

ART, NATURE, AND SPENSER'S PICTORIALISM

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis began with the desire to understand the gold ivy painted green that entwines the crystal fountain in Spenser's Bower of Bliss. Although this artificial vegetation struck me as an example of what twentieth-century critics would call "kitsch", I somehow felt that the poet himself was viewing his creation as an object of beauty. In order to test this feeling I began my research by examining the use of the terms "art" and "nature" in Elizabethan writing, for it seemed to me that in the definition of and the relationship between these two terms lay a key to Spenser's esthetic. The artist here has tried to make an artificial substance appear to be natural; reading the Elizabethan critics I found that such attempts at artistic deception were almost unanimously applauded.

Spenser's age could not have formulated its esthetic intuitively, however, and in order to understand its historical perspective I have examined the relationship between "art" and "nature" in important historical periods before the Renaissance. Here it was found that at times when painting is dominant, as in the Renaissance, art's imitation of nature is understood naturalistically, and a convention of literary pictorialism arises. In the writings of the critics of the Italian Renaissance, art is praised

for its approximation to nature, and the poet, like the painter, is admired for his accurate pictures.

Turning to the Elizabethan critics I found an esthetic similar to that expressed by the Italian writers. A common philosophy lies behind this esthetic. It is believed that to imitate nature with accuracy is to reproduce in art the harmony of God's creation. In performing this imitation man the artist is demonstrating his relationship to God the Artist.

It was found further that the Elizabethan environment also demonstrated the delight in art's ability to deceive that is expressed by the writers of the period. And we find in their surroundings, in visual support of the critical theories, that the Elizabethans are not only delighted when art appears to be nature, but that they are also delighted when nature appears to be art.

Looking finally at Spenser's scenes, we find his period's esthetic exemplified. He bases his idea of the beautiful on the conception of a world made up of order and variety. He praises verisimilitude in art, delighting to see art appear to be nature. He also delights when he sees a natural scene that resembles art. In addition he describes with pleasure situations in which art and nature are in friendly competition, or, perhaps the most delightful relationship of all, situations in which art and nature

play complementary roles. One of Spenser's characteristically Renaissance traits is his ability to separate ethics and esthetics. This point has often been overlooked for the gold ivy painted green has been dismissed in some previous criticism not as esthetically poor, but ethically, as evil. Rather, in Elizabethan eyes, it is basically an esthetic good and can be used by the poet to create a number of effects.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND THE APPROACH

Despite their dissimilarity to the traits of modern poetry, the characteristics of Spenser's style, its leisurely pace, its purposely ornate language, its systematically intricate sound patterns, along with the copious variety of its subject matter, are still appreciated by many contemporary readers of poetry. And the thematic material of Spenser's greatest work, though possibly oversimple if read too mechanically, if read sympathetically, remains compelling. For it contains a basic view of man's problems: his struggle to maintain the forces of light in the face of the forces of darkness, his struggle to be holy or temperate, or human, in a world full of temptations, bestiality, and despair. My problem with Spenser is a much lesser one. For I find that the greatest obstacle to a modern's sympathetic reading of this poet is neither his style nor his subject matter, but rather that very quality for which he was so much admired by his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers, his pictorial vividness.¹ It is not that too much attention to picture-making in poetry

¹Rudolf Gottfried in "The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry" (ELH, XIX, 1952, 203-213) notes that Spenser is compared to Rubens by Joseph Warten; to Raphael, Corregio, Michelangelo and Poussin by Leigh Hunt; and to Gian Bellini, Titian and Tintoret by Lowell (pp. 204-205).

is objectionable in itself; it is rather that Spenser's pictures, from most current esthetic viewpoints, are in bad taste: Una, with her white skin whiter than the white ass on which she rides which, to begin with, is "more white than snow" (I.i.4); the beaten gold ivy on the fountain in the Bower of Bliss, painted green (II.xii.61); Belphoebe, with her "lockes crisped, like golden wyre" (II.iii.30), and Belphoebe's forest dwelling, with its equidistant trees that "naturally" resemble a stately theatre (III.v.39). It would seem that Spenser's conception of what makes a pleasing picture is based on assumptions radically different from most of those we hold concerning the proper relationship between art and nature.

Our objection, of course, is grounded on a modern distaste for the artificial. An easy answer to those who dislike Spenser's taste, then, would be simply to point out the ameliorative use of the term "artificial" in Renaissance criticism and to thus dismiss our antipathy with a condescending remark about the historical relativity of esthetics. But surely this would be a lamentable attitude, for it means dismissing an important aspect of a great poet's work as simply unavailable for pleasure. Perhaps a more determined examination of the problem would lead to a greater understanding and appreciation.

Several attempts have already been made to overcome this barrier of taste. C. S. Lewis defined the problem as a moral one and explained the gold-painted-green ivy, for example, as a misuse of art characteristic of the Bower of Bliss.² He finds the natural-artificial contrast one of the great antitheses which run throughout the whole of the Faerie Queene, on a parallel with Life and Death or Light and Darkness. Specifically he believes that the poet constructed the Bower of Bliss as a calculated opposite to the Garden of Adonis: "The one is artifice, sterility, death: the other, nature, fecundity, life." (p.326) The explanation of the painted ivy, then, is that it is evil, and, Lewis rather strongly argues, to misunderstand this is either to accuse Spenser of bad taste, or, what is worse, to confess oneself an admirer of metal vegetation as a garden ornament (p.325).

Lewis' wholesale equation of Nature with good and Art with evil in the Faerie Queene has been modified by several later critics but most accurately, I think, by Hans P. Guth in his article "Allegorical Implications of Artifice in Spenser's Faerie Queene".³ After finding in Spenser many examples in which nature is portrayed with horrible aspects

²C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York, 1958), pp. 327-328.

³PMLA, LXXVI. (1961), 474-479.

and, on the other hand, many words of praise such as "beautify", "embellish", "painted" and "gorgeous" which are suggestive of artifice, Guth concludes that both Art and Nature appear in the Faerie Queene with good and evil associations (p. 475) and that "the moral implications of artifice depend on the author's intention in a given passage" (p. 479). This argument quite conclusively breaks down Lewis' generalized equation but still leaves us with evil ivy. However, an additional comment by Guth--that the moral and esthetic vision are not fused, that this is allegory, not symbolism (p. 479)--supports my own feeling about the ivy: it may be evil, but for Spenser, at least, it is nevertheless beautiful.

What I am questioning here is the critical assumption that the Elizabethan mind was incapable of separating ethics from esthetics.⁴ It is true that one of the main concerns of the criticism written by Spenser's contemporaries was the vindication of poetry on the grounds of its moral usefulness, but in the following chapters it will be argued that an understanding of the moral implications of their art is not sufficient for a full appreciation because it does not exactly coincide with the Elizabethan feeling for the beautiful. The idea and the feeling are of course closely related, for

⁴Suggested, for example, by Joel E. Spingarn, Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (New York, 1924), p. 58 and p. 262.

the Elizabethan delight in the artificial (i.e. their feeling for the beautiful) is based on their idea of the structure of the universe, especially on their idea of the order of nature.

Even at this point it can be seen that Spenser's moral purpose alone will not explain away his apparently distasteful mingling of art and nature. Even if we allowed it to excuse the ivy, accepting Lewis' implied imperative that what is evil cannot be beautiful, we are still left with a list of atrocities which are morally good: Una's ghoulish skin or the metallic Belpheobe and her stagy landscape.

At times a rather radical approach has been used to dismiss this whole problem. It is argued that Spenser's taste in pictures is not questionable at all, for he is not pictorial. Israel Baroway, for example, in this manner explains away Belpheobe's artificiality. He demonstrates that Spenser's method here has been influenced by the oriental image technique of the Song of Songs which he believes Spenser at one time translated.⁵ The technique is one which does not attempt to describe a woman physically, but by equating parts of her body to supreme types of excellencies (usually good fruit or valuable metal) evokes

⁵"The Imagery of Spenser and the Song of Songs", JEGP, XXXIII (1934), 23-45.

a diffuse and benumbing sensuous response rather than an erotic one. On a much broader basis Rudolf Gottfried and Lyle Glazier have effronted critical tradition by arguing that the "painter of the poets" should in no cases be viewed pictorially. Gottfried argues that Spenser should not be considered a painter because he is a poor one, his pictures are either logically inconsistent or weak in composition. We cannot visualize the opening scene, for example, because the three figures, Red Cross, Una and the Dwarf, are all moving at a different pace; they simply cannot be contained within one frame. Spenser's pageants, Gottfried finds, are not pictorial because they break into a series of separate groups or single figures. And the picture of Belpheobe, skipping as it does from her forehead, to her costume, to her legs, to her spear, to her breast and back to her hair, is poorly composed and not flattering.⁶

This argument that Spenser is clumsy, or imprecise with his brush does not, it seems to me, exclusively deny him the title of painter. The title is metaphorical; we must not expect the precision of an oil painter from a painter in words. At one point, however, Gottfried does convincingly explain why Spenser does not compose pictorially. He points out that the incongruity in the opening scene

⁶"The Pictorial Elements in Spenser's Poetry", 203-213.

results from Spenser's subordinating pictorial quality to moral allegory (p. 210). This is the grounds on which Glazier, even more convincingly, argues against Spenser's pictorialism. He finds the poet's colors patchy and his lines "mere impressionistic suggestions for use by the inner eye".⁷ He points out, for example, that in the opening scene, commonly thought of as vividly descriptive, white, silver, red and black are the only colors that appear and that Una's hyperbolic whiteness stands less for the color of a face than for the radiance of an abstract idea (Truth), (p. 301). Curiously enough, Glazier also remarks, undermining his own argument against Spenser's pictorialism, that it is the reader, with his knowledge of medieval and Renaissance art, who supplies the vivid pictures from Spenser's hints (p. 300). He admits that the hints are there, then, and since a reader is needed for a poem to exist--we inevitably have pictures. And I would argue that if the reader's imagination is called upon to visualize early Renaissance pictures, then Spenser's art is in some sense pictorial, for the creators of these pictures, like our poet-painter, used simple colors, and, we should not forget, shared his allegorical temper.

A brief survey of Elizabethan visual arts will help to show that Spenser's esthetic is in fact a dominant one in

⁷"The Nature of Spenser's Imagery", MLQ, XVI (1955), 300.

his period, while, in turn, a knowledge of these arts will help us visualize the poet's pictures. To demonstrate that this looking back and forth between two arts is a legitimate process, in fact a necessary one, once practised by the Elizabethans themselves, a look at the Renaissance convention of "ut pictura poesis" must also be taken.

The tradition of "ut pictura poesis" is an old one and a study of its development reveals its importance in a period when art is expected to realistically imitate nature. Spenser's gold-painted-green ivy, plus his pictorialism in general, demonstrate that he belonged to such a period. A brief look at the history of the relationship of art, nature and pictorialism, with special emphasis on its state in the Renaissance, will therefore precede our look at Elizabethan esthetics, Elizabethan visual arts, and, finally, Spenser's pictures.

CHAPTER II

ART, NATURE AND PICTORIALISM FROM
PLATO TO TASSO

Until the late nineteenth century when Oscar Wilde, with typical arrogance and acuity, reversed the position of the subject and the object, the dictum that art imitates nature had been a common starting point for esthetic philosophies. That the philosophies nevertheless argue for different concepts of art, must be explained by the existence of varying conceptions of the process of imitation and varying definitions of the idea of nature.

For Plato the real world is the world of ideas. Since to him the world of nature is in itself a deceptive imitation, the artist in imitating it performs a not very laudable function, for he removes men even farther from truth. That Plato is discussing an imitative art can be seen from his assumption that the artist uses particular examples as objects of imitation. He says, for instance, that an artist in painting a bed can only imitate what is already "a shadow of the truth", that is, a particular bed that is made by the cabinet maker in imitation of the one real bed that exists in the realm of ideas.⁸ And poets,

⁸The Republic, trans. Gilbert, Book X, in Literary Criticism, Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York, 1940), p. 44. In this chapter, unless otherwise noted, all quotations from critical works are from Gilbert's anthology, and, unless otherwise noted, are translated by the editor.

he argues, share with the painters the role of deceptive imitators (p. 48).

Aristotle qualifies the famous dictum in such a way as to give the artist quite another role than the one that Plato had given him. While the latter regarded reality as pure "Ideas" divorced from the concrete, Aristotle conceived of reality as a process of becoming. The concrete takes on form and meaning when it works in accordance with persisting, ordered principles, and art, through harmonious design, imitates this ordered process of nature.⁹ In this concept of imitation art functions idealistically for in carrying out a logical process the artist reveals not what has happened (the particular) but what would happen, according to the laws of probability (the universal). That Aristotle does not think of imitation in a pictorial sense is evident from his naming of music as the highest of the arts. Music, with its quality of duration can better imitate moral or natural harmony than painting, which must make use of shape and color symbolically. Aristotle's understanding of his own dictum, then, yields an esthetic that demands the ideal, an art that is closer to the abstract than to the naturalistic. Where Plato's comparison of painting and poetry denigrates the latter for its subjection to the particular, Aristotle's

⁹Walter Jackson Bates, Criticism: The Major Texts (New York, 1952), p. 5.

comparison illustrates the idealizing process of art:

"the dramatists should imitate good portrait painters who, though presenting the right form and making their portraits like the originals, make them more beautiful."¹⁰

With Horace criticism becomes urbane; the concern here is no longer with the ontological position of poetry but rather with what makes good poetry. Horace seems to have taken the dictum that art should imitate nature literally, for his primary concern is with the maintenance of decorum, decorum for the sake of verisimilitude, and verisimilitude in order to ensure the credulity of the poet's audience. In other words, art must seem to be nature (or reality) itself. In style also, art must seem natural: "I shall aim at a poem so deftly fashioned out of familiar matter that anybody might hope to emulate the feat, yet for all his efforts sweat and labour in vain".¹¹ And the poet himself is to be a blend of art and nature: "Whether a good poem be the work of nature or of art is a moot point. For my part I fail to see the use of study without wit, (native ability) or of wit without training: so true is it that each requires the other's aid in helpful union" (The Art of Poetry (408), Gilbert, p. 141).

¹⁰The Poetics, trans. Alfred Gudeman, Ch. XV, 5468, Gilbert, p. 91.

¹¹The Art of Poetry, trans. Edward H. Blakeney, Gilbert, p. 132.

Jean Hagstrum finds that Horace's frequent comparisons of poetry to painting (the whole epistle begins with the extended analogy) are evidence of his belief that art should literally imitate nature (the external world), for painting can do this better than poetry.¹² It was in fact to Horace's authority that Renaissance critics turned when they argued that poetry should imitate the techniques of painting. Just as they extend his observation that "the poet's aim is either to profit (teach) or to please (delight)" (Art of Poetry (233), Gilbert, p. 139) into the dictum that poetry should teach through delight, so in his observation that a poem is like a painting ((360), p. 139) the verb was converted into a should be or a must be. But although Horace himself did not advocate that poetry should imitate painting (which would surely remove it one step from nature), he did qualify his argument for decorum as consistent imitation of reality for the sake of illusion. An alternative to carefully following the dictates of decorum, it seems, is simply to copy past masters: "Either stick to tradition or see that your inventions be consistent." ((119), p. 131), and "Do you, my friends, study the Greek masterpieces: thumb them day and night" ((263), p. 136). Now instead of art imitating nature, it is recommended that art should imitate art.

¹²Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts (University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 10.

For Longinus' On the Sublime¹³ the balance is weighted in favour of conscious art over an art that conscientiously looks to nature. The aim of Longinus' subject, elevated style, is not to persuade an audience that what they hear is real, but rather to transport them with sublimity: "Genius does not merely persuade an audience but lifts it to ecstasy" (Ch. 1, Gilbert, p. 147). It is true that Longinus gives as the first two (and necessary) sources of the sublime the natural qualities of elevation of mind and vehement passion, but the other three sources--figurative language, noble diction and devoted arrangement of words--are in fact the main subject of his treatise. In Chapter Three he argues against those who would claim that genius is a gift of nature and will only be ruined if subjected to the rules of art. The reverse, that nature is inadequate without art, is in fact the case. And if there are some things that depend on nature alone, we can only be sure of this fact through a knowledge of art (p. 148).

A theory of literary pictorialism seems to be expressed by Longinus in a definition of one of his key terms: "The name imagination is commonly applied to any idea that enters the mind and produces speech, but the meaning that prevails is the one I employ, namely, that in your enthusiasm and strong feeling you seem to see what you speak

¹³Trans. by Gilbert as On Literary Excellence.

of and put it before the eyes of your audience" (Gilbert, p. 165). This convention of pictorialism as it developed among the Alexandrian poets such as Callimachus and Philetas presents the paradox of an art that imitates art for the sake of naturalism. In the Alexandrian period, one of great painters and a high interest in painting, there emerged an iconic genre of poetry--poems which were written expressly to describe works of art. The works of art are praised for their naturalism, however, and Hagstrum argues that the genre developed because of a literal interpretation of art's role in imitating nature, accompanied by the belief that painting of all the arts, can do this best (pp. 25-27).

During the Middle Ages the dictum that art imitates nature is at times restored, at least in theory, to its original meaning, for Aquinas writes, echoing Aristotle, that "art imitates nature in its operation" (Summa 1.9.117. a.1.c., quoted by Hagstrum, p. 46, underlining mine). Nature as simply external reality is not the concern of art. Theosophilus, author of one of the few surviving medieval tracts on painting, says nothing at all about nature or design, but is concerned with mixing colors to achieve not natural but artistic effects (Hagstrum, p. 51). Dante, who, Gilbert says, is so much an echo of his age that he may be chosen as representative of medieval critical theory (p. 199), does not once mention outside reality in his enumeration of

the crucial moments in the production of art. And, as if echoing Aquinas, his basic qualification for beauty is not form, but claritas, light or luminosity.

Art in the Middle Ages tends to the abstract and the least naturalistic of its forms, architecture and music, take the prominent place formerly occupied in theory by painting. A moral concern has defined art and separated it from nature, but in poetry, at least, it is still possible to separate ethics and esthetics. Dante, for example, says: "The goodness and beauty of every composition are distinct and separate from each other. Its goodness is in its idea and its beauty in the adornment of its words . . ." (Convivio, quoted by Gilbert, p. 200).

In the Renaissance painting is again the dominant art and with its careful observation of anatomy, its new subtlety in coloring, and its discovery of the laws of perspective, it becomes more than ever the art that can most accurately observe external nature. A renewed interest in the order of nature as the subject of art is aided by a revival of classical texts. At this time Aristotle's statement that art should imitate nature is often taken to mean that art should reproduce objective reality, while, as was noted above, Horace's "a poem is like a painting" is often qualified into "a poem should be like a painting". The two, of course, go hand in hand, for if it is the aim of art to

present images of the external world all other arts should admire and imitate painting, for painting can perform this feat most obviously, and, now, thanks to Leonardo and his peers, most accurately.

Again and again, in spite of their sometimes anti-thetical viewpoints, we find the Italian critics defending their theories of poetry by reference either to nature or to painting, or, to both. Giraldi Cinthio defends the multiple-action construction of modern romances such as Orlando Furioso over the single-action construction of the classic epic: "Diversity of actions carries with it variety which is the spice of delight, and gives the author wide scope for introducing episodes, or pleasant digressions, and for bringing in events which in poems dealing with a single action cannot come about save with some hint of blame . . ." (On the Composition of Romances, Gilbert, p. 264). But he adds that these many actions must be well integrated:

The writer should use great diligence that the parts of his work fit together like the parts of the body And in putting together the bony frame he will seek to fill in the spaces and make the members equal in size, and this can be done by inserting at suitable and requisite places, loves, hates lamentations, laughter, sports, serious things, beauties, descriptions of places, temples, and persons, fables both invented by the author himself and taken from the ancients, voyages, wanderings, monsters, unforeseen events, deaths, funerals, mournings,

recognitions, things terrible and pitiable,
 weddings, births, victories, triumphs,
 single combats, jousts, tournaments,
 catalogues, laws and other like matters . . .
 For there is nothing above the heavens or
 below, nor in the very gulf of the abyss,
 which is not ready to the hand and choice
 of the judicious poet (pp. 264-265)

C. S. Lewis has argued that the *Faerie Queene* is by genre a branch of the Italian epic (*Allegory of Love*, p. 305) and Gilbert suggests that in Spenser's lost critical work, *The English Poet*, an argument similar to Giraldi's would be set forth (p. 462); the foregoing list which reads like a quick synopsis of the *Faerie Queene* certainly seems to confirm these views.

The point that is to be noticed here, however, is that this exuberant variety, excessive and artificial to the modern reader, is defended by Giraldi by making it analogous to a natural structure, the body of man. Mazzoni, with a similar aim of defending the moderns against the ancients, also defends variety with a metaphor from nature: "certainly as we see that gardens with various leafy trees are not less but more beautiful than groves in which we see oaks only, in like manner I think the beautiful and attractive variety of our epic poets . . . is much more to be commended than the severe and rigid simplicity of the ancients" (*Discourse in the Defense of the Comedy*, Gilbert, p. 359). At this point it would seem that a Renaissance delight in variety in art can be explained by their love of nature,

although Mazzoni's metaphor does qualify nature into nature improved by art (a garden). Turning to Minturno, however, we find a member of the opposite camp (that of the ancients) arguing that art based on a single action gives "all her effort to the imitation of Nature, and does well in proportion as she approaches her" (L.Arte Poetica, Gilbert, p. 285). Minturno is the one who is arguing out of tune with the times, but in his feeling of the necessity of defending art by approximating it to nature, he is at one with his contemporaries.

In the comparison of poetry to painting we again find critics employing similar metaphors for opposite arguments. Giraldi compares the poet with the painter because of their power of varying likenesses (p. 269), while Minturno employs the same metaphor to argue against variety. He supports his defence for one complete action by comparing the action with the lines in a painting--though colors may vary the outline remains the same from beginning to end (p. 286). The suggestion that these parallels are implicit arguments for a realistic art is made explicit in Mazzoni, for he compares poetry to painting by arguing that the primary aim of poetry is neither to delight nor to teach but to imitate, and to imitate accurately (p. 376).

The Renaissance ideal of the accurate imitation of nature makes the principles of verisimilitude and decorum

two of their primary critical concerns. The moral aim of poetry, however, is not lost sight of.¹⁴ Mazzoni, although he advances the apparently amoral case for poetry as an imitative art, goes on to argue that pleasure always naturally accompanies imitation (p. 377), and a poet, possessor as he is of a "civil faculty" should ensure that this delight is directed to benefit "perfect poetry concerns itself with delight for the sake of utility" (p. 381).

Another approach to the relationship between poetry and ethics is found in Giraldi's statement that "The function . . . of our poet, with respect to affecting morals, is to praise virtuous actions and to blame vices and by means of the terrible and the piteous to make them odious to the reader" (p. 271). The separation of Giraldi's morality from the medieval is illuminated when we compare this statement with Dante's declaration of the aim of his Divine Comedy: "the end of the whole and the part is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to lead them to a state of happiness" (Letter to Can Grande Della Scala, Gilbert, p. 205). Poetry for Giraldi should make this present life a more pleasant one while in Dante it promises a better one hereafter. In the degree

¹⁴Castelvetro is the exception when he argues the sole aim of the poet is "to give a semblance of truth to the happenings that come upon men through fortune, and by means of this semblance to give delight to his readers" (On the Poetics in Gilbert, p. 307).

of devotion to these moral aims even a greater divergence is to be found, for Dante's aim is carried throughout in his allegory while in Giraldi's criticism, as in the poem that he is defending, it is only periodically inserted, often with the appearance of an after-thought.

A line of reasoning which brings together an ideal of imitation and an aim of morality is to be found in Tasso's Discourses on the Heroic Poem (1594), another work which Gilbert feels Spenser's English Poet would have resembled. Tasso argues that poetry cannot have two aims, either the delighting or the profiting must dominate, and he prefers the latter. Poetry for Tasso should profit through delight (in Gilbert, p. 467). Pleasure as the end of poetry, however, should not be despised, because pleasure is capable of making the nature of man magnificent-- "Those who love pleasure are likely to become both magnanimous and splendid" (p. 469). One feels that Spenser, with his gorgeously clad and delightfully courteous knights and ladies, would on this point heartily agree with the Italian. Pleasure of course is derived from beauty and

Beauty is a work of nature and since it consists in a certain proportion of limb with a fitting size and beautiful and pleasing coloring, these conditions that once were beautiful in themselves will ever be beautiful But if such in themselves are the works of nature, such must needs be the works of art which without any intermediary is the imitator of nature . . . if the proportion of the members in itself is beautiful

when imitated by the painter and the sculptor, and if something in nature is worthy of admiration, the artificial thing that is similar to the natural will also be admirable. (p. 497)

Here we find the ideals of Renaissance art-- proportion ("a certain proportion of limb"), decorum or the proper place of all the parts ("with a fitting size"), variety and ornament ("beautiful and pleasing coloring") --presented as qualities that are naturally obtained through a close imitation of nature. And this process of imitation also yields the morality of art, for it is argued that art, in thus imitating nature, is in fact divine, for the works of nature are the works of God, "the first artist" (p. 492).

This idea that external nature is the product of Divine Art had occurred as early as Plato and was also an important current of thought in the Middle Ages, but for many Renaissance theorists, anxious to rescue nature from the devil and art from the puritans, it was to take on evangelical proportion. In England, where the Puritan pressure was stronger than in Italy, this Divine Art theory, along with other moral defenses, is to be found in greater predominance. But even in Tasso, who here so emphatically argues for the inextricability of art and morality, we can find evidence for an esthetics separable from ethics: "Real beauty . . . is not so called because

of any usefulness it may possess, but is primarily beautiful in itself".¹⁵ So also among the English writers, occupied as they are with justifying beauty, an ideal of beauty, apart from ethics, can, if carefully searched for, be found.

¹⁵Tasso's Opere quoted by Spingarn, Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (New York, 1908), p. 57.

CHAPTER III

ART, NATURE AND PICTORIALISM
AMONG THE ELIZABETHANS

J. W. H. Atkins, arguing against G. Gregory Smith and Joel E. Spingarn, his most prominent predecessors in the study of Renaissance criticism, denies the influence of sixteenth-century Italian critics on the Elizabethan defenders of poetry. He finds that the defenses of the latter are characterized by an appeal to Nature or reason, and that this is a result of the continuation of medieval or native thought and also the influence of fifteenth-century humanism.¹⁶ A settling of these disputes over direct influence is not within the scope of this paper, though in passing I would argue that the parallel positions demonstrable between sixteenth-century Italian and English critics indicate, if direct influence be denied, an exceptional case of gleichzeitigkeit. In deference to Atkins' argument, however, and in order not to make one influence appear overly predominant, a look at a relevant work by a fifteenth-century humanist should perhaps be taken.

In Erasmus' "The Godly Feast" Eusebius takes his dinner guests on a tour of his garden, a garden which is

¹⁶English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance (London, 1947), p. 6.

designed for pleasure, but "honest pleasure, that is: to feast the eyes, refresh the nostrils, restore the soul."¹⁷ The garden is dominated by a statue of Christ instead of Priapus. Nature here is rescued from the devil and with it art, for Eusebius answers a guest who wonders about the necessity of painting a garden on the walls of an already neat and trim one:

One garden wasn't enough to hold all kinds of plants. Moreover, we are twice pleased when we see a painted flower competing with a real one. In one we admire the cleverness of Nature, in the other the inventiveness of the painter, in each the goodness of God, who gives all things for our use . . ." (p. 137)

It is the argument of Tasso with a slight difference. Here we are not asked to admire art for imitating the creative act of God but to admire the imitative act in itself because this very ability has been created by God. An emphasis that marks Erasmus' esthetic as more scholastic than Tasso's is to be found in his continual praise of variety, but variety in the form of catalogue, and in the pervading presence of morality, but morality in the form of sentence. On the walls of the garden can be found every kind of bird, every kind of tree, every kind of flower, etc., and with each one, a proverb.

One particular detail of the garden comes pointedly

¹⁷Ten Colloquies, translated Craig R. Thompson (New York, 1957), p. 135.

close to Spenser's green-gold ivy which started, and in time will end, this inquiry. The cultured Eusebius has in his Godly garden--pillars of imitation marble! The pillars contain a lesson, as all items in this garden do, which is to remind us that appearances often deceive. But the owner proudly adds the comment that "We make up for lack of wealth by ingenuity" (p. 137). Surely herein is implied that besides the lesson, and despite the, what now seems to us tasteless imitation, these pillars are to be enjoyed for their beauty. Even in Erasmus, then, as esthetic separable from ethics can be found. The pillars are examples of deception, but they are beautiful. Erasmus shares the Elizabethan delight in the achievement of artificiality.

Although he was Dutch by birth, his many trips to England, his teaching position at Cambridge, and his friendship with Colet and More, allow us perhaps to consider Erasmus as the first English critic that we have here examined. He is referred to with respect by the critics of the Elizabethan period proper and his efforts to integrate classicism and Christianity are certainly their heritage.

Before I begin my examination of Art and Nature in the esthetics of the Elizabethans, however, it should be noted that a far more thorough survey of the use of these

two key terms during the Renaissance has been made in a recent book by Edward William Taylor.¹⁸ From page 8 to 21 he records the habitual joining of Art and Nature as analytical terms in a variety of "logically" unrelated areas of human endeavour: education, rhetoric, cosmetics, gardening and literary criticism. His explanation for their pervasive use is that in the order of nature the two of them comprehended the whole of man's experience. He quotes in his support lines from Herrick's Upon Man:

Man is compos'd here of a two-fold part;
The first of Nature, and the rest of Art-
(p. 33)

Taylor explains the different positions Renaissance writers take in their assessment of the relationship between the two terms as dependent on their views of reason. "Where Nature is virtually equivalent to (right) reason, the relationship between Nature and the product of human reason, Art, will be complementary" (p. 28). This, he feels, is the orthodox position of Christian humanists, while Montaigne, who sees the law of nature as opposed to human reason and hence the terms Art and Nature as antithetical, is the exception (p. 29). He later adds, however, that a writer's view can vary with particular situations (p. 35) and it is the particular situation of the unfallen, in fact superior

¹⁸Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature (New York, 1964).

position of nature in pastoral that Taylor's book comes to focus on. His investigation, while helpfully thorough in its first chapter, explores through pastoral the relationship of Art, Nature and ethics and leaves the question of Art, Nature and esthetics still to be examined.

In our attempt to explore the latter we will first observe the use of the terms by an early Elizabethan, Roger Ascham. In Ascham's chapter on Imitatio from The Scholemaster (1570),¹⁹ he defines the process of art in terms of the imitation of nature:

Imitation is a facultie to express livelie and perfitelie that example which ye go about to folow. And of it selfe it is large and wide: for all the workes of nature in a maner be examples for arte to folow. (I, p. 5)

Ascham does not develop this in large for his subject here, in a discourse on education, is the proper use of another kind of imitation, the imitation of other authors. In the process of this discussion, however, he often makes use of the poet-painter analogy and in doing so implies again that a basic process of art is that of the close imitation of nature. He praises even a mean painter as being a better imitator than some students at university (p. 10); he praises

¹⁹In G. Gregory Smith's Elizabethan Critical Essays (London, 1904), I, pp. 1-45. Unless otherwise noted all following quotations from Elizabethan critical works will be taken from Smith's two volume collection. The spelling in Smith has been reproduced except in the cases of u's and v's or j's and i's which I have modernized.

Virgil for imitating Homer as precisely as a painter in London follows the feature of any fair personage (p. 15) and on pages 22 and 28 he again employs this type of comparison. The analogy employed in praise of Virgil makes little sense of a modern; we would expect it rather to be employed in dispraise, for it emphasizes for us Virgil's lack of originality, his "artificiality" in a pejorative sense. But to Ascham an art that imitates art and an art that imitates nature are equally praiseworthy--provided a model has been chosen which in itself is a good depiction of nature. A seeming reversal of opinion occurs in Ascham's comment on Salust, however. For he dispraises him with the words that "in Salust writing is more Arte than nature, and more labor than Arte" and adds that he does not express himself "lively and naturally with common speach but artificially, after to learned a sort" (I, p. 40). These words seem unequivocal in their preference of nature over art, but if we read further we find that the reason Salust erred in Ascham's eyes is that he imitated the wrong people (I, pp. 41-43); in other words, artificiality (in the sense of art's imitation of art) is not bad in itself, but with a misdirected artificer it can result in a wrong, or false artificiality. A right artificiality, on the other hand, is one that seems natural--that is, it still has an ultimate

connection with nature for it has chosen its model for this connection.

As in Ascham's, we may isolate in Sidney's criticism a quotation which would indicate a separation in the writer's mind between the position and value of the products of art and those of nature. But in Sidney art, at least the art of poetry, is definitely valued above nature. He demonstrates how every art of mankind has "the workes of Nature for his principall object", showing how the astronomer, geometrician, musician, philosopher, lawyer, historian, grammarian, rhetorician, logician, physician and even the metaphysician rely on nature to obtain their artificial rules. This is indeed the orthodox empiricist position, but Sidney expresses it only as a preface to his real point --that of the supremacy of poetry. For following the description of the functions of the other arts comes the triumphant:

Onely the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any
such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of
his owne invention, dooth growe in effect
another nature, in making things either better
then Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe,
formes such as never were in Nature . . . so
as hee goeth hand in hand with Nature, not
enclosed within the narrow warrant of her
guifts, but freely ranging onely within the
Zodiak of his owne wit. (I, 156)

At first reading this sounds startlingly like an art for art's sake doctrine based on a spontaneous subjective

concept of creativity, but as we read further and learn how poets make the "too much loved earth more lovely", we are reminded that even imitation with improvement remains imitation. Reading still further we find that the improvement is made to present better than natural men as better examples to follow; in other words, it is art for morality's, not for art's sake.

We must read much farther, however, to the last section of the Apology where Sidney is diagnosing the faults of contemporary poetry, to find what is perhaps his most sincere, because his calmest, attitude towards poetry. In his opening pages he is anxious to flaunt the powers of poetry in the face of its detractors and at times makes use of hyperbolic means of persuasion. Towards the end, however, though he repeats his contention--that a poet must be born with his divine gift, he adds with emphasis that even "the highest flying wit" must have a Dedalus to guide him, a Dedalus with "three wings to beare it selfe up into the ayre of due commendation: that is, Arte, Imitation, and Exercise." (I, 195). And it is because English poets will not cumber themselves with artificial rules or imitative patterns that their products are so open to censure. A spontaneous creativity, then, will not produce good art; but neither will the ignoring of nature, for Sidney, in explaining how he often finds a sounder style in "smally learned Courtiers"

than in some professors of learning says: "the Courtier, following that which by practise hee findeth fittest to nature, therein (though he know it not) doth according to Art, though not by Art: where the other, using Art to show Art, and not to hide Art (as in these cases he should doe), flyeth from nature, and indeede abuseth Art" (I, 203).

Choosing the fittest in Nature leads to art, and, as in Ascham, the good, conscious artificiality, is the one that seems natural.

That poetry's job is to produce what seems like nature, even though for the sake of teaching it produces what is in fact, better than nature, is evident in Sidney's arguments for the greater moral efficacy of poetry than of history and philosophy. The supremacy lies in poetry's picture-making ability, and in its ability to make convincing pictures, for when it does so poetry is "indeed the right Popular Philosopher" (I, 167).

As befits its title the greater part of Sidney's Apology is devoted to the defence of poetry's moral quality; he even gives poetry's moral function a place in his famous definition: "Poesie therefore is an arte of imitation . . . a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight" (I, 158). But because Sidney is preoccupied with poetry's ability to teach need not mean that he is unaware of the ability of art to delight without teaching. Already in his

"too much loved earth" (I, 156) Sidney makes an implicit admission that delight in beauty can be dangerous to morality, and elsewhere, but with clever rhetoric that turns his admission into aid for his own defense, he confesses it. Poetry, he says, may be "Phantastike" instead of "Eikastike"; it may infect the fancy with unworthy objects instead of figuring forth good things as it should. But he argues that it is not poetry that abuses man's wit, but man's wit that abuses poetry, and, more strongly still, that "whatsoever, being abused dooth most harme, being rightly used (and upon the right use each thing conceivith his title), doth most good" (I, 186-187). There is a sentence along the way in this argument, however, that seems to me to express what Sidney could never directly confess (and which is also hinted at in the "too much" phrase); it contains a proudly amoral, and typically Renaissance esthetic: "But grant love of beautie to be a beastlie fault (although it be very hard, sith onely man, and no beast, hath that gyft to descerne beauty). . . ." (I, 186). In Italy Castelvetro and Fracastoro had boldly claimed for delight in beauty an amoral status. And the defense here, that love of beauty is a quality that helps to define man, is characteristic of the new morality of the Renaissance, inevitably associated with Italy. It is a morality in which man is responsible to the image of man as man, not man as the

image of God. Sidney, however, only hints at his attraction to it. Perhaps the hint was not made consciously.

The focus of Puttenham's critical treatise, as its title indicates, differs from that of Sidney's. His concern is with The Arte of English Poesie and accordingly his chapters are devoted to formal concerns such as the characteristics of genres, proportions (metre and rhyme) and decorations (figures). He begins, however, with a defense that resembles Sidney's, arguing for the divine inspiration of poetry, its antiquity, and its moral efficacy. He is not quite as stringent in his insistence on the latter, however, for he quite consciously allows that poetry can function simply as a "common solace of mankind in all his travails and cares of this transitorie life; and in this last sort, being used for recreation onely, may allowably beare matter not alwayes of the gravest or of any great commoditie or profit, but rather in some sort vaine, dissolute, or wanton, so it be not very scandalous & of evill example" (II, 25). This, however, is only the third "sort" of poetry; the first honours the gods, while the second is concerned with moral doctrine and "the revealing of sciences naturall to other profitable Arts" (II, 25). This listing of

alternatives is typical of Puttenham's uncommitted position in the writing of this treatise. He starts and finishes his work with similar lists, and in his conclusion passes off the whole thing as a "tedious trifle" (II, 192). The latter remark, of course, is only a conventional show of courtly gentleness, appropriate since the work is dedicated to the Queen, but the noncommittal lists, with their generous employment of our key terms, Nature and Art, remain. Puttenham's flexible use of them gives us perhaps the truest picture of their general employment among the Elizabethan courtiers.

With echoes of Sidney, Puttenham begins by stating that a poet is a maker analogous to God, and as such is superior to all other artificers, scientific or mechanical. But the very next sentence qualifies this exaltation: "And neverthelesse, without any repugnancie at all, a Poet may in some sort be said a follower or imitator, because he can expresse the true and lively of every thing is set before him . . . and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation" (II, 3). Discussing the art of poetry Puttenham finds that even more qualifications are necessary. Again he begins on a high note--"And this science in his perfection can not grow but by some divine instinct". He then settles down by degrees: "or by excellencie of nature and complexion;

or by great subtiltie of the spirits and wit; or by much experience and observation of the world, and course of kinde; or, peradventure, by all or most part of them" (II, 3 - 4, Underlining mine). One feels after reading the treatise through that the "or" that Puttenham would truly support is missing, that it would be "or by exercise, study and imitation of authors". For already in Chapter II he is defining art as "a certain order of rules prescribed by reason, and gathered by experience" (i.e. observation of the success of past authors) and in his final chapter he is advising the artist to dissemble so that the subtleties of his art "may not appeare, nor seeme to proceede from him by any studie or trade of rules, but to be his naturall" (II, 186-187). Following this position, in some ways resembling Sidney's, come more qualifications, three pages of them that explain where and when the natural is in fact more commendable than the artificial. Looking again at the other arts Puttenham shows that sometimes art is an aid to nature, as in gardening and physic, and says that then it is no small praise for the gardener and physician to be called a cunning artificer; that sometimes art surmounts nature's skill, as when a garden produces flowers that did not exist before (makes a single gilliflower double), and again the artificial is praiseworthy; thirdly

that art sometimes imitates nature, as in painting and carving and here also the artificial is to be praised. Finally, he says that art can produce effects contrary to nature, as a carpenter building a house, and here too it is a praise to call the art artificial. Also in the actions of man there are those activities that are praised for being artificial, such as dancing by measures, singing by note or playing the lute. Speech, however, is natural to man, and though it may be improved by exercise "whatsoever a man speakes or persuades he doth it not be imitation artificially, but by observation naturally" (II, 190).

Puttenham admits that one may speak better with the aid of rules and precepts, just as one may see better with the aid of glasses, but natural speaking, as with unaided seeing, will always be praised above the artificial. Turning specifically to the poet, however, Puttenham argues that in his composition he must use all four types of artificiality described above, and is admired for each, but "for that in our maker or Poet which rests only in devise and issues from an excellent sharpe and quick invention, holpen by a cleare and bright phantasie and imagination" he is then most admired when he is most natural and least artificial (II, 191 - 192). So at the end of a work whose aim is to aid the making of poetry comes an admission, in effect, that a poet is born and not made. But note that it is only

one-fifth of the creative process that is praised as natural. The natural must be there, but so must the four-fifths of artifice; Nature suggests, but art polishes. "Therefore shall our Poet receive prayse for both". And when the praise is for art, as in Ascham and Sidney, it is for the artificial well dissembled.

In Ascham, Sidney and Puttenham we have three important spokesmen for Elizabethan criticism, and the agreement we find in their attitudes towards art and nature --that art is an imitation of nature, that nature needs art, and that art must seem natural--can be found almost unanimously among the lesser critics. Harvey attacks Nashe saying that he needs art and imitation to attain "whereunto the cranknesse of Imagination already aspireth" (II, 276); but Nashe himself argues that he has not set himself against art but the "diseases of art" (I, 320). And in another controversy Campion argues against rhyme as a vulgar and "unartificial" custom (II, 327), and Daniel defends rhyme on the grounds that it is natural to the English language and that Nature is above all Art (II, 359). Daniel is refuting what many Elizabethan writers would call a false artificiality, a rigorous application of rules to an unyielding substance, and in order to emphasize the unnaturalness of this process his rhetorical inclination,

quite naturally, leads him to exalt its opposite. Daniel here is the exception; the others, even if on opposite sides in a particular controversy, agree in general on a balance being necessary in the relationship between nature and art.

That an Elizabethan esthetic is not inextricably involved in ethics was seen implicitly in Sidney and explicitly in Puttenham. And to assure ourselves that many Elizabethans were aware of this fact we can turn to Francis Meres and find in his Palladis Tamia, a literary commonplace-book, the declaration that we may praise an art at the same time as we detest its subject-matter. His example is a portrait of murder or incest (II, 311). The occurrence of this statement in a commonplace book argues that it was entertained by others than Meres himself.

Delight, then, may be separated from profit. But there remains to be defined those qualities which in art particularly delighted the Elizabethans. The importance of delight in the artificial well dissembled has, I hope, been demonstrated from Ascham's, Sidney's and Puttenham's criticism. Further illustration is to be found in the "ut pictura poesis" tradition the currency of which we have already witnessed among the critics. The points at which Ascham compares poetry to painting have been noted; Sidney defines poetry as a speaking picture and like Meres uses

painting to illustrate the immoral possibilities of art (Sidney, I, 187; Meres, II, 311); Puttenham, in discussing ornament, compares figures in poetry to colours in painting (II, 143). Jean Hagstrum, who has devoted a book to the examination of the relationship between these two arts, (see above footnote 12) claims that "the chief importance of ut pictura poesis in Renaissance criticism was that it served the purpose of artistic naturalism" (p. 62). On the other hand, it has been argued that the Elizabethan pictorial arts were not themselves naturalistic, and it is true that to a modern viewer, having experienced nineteenth-century naturalism, the Elizabethan version of this style seems highly artificial. But, in support of Hagstrum and as we have seen above, the natural and artificial to the Elizabethan are not antithetical. Furthermore, certain characters in Elizabethan poems and plays clearly comment on art as if it were naturalistic.

Since it has often been shown that he abounds in them, Shakespeare, the most famous of Elizabethans, can be used as a source for this particular Elizabethan commonplace. In his early poem, The Rape of Lucrece, 181 lines are devoted to the description of a painting depicting the seige of Troy. The function of the painting within the poem is to epitomize in visual terms Lucrece's grief. She finds and describes Hecuba's face as the one in which

"all distress is stelled" (l. 1444) but a great many lines are simply devoted to the praising of the painter's skill, and his skill, it is evident, lies in his achievement of lifelikeness:

A thousand lamentable objects there,
In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life.
(ll. 1373-1374)

Many a dry drop seemed a weeping tear.
(l. 1375)

And here and there the painter interlaces
Pale cowards, marching on with trembling paces,
Which heartless peasants did so well resemble
That one would swear he saw them quake and tremble.
(ll. 1390-1394)

The scalps of many, almost hid behind,
To jump up higher seemed, to mock the mind.
(ll. 1413-1414)

(Mock the viewer's mind, that is, in that what he knows is fixed and unreal seems to move, and to be real.)

For such imaginary work was there.
Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind.
(ll. 1422-1423)

(Kind, meaning natural.)

The first and the last of these quotations, it will be noted, explicitly contain the cliché of the critics, that an art well dissembled (to seem natural) is to be praised.

Scattered throughout the plays of Shakespeare we find further evidence of his period's esthetic. Bassanio on opening the lead casket and finding with wonder Portia's picture therein praises the artist for his realism:

"What demigod /Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?" (Merchant of Venice, Act II, sc. ii, ll. 116-117)

In Timon of Athens the Poet praises a product of his friend the Painter with "It tutors nature, Artificial strife /Lives in these touches, livelier than life." (I, i, 38-39). Iachimo in Cymbeline views a tapestry in Imogen's bedchamber and wonders that it "Could be so rarely and exactly wrought, /Since the true life on't was ____" (II, iv. 75-76). In the same scene he views the carving on the mantelpiece and remarks: "Never saw I figures/So likely to report themselves. The cutter/was as another nature, dumb, outwent her, /Motion and breath left out. (ll. 82-85)

I have quoted at some length in support of my view that Elizabethan art, in Elizabethan eyes, conscientiously attempted to imitate external nature. Some critics find it possible to ignore comments of the sort that Iachimo and Bassanio make despite their frequency, and point to others that indicate an appreciation of a symbolic art. Rosamond Tuve, for example, argues that Elizabethan artifacts were designed to please on the grounds of formal excellence rather than by "likeness to the stuff of life--a relatively formless subject matter not to be identified with the poetic subject and evidently not even loosely identified with 'reality'."²⁰ The praise of life-likeness in pictures,

²⁰Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago, 1947), p. 25.

she says, is actually an apprehension of the intelligible in the visible and for illustration she quotes from an observation of another picture of Troy, this one in Drayton's Mortimeriados: "See wofull Citty, on thy ruin'd wall,/The verie Image of thy selfe heer see". Tuve italicizes "Image of thy selfe" and feels that this proves that the artist like the poet only portrays the psychologically significant (p. 54). What Tuve is pointing out is not difficult to see, even in Lucrece can be found lines that praise the artist for revealing an inward quality through external presentation ("But the mild glance that sly Ulysses lent/ Showed deep regard and smiling government" ll. 1399-1400). But should recognizing these effects of art make us blind to the others? We cannot deny that the Elizabethans delighted in the ability of art to epitomize; the painting occurs in Lucrece for that very reason. But that they at the same time delighted in art's ability to counterfeit, to seem life-like, must also be recognized.

Tuve's argument is that the Elizabethan concept of imitation involves the artist's ordering of nature and because of this he may only present the universal and the significant (p. 25). I would argue rather that the Elizabethan sees nature as already ordered, his subject matter as already universal and significant, and his job as an artist, therefore, to imitate naturalistically.

A return to the critics may help to demonstrate my contention. Campion, advocating the adoption of quantitative verse, writes that "The world is made by simmetry and proportion, and is in that respect compared to Musick and Musick to Poetry" (II, 329). Daniel, arguing to a different end employs the same means, for to him rhyme is more pleasing to Nature, because Nature desires certainty (II, 366). Harvey praises Petrarch for making art more excellent "by contemplation of excellentest nature" (II, 259). Nature, for these Elizabethans, already contained the order that is necessary to art. The quotation from Campion with its reference to the harmony of the spheres surely reminds us (how could Tuve forget) of that ordered Elizabethan world picture that Tillyard finds in so many Elizabethan writings.²¹ And in imitation of the Elizabethans I may here describe a picture to illustrate my point. Edward Taylor has included between pages 3 and 4 of his Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature (see footnote 18) the reproduction of an illustration from Robert Fludd's Utriusque cosmi majoris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia (Oppenheim, 1617), entitled The Mirror of Nature and the Image of Art (Integrae Naturae speculum, Artisue imago). In it we see the hand of God extended from a cloud and grasping a chain which ends in a manacle about the wrist of the goddess Natura. Natura

²¹E. M. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1960).

stands on sea and land, her sun breast fecundates the earth and her head is surrounded by stars. In her left hand she in turn holds a chain; this one manacles an ape-like man (or a man-like ape) who holds a globe in one hand, a compass in the other, and who sits on the earth. The whole symbolizes, as Taylor points out, the attempts of art, or man, to ape the works of God and Nature. And in the surrounding symbolism we are reminded that the works of God and Nature are already firmly ordered. Bird, fish, carrot, man, woman, snail, snake, lion, they all have a set, ordered place in the heirarchy. And switching once more, with Elizabethan agility, from painting to poetry, we find in Shakespeare support for our belief in the currency of this picture of art as ape. A gentleman in the Winter's Tale comments on Paulina's statue: "a piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape" (V.ii. 103-108, underlining mine).

Even though the Elizabethan world picture is not uniform--some writers draw on the chain of being, others on the theory of humours and others claim a divine mystery--the assumption in all these cases is that the order is there in nature. The artist's task, then, is to imitate this order faithfully, or, to make his own work seem

natural. If he does so successfully, the work of art actually becomes a meaningful part of the scheme of things.

Despite the evidence that Elizabethans sometimes regarded art as naturalistic, it might still be argued that the professed naturalism of the Elizabethans is simply a case of Englishmen aping Italy rather than nature. For in that country naturalism was a real option for the artist, and it was to an Italian sculptor that Shakespeare paid the compliment of "perfect ape". If we find that the Elizabethan visual arts can by no means be termed naturalistic, we will be forced to reassess the foregoing evidence and admit that the "ut pictura poesis" of critical convention is just that, a borrowed and therefore meaningless convention. A look at these arts will not only decide this question of naturalism, but also provide a broader, more practical understanding of Elizabethan esthetics.

CHAPTER IV

THE ELIZABETHAN VISUAL ARTS

A common characteristic of Elizabethan visual arts, obvious to the casual observer's eye, is profuseness, variety, or exuberance of detail. This love of variety is evident in the Elizabethans' clothing, the surfaces of their furniture, on their tapestries, in their gardens, and, in general, throughout their whole environment. One naturally surmises that all this surface activity is dictated by a concept of art that is decorative rather than naturalistic. There is little to mitigate this impression when on closer observation one finds that some kind of order is in fact in control of this profusion. For the order inevitably seems to be a mechanically imposed one: the geometric lay-out of the richly confused flower-beds, the carefully proportioned oak panels beneath all the fretwork, or, to turn to a pertinent analogy in the art of literature, the 12 x 12 scheme that was intended to control the wandering expansiveness of the Faerie Queene. This kind of subdivided unity is obviously not organic, and an organic unity is surely what is expected in naturalistic art, naturalistic art as we know it, that is. But if naturalism is the attempt of art to conscientiously imitate nature, the term can be used in referring to Elizabethan art viewed through Elizabethan eyes.

For its apparently artificial principle of profuse variety within an imposed order is in fact the method by which the Elizabethan artist imitated nature. For nature, to the Elizabethan, is at once wildly profuse and carefully ordered. For example, Hooker, who, according to Tillyard, is a spokesman for the educated nucleus that formulated many beliefs current in the Elizabethan age, sees the order in nature as God's law "that order which God before all ages hath set down with himself, for himself to do all things by." A mechanically imposed order is intrinsic, or natural, then, because God has willed it so. Furthermore, Hooker adds, that God, having so chosen to work in finitude of some sort to show His glory, then chose to express the abundance of His glory in variety (Tillyard, p. 11).

We are not justified then in applying the terms "artificial" or "decorative" to Elizabethan arts if we mean by this application that these arts are frivolous and superficial, that they had nothing to say about man's role in the universe. To insist that the glittering art of the period is in fact organic from an Elizabethan viewpoint will seem curious but even Tillyard, who should more than most be expected to overcome this feeling of queerness, candidly admits in his Epilogue to the Elizabethan World Picture that the Elizabethan's view of the cosmos and its mechanical applications (such as the number two being the

symbol of the female and the number three of the male) must, to a modern, inevitably remain "queer" (p. 101). And if Tillyard says this of the Elizabethan world-picture itself, we can expect an even queerer feeling when we meet with art's imitation of that picture.

The Elizabethans themselves did not employ the term "naturalism". I have used it in order to re-evaluate its counter term, the word "artificial". This term was frequently used by the Elizabethans themselves, but not in the pejorative sense with which it is inevitably employed today. Though the Elizabethans did not use the term naturalistic and though they did not continually announce that their art imitated the principles of God's nature, they frequently complimented art by referring to nature, and complimented nature by referring to art. Art and nature to them were not antithetical but ancillary. In the previous chapter evidence of this theory has been found in the Elizabethan critical writings. A look at the Elizabethan visual arts provides similar evidence that they regarded the two as amicable. It may be appropriate to begin this study by looking at the art of gardening for it is here above all that the relationship of art and nature most obviously manifests itself.

It has been noted above that the organizational principle of multiple unity, of profuseness segmented into a mechanical order, is to be observed in the layout of the

Elizabethan garden. According to Esther Singleton, who has done careful research into the structure of Elizabethan gardens with the aim of providing practical instructions for lovers of Shakespeare who wish to reproduce them, there are four principles that were observed in all stately Elizabethan gardens: 1. The layout was made according to the architecture of the house in long terraces and paths of right lines, or "forthrights" to harmonize with the rectangular lines of the Tudor buildings, yet at the same time the monotony of the straight line was broken up with beds of intricate patterns (knots). 2. Beds were planted with mixed flowers to provide a mosaic of rich, indeterminate color. 3. There were flowers and shrubs for all seasons. 4. Attention was given to the sense of smell as well as sight.²² While this fourth principle will hardly seem relevant here, it should be noted in passing as evidence of the Elizabethan joy in perceiving interrelationships. Here the interrelationship is simply between the senses, but the Elizabethans tended to see all their arts in relationship to one another. The fact that they had an instinctive feeling for correspondences, saw, in fact, the whole universe as interrelated, is well made in Tillyard's book (see footnote 21). The other three principles, however, are what interest us here. The first illustrates the principle of multiplicity

²²The Shakespeare Garden (London, 1923), pp. 42-43.

within an imposed order while the second and third emphasize the importance that was given to variety or abundance. Once the over-all order has been imposed, the variety is allowed to run rampant: to provide a rich indeterminate mosaic of colors.

Singleton has appropriately used the term "mosaic" to describe a flower bed, for it was in common usage among the Elizabethans. Sidney, for example, describes Kalanders garden in The Arcadia:

. . . They were suddainely stept into a delicate greene, of each side of the greene a thicket bend, behinde the thickets again newe beddes of flowers, which being under the trees, the trees were to them a Pavillion, and they to the trees a mosaical floore: so that arte therein would needes be delightfull by counterfeiting his enemie error, making order in confusion.²³

Kalanders garden is praised for resembling man-made structures such as mosaics or pavilions; it seems that the viewer derives his pleasure from seeing the natural appear artificial.

In such practices of Elizabethan gardening as the geometrically trained fruit trees we find the same apparent desire to denaturalize nature. But in hearing an Elizabethan speak of this process we learn that it is not a wanton one; it is, in fact, at least according to Gervase Markham in his Country Farm, a process based on natural principles:

²³The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Albert Feuillerat (London, 1912), Volume I, p. 17.

The Garden of Pleasure shall be set about and compassed with arbors made of jessamin, rosemarie, box, juniper, cypress-trees, savin, cedars, rose-trees and other dainties first planted and pruned according as the nature of every one doth require.

(quoted by Singleton, p. 71
underlining mine)

His position seems to be that nature naturally needs art.

A further complication is added to this confusion of terms when one reads Bacon's "Essay on Gardens," for here it is recommended that the gardener's art be employed to gain artificially an effect of naturalness:

For the heath, which was the third part of our plot [the first was a green in the entrance, the second a main garden] I wish it to be framed, as much as may be, to a natural wildness. Trees, I would have none in it; but some thickets made only of sweetbrier and honeysuckle and some wild vine amongst; and the ground set with violets, strawberries and primroses . . . and these to be in the heath, here and there, set in any order. I also like little heaps in the nature of molehills (such as are in wild heaths)

(quoted by Singleton, p. 62)

Here we have an elaborated design to produce an effect of untutored nature. It would seem that Bacon, at least in the third part of his garden, does not share some of his contemporaries' love for the appearance of the artificial. On the other hand, we may have here an example of that delight we found the Elizabethan critics taking in the artificial well dissembled. For the pleasure that was felt in Kalender's garden, in seeing nature seem what it was not, is surely duplicated here. In the former the

natural scene had been transformed into a seeming pavilion; here a natural scene, whatever it was, now seems to be a wild heath. And the viewers of Bacon's "natural" garden would be well aware that this was an artificial heath, for they have just passed through a cultivated green and a traditionally knotted garden. Their delight in this heath would derive from the very fact that they know it to be an artificial one: it is a delight in the deceptive achievements of artificiality.

If further proof is needed that Bacon did not widely diverge from contemporary taste in gardens one may refer to his comments on the topiary art. He objected to the pruning of hedges into the shapes of animals or men (whole battlefields were sometimes depicted) but recommended the cutting of geometric shapes. Here we are reminded that although an Elizabethan does not despise artificiality in itself, he does recognize and reject what seems to be a false artificiality. The trees, that is, would naturally lend themselves to geometrical shapes (the eye can see this easily enough) but it is hard to imagine a tree that could readily be shaped into a man on horseback. Such a shaping would be an example of false artificiality.

These observations on gardening seem to lead to the conclusion that the Elizabethans preferred art to nature. But it seems to me that in the above cases the delight is

taken in artificiality because the substance with which the artist works is nature itself. When the artist works with artificial materials, on the other hand, the delight is in the reverse process--that is, the viewer delights in the achievement of the appearance of nature. This seeming contradiction is resolved if we consider that, in both cases, the basis for the delight, whether the apparent effect be artificial or natural, lies in the perception of the close relationship between art and nature. In perceiving this the Elizabethan viewer is in fact seeing his world-picture confirmed. It is a picture in which man and his man-made products are not in disharmony with nature, for nature is also man-made, in the sense that it was made for man. Both seeing art look natural and seeing nature look artificial draws attention to the skill of the artificer, and in this perception another pleasant aspect of the world-picture is made evident. On the chain of being man is linked by his intelligence to the angels, and ultimately to God. In displaying the ingenuity of his intelligence man the maker demonstrates his connection with God the Maker.

Before moving indoors to show the delight in the artificial made natural, one last praise of a garden should perhaps be recorded. The examples above only implied a delight in arts' triumph over nature; Sir Henry Wotton, author of Elements of Architecture uses these key terms

explicitly, and in doing so, I believe, he demonstrates that the basis of his delight is in deception, in the complete replacement of one term by the other. He is praising Sir Henry Fanshaw for his garden in Ware Park:

He did so precisely examine the tinctures and seasons of his flowers that in their settings, the inwardest of which that were to come at the same time, should be always a little darker than the outmost, and so serve them for a kind of gentle shadow, like a piece not of Nature but of Art.

(quoted by Singleton, p. 47)

While gardens, opening out as they did like a series of rooms partitioned off by hedges, arbors or walls, seemed to be the indoors moved out, the appearance of the interior of Elizabethan houses, to a responsive eye, seemed to be the outdoors moved in. Here the artist, working with artificial material, courts natural forms. Carved decoration mainly of floral or foliage motifs flow and coil over both walls and furniture. The ceilings themselves are encrusted with moulded strapwork ornament and the floors kept covered with fresh rushes. Though furniture was sparse, an effect of coldness or bareness was avoided by the wall covering: panelling, plaster work, and elaborate tapestries. Tapestries seem to have been especially popular in England at this time, for foreign visitors of the period (1580-1600) frequently recorded their admiration for the use that

Englishmen made of them.²⁴ An inventory of King Henry's collection (which was no doubt inherited by his daughter), included more than 2,000 items, while an inventory of a private collection of the Elizabethan period, such as that of Leicester House where the young Spenser had for a time resided, would include as many as 150 items.²⁵

The art of tapestry making is usually considered to be a medieval one and many Elizabethan items do in fact depict medieval subjects in a medieval manner. But side by side with schematized representations of the Seven Deadly Sins are to be found tapestries depicting the tales from Ovid and employing such new devices as perspective. In the mediievally-styled tapestries nature is imitated only in the rich borders, where natural motifs intertwine; in the tapestries executed under Renaissance influence--often after cartoons by the great Italian artists--the figures themselves are realistically or naturally shaped while the use of perspective produces the effect of a room opening on the out-of-doors.

A look into the Great Chamber of Hardwick Hall, one of the least altered of the Elizabethan great houses,

²⁴E.g. Samuel Viechel in 1585, Frederick, Duke of Wirtemberg in 1592, Paul Hentzner in 1598. See W. B. Rye's England as Seen by Foreigners (London, 1865).

²⁵Frederick Hard, "Clothes of Arras and of Toure," SP, XXVII (1930), p. 172.

provides concrete illustration of the points made above.²⁶ The rushes are now missing from the floor but the wall surfaces are typically Elizabethan ones. They are bordered with a deep plaster frieze, depicting Diana and her court, in which the nymphs and the foliage seem inextricable intertwined. The Brussel tapestries which hang beneath this frieze depict the story of Ulysses. In a photograph these tapestries are easily mistaken for oils because of their skillful use of light and dark and of perspective. The marble fireplace is covered with strapwork and the tables and sideboards with elaborate floral design.

It is true that our reaction to such a room would not be to exclaim that here is a room full of nature, but rather that here is a room full of decorative art. But the room interior, even if artificial by our standards, does employ art forms that create an illusion of expanse and natural variety, and an Elizabethan viewer, I believe, would make the former exclamation. Everywhere else his reaction to the artificial-natural dichotomy has been the opposite one to what ours would be, in fact for him the dichotomy is hardly a dichotomy at all. This has been evident, I think, from the way in which he gleefully

²⁶Pictures of Hardwick Hall, interior and exterior, can be found in Sacheverell Sitwell's Great Houses of Europe (New York, 1961), pp. 99 - 105.

overlays the natural with the artificial (his gardens strive to look man-made) and then in turn, just as gleefully, overlays the artificial with forms taken from nature. Again, to reiterate my main point, these two processes are possible for the Elizabethan because for him nature is not antipathetic towards man and his products, nor is art a debasing of nature.

The Elizabethan artist strove to exactly reproduce nature in some of his artificial products. This can be seen by looking once again into the Great Chamber and observing that the plaster frieze depicting Diana and her nymphs is painted in life-like colors. This observation will also serve to remind us of the difference between the Elizabethan and present day tastes. The frieze can be viewed as abbreviated statuary and we are reminded that Elizabethan statues were, in fact, painted with the colors of life. The painting of statuary in life-like colors is relegated today to such realms of "kitsch" as Royal Doulton ornaments, plastic dolls and Royal Wax Museums. That the Elizabethans, however, viewed with seriousness and admiration the attempt of a sculptor to create the illusion of a living person has been argued in the previous chapter, with reference to the praises lavished on the statue of Paulina in The Winter's Tale (see page 44). As further illustration, let us return to Kalander's garden in The Arcadia:

. . . and in one of the thickets was a fine fountaine made thus. A naked Venus of white marble, wherein the graver had used such cunning, that the naturall blew veines of the marble were framed in fitte places, to set foorth the beautifull veines of her bodie. At her brest she had her babe Aeneas, who seemed (having begun to sucke) to leave that, to looke upon her fayre eyes, which smiled at the babes follie, the meane while the breast running.

(Sidney, Complete Works, I, 17-18.)

Though this statue is not painted, the praise of the use of the blue veins of the marble to depict the blue veins of the body is dictated by the same taste that appreciates a fully painted statue. And this taste is expressed by the author of what is usually considered one of the most exalted expressions of critical theory ever written.²⁷

By passing from the Elizabethan garden to the Elizabethan interior we have omitted an examination of the Elizabethan home's exterior. It was noted that the garden walls or divisions were to reproduce the lines and proportions of the Tudor house. Looking at the house itself we find that just as the geometric lines of the garden were relieved by beds of indefinite patterns, so the lines of the houses were broken up with stone fretwork, mullioned

²⁷Further proof of the common taste Sidney shares with Shakespeare is to be found immediately following the description of the statue. Here a gallery of pictures is viewed and the painter is praised for achieving the effect of reality. In reference to the statue it should also be noted that in the artist's utilization of the blue veins we have a fine example of art's deceptive disguising of nature.

windows, columns and pilasters. The love of both order and variety, of multiple unity, is again evident.

The application of columns and pilasters to the Elizabethan house is evidence of the influence on English builders of the Italian Renaissance. John Gloag in The Englishman's Castle maintains that the native craftsmen resented foreign fashions and did not trouble to understand the rationale of classic proportions.²⁸ It is generally maintained that these proportions were not used with understanding and conscientiousness in England until the works of Inigo Jones (1573-1652). But even if the rationale of classical building was not understood by the Elizabethan architects, the classical motifs were in popular use, and their implications may well have been understood by the more educated viewers, some of whom would be familiar with Italian Renaissance architectural theory. While the consistent utilization of certain rules of proportion would seem at first glance a wholly inorganic or unnatural approach to architecture, behind the Italian theorists belief in the necessity of these rules is the assumption that antique building (from which the rules of proportion were derived) conformed in a higher degree than that of any other age to the immutable laws of beauty informing

²⁸(London, 1949), pp. 62-63.

Nature, the art of God. The conviction of the spiritual relevance of centralized planning--churches were planned according to the shape of the circle, the polygon, the Greek cross--is expressed by Alberti: "It is manifest that Nature delights principally in round figures, since we find that most things which are generated, made or directed by Nature, are round."²⁹ Further evidence of this belief in the naturalness of beautiful forms is found in diagrams that show the anthropomorphic derivations of the standard proportions of the church facade and plan. Two such diagrams by Francesco di Giorgio (ca. 1490-1495) are reproduced in Frazer's Key Monuments on page 317. In the opening of Puttenham's "Of Proportion" we have a clear example of an Elizabethan's awareness of the natural and mathematical basis for artistic form, while Spenser demonstrates his awareness of the building artist's method of imitating nature in his description of the House of Temperance (Faerie Queene, II. ix. 22).

After having noticed a careful blending of art and nature in Elizabethan gardens and houses, one might expect to find the same in Elizabethan painting, the most clearly representational of the arts. The general opinion concerning Elizabethan painting, however, is that it is a highly

²⁹ Alfred Frazer, Key Monuments of the History of Architecture (New York, N.D.), p. LXXI.

stylized, unrealistic art. This impression is derived largely from the portraits of Queen Elizabeth, but these portraits, as Ellis Waterhouse has pointed out, were anachronisms, the style of which was in fact imposed upon the painter:

[In Elizabeth's portraits] Likeness of feature and interest in form and volume have been abandoned in favour of an effect of splendid majesty obtained by decorative pattern, and the forms have been flattened accordingly. The Queen's astonishing wardrobe and politic skill with which she used it alone made this anachronism in Elizabethan portraiture possible.³⁰

In the Queen's portraits, then, an impression of majesty, not of life, was desirable. But that with other subjects, an attempt to capture life was often the artist's aim can be seen in the work and writings of Nicholas Hilliard, the Queen's limner (miniature artist) and goldsmith. While he must needs abandon it when portraying the Queen, in his work with other subjects Hilliard's aim was to achieve a psychological intimacy. He writes in his Art of Limning (1600) that the "curious drawer" must closely observe his subject in life and, as it were, catch "these lovely graces, witting smilings, and these stolen glances which suddenly, like lightening, pass and another countenance taketh place;" (Waterhouse, p. 23). Here it appears that the Elizabethan painter is wishing for the twentieth-century's candid-photographer's eye.

³⁰ Painting in Britain 1530 to 1790 (Penguin Books, 1953), p. 23.

While the great influx of Italian paintings into England did not begin until the seventeenth century, the Renaissance refinements of chiaroscuro and perspective were not unknown to the Elizabethans. Italian artists visited England and Englishmen visited Italy. Sidney, for example, whose portrait was painted by Veronese, was well acquainted with Italian art. Hilliard, in his Art of Limning, discusses the etchings of Dürer. Holbein, although he had to temper his style to the more mediievally-minded taste of his patron, brought to the court of Henry the Eighth a knowledge of both Leonardo and Raphael. And the portrait called "Young Man in Red", painted by an unknown English artist around 1550, is assumed to be the first European full-length portrait of a figure silhouetted against a wide horizon with a dramatically receding landscape below.

Though we should perhaps hesitate to call the effects of the Renaissance innovations in painting naturalistic, the new art was nevertheless praised by the Elizabethans as an accurate portrayal of life, as earlier quotations from both Sidney and Shakespeare indicate. To feel the excitement with which this new art was greeted one should refer to plates 15 and 16 in Panofsky's Studies in Iconology.³¹ Here, side by side, are reproduced a medieval miniature

³¹New York, 1962.

portrait of the Rape of Europa and a Dürer drawing of the same subject. In the miniature, an illustration for a fourteenth-century moralized version of Ovid, Europa's three companions, looking exactly alike, are set in a formalized landscape and Europa and the bull, in no particular hurry, move through splashless water. The depiction is not an incompetent one; its schematized qualities are dictated by a schematized story. But in Dürer's version the story loses its morality and regains life. The three companions, though perhaps too large in proportion to their distance, stretch in variously anguished positions before a receding landscape. Europa, with flying hair and fluttering robes, draws up her toes to avoid the water splashing below the bull. As Panofsky says, Dürer's drawing actually gives life to Ovid's sensual description (p. 30). One should keep this comparison in mind when hesitating to call Elizabethan or Renaissance art naturalistic, for the Elizabethan eyes were not comparing their art with photographs, but with examples, such as the one given here, of the medieval art that preceded it.

CHAPTER V

SPENSER'S PICTORIAL ART

The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate the presence of the Renaissance eye in Spenser. Before proceeding, however, it may be well to acknowledge its more than occasional medieval squint. Although Chapter IV was devoted to the Renaissance esthetic principles evident in Elizabethan arts and artifacts it must not be forgotten that Spenser's environment would also contain remnants of the medieval tradition in design. It was noted above that in the case of portraits of Queen Elizabeth the medieval principle of non-realistic, allegorical representation was consciously adhered to. So in Spenser, I feel, whenever he paints a medieval portrait he does it with a conscious intent. That he often does so is hardly inconsistent since his whole subject matter--his series of knights with their various quests--is drawn from the Middle Ages and his over-all method, that of allegory, also belongs to that period.³²

It was through this recognition of allegorical intent that Gottfried and Glazier were able to argue that

³²Proof that Spenser was aware of his decision to be unrealistic is found in the Proem to Book III. Here his reason is the same as that of the painters: his subject is Queen Elizabeth and her virtue is too dazzling to be portrayed without the veil of allegory.

Spenser's pictures were not, in fact, pictorial at all (see pp. 6-7 above). It is significant, however, that in order to demonstrate Spenser's subordination of pictorial intent to allegorical significance, both critics use as their evidence the picture of Una, Red Cross, and the dwarf as they enter in Book I, Canto i. Gottfried argues that all three figures are moving at different paces and so cannot be contained within one frame, while Glazier points out the paucity of colors in the scene. In the former case the various paces, which would appear so ludicrous if the scene was visualized in realistic terms, are appropriate symbols for the tempers of the minds of the three actors, while in the latter the hyperbolic description of the whiteness of Una's face is calculated to emphasize the quality Truth of which Una is the symbol. If this is a picture at all then--and Glazier admits that the reader will readily supply a picture despite the extreme economy of Spenser's hints--it is a picture in the medieval manner: the movement of each figure is independent, color is scarce, and the figures are allegorical.

But this is Spenser's opening scene, the one in which he would surely be most conscious of his attempt to create an aura of a lost Golden Age. In this same canto we find a clearly Chaucerian description of landscape which like that of the human figures in the scene can barely be called

pictorial.³³ Una and Red Cross, running into the woods to avoid a shower, are said to praise the trees about them:

The sayling Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,
The vine-prop Elme, the Poplar never dry,
The builder Oake, sole king of forrests all,
The Aspine good for staves, the Cypresse funerall.

The Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours
And Poets sage, the Firre that weepeth still,
The Willow worne of forlorne Paramours,
The Eugh obedient to the benders will,
The Birch for shaftes, the Sallow for the mill,
The Mirrhe sweete bleeding in the bitter wound,
The warlike Beech, the Ash for nothing ill,
The fruitfull Olive, and the Platane round,
The carver Holme, the Maple seeldom inward sound.
(I.i.8-9)

The categorical list does not lend itself to picture-making; the extent of the variety here, although it reminds us of the Renaissance love for that quality in nature, would make any visualization unnatural. Individually, the trees are characterized in utilitarian terms rather than considered as objects of esthetic pleasure. The eye that looks upon them is the same one that looked upon Una and saw only meaning, not form.

But Spenser's eye, consistently medieval in this opening canto, is to flicker between its medieval and Renaissance lenses as the poem progresses. When we meet Prince Arthur in Canto vii of Book I, stanzas 29 to 35, he is described as a creature covered from "top to toe" with twinkling stones, burnished gold, mother of pearl and

³³cf., for example, Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls ll. 176ff.

diamond. There is not a hint of what the breathing body under all this glitter may look like and, again, this unnaturalistic impression would seem to be the one consciously aimed at. For Prince Arthur represents the virtue Magnificence, the container of all the other twelve virtues, and, as such, a creation hardly to be realized in ordinary naturalistic terms.

Spenser demonstrates that he is capable of employing naturalistic pictorialism, however, only one canto later. Duessa's description, in fact, may perhaps be considered a little too naturalistic:

Her craftie head was altogether bald,
 And as in hate of honorable eld,
 Was overgrowne with scurfe and filthy scald;
 Her teeth out of her rotten gummes were feld,
 And her sowre breath abhominably smeld;
 Her dried dugs, like bladders lacking wind,
 Hong downe, and filthy matter from them weld;
 Her wrizled skin as rough, as maple rind,
 So scabby was, that would have loathd all womankind.

Her neather parts, the shame of all her kind,
 My chaster Muse for shame doth blush to write;
 But at her rompe she growing had behind
 A foxes taile, with dong all fowly dight;
 And eke her feete most monstrous were insight;
 For one of them was like an Eagles claw,
 With griping talaunts armed to greedy fight,
 The other like a Beares uneven paw:
 More ugly shape yet never living creature saw.
 (I.viii.47-48)

In one sense this portrait is unrealistic, since no "living creature" ever saw the model for it. But in contrast with the description of Arthur, it is realistic. Of Arthur we see only glitter and not life. Here, although we again

have a picture with an allegorical aim, the subject is frightfully full of breath and all the more carefully made so, it would seem, because of the poet's awareness that she has never breathed before. The poet's aim is to frighten his readers by visualizing the ugly reality of Deceit.

The fact that Prince Arthur is described with artificial details (precious gems, valuable metals, etc.) while in Duessa's description naturalistic details are used (scabs, dung, etc.) may suggest that a moral principle underlies Spenser's pictorial methods, that he uses naturalism in pictures of evil and an artificial method in pictures of virtue. One of the aims of this chapter is to demonstrate that any such equation is untenable and that the separation of ethics and esthetics in Spenser is, in fact, one of his Renaissance traits. It should be noted at this point that the moral equation suggested by the examples so far given is directly opposite to the one found by Lewis. (He finds the natural good and the artificial bad.) The purpose of the examples here, however, has been simply to demonstrate that Spenser in fact has two modes of seeing. His more typical way of seeing is found in the many descriptions of trees gracefully forming arbors of pleasure. In these nature is seen in esthetic rather than utilitarian terms, that is, with a Renaissance rather than a medieval eye.

But medieval pictures are undeniably present in Spenser. Perhaps they are sometimes unconsciously painted in imitation of Chaucer but more often they are dictated by a consciously allegorical aim. Spenser tells us the philosophical reasoning behind this kind of imitation in the Proem to Book V. Here he says that he has chosen to discipline his age with pictures of a former one because that earlier time was closer to the Golden Age when "simple Truth did rayne, and was of all admyred" (verse 3, line 9). It should be noted that this belief that the world had gradually become worse and worse since the Golden Age, or, in Christian terms, since the Fall, was a Renaissance commonplace. Looking at it from this point of view, then, Spenser's medievalism can be explained as characteristically Renaissance, at least in its motivation.

But even Spenser's more Renaissance pictures have allegorical intentions, and the allegorical temper is in fact a trait that persisted in the Renaissance arts. The difference between allegorical intent in medieval and Renaissance pictures is really a matter of degree: in the former the allegory dominates and cannot be ignored; in the latter a lively, sensuous realism attracts the viewer and shares his attention with the underlying allegory.

A curious combination of liveliness plus heavy allegory is found in the frequent scenes of pageantry in

the Faerie Queene. These pageants resemble masques (allegories presented by real players), and the liveliness with which they are depicted reminds us that the masque was a favourite Elizabethan art. The art of course is medieval in derivation and Spenser's medieval eye is apparent when he presents his pageants. The actors are given in a categorical list in a manner which is simply an extension of the method used in the tree-description in Book I, Canto i. They are dressed in symbolic clothing, and often actually carry symbols of their abstract identity so that there is no chance that their allegorical significance should be overlooked. The movement in these pictures, as in the case of the picture of Una and the Red Cross, is a stiff, unrealistic one. In the description of the pageant of Pride's carriage, for example, nineteen stanzas are devoted to the appearance of the drawers of the carriage (the remaining six Deadly Sins) and two stanzas to the actual process of moving in and out of Pride's castle to take the air (I.iv.18-38). Here the actual subject matter, the Seven Deadly Sins, is a favourite medieval one, and the seating of the six drawing sins on various beasts appropriate to their allegorical significance--Idleness on an ass, Gluttony on a swine, Lechery upon a goat--produces, as in the opening picture of the poem, a composition that cannot possibly move on any realistic basis. Among these medieval

impressions, however, is an occasional realistic stroke of portraiture that suggests that there are real actors beneath the allegorical clothing: Idleness with his heavy head hanging to the side, Gluttony with his up-blown belly, swollen eyes and long crane-like neck, his boozing can and his very realistic problem of sitting upright on his mount. In general, however, this pageant produces a medieval picture, as does the masque of Cupid in the House of Busyrane (III. xii.4-26), and that of the seasons, months and hours in the Mutability Cantos (VII.vii.28-46). In such pageant making, I feel, Spenser need not consciously strive to copy medieval models. For this form of allegorical entertainment remained in the Elizabethan setting.³⁴

Keeping in mind, then, that Spenser's Renaissance eye is frequently capable of a medieval squint, we may now examine the dominant mode of vision in the Faerie Queene. Here we shall find, as was found in the examination of the critical works of Spenser's contemporaries and of the visual arts with which he was surrounded, an esthetic that bases its idea of beauty on a vision of a varied but

³⁴For a full description of an Elizabethan masque see Enid Welsford's The Court Masque (Cambridge, 1927), p. 153. The description, apart from the language, could easily be mistaken for an excerpt from the Faerie Queene.

ordered universe, an esthetic which can, despite these philosophical implications, be considered quite apart from ethics, and an esthetic which in its own terms takes particular delight in verisimilitude. Along with this delight in verisimilitude is to be found a more general delight in objects which intermingle the effects of art and of nature.

Spenser's love of a varied universe and his belief in an ordered one are evident throughout the Faerie Queene. It is in two other works, however, that he directly discusses the theory that beauty must be understood in terms of a world order. In "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie" Spenser explains the beauty of nature in Platonic terms:

What time this worlds great work-maister did cast
To make all things, such as we now behold,
It seems that he before his eye had plast
A goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould
He fashiond them as comely as he could;
That now so faire and seemely they appeare,
As nought may be amended any wheare.

(ll.19-35)

Everything, he says, has been made according to one pattern, and, since this pattern is an attractive one, everything is fair. This obviously will need some qualification or we will have no esthetic at all, and Spenser does, in fact, qualify this first generalization. Before noting the qualification, however, it should be noticed that the above lines reveal a certain predisposition toward beauty, on

Spenser's part. As in the lines in the Proem to Book VI of the Faerie Queene where he expresses his delight in Faeryland and in the final two verses of the Faerie Queene where he expresses his sympathy for Mutability's claim to sovereignty, here we feel that Spenser really has an esthetic of his own. He delights in all. Even his ugliest pictures, as, for example, the portrait of Duessa examined above, have been painted with an enthusiastic eye and tongue. In the "Hymne", however, he does go on to describe an esthetic heirarchy which was commonly held among Renaissance critics. Those things which are most fair, he says, are those that are closest to the original pattern of Beauty. These things partake inwardly of the spirit of that Beauty and thus have an elevating influence on the beholder: they are able to kindle love. The poem then turns to a discussion of the refining process of love and leaves the consideration of outward beauty behind. The point that must be emphasized here is that beauty, when it is first beheld, is recognized as beauty because it has been made according to a pattern. The fact that Spenser argues that outward beauty, as the white and red of flowers or complexions, is not real or true beauty, of course suggest an esthetics based on ethics. But the poet, although he emphatically states that it is the beautiful soul that forms the beautiful body (ll. 127-133), goes on to lament that this is often not the case, that

sometimes a beautiful soul, through some accident, is given a deformed body (ll.141-142), and sometimes beauty in fact graces the sinner (ll.148-150). Spenser may believe that the separation of ethical and esthetical beauty is the exceptional and lamentable case, but he clearly speaks of them as separate values.

In "The Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" the poet, as the title suggests, is little concerned with the beauty of natural forms. Here the Christian Platonism quickly moves from earthly beauty to the contemplation of the abstract beauty of God. Before leaving the former, however, the poem gives a brief explanation of sensuous beauty that differs only slightly from that given in the "Hymne in Honour of Beautie";

Then looke who list, thy gazefull eyes to feed
 With sight of that is faire, looke on the frame
 Of this wyde universe, and therein reed
 The endlesse kinds of creatures, which by name
 Thou canst not count, much lesse their natures aime:
 All which are made with wondrous wise respect,
 And all with admirable beautie deckt.

(ll.29-35)

Here the Platonic concept of the Pattern is missing-- in this poem Plato's realm of Ideas is given a position between the sky and the realm of the Cherubins and Seraphins --and the great workmaster is quite definitely the Christian God. The resulting beauty of creation, however, is similar to that found in the earlier hymn. Again, everything is

well made and all things are interrelated because of their common author. The variety of creation is particularly emphasized in the above lines, and its order is evident throughout the poem. Order and variety are two of the key terms in Spenser's description of God's work of Creation. Another key esthetical term may also be accounted for here: the endless kinds of creatures are with admirable beauty "deckt". The Creator, the first artist, employs besides the principles of variety and order, the principle of decoration.

Throughout the Faerie Queene references are to be found that confirm the philosophy expressed in the two "Hymns". In Book IV, Canto 1 we meet Deussa's companion, Ate, the principle of discord, whose dwelling is by the Gates of Hell. All her study and all her thought, Spenser tells us, is devoted to schemes for disrupting Concord:

So much her malice did her might surpas,
 That even th' Almighty selfe she did maligne,
 Because to man so mercifull he was,
 And unto all his creatures so benigne,
 Sith she her selfe was of his grace indigne:
 For all this worlds faire workmanship she tride,
 Unto his last confusion to bring,
 And that great golden chaine quite to divide,
 With which it blessed Concord hath together tide.
 (IV.1.30)

Thus as a passing reference to clarify the function of one of his actors, Spenser outlines what Tillyard refers to as an Elizabethan world picture, the great Chain of Being.

The created world, or nature, is seen to consist of a hierarchy (the chain) of which the parts are in harmony (Concord) and the whole is thought of as a work of art ("worlds faire workmanship").

In Book V, Canto ii we have another reminder of Spenser's firm belief in the natural hierarchy of creation. Here Artegall and Talus (Justice and his Executor) meet a giant who is attempting to balance the elements, to weigh Heaven with Hell, to lower the mountains to the plains, to suppress tyrants and to equalize incomes: in short, to upset the world order. Artegall, the principle of justice and therefore the knower of true order, nobly answers the giant's arguments for equality with "The hills doe not the lowly dales disdain" (41.3); what is high has been made so by God as what is low has been also. The giant had seen injustice in the sea stealing from the land and injustice in the land being so increased by "all that dying to it turned be" (37.7). Artegall in reply points out that what is taken by the sea at one point is returned to the land somewhere else, and to the second objection, that it is only just that the land be increased by those who die into it since originally all have their being from that land. If properly considered, then, a controlled order, or justice, is to be seen even in the cycle of nature itself.

The Creator's control of all aspects of the naturalistic cycle is developed at even greater length in the famous description of the Garden of Adonis and in the final Mutability Cantos. The activity in the Garden of Adonis is a confusing one and has given rise to much critical debate. The thousand babes that attend old Genius waiting for fleshy weeds would seem to represent forms since it is from the substance of Chaos, or unformed matter, which exists outside this garden, that Genius supplies the babes with their desired weeds (III.vi.36). But that this is a garden of Platonic forms is refuted by the fact that the destructive powers of time are operative here and that in this creative process it is the forms that change and not the substance (38.1-2). With Artegall's arguments about the natural cycle in mind I am inclined to agree with Brents Stirling's interpretation of the Garden of Adonis as a description of the "naturalistic elements of Spenser's cosmology".³⁵ The forms that change then are not Platonic forms at all but only individual physical shapes. What is being eulogized in this garden is the physical process of life itself with the love making of Venus and Adonis as an appropriate central symbol.

In the Mutability Cantos continual change, which is

³⁵"The Philosophy of Spenser's 'Garden of Adonis'," PMLA, IL (1934), p. 522.

Spenser's world view, then, embodies the principles of variety and order. The belief that nature itself contains the principles of beauty naturally leads to a delight in art that displays verisimilitude. Narrowly defined "verisimilitude" is the attempt of art to appear to be reality, but when the term is applied to the Elizabethans it must include the delight which occurs when art may be mistaken for nature, nature mistaken for art, or, what is even more delightful, where art and nature are both seen to be present and either playfully compete with one another, or offer one another complementary aid. In all these cases, when art is not at all in disharmony with nature, the Elizabethan viewer has a confirmation of the world's harmony. Man the artist is quite naturally imitating God the artist. The process is a natural one for man was made in God's image.

Spenser praises verisimilitude mainly in his descriptions of tapestries, but he was not unaware of the realistic possibilities of painting as well. In the argument to the February Eclogue E. K. praises Thenot for telling the tale of the Oak and the Briar "so lively and so feelingly, as if the thing were set forth in some Picture before our eyes, more plainly could not appeare". We may assume that if E. K. is aware of the "ut pictura poesis" tradition, so

would be Spenser. Spenser himself confirms this when in the Proem to Book III of the Faerie Queene he actually takes a stand in the debate. Again the "liveliness" or lifelikeness of painting ("life-resembling pencill", verse 2) is praised, but the poet goes on to argue, quite understandably, that a poet's art excels painting in its ability to portray reality accurately. This argument may imply no more than an awareness of the critical debate, current in Italy, over the relative powers of the sister arts, but an awareness of the Italian pictorial arts themselves is implied by E. K. in the Preface to the Shepheardes Calender. Here he likens Spenser's use of rough words in his poetry to the use of rough, rocky backgrounds in paintings. Both have the effect of making the principle subject appear more beautiful, Da Vinci's "Madonna of the Rocks" comes to mind, though the effect was widespread in Renaissance painting.

But Spenser's appreciation of "liveliness" is most evident in his praise of tapestries, works of art of a kind he was certainly immediately familiar with. As was noted above (p. 56), the tapestries of the sixteenth century employed the devices of light and shadow, proportion and perspective which characteristically belong to the Renaissance art of painting. In Castle Joyous we are shown such a tapestry. Here the love of Venus for Adonis, a

favourite Renaissance subject, is depicted with a great deal of motion or liveliness, for it is the passionate fits and the sensual delights of the story, not its possible allegorical intent, that immediately impress the viewer. Even the dainty flower into which Adonis was finally metamorphosed "in that cloth was wrought, as if it lively grew" (III.i.38.9).

More elaborate praise for the lifelikeness in a work of tapestry is to be found in the description of that depicting Cupid's power in the House of Busyrane (III.xi.29-46). Here chiaroscuro is suggested when the artist is praised for the "wondrous skill, and sweet wit" with which he pictured the sleeping Leda shaded by daffodils (32.3-5). The workman's skill is more often praised, however, for its verisimilitude: Europa's heart "did lively seeme to tremble" (30.8); in Phaeton's story "all the walles did seeme to flame" (38.6); in Neptune's, "his seahorses did seeme to snort amayne" (41.1); and finally, the bloody river with which the artist surrounds this mass of activity, is "so lively and so like, that living sence it fayld" (46.9).

In another poem of Spenser's in which tapestries play an important role, the weaver's art is again judged according to its attainment of realism (Mulopotmos, ll.279-280). On Arachne's tapestry we again see Europa carried through the sea on the bull and it is "so lively seene,/That

it true Sea, and true Bull ye would weene". In reading the stanza which describes the expression of fear on Europa's face and her taking up of her dainty feet from the range of the waves one is reminded of Dürer's depiction of the scene. But whether Spenser's model here was actually a visual one or whether he was working directly from Golding does not matter. The picture he renders, like the version by Dürer, is a Renaissance one. The most important point for us to note is that in Mulopotmos, Pallas' tapestry is given the prize over Arachne's because of her triumphant portrayal of the butterfly "Fluttering among the Olives wantonly,/That seem'd to live, so like it was in sight" (ll.331-332). The accurate portrait of a butterfly, with its fluttering movements, its velvet nap, its glorious colors and glittering eyes, would seem to be the winner because it is the finest example of an artist's ability to capture the ephemeral beauty of life.

Extreme commitment to the belief that art should imitate nature is surely felt by those who find that nature in turn imitates art. If one believes that any work of art is an attempt to imitate some perfection in nature, it follows that when any perfection in nature is met with, he will immediately think of art. In the Faerie Queene we

find human beauties praised either for their approximation to a work of art or for their superiority to any known works. When Guyon selects Shamefastness as the object of his attentions in the Castle of Alma, for example, her blushing complexion is described in terms of art:

And ever and anone with rosie red
The bashfull bloud her snowy cheekes did dye,
That her became, as polist yvory,
Which cunning Craftesmans hand hath overlayd
With faire vermilion or pure Castory.
(II.ix.41.3-7)

Britomart's golden hair, on the other hand, is said to excel any possible work of art. But before this intellectual statement is made, the poet's first instinct is to admire it for its approximateion to a work of artifice:

. . . her yellow heare
Having through stirring loosd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare,
Framed in goldsmithes forge with cunning hand:
Yet goldsmithes cunning could not understand
To frame such subtile wire, so shinie cleare!
(IV.vi.20.1-6)

Beautiful works of nature are also praised for their artificial appearance. In the setting of Dame Nature's court on Mount Arlo, despite the fact that the poet has told us that all here is beautiful solely through nature's workmanship, we nevertheless find the flowers at Dame Nature's feet described as seeming richer "then any tapestry" (VII.vii.10.8). Here nature's beauty has surpassed the achievements of art, but the praise of its beauty must still be made with reference to its competitor.

Whole frameworks of nature are also seen in artificial terms. The setting of Belpheobe's dwelling is like a theatre (III.v.39), and the bay through which Guyon and the Palmer sail is likened to a half theatre (II.xii.30). There is a suggestion in these passages that Spenser sees and composes at the same time. That is, in visualizing a natural setting he automatically eliminates certain elements and rearranges others until the whole formation is a pleasingly symmetrical one. On the other hand it may be that he unconsciously only chooses to remember those natural settings which contain the symmetry of art.

In two of the examples given above it was seen that nature's beauty excelled the possibilities of art. But that art at times excels nature, is calmly acknowledged by Spenser in his "Hymne in Honour of Beautie." He discusses the art of pictures "In which oftentimes, we Nature see of Art/Exceld, in perfect limning every part" (ll.83-84). It seems to me that Spenser considers the contest for supremacy between art and nature a friendly one. For many objects lovingly described in the Faerie Queene seem to be found especially delightful because they bear witness to the existence of this friendly battle. But the fact that the relationship of art and nature is often referred to as a battle has no doubt made many critics wish to find out which side Spenser is on. In these searches the decision is usually made in

favour of nature and, as is the case in C. S. Lewis' analysis of the problem (see Chapter I above, page 3), proof is derived from a categorization of Spenser's gardens. Lewis, for example, found that the Bower of Bliss with all its artifice was evil, and that the Garden of Adonis, with all its naturalness, was good. This equation is contextually a true one, but it does not take into account the beautiful appearance of these gardens. The Bower of Bliss, though evil, is often exceedingly beautiful. Sometimes the falseness of its beauty is revealed through an overwrought artificiality; but more often the garden of Acrasia functions, as it must if it is to have any effect in the allegory, as a ravishing enticer of the senses. It does this by employing art which has the supreme excellency of appearing natural.

Our first glimpse at the Bower of Bliss is given when Atin seeks out Cymochles there. That Cymochles has fallen into evil ways is evident from the fact that he has cast aside his weapons of war for the pleasures of "loose Ladies and lascivious boyes" (II.v.28-9). But is the actual setting in which he is found evil in itself? The arbor in which he lies has been formed by "art striving to compaire/ With nature" (29.1-2) but the suggestion of harmony, rather than strife is the effect produced. The arbor is:

Framed of wanton yvie, floueing faire,
Through which the fragrant Eglantine did spread
His pricking armes, entrayld with roses red,

Which daintie odours round about them threw,
 And all within with flowres was garnished,
 That when myld Zephyrus emongst them blew,
 Did breath out bounteous smels, and painted colors
 shew.

(29.3-9)

The mixture of art and nature here, although its effects are being abused by the lascivious Cymochles, is the one that is ideally attained by the gardener's art. Compare this passage, for example, with the description of a harmless garden visited by the butterfly Clarion:

To the gay gardins his unstaid desire
 Him wholly caried, to refresh his sprights:
 There lavish Nature in her best attire,
 Powres forth sweet odors, and alluring sights;
 And Arte with her contending, doth aspire
 T' excell the naturall, with made delights:
 And all that faire or pleasant may be found,
 In riotous excesse doth there abound.

(Mulopotmos, ll. 161-168)

The ivy is missing here but the mixture of beautiful odors with beautiful sights and the statement that art is contending with nature occurs in both descriptions. The observation that art and nature are at battle does not suggest evil but rather a normal garden setting. That the battle is really a friendly one is obvious from the sense of harmony achieved in both descriptive passages. And although wanton ivy is present in Cymochle's arbor this need not function as a warning. For we find wanton ivy trailing over the House of Alma's porch (VI.ix.24.5) and it is even entwining an arbor in the Bower of Bliss's ethical anti-type, the Garden

of Adonis (III.vi.44.5). In the Bower of Bliss, furthermore, can be found "the stately tree,/That dedicated is t'
Olympicke Jove" (31.2-3). It is not the setting itself, then, that is evil, but it is the use that it is being put to that is corrupting. The setting in itself is neither good nor evil, but beautiful.

In Canto xii, when we approach the Bower of Bliss for a second time, we are better able to perceive the evil lurking behind or among the beauty for we are accompanied by a moral guide, the Palmer. Still, the ivory gate that forms its outer entrance seems to demonstrate that friendly battle between art and nature which was particularly admired by Spenser: on it a ship passing through the sea is so realistically carved "That seemd the waves were into yvory,/Or yvory into the waves were sent" (II.xii.45.3-4). The guardian of this gate, however, though a comely person, has a "semblance pleasing, more then naturall" (46.5). (Underlining mine) Here we have a warning of evil, but it comes not from the appearance of the garden paradise itself but from one of its inhabitants. It is true, however, that the plain which Guyon and the Palmer first behold on entering also gives warning of a false artificiality:

A large and spacious plaine, on every side
Strowd with pleasauns, whose faire grassy ground
Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide
With all the ornament of Floraes pride,
Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
Of niggard Nature, like a pompous bride
Did decke her and too lavishly adorne.
(50.2-8)

This too lavishly adorned meadow is admired by Guyon but recognized as dangerous. Passing through another gate, however, a more dainty paradise is found and here all appears harmonious and ordered ("The dales for shade, the hilles for breathing space," 58.6). There is no false luxuriance to warn Guyon off; in fact one of the most delightful aspects of this garden is that "The art, which all that wroght, appeared in no place." (58.9) Since this is a quality that graces all fair works (58.9), no wonder Guyon is at this point taken in by the seeming naturalness of the play of the maidens in the fountain. Without the superhuman moral vision of the Palmer, Guyon at this point would have been lost.

The nymphs that deceive Guyon are playing in that curious fountain which stands in the centre of this garden paradise. Over this fountain trails the pure gold ivy, subtly painted green so that "wight, who did not well avis'd it vew,/Would surely deeme it to be yvie trew" (61.4-5). Surely this is the supreme compliment to the art of the Bower of Bliss. The sculptor and painter here have successfully attained the verisimilitude that we have seen Spenser to admire in his comments on pictorial art. Without an adviser here the viewer would mistake art for reality. In other words, the craftsmanship that wrought it "appeared in no place" and that, Spenser says, only a few lines earlier,

"all faire workes doth most aggrace" (58.8).

We have, then, in the centre of Acrasia's garden, a fine work of art. Passing in still further towards her actual bower, in the description of the beauty of the birds' songs mixed with voices, instruments, winds and waters, we also have a supreme example of the harmony possible to an orderly mixing of nature and art (verse 70). But as Guyon and the Palmer approach the Enchantress's bed itself a warning song is heard. The song is a "lovely lay" chanted in harmony with the birds' songs but the falsity of its logic--it argues "gather ye rosebuds" by making a man's life analogous to that of a rose (a violation of the Chain of Being)--is readily understood by both Guyon and the Palmer: "The constant pair heard all, that he did say,/Yet swarved not" (76, 5-6). Seeing Acrasia and her lover in bed, one needs no perceptive Palmer to point out the moral depravity of the situation. Acrasia's clothes are disarrayed, her breast bare, and she is occupied with sucking the spirit out of her sleeping lover. Verdant's degradation is evident not only in his languishing posture but also, and more strongly, in his cast aside and mutilated arms that hang upon a tree of the bower. Guyon's former aberration is not repeated, and after he and the Palmer have safely chained Acrasia

...all those pleasant bowres and Pallace brave,
Guyon broke downe, with rigour pittillesse;

Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
 Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse.
 (83.1-4)

The moral will has triumphed, then, but surely a feeling of regret rings through this declaration of triumph.

A supposition of this sort, which poses the question as to which was stronger in Spenser, his moral or his esthetic nature, cannot, with any surity, be answered. The point that I wish to stress is that the two natures are separable. Acrasia's garden is not evil because it contains a great deal of artificiality: it is evil because Acrasia is inhabiting it, and if to destroy her, her bower must also be destroyed, then beauty is lost in the attainment of morality.

For Spenser, then, neither the beauty of nature nor the beauty of art has in itself any ethical implications. It has already been noted that wanton ivy appears not only in the Bower of Bliss but also in the Garden of Adonis and on the House of Alma. More striking than this is the hyperbolic whiteness of Acrasia's skin (verse 77) which would be very hard to distinguish from the whiteness of the chaste Una. Natural and artificial beauty may be good or bad as the possessor, or ultimately the author, chooses to make it. Prince Arthur approaches all aglitter and we assume that gold, diamonds and pearls are symbols of excellence (I.vii.29-36). Our entry into the Castle Joyous, however,

which turns out to be the dwelling place of lascivious knights and ladies, dazzles us with a similar display:

But for to tell the sumptuous aray
 Of that great chamber, should be labour lost:
 For living wit, I weene, cannot display
 The royal riches and exceeding cost,
 Of every pillour and of every post;
 Which all of purest bullion framed were,
 And with great pearles and pretious stones embost,
 That the bright glister of their beames cleare
 Did sparkle forth great light, and glorious did
 appeare.
 (III.1.32)

Gold foil is used as a metaphor for deceitful looks (IV.ii. 29), and was the substance from which the deceiving ivy was hammered, but Britomart's hair has also been compared to hammered gold and it is gold that is used to crown Sapience in the final "Hymne of Heavenly Beautie". To know the moral value of an object which has artificial or natural beauty we must rely on an ethical criterion that has no inevitable relationship with the symbol itself. And if the symbol turns out to be bad, it nevertheless remains beautiful, at least in the purely esthetic sense. As a further example consider the imitation Florimel. Not esthetic perception but a magic girdle is required to distinguish between the falsity of the snowy Florimel and the virtue of the beautiful Amoret (IV.v.15-19).³⁶

³⁶This point has also been noted by Hans P. Guth, "Allegorical Implications of Artifice in Spenser's Faerie Queene", *PMLA*, LXXVI (1961), p. 477.

Both art and nature can be good and bad in the Faerie Queene, for "vertues seat is deepe within the mynd, /And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defynd" (VI.Proem 5.8-9). An ordered and various nature, however, is always pleasing, and a work of art displaying order, variety and verisimilitude, or, simply good craftsmanship, is always admired. We see that a work of art that appears particularly artificial is considered admirable in the frequent use of the word "cunningly" as a complimentary epithet. To call a work cunningly done is to recognize the presence of the artist and to admire him for the skill of his workmanship. Although we might expect the word cunning to be applied to art that attempts to deceive, as much does in Acrasia's garden, we find the word employed, in the midst of all this deceit, to an ultimate symbol of morality--the Palmer's staff. (It is framed of wood cunningly. II.xii.41.1) The idol of Isis, another symbol of goodness, is also praised for the cunning of the hand that wrought it (V.vii.6.3). But cunning craftsmanship, although admirable, can also be employed for evil means, and hence the lamentable destruction of the "goodly workmanship" of the Bower of Bliss.

The Garden of Adonis, all reproduction and goodness, where, in contrast to the Bower of Bliss "of their owne

accord/All things, as they created were, doe grow" (III. vi.34.2-3) is often used as evidence of Spenser's preference for nature over art. But, as was suggested above, this garden seems to be an allegorical presentation of the cycle of natural creation. It is only natural, then, that here there should be no art. Josephine Bennett, in attempting to fix the location of this garden, demonstrates that it is a semi-celestial paradise for which Spenser had precedence in both Platonic and Christian tradition.³⁷ Usually this paradise was located on the moon but for the sake of Amoret's education it was more convenient for Spenser to locate his on a mountain top. For the point that is to be made here it is not necessary to locate Adonis' garden any more definitely than to say that although it represents the cycle of earthly reproduction it is not of this earth. For one thing, the garden possesses only forms and must rely on Chaos to supply the matter for earthly creation. Here we find then neither a morality nor an esthetics that is directly applicable to life on earth. Venus and Adonis, symbols of goodness here, lie languishing in love making all day in the manner of Acracia and Verdant. This activity can only be understood allegorically--Venus, the mother of all substance, is making love with Adonis, the father of all forms. For an overindulgence in love-making, as we have seen in the Bower of Bliss, is an evil

³⁷"Spenser's Garden of Adonis," *PMLA*, XLVII (1932), pp. 46-80.

in the world of reality.

For our illumination of what is esthetically good on this earth the Garden of Adonis is again not very helpful. There is no art in this garden since there are no men to create it. We do see workmanship here, however, the workmanship of God the artist (III.vi.12.5), and the familiar principles of order and variety are again the ruling ones:

Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
 And uncouth formes, which none yet ever knew,
 And every sort is in a sundry bed
 Set by it selfe, and ranckt in comely rew.
 (35.1-4)
 (underlining mine)

In the Bower of Bliss art, nature and love-making are abused. In the Garden of Adonis neither art nor earthly nature appear and the love-making is of an allegorical nature. In yet another examination of love, however, art and nature are quite amicably related. Although the love between Scudamour and Amoret has its own allegory, its significance, in comparison to the universal cycle represented by Venus and Adonis, contains a lesson applicable to ordinary human conduct, for Amoret, raised in "goodly womanhed" by Venus, is representative of married love. The garden through which Scudamour must pass to attain his bride, therefore, is appropriately an earthly one of exceptional

perfection. When Scudamour arrives on the island containing Venus' temple, which in turn contains Amoret, it seems to his "simple doome":

The only pleasant and delightfull place,
That ever troden was of footings trace.
For all that nature by her mother wit
Could frame in earth, and forme of substance base,
Was there, and all that nature did omit,
Art playing second natures part, supplied it.
(IV.x.21.4-9)

His description continues and we find that every tree is either growing naturally or planted there, that there are hills for viewing, dales for love-making, groves for shade and plains for sun-taking (22-24). Besides the pleasures of a varied and ordered nature, which, it should be noted, is the product of both nature and art, this garden contains every "queint device"--i.e. artiface--that ever a heart has yearned for (22.8.9). A garden that is to provide a man with his earthly happiness, then, contains the beauties of both nature and art, the two working side by side in harmony. And if art sometimes seems to be nature or nature seems to be art there is no cause for alarm. Scudamour, passing along the garden's wall, admires the "stones of rich assay":

Cast into sundry shapes by wondrous skill,
That like on earth no where I reckon may:
And underneath, the river rolling still
With murmer softe, that seem'd to serve the
workmans will.
(15.6-9)

The pleasure that is here felt in the observation of the relationship between the workmanship of stones and the apparent workmanship of real waves seems to be given utterance in the harmonious murmuring of the river itself.

That the relationship between art and nature found in the garden of Venus' temple is the ideal one for this life on earth is further supported by the contents of Book VI, The Legend of Courtesy. According to Edward Taylor a concern for the relationship between art and nature is the unifying principle of this book, for although men are born with courtesy and in that sense the quality is natural, Calidore himself embodies civilized courtesy--the best combination of nature and art possible in the order of nature.³⁸ The wholesale condemnation of art which is given through Meliboe's lips in Canto ix.24-25, is explained by Taylor as applicable only in the ideal world of the pastoral (p. 113). It is significant that Calidore may not remain in this world with his Pastorell but must continue in the world of art his pursuit of the Blatant Beast, an allegorical figure related to courtly affairs.

In the most lavish description of Book VI we again have a paradise formed by nature alone, but as in the case of the Garden of Adonis, the allegory here is again visionary. Here the Graces are for the moment on earth

³⁸Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature (New York, 1964), p. 118.

and the earth for that moment is appropriately perfect. (The trees "all winter as in sommer bud".) But the setting's natural perfection, as we might expect, is an extremely ordered one: the hill is of "equal" height and is bordered with stately trees which appear also to be of equal height (VI.x.6-8). So too the dance which the Graces perform in a natural nudity inevitably has the appearance of art. It is performed in a ring and therefore is a symmetrical and ordered one. According to Taylor the Graces themselves represent "the ideal union of nature and art that is the height of courteous civility" (p. 117), for they not only "bestow" their gifts on man, but they also "teach" him how to "demeane" himself (verse 23).

Although at this point, near the end of the existing narrative, Spenser seems to give an ethical recommendation for the proper balance of nature and art, various combinations of art and nature have occurred frequently in the earlier books for the sake of esthetic delight and in several relations to the ethical allegory. Although Spenser can at times raise his esthetic to ethical and cosmological significance, these passages occur in his most abstracted visions; whereas in the general environment of Fairyland the reader must rely upon some extra signal from the author before he can be sure if the beauty he beholds belongs to a morally superior or inferior object. And although beauty

is often abused by the morally degenerate, we must remember Spenser's plea in beauty's defense:

Yet nathemore is that faire beauties blame,
 But theirs that do abuse it unto ill:
 Nothing so good, but that through guilty shame
 May be corrupt, and wrested unto will.
 ("Hymne in Honour of Beautie",
 ll.155-158)

Beauty, then, remains a good in itself, despite its moral abusers.

To show what is beautiful to Spenser has been the whole aim of this study. His esthetic appreciation has proven to be one that is consistent with a wide-spread Renaissance outlook that sees beauty in art when it sees order, variety and verisimilitude.³⁹ Because this concept of beauty is based philosophically on a belief in an ordered universe and a theory that man the artist is imitating God the Artist, it would seem to follow that what is beautiful is also morally good, for God's universe is in this view certainly a good one. Looking at pictures of beauty in Spenser, however, we find that ethics and esthetics have no absolute correlation. The poet provides another Renaissance commonplace to explain this discrepancy. He explains that in the Golden Age beauty and virtue were one and the same,

³⁹The key terms "decorum" and "harmony" can be considered as subdivisions of order.

but as the world waxed older:

. . . beautie, which was made to represent
The great Creatours owne resemblance bright,
Unto abuse of lawlesse lust was lent,
And made the baite of bestiall delight:
Then faire grew foule, and foule grew faire in sight,
And that which wont to vanquish God and man,
Was made the vassall of the victors might.
(IV.viii.32.1-7)

In these lines, in which we sense a feeling of regret over the abuse of beauty, we are reminded of that ring of regret that seemed to sound as the Bower of Bliss was felled under Guyon's fury.

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