender eeke in mynde;
> But cruelty and hardnesse from you chace,
> That all your other praises will deface,
> And from you turne the love of men to hate.
> (VI.VIII.ii.1-6)

His opinions on love vacillate from one extreme to the other. At one moment, he may praise its grandeur and, at the next, boldly examine the inconsistencies and the unreliability of love. He does not hesitate to indite even the prominent characters for moral weaknesses, particularly in matters of reason when love is involved. For example, when Una sees the knight whom she loves, she allows all other thoughts to escape from her reason and makes a fool of herself. But such is the power of love, implies the narrator:

> . . . one loving howre
> For many yeares of sorrow can dispence:
> A dram of sweete is worth a pound of sowre:
> Shee has forgott how many a woeful stowre
> For him she late endurd; she speakes no more
> Of past: true is, that true love hath no powre
> To looken backe; his eies be fixt before.
> Before her stands her knight, for whom she toyld so sore.
> (I.III.xxx)

As he develops his love philosophy, he generally blames women's fickleness for the problems which plague the heart. Although he admires women, his inherent distrust is evident when, as he compares ladies to roses, he carefully includes a warning about thorns. He asserts that women need to feel more responsibility in governing their love. He believes that women are sadly lacking in a sincerity which, egotistically, he believes that all men possess. But, then, he admits that one has to take the good with the bad:

> Faire ladies, that to love captived arre,
> And chaste desires doe nourish in your mind,
> Let not her fault your sweete affections marre,
> Ne blott the bounty of all woman kind.
> 'Mongst thousands good one wanton dame to find:
> Emongst the roses grow some wicked weeds;
> For this was not to love, but lust, inclind;
> For love does alwaies bring forth bounteous deeds,
> And in each gentle hart desire of honor breeds.
> (III.I.xlix)

Moreover, he explains how love affects different personalities. Since he has a respect for the force of love, he thinks that no one can experience love without also experiencing a change in personality. He argues that love makes base people baser and noble people nobler. Moreover, he cannot resist pointing out the quality of change to his audience, although, at this point, his didacticism is extraneous to the dialogue. Commenting upon the personality-changing aspects of love, he observes:

> Wonder it is too see in diverse mindes
> How diversly Love doth his pageaunts play,
> And shewes his powre in variable kindes:
> The baser wit, whose ydle thoughts alway

> Are wont to cleave unto the lowly clay,
> It stirreth up to sensuall desire,
> And in lewd slouth to wast his carelesse day:
> But in brave sprite it kindles goodly fire,
> That to all high desert and honour doth aspire.
> (III.V.i)

The effects of love on different personalities is not the only didactic explication which the narrator undertakes on the subject of love; he also developes a theory concerning different kinds of love, pointing out that there are three kinds: "deare affections of kindred sweet," "the raging fire of love to woman kind," and "the zeale of friends combynd with virtues meet." He emphasizes that, to become a well-rounded individual, one must incorporate all three kinds of love, equally balanced, into the personality. However, he is realistic enough to understand that a person who would possess these various kinds of love would be rare:

> Hard is the doubt, and difficult to deeme,
> When all three kinds of love together meet,
> And doe dispart the hart with powre extreme,
> Whether shall weight the balance downe to weet;
> The deare affection unto kindred sweet,
> Or raging fire of love to woman kind,
> Or zeale of friends combynd with vertues meet.
> But of them all, the band of vertuous mind,
> Me seemes, the gentle hart should most assured bind.
> (IV.IX.i)

The practicality of love as presented by the narrator exemplifies a natural psychological make-up of man, who, when he is a well-rounded and well-developed person, is most virtuous. This state, according to Spenser's narrator, is that ethical achievement which all of the heroes of The Faerie Queene must

realize. He makes it clear that all kinds of love are important, but that their right balance takes precedence.

The value of the love of friendship is the theme of another of the narrator's important didactic sermons. He feels that Cupid's love, necessarily always associated with women, is not dependable. However, his sincere admiration for the virtue of steadfastness in the love between friends is evident when he states:

> For natural affection soone doth cesse,
> And quenched is with Cupids greater flame:
> But faithfull friendship doth them both suppresse,
> And them with maystring discipline doth tame,
> Through thoughts aspyring to eternall fame,
> For as the soule doth rule the earthly masse,
> And all the service of the bodie frame,
> So love of soule doth love of bodie passe,
> No lesse then perfect gold surmounts the meanest brasse.
> (IV.IX.ii)

Yet, he also acknowledges the rigors of love. Although friendship is Spenser's theme of Book IV, he shows that facets of love impose hardships upon human emotions and sanity. The narrator, on occasion, expresses a sincere sympathy for those subject to the many trials of love:

> So love does raine
> In stoutest minds, and maketh monstrous warre;
> He maketh warre, he maketh peace againe,
> And yett his peace is but continuall jarre;
> O miserable men, that to him subject arre!
> (II.II.xxvi.5-9)

Although he knows that love's hardships are well-known and, perhaps, inevitable, he never negates the value of human love, because he recognizes it as a motivating facet in life that changes the most bound course of history and influences

kingdoms. In one address to love, he illustrates how troubles which accompany love are not respectors of persons or stations in life:

> Great God of Love, that with thy cruell darts
> Doest conquer greatest conquerors on ground,
> And setst thy kingdome in the captive harts
> Of kings and keasars, to thy service bound
> What glorie or what guerdon hast thou found
> In feeble ladies tyranning so sore,
> And adding anguish to the bitter wound,
> With which their lives thou lanchedst long afore,
> By heaping stormes of trouble on them daily more?
> (IV.VII.i)

Similarly, he often expounds upon the power of love. Here, he vows that love is the strongest force under heaven. However, he points out that in its strength, there is, paradoxically, a weakness, because the power of love can make a man forget his manliness. Furthermore, he places the blame for man's falling in love on "beauties lovely bait":

> Nought under heaven so strongly doth allure
> The sence of man, and all his minde possesse,
> As beauties lovely baite, that doth procure,
> Great warriours oft their rigour to represse,
> And mighty hands forget their manlinesse;
> Drawne with the powre of an heart-robbing eye,
> And wrap in fetters of a golden tresse,
> That can with melting pleasaunce mollifye
> Their hardned hearts, enur'd to bloud and cruelty.
> (V.VIII.i)

By presenting his theory on the necessity of cruelty in love, the narrator dismisses love's undesirable side-effects. Pure love, he believes, without all of the distractions in emotional afflictions or hearty disappointments, would be too much like heaven. Therefore, to make love more suited to humans, it is to be "tempered" [illegible] sorrows that make it worth

more for the having:

> The joyes of love, if they should ever last,
> Without affliction or disquietnesse,
> That worldly chaunces doe amongst them cast,
> Would be on earth too great a blessednesse,
> Liker to heaven then mortal wretchednesse.
> Therefore, the winged god, to let men weet
> That here on earth is no sure happinesse,
> A thousand sowres hath tempred with one
> To make it seeme more deare and dainty, as is meet.
> (VI.XI.i)

In making this statement on love, the narrator reveals his attitude toward the human condition. Man, as the narrator conceives of him, does not deserve to be happy, or at least too happy. There must be a period of sorrow in order to make heaven worth having. Again, this view reflects the Aristotlean philosophy of the Golden Mean.

But the narrator clearly believes firmly in the wonders of love, and consistently promotes them. In his opinion, it is divine, more so than any other quality on earth, and should be highly prized. In his explanation, he asserts:

> Nought is on earth more sacred or divine,
> That gods and men doe equally adore,
> Then this same vertue that doth right define;
> For th' hevens themselves, whence mortal men implore
> Right in their wrongs, are rul'd by righteous lore,
> Of Highest Jove, who doth true justice deale
> To his inferiour gods, and evermore
> Therewith containes his heavenly commonweale:
> The skill whereof to princes hearts he doth reveale.
> (V.VII.i)

It is apparent, therefore, through his didactic comments, that Spenser's narrator exhibits an interesting facet of personality. Incurably didactic, he inserts his unsolicited

comments into any feasible part of the narrative, expounding upon various topics. Even though he retains his many prejudices and opinions, and although his attitudes are not totally consistent, he does maintain a firm position regarding knightly honor, the doctrine of reward for righteousness and punishment for the wicked, the recognition of human frailty, the avoidance of women's craftiness, and the honorable pursuit of love. That he is a highly opinionated man is obvious in the staunch position which he takes on topics which represent these prejudices, such as women's place in society. His moralistic views are quite Puritan; he rarely neglects an opportunity to moralize when one of Spenser's characters departs from a given standard of moral virtue. With the many ready-made opportunities for moralizing that present themselves in the poem, the narrator consistently delights in inserting his personal opinions into the narrative.

## CHAPTER III

## THE NARRATOR'S AMPLIFICATION OF THE NARRATIVE

In addition to his role as a didactic commentator, the narrator in The Faerie Queene is also adroit in embellishing the narrative with similes that amplify his meaning beyond the level of Spenser's simple narrative. Generally, these passages with descriptive similes occur whenever the narrator is involved in describing a battle or fight, although his similes do appear under other circumstances and for a variety of purposes. Frequently, he employs a simile solely for the purpose of amplification; often, he uses them to imply a note of sarcasm or to create satire; on other occasions, he conveys through his choice of similes an humorous significance. With the mere addition of a simile, he frequently changes the meaning of the narrative when one considers the implications of his comparison. Besides the connotative value of these similes, a distinctive descriptive aspect emerges when the narrator inserts occasional, additional remarks, and, generally, a listener's mental image of the narrative is slightly modified by the addition of the simile. His similes fall into three general groups: nautical, mythological, and pastoral.

The narrator's most frequently used simile involves the use of nautical references. Logically, one would expect him to make references to situations with which he was most familiar.

Thus, the frequency of his use of nautical similes should be an indication of his familiarity with the sea and with the sailor's life. The narrator's use of nautical similes may reflect a subject that most of his English listeners would have understood and appreciated. His use of nautical similes is effective, adding a vivid quality to his description of persons and situations.

There is an abundance of examples of the narrator's use of nautical similes to amplify the narrative. One which demonstrates this special function of the simile occurs in an episode involving Una in her search for the Redcrosse Knight. When she sees Archimago, the enchanter, in the disguise of the Redcrosse Knight, she gives him such a joyful welcome that the narrator feels the necessity of including a ridiculous simile in order to illustrate the absurdity of Una's situation. Comparing her to a "beaten marinere," he not only chides her for her lack of perception, but also comments upon her changed appearance. Previously, one recalls, her beauty has saved her life (e.g., in the episode involving her with the lion), but now she is tanned and weather-beaten; hence, the narrator describes the once lovely Una, as follows:

> Much like as when the beaten marinere
> That long hath wandred in the ocean wide
> Ofte soust in swelling Tethys saltish teare,
> And long time having tand his tawney hide
> With blustring breath of heaven, that none can bide;
> And scorching flames of fierce Orions hound
> Soone as the port from far he has espide

His chearfull whistle merily doth sound,
And Nereus crownes with cups; his mates him pledg around.
(I.III.xxxi)

As with all of his similes, this one causes the situation to take on a slightly different dimension.

The narrator, also, is an opinionated man, capable of using biting sarcasm whenever a situation warrants it. Although he is not a cynic in the true sense of the word, he clearly reveals his opinion of deceptive, evil persons in his sharply outlined comments that depict hypocrisy in either a ridiculous or derogatory manner. For example, he involves the enchantress, Duessa, in a mockingly foolish comparison to a crocodile in showing her concern for a wounded knight. In this passage, Duessa, a self-centered and cruelly unfeeling person, exhibits, at least outwardly, a compassion for a knight wounded in a battle with the Redcrosse Knight. The narrator qualifies Duessa's expression of sympathy as "false griefe" and accuses her of shedding proverbial "crocodile tears" in an effort to convince Sansjoy of her true concern:

As when a wearie traveiler, that strayes
By muddy shore of broad seven-mouthed Nile,
Unweeting of the perillous wandring wayes,
Doth meete a cruell craftie crocodile,
Which, in false griefe hyding his harmefull guile,
Doth weepe full sore, and sheddeth tender teares:
The foolish man, that pitties all this while
His mournefull plight, is swallowed up unwares,
Forgetfull of his owne, that mindes an others cares.
(I.V.xviii)

But sarcasm is not the narrator's only useful device in connection with the simile. Occasionally, he resorts to hyperbole

to exaggerate the fame and renown of the heroic knights, a technique which he uses frequently in the praising of worthy deeds. In a determination to make exemplary models of his knights, he attributes to them great and wondrous powers of skill and strength. At one point, Sir Guyon is forced to fight two knights, simultaneously. To illustrate the danger Guyon, thus, faces and overcomes, the narrator compares him to a "tall ship" caught between two contrary winds, while Guyon, the exemplary knight of temperance, ". . . does ride on both their backs . . ." and heroically wins the battle, as follows:

> As a tall ship tossed in troublous seas,
> Whom raging windes, threatning to make pray,
> Of the rough rockes, doe diversly disease,
> Meets two contrarie billowes by the way,
> That her on either side doe sore assay,
> And boast to swallow her in greedy grave;
> Shee, scorning both their spights, does make wide way,
> And with her brest breaking the fomy wave,
> Does ride on both their backs, and faire her self doth save:
> (II.II.xxiv)

Even though the narrator invests his knights with heroic statures, he often points out, nevertheless, that they are not always sure of their prowess. For example, one learns that the Redcrosse Knight frequently exhibits self-doubt and, then, amazement over his slaying of Sansloy. By implication, here, the narrator accuses the Redcrosse Knight of neglect in failing to be alert for potential misfortune, although the Knight always escapes danger in spite of himself and, indeed, much to his own surprise. Afterwards, the narrator describes the

knight's amazement in a nautical simile:

> As when a ship, that flyes fayre under sayle,
> An hidden rocke escaped hath unawares,
> That lay in waite her wrack for to bewaile,
> The marriner, yet halfe amazed, stares
> At perill past, and yet in doubt ne dares
> To joy at his foolhappie oversight:
> (I.VI.i.1-6)

Spenser's narrator, moreover, is constantly aware of the fact that these knights have been given a mission by the Faerie Queene, and that, although each occasionally is often delayed, not one ever forgets his goal. On the other hand, the narrator is sometimes afraid that his reader may forget the purpose of these missions and, consequently, interrupts the narrative with a simile assuring the reader that the purpose has not been forgotten, but only postponed. In one instance, in using a nautical simile, he describes the high sense of purpose which Sir Guyon exemplifies, comparing him to a sea pilot who has fixed his compass to reach his destination:

> As pilot well expert in perilous wave,
> That to a stedfast starre his course hath bent,
> When foggy mistes or cloudy tempests have
> The faithfull light of that faire lampe yblent,
> And cover'd heaven with hideous dreriment,
> Upon his card and compas firmes his eye,
> The maysters of his long experiment,
> And to them does the steddy helme apply,
> Bidding his winged vessell fairly forward fly:
> (II.VII.i)

Similarly, the narrator assures his reader of Sir Calidore's faithful determination, when this noble knight is delayed by storms and hardship. Comparing Calidore to a ship that battles storms and often must swerve from its course, only to return

eventually, the narrator states:

> Like as a ship, that through the ocean wyde,
> Directs her course into one certaine cost,
> Is met of many a counter winde and tyde,
> With which her winged speed is let and crost,
> And she her selfe in stormie surges tost;
> Yet making many a borde, and many a bay,
> Still winneth way, ne hath her compasse lost,
> Right so it fares with me in this long way,
> Whose course is often stayd, yet never is astray.
> (VI.XII.i)

He also uses nautical similes to describe a mood or disposition of a character, as well as an action. When Britomart, for example, experiences a swift change of disposition, the narrator compares her to a foggy mist blown away by a wind. Her gloom changes to wrath and her grief to vengeance when she realizes that the knight whom she sees is not her beloved Artegal. Here, the narrator graphically describes her mood as follows:

> As when a foggy mist hath overcast
> The face of heven, and the cleare ayre engroste,
> The world in darkenes dwels, till that at last,
> The watry southwinde, from the seabord coste
> Upblowing, doth disperse the vapour lo'ste,
> And poures it selfe forth in a stormy showre;
> So the fayre Britomart, having disclo'ste
> Her clowdy care into a wrathfull stowre,
> The mist of griefe dissolv'd did into vengeance powre.
> (III.IV.xiii)

Significantly, almost every battle scene within The Faerie Queene is amplified by some use of simile. In one such episode wherein Artegal is pledged to punish a wicked knight for his unchivalrous habit of exacting a payment from all who travel through a part of the forest, the narrator compares the ensuing

battle to a fight between a dolphin and a seal. According to him, the battle is so fierce that the entire sea is disturbed. He notes how the two champions "snuf, snort, bounce, rage and rore," as follows:

> As when a dolphin and sele are met
> In the wide champian of the ocean plaine:
> With cruell chaufe their courages they whet,
> The maysterdome of each by force to gaine,
> And dreadfull battaile twixt them do darraine:
> They snuf, they snort, they bounce, they rage, they rore,
> That all the sea, disturbed with their traine,
> Doth frie with fome above the surges hore:
> Such was betwixt these two the troublesome uprore.
> (V.II.xv)

He is conscious, moreover, of social status in those whom he is describing. For example, when he uses a simile to amplify the narrative, he is very careful to accord his characters their respective rank, by simile. When Sir Calepine is lost and must be rescued, he is saved by what the narrator calls a "savage man." In the simile that follows, the narrator carefully maintains Calepine's social status by comparing him to a ship and the savage to a mere "fisher barke." Yet, he shows that the savage is capable of comforting Calepine, thus illustrating the Renaissance concept of the noble savage. Referring to the courageous knight and to his rescue, the narrator observes:

> Like as a ship with dreadfull storme long tost,
> Having spent all her mastes and her ground-hold,
> Now farre from harbour likely to be lost,
> At last some fisher barke doth neare behold,
> That giveth comfort to her courage cold:
> Such was the state of the courteous knight,

> Being oppressed by that faytour bold,
> That he remayned in most perilous plight
> And his sad ladie left in pitifull affright.
> (VI.IV.i)

The narrator's mythological similes do not occur as frequently as the nautical references. However, his varied allusions to mythology are sufficient evidence of his familiarity with ancient lore. However, the comparisons are sometimes ridiculous. One notices, for example, the irony in comparing Una to Ulysses, when the narrative deals with Una's search for her lover and her homeland. Here, the narrator states that Una looks for the Redcrosse Knight "In waies unknowne, her wandering knight to seeke, / With paines far passing that long wandring Greeke." (I.III.xxi.1-2) Una's degree of patience must have been astounding if she were to surpass the patience of Ulysses' ten-year search.

Spenser's narrator often mixes mythological allusion with Christian reference. Although The Faerie Queene is basically Christian in tone, the narrator refers to Jove, not Jehovah, when he uses a simile to describe the destructive power of the giant, Orgoglio. His reference, here, clearly enhances the eventual triumph of Prince Arthur, since the giant possesses an apparently supernatural power, and Arthur is a mere mortal. He describes their battle in terms of the following simile:

> As when almightie Jove, in wrathfull mood,
> To wreake the guilt of mortall sins is bent,
> Hurles forth his thundring dart with deadly food,

Enrold in flames and smoulding dreriment,
Through riven cloudes and molten firmament;
The fiers threefold engin, making way,
Both loftie towres and highest trees hath rent,
And all that might his angry passage stay,
And shooting in the earth, castes up a mount of clay.
(I.VIII.ix)

Furthermore, the narrator exhibits a knowledge of literary works and suits them with ease to his purposes. For example, in a description in which he attempts to prove that only a god or a godlike person can dispel melancholy, he refers to the Psalmist, David, who played on his harp to allay the fears and subdue the melancholy of a wrathful King Saul:

Or such so that celestiall Psalmist was
That when the wicked feend his lord tormented,
With heavenly notes, that did all other pas,
The outrage of his furious fit relented:
Such musicke is wise words with time concented,
To moderate stiffe mindes, disposd to strive:
(IV.II.ii.1-6)

Arthur's legendary powers are often the narrator's motive for simile. Whenever the Prince is engaged in battle, the narrator uses a simile to emphasize Arthur's invincible strength. In one such case, he compares Arthur's last-minute burst of strength to a fire that smolders in a cave and suddenly breaks out. He implies that Arthur has kept such a tight control on his anger for so long a time that it takes drastic, personal danger to kindle him into action. But when Arthur is at last infuriated, the narrator explains:

Like as a fire, the which in a hollow cave,
Hath long bene underkept and down supprest,
With murmurous disdayne doth inly rave,

> And grudge, in so streight prison to be prest,
> At last breakes forth with furious unrest,
> And strives to mount unto his native seat;
> All that did earst it hinder and molest,
> Yt now devoures with flames and scorching heat,
> And carries into smoake with rage and horror great.
> (II.XI.xxxii)

The fact that Arthur represents the perfection of knighthood and, thus, the culmination of all honor and virtue may have influenced the narrator's choice of fire for the description of Arthur's avenging justice, since fire is a purifying element. Arthur is, also, the only knight who is not subjected to the process of having to learn virtue by experience. Indeed, the narrator treats him with all due deference. However, it is interesting to note that this shining example of knighthood almost invariably must be forced into fighting. A pastoral simile describes how fierce the Prince becomes after two others attack him when he attempts to rescue Sir Guyon. Here, the narrator likens him to a bull that, once angered, is terribly formidable:

> As a salvage bull, whom two fierce mastives bayt,
> When rancour doth with rage him once engore,
> Forgets with wary warde them to awayt,
> But with his dreadfull hornes them drives afore,
> Or flings aloft, or treades downe in the flore,
> Breathing out wrath, and bellowing disdaine,
> That all the forest quakes to hear him rore:
> (II.VIII.xlii)

The narrator is unrelenting in his criticism when a knight is not fulfilling his knightly duty. For example, when Artegal is first attracted to the place wherein the Amazon women are disgracing knights by keeping them in slavery, the

noble Artegal promptly accepts the challenge to avenge the captive knights. The narrator, in approving terms, compares Artegal to an eagle:

> Like to an eagle in his kingly pride,
> Soring through his wide empire of the aire,
> To weather his brode sailes, by chaunce hath spide,
> A goshauke, which hath seized for her share
> Uppon some fowle, that should her feast prepare.
> (V.IV.xlii.1-5)

But Artegal soon earns the narrator's reproof when, after a victory, he relaxes his guard for a fleeting moment and finds himself defeated by Radigund, the Amazon champion. While Radigund stands triumphantly over the fallen Artegal, the narrator describes the knight as weak and whimpering:

> As when a beare hath seiz'd her cruell clawes
> Uppon the carkasse of some beast too weake,
> Proudly stands over, and a while doth pause,
> To heare the piteous beast pleading her plaintiffe cause.
> (V.IV.xl.6-9)

In an equally effective manner, he employs similes to heighten his descriptions of valour and bravery of heroic knights. For example, when Sir Calidore rushes among a rout of bandits in order to rescue his fair lady, the narrator describes him as a lion among a herd of deer:

> Like as a lion mongst a heard of dere
> Disperseth them to catch his choysest pray;
> So did he fly amongst them here and there.
> (VI.XI.xlix.1-3)

But the bandits, who are neither as brilliant nor as valiant as their lone attacker, unwittingly aid Sir Calidore by destroying one another in a savage manner. The narrator, then,

compares them to hungry dogs, as follows:

> Like as a sort of hungry dogs, ymet
> About some carcase by the common way,
> Doe fall together, stryving each to get,
> The greatest portion of the greedie pray;
> All on confused heapes themselves assay,
> And snatch, and byte, and rend, and tug, and teare,
> That who them sees would wonder at their fray,
> And who sees not would be affrayed to heare:
> (VI.XI.xvii.1-8)

In addition to making references to animals in his pastoral similes, the narrator also occasionally utilizes other types of pastoral devices, such as the blossoming of flowers. In the episode wherein Irena rejoices at the sight of Artegal, the narrator compares her to a flower that blossoms

> Like as a tender rose in open plaine,
> That with untimely drought nigh withered was
> And hung the head, soone as few drops of raine,
> Thereon distill, and deaw her daintie face,
> Gins to looke up, and with fresh wonted grace,
> Dispreds the glorie of her leaves gay:
> Such was Irenas countenance, such her case,
> When Artegall she saw in that array,
> There wayting for the tyrant, till all was farre day.
> (V.XII.xiii)

The same type of simile is also utilized to describe Tristram's reaction to being made a squire by Calidore, although the image seems to be not in keeping with masculine pride:

> Like as a flowre, whose silken leaves small,
> Long shut up in the bud from heavens vew,
> At length breakes forth, and brode displayes his smyling hew.
> (VI.II.xxxv.7-9)

The narrator's use of similes as amplification has an elevating effect upon the narration as a whole. The narrator's asides serve not only to amplify the meaning beyond the scope

of Spenser's simple narrative, but, also, to suggest, at various intervals, satire, or to invest a simile with humorous significance. His similes often change the meaning of the narrative when one considers the implications of his comparison, but the change is generally such a subtle one, that more than a mere surface reading in some episodes is required for one to comprehend the nuances of meaning. The narrator employs various types of similes to illustrate history, but, generally, his similes are either of a nautical, mythological, or pastoral classification. With the addition of each simile, he molds the narrative into a more interesting and colorful tale.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE NARRATOR AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE ACTION

A third manner in which Spenser's narrator in The Faerie Queene departs from his traditional role is reflected in his unorthodox habit of becoming involved in the narration itself, as if he, too, were a character in the action. Although his unique personality is delineated in the previously discussed types of narrative asides, in his role as the "participant," he unknowingly presents an even clearer view of himself as a man. Most striking is his undisguised concern for people, i.e., his humanitarianism. Nor is he afraid of becoming "involved," for his opinions and prejudices are well defined in his various outbursts. He believes, sincerely, that justice and truth are always rewarded, and that evil and dishonesty are always punished. His implicit belief in a heaven that watches over and controls mankind is clearly evident in the several cases wherein he rather angrily appeals to heaven for divine intervention on behalf of wronged individuals. His startling custom of sternly reproving individual characters shows his unfeigned desire that they conduct themselves as knights worthy of their high chivalric code.

Very characteristic of his manner of intruding into the action is his behavior in an episdoe in which the Redcrosse Knight, mistakenly thinking Una unfaithful to her vows of

chastity, deserts her and leaves her alone, without protection. The narrator becomes very disturbed over Una's plight and angrily demands of heaven why there is not immediate vengeance from above:

> Ah! heavens, that doe this hideous act behold,
> And heavenly virgin thus outraged to see,
> How can ye vengeance so long withhold,
> And hurle not flashing flames upon that Paynim bold?
> (I.VI.v.1-4)

However, when he sees that there will be no heavenly fireworks on behalf of the distressed maiden, he satisfies himself merely with rhetorical lamentations:

> Who now is left to keepe the forlorne maid
> From raging spoile of lawlesse victors will?
> Her faithful gard remov'd, her hope dismaid,
> Her selfe a yeilded pray to save or spill.
> (I.III.xliii.1-4)

His appeals for heavenly aid and comfort do not always end on such a negative note. Such is the case when he reverses his own pessimistic attitudes during an episode in which Sir Guyon is in great danger. At first, he laments heaven's lack of concern; then, he reverses his attitude to show an explicit belief in divine grace which he had formerly doubted:

> And is there care in heaven? And is there love
> In heavenly spirits to these creatures bace,
> That may compassion of their evilles move?
> There is: else much more wretched were the cace
> Of men then beasts. But o th' exceeding grace
> Of Highest God, that loves his creatures so,
> And all this workes with mercy doth embrace,
> That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
> To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe!
> (II.VIII.i)

The narrator's defense of heavenly grace reveals that he believes in the granting of heavenly love through divine grace, not through human merit.

His emotional reactions to the events which he narrates are often the motivations for his intrusions into the narrative, revealing a strong sense of loyalty and pity for the characters and deep concern for their destiny. For example, when Una is unjustly made the victim of deceit, the narrator is completely concerned about her plight, admitting, here, that Spenser's lines "with teares do steepe." According to his concept of justice, one so good as Una should not be subjected to such wrongs. In behalf of this maiden who is "true as touch," the "daughter of a king," and fairer than any other woman, he admits that he is deeply "empassioned":

> And now it is empassioned so deepe,
> For fairest Unaes sake, of whom I sing,
> That my frayle eies these lines with teares do steepe,
> To thinke how she through guyleful handeling,
> Though true as touch, though daughter of a king,
> Though faire as ever living wight was fayre,
> Though nor in word nor deede ill meriting,
> Is from her knight divorced in despayre,
> And her dew loves deryv'd to that vile witches shayre.
> (I.III.ii)

In the same manner, he is not only moved to tears, but also filled with pity upon witnessing an episode, because his sense of justice does not permit him to account for unrewarded virtue or unpunished evil. Observing beauty brought to "unworthie wretchednesse," he confesses it is ample cause for compassion. He also is a consciously chivalrous man,

acknowledging his "allegeance" to all womankind. When propriety is deliberately ignored, he reacts with great agony, so that, for pity, he wants to die:

> Nought is there under heav'ns wide hollownesse,
> That moves more deare compassion of mind,
> Then beautie brought t' unworthie wretchednesse
> Through envies snares, or fortunes freakes unkind:
> I whether lately through her brightness blynd,
> Or through alleageance and fast fealty,
> Which I do owe unto all womankynd,
> Feele my hart perst with so great agony,
> When such I see, that all for pitty I could dy.
> (I.III.i)

He freely admits that his compassion for Spenser's characters often moves him to tears. At times, he becomes so overwrought that he regrets that the tale has ever been written. For example, after having narrated the misfortunes of Florimel, he remarks that

> The deare compassion of whose bitter fit
> My softened heart so sorely doth constraine
> That I with tears ful oft doe pittie it,
> And oftentimes doe wish it never had bene writ.
> (IV.I.i.6-9)

Even when he knows that unfortunate situations are often unavoidable, he expresses regret and pity for having to see the heroic characters suffer unpleasantness. During the adventures of Florimel, it is necessary for him to utilize a flash-back technique to correlate the action with an episode involving Marinel. Hence, his conscience disturbs him when he remembers that he left Florimel languishing in a prison. Thus, he scolds himself for having been thoughtlessly cruel and expresses his pity for the unfortunate maiden:

> But ah for pittie that I have thus long
> Left a fayre ladie languishing in payne!
> Now well away! That I have doen such wrong,
> To let faire Florimell in bands remayne,
> In bands of love, and in sad thraldomes chayne!
> From which unlesse some heavenly powre her free
> By miracle, not yet appearing playne,
> She lenger yet is like captiv'd to bee;
> That even to thinke thereof it inly pitties me.
> (IV.XI.i)

The narrator's admiration for his characters in their triumphs is as great as his concern for them in their distresses. Often, his sense of approval is incorporated into similes describing their beauty or valour. Occasionally, he intrudes into the narrative to offer personal opinions on the magnificence of beauty or valour. For example, he states, without qualififcation, that Una's beauty is unequalled on earth. He illustrates his love for hyperbole, again, when he declares that her beauty is so great that to describe it is beyond the reach of his humble talents:

> Ne under sunne, that shines so wide and faire,
> Whence all that lives does borrow life and light,
> Lives ought that to her linage may compaire,
> Which, though from earth it be derived right,
> Yet doth it selfe stretch forth to hevens hight,
> And all the world with wonder overspred;
> A labor huge, exceeding far my might:
> How shall fraile pen, with feare disparaged,
> Conceive such soveraine glory, and great bountyhed?
> (II.X.ii)

Throughout the narrative, he assumes that his listeners are in accordance with his sympathies for the characters in The Faerie Queene. Without any approval from his audience, however, he proceeds as if with approbation. This attitude facilitates

his easy and frequent insertion of asides into the narrative. Obviously, he wishes to recruit sympathy for Britomart's cause when he contemptuously remarks about her enemy: "Ah! Who can love the worker of her smart?" (III.XII.xxxi.7) In the same manner, he states his opinion in the case of Mirabella, when, as she is condemned to wander through the world to make amends for her wrongs, he concludes that her task is an impossible one: "Aie me! How could her love make half amends therefore?" (VI.VII.xxxviii.9) When the illustrious Marinell is chained in a dungeon by a monster, the narrator remarks, somewhat incredulously: "Ah! Who would her despyse?" (IV.XI.v.2)

When he interrupts the narrative to speak directly to the involved characters, he feels that they need such instruction. Often it is to chide them; at other times, it is to encourage them. In an episode in which Britomart and Malbecco are fighting, he stops the narrative in order to address the "redoubted knight" and the "honorable dame." He wants it to be clear to all that the actions of the dishonorable Malbecco are not at all exemplary:

> Redoubted knight and honorable dames,
> To whom I levell all my labours end,
> Right sore I feare, least with unworthie blames
> This odious argument my rymes should shend,
> Or ought your goodly patience offend,
> Whiles of a wanton lady I doe write,
> Which with her loose incontinence doth blend
> The shyning glory of your soveraine light;
> And knighthood fowle defaced by a faithlesse knight.
> (III.IX.i)

In a classic example of his chiding for neglect of duty, he takes three knights to task for having failed to aid their ladies in distress. Florimel, kidnapped by Proteus, is abandoned by her three protectors. Since the knights have failed, the narrator shows how help now must come through divine intervention:

> But if that thou, Sir Satyran, didst weete,
> Or thou, Sir Peridure, her sory state,
> How soon would yee assemble many a fleete,
> To fetch from sea that ye at land lost late!
> Towres, citties, kingdomes ye would ruinate,
> In your avengement and dispiteous rage,
> Ne ought your burning fury mote abate;
> But if Sir Calidore could it presage,
> No living creature could his cruelty asswage.
>
> But sith that none of all her knights is nye,
> See how the heavens, of voluntary grace
> And soveraine favor towards chasity
> Doe succor send to her distressed case:
> So much High God doth innocence embrace.
> (III.VIII.xxviii-xxix)

Again, he reiterates his belief in a just God and in the eventual good to be found in all situations, but one notices that he considers divine intervention to be merely a last resort; that is "sith that none of all her knights is nye," heavenly intervention is necessary.

Throughout The Faerie Queene, he finds occasions to theorize about the proper status and role of women. As previously observed, he zealously guards his masculine pride with what he considers to be the proper convictions about the inferior status of women. Although he does occasionally relinquish a small measure of masculine superiority in crediting women,

his general attitude remains one of stubborn inattention to female accomplishments. Occasionally, however, he cannot ignore the achievements of the fairer sex. In such cases, he circumvents the issue by mourning the passing of the great women of ancient time, lamenting the absence of such women in his own age. For example, he displays this point of view in an episode in which praise of the maiden knight, Britomart, is his main subject. First, he ponders the passing of great women, and concludes with an outburst of disdain for all women who are not, in his opinion, worthy of the honor and glory which they have been given:

> Where is the antique glory now become,
> That whylome wont in women to appeare?
> Where be the brave atchievement doen by some?
> Where be the batteilles, where the shield and speare,
> And all the conquests which them high did reare,
> That matter made for famous poets verse,
> And boastfull men so oft abasht to beare?
> Beene they all dead, and laide in dolefull herse?
> Or doen they only sleepe, and shall againe reverse?
>
> If they be dead, then woe is me therefore:
> But if they sleepe, O let them soone awake!
> For all too long I burne with envy sore,
> To heare the warlike feats which Homere spake
> Of bold Penthesilee, which made a lake
> Of Greekish blood so ofte in Trojan plaine;
> But when I reade how stout Debora strake
> Proud Sisera, and how Camill' hath slaine
> The huge Orsilochus, I swell with great disdaine.
> (III.IV.i-ii)

More than any other type of narrative aside, his "participant" role presents him as a strikingly sympathetic and humane individual. Even though he still resorts to the use of

prejudiced and unsupported opinion in some instances, he is a devout optimist at heart, sincerely believing in the eventual conquest of good over evil. When his characters are involved in unfortunate situations, he does not hesitate to appeal to heaven for recompense. He has a genuine concern for the characters, experiencing genuine apprehension for them, admitting that their cause even moves him to tears. However, he is not in the least hesitant to scold any character that does not realize the error of his way, commending those who take heed of the lesson and mend their ways. In spite of his prejudices, he is a man of great human compassion and, hence, one to be appreciated.

## CHAPTER V

## THE NARRATOR AS SEEN THROUGH A STUDY OF NARRATIVE ASIDES

The characters of The Faerie Queene are a distinguished and renowned company; anyone with even a cursory knowledge of The Faerie Queene is acquainted with such personages as the Redcrosse Knight and Una, Britomart and Artegal, Calidore and Archimago. Since each character has his own role and, hence, his own personality, a common tendency in reading The Faerie Queene is to concentrate attention upon the characters involved in the narrative itself and to overlook the role and personality of its important narrator. In true narrative tradition, this practice would be commendable; however, when working with The Faerie Queene, inattention to the narrator and his personality is a regrettable negligence. The narrator demonstrates, with his various kinds of intrusions into the narrative, the facets of his own unique and rather complex personality. A study of the nature of his narrative asides illustrates his attitudes and convictions on a variety of topics, making it possible for one to arrive at a statement concerning him and his effect on the work as a whole.

One finds, of course, both good and bad characteristics in the narrator of The Faerie Queene. A trait that has both positive and negative significance is his incurable love of exaggeration, found in all the classifications of narrative

asides, particularly in that involving amplification by simile. His use of hyperbole frequently results in some rather ridiculous descriptions; at other times, his exaggeration causes a distorted concept of a truth, virtue, or situation, because of the scope of the comparison he draws. Although he occasionally employs a simile as a mere amplification of the narrative, usually he chooses a simile which deliberately changes the nature of the situation, either magnifying the evil or good being represented, or ridiculing the complete absurdity of the situation. When the narrator becomes overly enthusiastic about an event in which a character either has attained, or will attain, to a certain degree of perfection, he generally imposes his own verdict and renders his own exaggerated opinion. He frequently exaggerates by means of sweeping statements of generalization, which, he naively believes, will be accepted by his listeners without question of any kind.

Although he often exaggerates the narrative far out of proportion, he is, nevertheless, a man of high ideals. Upholding his personal philosophy of life, he idealizes the standard virtues of the "good life," such as honesty, steadfastness, courtesy, love. He is not unduly distressed that the characters of The Faerie Queene do not consistently maintain their standards of moral virtues, but he is insistent that they return to a reasonable adherence to their standards after they have learned their lessons through experience. When the

characters depart from the expected norm of social conduct, he has an opportunity to expound upon the attainment of virtue in which he so devoutly believes. From an examination of his constant and, at times, vehement condemnation of evil and fraud, one learns that he hates hypocrisy and dishonesty. He never forfeits a chance to moralize on the avoidance of these sins. Then, when the characters resume their pursuit of worthy objectives, he gallantly points out the rewards in their return to righteousness.

He is a highly opinionated man, unfailingly blunt when he feels compelled to offer his personal convictions upon a favorite subject. With unrestrained confidence, he expounds, through his narrative asides, upon every type of subject. For inexplicable reasons, he considers himself an authority upon the topics which he discusses, ranging from a theological consideration of heavenly grace to the more practical problem of human relations. He considers such topics as knightly duty and honor, love and its trials and glories, and the social place of women to be his unchallenged domain.

Closely aligned to his opinionated nature is his tendency to stubborness, almost to the point of obstinancy. His stubborness is illustrated in many episodes, but it can be noted most clearly in his reaction to feminine achievements. Even though he is aware that some women are extraordinary, he, nevertheless, ignores the possibility and continues to believe

in an infallible philosophy of masculine superiority. With equal fervor, he retains his dogmatic beliefs in his moral standard and his concepts of knightly honor and valour.

Nevertheless, he is a sensitive man who is capable of deep human compassion, one who is unashamed to admit that such feelings stir his soul. Although this characteristic is surprising in a man who is so quick to criticize and so prone to moralize, nevertheless, the apparently genuine concern and sympathy that he exhibits cannot be considered hypocritical. His sensitive, emotional nature is to be seen principally in his intrusions into the narrative in his "participant" role, although one may note his exhibition of anger, pity, remorse, and humor in many other instances. His sensitive nature is a catalyst for his display of other personality traits, because, unless he is concerned about the characters of whom he is speaking, he does not feel compelled to interrupt the narrative.

With his various intrusions and his expressions of personal opinion and concern, Spenser's narrator has a definite effect upon the poem. The scope of the work is enlarged by the presence of his extraneous material, not only because of its departure from narrative form, but also because of the type of material that is added. He imposes his own philosophies, humor, and interpretations, thus changing the basic meaning of the narrative itself. One must be influenced by the presence

of this narrator, because he is constantly and insistently a part of the very essence of the poem. Although his role is subtle, it is, at the same time, dynamic. It is only through a careful study of the nature of his frequent asides that one becomes aware of the importance of the role of the narrator in Spenser's The Faerie Queene.

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