

Terrorism and Tyrannicide in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*

Lori A. Davis Perry

Literary interrogations of terrorism in the early modern period are rare, primarily as the term *terrorism* was not widely used until the French Revolution. Scholarly inquiry has thus largely overlooked Spenser's engagement with issues of terrorism in *The Faerie Queene*. However, through the lens of tyrannicide in Book V's Legend of Justice and iconoclasm in Book VI's Legend of Courtesy, Spenser invites his readers to deliberate upon what Robert Applebaum has termed the mythography of terrorist violence. In Book V, Spenser constructs a narrative of political violence through tyrannicide that brushes up closely against early modern discourse about terrorism, forcing the reader to deliberate over the terms of just or unjust political violence, particularly violence tinged with images of sacred cleansing. Both books require readers to engage in the discourse of terrorism, while gesturing toward the appropriate response—approbation in Book V and rejection in Book VI. The poem thus requires serious speculation from its readers about the terms under which such violence may or may not offer appropriate intrusions into political life.

Mythographies of Terrorism and Tyrannicide

The formal study of terrorism and its political structures is a relatively new academic discipline. Critical responses to terrorism traditionally began with the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror when state-sponsored terrorism brought the term into widespread use. Violent actors, however, were likely to be labeled agitators, anarchists, revolutionaries, or criminals rather than terrorists, as their activities were not necessarily viewed as part of a larger political or

cultural phenomenon. They existed in the public and critical imagination as dangerous anomalies. Beginning in the 1970s, Walter Laqueur altered the critical response, establishing foundational theories of terrorism that transcended specific groups or individuals. Laqueur argued that though the term terror was used primarily after the French Revolution, the goals and tactics of terrorism had existed for a long time and in many forms throughout various cultures. Nevertheless, while historians and political scientists now note the existence of terrorists and their tactics from the ancient world to the present, these violent groups are usually disposed of in the introductory pages of a critical work. The majority of critical attention instead focuses on modern forms of terrorism from the 19th through 21st centuries, including international groups such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) or the Japanese Red Army, revolutionary nationalists such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Ireland or the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Basque, anti-colonialist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the National Liberation Front in Algeria, religious terrorists such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban, and domestic terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan in the US or the Grey Wolves in Turkey. Critical inquiry seeks to illuminate the social conditions, tactics, targets, funding, recruitment, and organization of such groups.

Yet the violent struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly before the English Civil Wars, brought the issue of terrorism to the forefront of political and religious discourse. If the term terrorism entered public use much later, the reality of it was clear centuries earlier in literature and commentary from the early modern period. Extrajudicial assassinations of powerfully symbolic figures, designed to both terrify and alter structures of power, combined with images of vengeance, martyrs, religious imperatives, secret cabals, or criminal acts 'justified' for higher moral purposes—the elements of modern terrorism were on full view, not only during

the Wars of Religion in France but elsewhere in early modern Europe. In Scotland, the public murder in 1566 of Mary Stewart's musician David Rizzio by her husband Lord Darnley qualifies as an act of terrorism, as does the murder of the Duke of Buckingham in England decades later in 1628. In these and other cases, terrorist violence illuminated altered power relations and invited public approval of a criminal act.

Robert Applebaum has argued that early modern literature is more engaged with events that we would define as terrorism than has been previously acknowledged, and that the poetry of the period made terrorism "into a subject of literary form and ideological struggle."¹ Tyrannicides in particular were drawn to terrorist forms of violence throughout France and the British Isles, as tyrannicide is exceptionally suited to the rhetorical discourse of terrorism. Despite critical debates about specific tactics, terrorism aims, through the systematic use of murder, injury, destruction, or other threats of violence, to achieve political ends that would otherwise prove elusive.² Political theorists differ in defining the details of terrorism, however, and Laqueur has argued that it can never be defined in absolute terms, suggesting some definitional flexibility.³ Terrorism does differ, however, from other forms of violence, including the implied violence Hobbes claimed as the source of authority for political figures. Scholars have generally agreed that terrorism is a performative or theatrical act, designed to communicate to a specific audience, and inviting the approval of that audience for the violence done on their behalf. There are additional distinctions. Military atrocities committed during a war may be horrifying, but they are not necessarily acts of terrorism. Likewise, a monarch's abuse of his subjects may be

¹ Robert Applebaum, *Terrorism Before the Letter: Mythography and Political Violence in England, Scotland, and France 1559-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 5.

² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 3, 40.

³ Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 3-23.

violent, but not necessarily qualify as state-sponsored terrorism. Finally, terrorism primarily takes place in the context of low-intensity conflicts, where the acts of terror are surprising breaches of presumed military operations or sanctuaries, usually carried out by non-state or sub-state agents in a manner that produces cultural shock value.⁴ Yet, though terrorism has a long history around the world, twenty-first century scholars rarely investigate *literary* responses to terrorism before the nineteenth century, and most scholarship focuses exclusively on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In a ground-breaking response to this dearth of research, Robert Applebaum argues that terrorism, particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was identified, reproduced, interrogated, censured, applauded, and disallowed through a wide swath of literary and pseudo-literary forms. He terms this literary engagement “terrorism before the letter,” encompassing a twofold meaning: “on the one hand, it refers to terrorism before the word and the concept of terrorism existed; on the other, it refers to terrorism so far as it was brought before the bar of literature and became a subject of writing.”⁵ He argues specifically that a “mythography” of terrorism existed in France and the British Isles, “enabling fictions” that make it possible to think about terrorism with or without the formal term.

If you can think terrorism, with or without a word to identify it, then you can think about and with it and at the same time support, revile, or defy it; you can do it or defend against it or stand aghast at what it has done; you can speculate about it and morally respond to its intrusions into the political life of a society. A

⁴ Applebaum, *Terrorism Before the Letter*, 11, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

mythography is what enables you to do any of this and such a mythography arose out of ancient and medieval storytelling and political theory in this period.⁶

In his extensive analysis of the mythographies that supplied terrorism with its models, justifications, audiences, and symbols, Applebaum emphasizes the discursive nature of terrorism, as terrorists self-consciously act out a form of “symbolic exchange.” Whether the acts of violence are ultimately approved or condemned by the audience for which they are performed, the acts already signify “a shift in power relations” and “transformation of the status quo,” as those acts bring “rewards to some and penalties to others.”⁷

Tyrannicide offers a particularly attractive motive for acts of terrorist violence, as the moral weight of the deed can be marshalled in its defense. In the sixteenth century, tyranny and tyrannicide were widely debated from both political and theological positions. Today’s readers are likely to associate tyranny with secular political forms, as Hobbes’s *Leviathan* casts a long shadow in political philosophy. After the horrors of religious warfare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sought to sanitize political philosophy, and later political science, from the contamination of religious passions. These rhetorical and intellectual moves, however, existed well in the future for Spenser’s contemporary readers, who were intellectually, and often personally, engaged in religious warfare at home and abroad. Thus, in the sixteenth century, tyrannicide was frequently justified for religious as well as secular reasons, and the justifications often included allusions to Satan specifically.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 13.

Ryan J. Croft has argued that for Spenser's contemporary readers, and for Spenser himself, definitions of tyranny often included the assumption that Satan played an active role in human affairs, as the original and continuing instigator of human ambition and the self-serving desire for power. In this political theory Satan acted as the unjustified usurper of God's authority over humans, playing the central role in the Fall of Adam and Eve; he was therefore established as the preeminent tyrant in all of creation.⁸ Satan as a tyrant had long been a conventional theological perspective, codified, for instance, in medieval drama, theological treatises, Protestant catechisms, and liturgy. Fallen humans, corrupted by Satan into disobedience, were believed to be particularly susceptible to tyranny—a form of unjust power—both as nations and as individuals. Fallen humans *can* live in justice, it was believed, provided that they remain obedient to God and a king who rules justly through God's authority. But if the people or the king become disobedient, and seek personal power over righteousness, they weaken, becoming easy prey for Satan. In the general understanding of Spenser's readers, tyrants rule with the direct assistance of Satan. Tyrannicide therefore becomes a sacred act of violence in the wider war against Satan.

Monarchy in and of itself was not viewed as a form of tyranny; sixteenth-century readers differentiated between tyrannical and non-tyrannical monarchs. Protestant English readers frequently compared the tyranny of Queen Mary to the rule of Good Queen Bess. They likewise differentiated between tyrannicide and anti-monarchal violence in a general rebellion. Nor was tyranny defined as unchecked monarchical power, as such forms of power could be relied upon to prevent, rather than enact, a tyrannical rule. For instance, Dante argued that a proper monarchy

⁸ Ryan J. Croft, "Sanctified Tyrannicide: Tyranny and Theology in John Ponet's *Shorte Treatise of Politike Power* and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*," *Studies in Philology* 108, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 538-571.

should work to protect the people from oppressive systems, preventing society from descending into “tyrannies, self-serving oligarchies, and mob democracies.”⁹ Likewise though he was occupied with concepts of tyranny while writing *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer also posited the good versus tyrannical monarch, contrasting the image of a just Prince (duly elected, as was often implied in the writings of the period) and answerable to God in the service to the people, against an unjust or tyrannical ruler answerable only to himself.¹⁰ Throughout medieval and early modern writings, we find arguments that a ruler who internalized the law, and judged his own actions against that law, could be a strong, all-powerful monarch, while a ruler who served his own interests would be a tyrant. Moreover, good government depended upon obedience to a good king, a mutually supportive relationship that ensured peace, honor, and prosperity. Tyrannicide was thus a simple purging of the body politic from an unnatural corruption.

As an old form of justice that legitimately deposed tyrants through violence, tyrannicide appears in a wide swath of literature familiar to Spenser and his readers, such as Plutarch’s *Lives*, Cicero’s *De Officiis*, Seneca’s *Hercules Furens*, and Thomas Aquinas’s commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, to name a few. John of Salisbury legitimized tyrannicide in the *Policraticus* (circa 1159), and Jean Petit justified tyrannicide through Biblical examples after the murder of Louis I, Duke of Orleans, in 1408. In 1556, John Ponet’s *A Shone Treatise of Politike Power* argued in favor of the people removing rulers who lost their trust, including forceful removal. Tyrannicide, therefore, offers a legitimate use of violence against an unjust, tyrannical ruler, for the common good.

⁹ Peter Armour, “Dante and Popular Sovereignty,” *Dante and Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 27-45.

¹⁰ David R. Pichaske and Laura Sweetland, “Chaucer on the Medieval Monarchy: Harry Bailly in the *Canterbury Tales*,” *The Chaucer Review* 11, no. 3 (1977): 183-184.

Book V: The Legend of Justice

Not surprisingly, in his engagement with issues of political violence, Spenser focuses on tyrannicide in Book V and iconoclasm, a phenomenon based on similar purgative impulses, in Book VI. The structure of the larger poem is well known. In each of the six books, a knight must battle, in a multitude of physical and psychological forms, the essential enemy of the knight's embodied virtue. In Book V, Artegall, the Knight of Justice (Arthur's half-brother and Britomart's future husband), seeks to rescue Princess Eirene from the tyrant Grantorto. Tyranny, posited as the greatest threat to Justice, becomes allegorized into a variety of forms. These include Pollente and his daughter Munera; a Giant who attempts to weigh right and wrong in his scales; the manipulative and violent Geryonco who feeds Queen Belgae's children to a monster; and, perhaps most memorably, the Amazon Queen Radigund. By Canto 12, the narrator offers up examples of tyrants who have acted dishonorably because they are obsessed with power:

O SACRED hunger of ambitious minds,
And impotent desire of men to raine,
Whom neither dread of God, that devils bindes,
Nor lawes of men, that common-weales containe,
Nor bands of nature, that wilde beastes restraine,
Can keepe from outrage, and from doing wrong,
Where they may hope a kingdome to obtaine.¹¹

¹¹ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, V.12.1.1-7.

Burbon has become faithless and unsound, Gerioneo has oppressed Belge, and Grantorto has acted outrageously. In short, justice cannot co-exist with tyrannical impulses.

Applebaum argues that the mythographic epistemes of terrorism operate from dual goals: “a vulnerability to violence that disturbs the fundamental conditions of peace; a hope, by the same token, that violence, against all odds, might renew even as it destroys, and save even as it brutalizes.”¹² As a result, terrorism functions as a form of “foundational violence,” an act which “establishes the legal and social basis of political society, a violence that, having broken up one foundation, may replace it with another.”¹³ A terrorist act attempts to purge imperfect or corrupted forms through violence, re-establishing an older or more perfect political structure. Terrorism therefore creates an ongoing tension between destruction and renewal, repression and generation. Likewise, the tension between violent repression and generation is a central concern of *The Faerie Queene*.

The poem’s defining image of generation appears in the Garden of Adonis, where we find the breeding ground of all that lives and dies, generated by the blood of Adonis, the “Father of all formes,”¹⁴ who is “eterne in mutabilitie, / And by succession made perpetuall.”¹⁵ Despite the apparent differences between the Garden of Adonis and, for instance, Artegall’s conflict with the Amazon Queen Radigund in Book V, or Calidore’s capture of the Blattant Beast in Book VI, the archetype of the Garden infuses and illuminates all these incidents. Four poetic motifs that appear in the Garden play a central role in Spenser’s interrogation of political violence: the destructive presence of Time; the simultaneous appearance of past, present, and

¹² Applebaum, *Terror Before the Letter*, 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁴ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, III.6.47.8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III.6.47.5-6.

future; the death, blood, and decay that generates new life; and the association of this decay with memory.

Book V, the Legend of Justice, appears on the surface to have little association with the Garden of Adonis, other than to offer a reversal of its generative power. Here, in opposition to infinite life, we find almost uncontrollable slaughter, particularly at the hands of Artegall's squire Talus, the Iron Man. Likewise, in opposition to perpetual change, we witness the re-establishment of formal hierarchies, as castles and kingdoms throughout the book are restored to "rightful" rule, and corrupted ambition is purified from the political and social order. The primary quest of the book remains the salvation of Eirena and her kingdom from the tyrannical giant Grantorto. But along the way, both Artegall and Arthur impose justice at every turn, primarily through brutal tyrannicide, including frequent massacres of the tyrants' followers, mobs, or peasants. One unflinching portrayal of this belief in the moral power of order appears in Artegall's encounter with Radigund the Amazon Queen, where the patriarchal order is first inverted and then re-formed through the decapitation of the Queen.

Radigund's violent overthrow *appears* to validate Artegall's methods, for his single moment of hesitation while battling Radigund leads to his enslavement, and his future wife Britomart must finish the job by killing the Amazon Queen in hand-to-hand combat. In the narrative structure of imposing justice through violence, Spenser appears to anticipate Hobbes, for fear is the foundation of political society in Book V. Political authority without recourse to violence is nearly non-existent. Even in the court of Mercilla, where armor is rarely seen, a poet's tongue is nailed to the wall as punishment for slander. Despite the poem's setting in a pre-modern world, Max Weber's concept of the modern state as a polity that maintains a monopoly on the use of violence co-exists uneasily with poem's narrative structure, in which feudal powers

and obligations blur the lines between legitimate and illegitimate violence. In other words, the political world of the poem is slightly at odds with the historical realities of its contemporary readers, who live in a legitimate early modern state rather than the poem's amorphous feudal system of shifting powers, and this disconnect offers insight into contemporary concerns about proper and improper uses of violence, particularly tyrannicide.

The pseudo-historical setting of the poem is peopled with characters who resemble the knights of feudal Europe, operating more as warlords than courtiers. As Steven Pinker has noted, prior to the early modern period,

states were ineffectual, and the king was merely the most prominent of the noblemen, with no permanent army and little control over the country. Governance was outsourced to the barons, knights, and other noblemen who controlled fiefs of various sizes. . . . The knights raided one another's territories in a Hobbesian dynamic of conquest, preemptive attack and vengeance, and . . . they did not restrict their killing to other knights.¹⁶

The figures in Spenser's poem therefore achieve their status through traditional medieval methods—force, violence, warfare, and success on both real and ceremonial battlefields.

Yet the shadow of contemporary political realities, including political theories concerning tyranny, tyrannicide, and Appelbaum's "terrorism before the letter," intrudes upon the pseudo-medieval poem. By the 1590s, the early modern transition from warlords to courtiers was well under way, despite the troubling rise in political terrorism taking place in France, Scotland, and

¹⁶ Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Penguin Books), 66.

England. On the one hand, virtuous knights such as Holinesse, Chastity, Justice, and Courtesy raid and fight as proof of their fidelity to a higher moral and religious purpose rather than merely personal power over their neighbors. As unlanded knights, without retainers or subjects, they embody absolute loyalty to a body politic (the Faerie Queene) over material self-interests. Yet the violence in which they participate harkens back to a pre-government state, for there is no state monopoly on violence in such a world. In earlier manifestations of organized political groupings, violence was diffused among a variety of figures, for without a larger restraining entity that can exert control over warlords, local and widespread violence will be wielded as the only recourse to morality and justice. In a non-state or pre-state world, the law holds no tyranny at bay, and the distinctions between just and unjust violence become dangerously unstable. It is in such a non-state or pre-state political reality that Spenser's knights appear to be operating, pushing and pulling against medieval and modern claims for justice, violence, and political authority. In Book V, the resulting conflicts encourage the appearance of tyrants, who violently usurp power and maintain it through brutality.

One of these tyrants, Queen Radigund, rules over a society of Amazons in which normal hierarchies have been reversed. She holds male knights in thrall, forcing them to dress like women and perform feminine domestic duties (such as spinning and weaving). Yet each of these knights had entered voluntarily into the bargain she offered—withdraw or fight. Knights who lose choose thralldom or summary execution. Likewise, her Amazons are united in their support of her rule. So, in the most technical sense, she rules with the consent of the governed as an elected prince. At first glance, it is not altogether clear that her tyranny can be divorced in principle from her gender. The difference eventually appears in the purpose behind her actions, which are driven by the need for vengeance—a self-interest associated with tyrants. Radigund

has been unlucky in love, spurned by Sir Balladant, and her actions against all other knights encapsulate her need for reciprocal humiliation. Thus, the laws of Radigund's kingdom are based upon vengeance rather than justice.¹⁷

Artegall arrives at her city, escorting Sir Terpin, her latest victim, whom he has just rescued from hanging. Catching sight of Sir Terpin, Radigund falls upon him in a rage, and for the second time Artégall rescues Sir Terpin from her vengeance, leading to a day-long battle between the Amazons and Artégall's allies. The following day, Artégall and Radigund agree to fight in single combat, agreeing that the loser will be enthralled to the winner. Single combat, fought as a performative act, designed to communicate specifically to the followers of each combatant, invites the approval of its witnesses even as it threatens to re-establish the legal and social basis of the society. For Artégall, the loss will require him to join the other defeated knights in their women's roles. During the battle, as will be discussed below, Artégall surrenders, and Sir Terpin ends up executed after all. Artégall, the Knight of Justice, will remain enthralled to Radigund until saved by Britomart, the Knight of Chastity.

While Radigund's threat to patriarchal authority is clear, multiple allusions in Book V also associate Radigund with Roman Catholicism, particularly convents and educational systems for women, a double threat to Anglican male political authority, much like the Marion reign that ended in 1558. The name of St. Radigund was a reasonably well-known name, as the College of St. Rhadegund in Cambridge had originally been the nunnery of St. Rhadegund. Prior to being

¹⁷ As Mary Bowman has noted, however, "[j]ust as the tyranny of Radigund inheres in her behavior, not her gender, the woman ruler debate was not exclusively about gender though it clearly was shaped by and in turn endorsed a pervasive misogyny." Mary Bowman, "Distressing Irena: Gender, Conquest, and Justice in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*," *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003), 165.

transferred to Jesus College, St. Rhadegund was "an important center of learning for women."¹⁸

This was due to the high standards of literacy which were required of its nuns from the founding of its order in the 6th century.¹⁹ The nunnery of St. Rhadegund functions as well as an allusion to the Dissolution of the 1530s, still a dangerous topic, but one which surfaces overtly once more in Book VI. As Maryclaire Moroney points out, "for obvious political reasons, the ruins of the medieval church appear in Elizabethan texts rather like the omniscient remains of Harry in 'The Trouble with Harry': frequently glimpsed, but rarely acknowledged."²⁰ Spenser's City of Radigund both acknowledges and interrogates the political and religious violence of the near-distant past. As a relic of monasticism, Radigund and her city of women represent not only disturbing memories of the past, but a potential future that still threatened the stability of Elizabethan society.

Within the Legend of Justice, Radigund must be defeated, and her city of Amazons must be re-formed into patriarchal structures of authority, not by bringing forward a new order, but by re-asserting a previous order through exactly the forms of violence that had overthrown it in the first place. Somewhat ironically, the feminine figure of Britomart, the Knight of Chastity, will be more successful in this job than Artegall, the Knight of Justice. Artegall and his assistant Talus, the Iron Man, create a direct relationship between justice and authority; just authority is eventually re-established through the use of force, creating a trinity effect between justice, authority, and physical power. Yet the Proem to Book V subverts this correlation by creating

¹⁸ Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 13.

¹⁹ Karen Cherewatuk, "Radegund and Epistolary Tradition," in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, eds. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 23.

²⁰ Maryclaire Moroney, "Spenser's Dissolution: Monasticism and Ruins in *The Faerie Queene* and *The View of the Present State of Ireland*," *Spenser Studies* 12 (1998), 108.

contradictory images related to time. On the one hand, Spenser describes the past in Ovidian terms as a more perfect world that has succumbed to the ravages of time by decaying from its original perfection. On the other hand, he describes the present as the continuation of a perpetually perfect world that is *unchanging* and accurately reflects the divine will through the rule of human princes. In creating this paradox, Spenser raises serious questions about the relationships between justice, authority and force. For instance, in the golden age of Saturn, “no man was affrayd of force”²¹ for “simple Truth did rayne” and “Iustice was not for most meed outhyred.”²² But now the world suffers from a moral decay that manifests itself in physical, moral, and metaphysical terms, as “Right now is wrong, and wrong that was is right.”²³ Force was not necessary in the past but has now become an indispensable tool in re-establishing justice. But the Proem also suggests that these changes are part of an unalterable movement toward disintegration, and that the world cannot be re-formed at all. The heavens and the earth continue to wander from their proper states “[t]il they arrive at their last ruinous decay”²⁴ and the world is moving “toward his dissolution.”²⁵ If such decay is inevitable, we wonder what value force can offer in re-establishing the past. Thus, the introduction to Book V distorts the apparent understanding of Justice, particularly justice through tyrannicide, that the Legend of Justice posits.

More significantly, the claim that Justice sits on the throne in the poem’s present time appears to be a politically convenient cultural lie imposed through violence, as the Proem raises the disturbing possibility that political violence is not the *arm* of justice, but the *usurpation* of

²¹ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, V.Proem.1.9.

²² Ibid., V.Proem.3.8-9

²³ Ibid., V.Proem,4.4.

²⁴ Ibid., V.Proem.6.9.

²⁵ Ibid., V.Proem.4.9.

justice. The last stanza is directed to Elizabeth, that "Dread Souerayne Goddess, that doest highest sit / In seate of iudgement, in th'Almighties place,"²⁶ an ambiguous phrase, for Elizabeth may be the rightful representative of the Almighty or, alternatively, she may have simply seized this position, as Queen Lucifera in Book I had seized her throne in the House of Pride. The Proem's argument that the world is no longer governed by just principles, that "the world is runne quite out of square"²⁷ invites us to question her position and its implications. It is entirely possible that the current ruler constitutes an inversion of justice in which physical violence, or the threat of it, becomes a false substitute for the authority of "simple Truth" and, by extension, divine justice. The Proem interrogates the entire nature of divine justice and the authority to impose it, an interrogation that implicates all human government.

In effect, the Proem creates an unsettled, even hostile, relationship between time and order, which we have already seen in the Garden of Adonis. We find a similar dynamic, with equally unsettling implications, arise in the Mutabilitie Cantos, where the cosmological order is challenged by the changeability of time itself in an allegorical struggle for authority. In this fragment of the unfinished Legend of Constancie, the female Titan Mutabilitie, daughter of Earth, lays claim to the throne of Jove, challenging his sovereignty over the world and the other Gods. Once again, we are presented with a world in which inversions associated with time have shaken the natural order:

For, she the face of earthly things so changed,

That all which Nature had establisht first

²⁶ Ibid., V.Proem.11.1-2.

²⁷ Ibid., V.Proem.1.7.

In good estate, and in meet order ranged,
She did pervert, and all their statutes burst:
And all the worlds faire frame (which none yet durst
Of Gods or men to alter or misguide)
She alter'd quite, and made them all accurst
That God had blest; and did at first prouide
In that still happy state for euer to abide.

Ne shee the lawes of Nature onely brake,
But eke of lustice, and of Policie;
And wrong of right, and bad of good did make,
And death for life exchanged foolishlie:
Since which, all liuing wights haue learn'd to die,
And all this world is woxen daily worse.
O pittious worke of MVTABILITIE!
By which, we all are subiect to that curse,
And death in stead of life haue sucked from our Nurse.²⁸

Mutabilitie first claims the throne by virtue of her father's lineage, "For, *Titan* (as ye all acknowledge must) / Was *Saturnes* eldest brother by birth-right."²⁹ She claims genealogy by

²⁸ Ibid., *Mutabilitie*.6.5.5-6.

²⁹ Ibid., *Mutabilitie*.6.27.1-2.

birth. But her real hopes lie with her second claim, the genealogy of prior rule—since all of heaven and earth is subject to Change, she already holds sovereignty over all.

Gordon Teskey has illuminated the cultural anxiety expressed and repressed by the *Mutabilitie Cantos* as stemming from the conflict between metaphysical order and genealogy, two discourses that intersect in Hesiodic origin myths. The purpose of these myths is not only to remember, but also to forget—to erase from the cultural memory the pain and violence that established the Olympian order in the first place. Metaphysical order uses its existence to justify and repress the memory of its origins. Genealogical order, on the other hand, is the memory that reasserts itself, the prior claim that puts all metaphysical order at risk. *Mutabilitie*, he suggests, by asserting the eternity not of Jove but of change itself, challenges the idea of rule without struggle—the myth Jove needs to protect. Thus, he argues, *Mutabilitie* exposes the truth about sovereignty.

Authority can be defined as the power to compel the public forgetting of what is privately remembered: it is hegemonic amnesia. Memory is therefore the stumbling block of the Olympians, opening up to our view what it is not an exaggeration to call the political unconscious of the universal order.³⁰

Teskey shrewdly remarks that “Spenser is undoing the illusion necessary to allegory by inverting the priority, in Renaissance social and political theory, of metaphysics to politics.”³¹ He writes:

³⁰ Gordon Teskey, “Mutability, Genealogy, and the Authority of Forms,” *Representations* 41 (1993), 108.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

. . . titanism, . . . the ceaseless mounting of genealogical challenges to any authority that declares itself permanent, was the most threatening of discursive formations in Spenser's political world . . . Genealogical discourse identifies memory itself with revenge, the latter being the former in act. And it is memory that Mutabilitie is constantly trying to reawaken in those she addresses. Such discourse is answered by the command to forget, or hegemonic amnesia, the forgetting by which an enforced world order can be seen as reflecting one that has existed forever.³²

The tension between the hegemonic amnesia of the present and the insistent memory that the current world order has not existed forever becomes particularly important in Book V.

In both the Mutabilitie Cantos and in the Proem the image of change subverts the cosmological claim to an unchallenged authority. Jove's just rule becomes nothing more than the triumph of violence, later justified by its own existence. Significantly, Artegall, the Knight of Justice, enforces justice almost entirely through the use of physical violence—either personally or through his surrogates. In Book V, good does not triumph over evil through rhetorical prowess, loving kindness, or metaphysical interventions, but through the sword. The suspicious reader therefore questions whether justice creates its own power for good, or whether the claim of justice is simply an expedient, a justification for brute force. The moral judgement demanded from the reader therefore begins to resemble the moral judgement demanded by acts of

³² Ibid., 112-113.

terrorist violence as the reader weighs the relative claims, for terrorism is also a claim of *reinstating* a former or better order.

Terrorist violence frequently relies upon prior claims in justifying purgative acts. Criminal acts of violence are justified as they re-set the political order to a purer form. Book V also invites a reader's moral judgement of the violence through which political structures are imposed. And in the Radigund episode, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between just and unjust violence. The mirroring effects between Radigund, Artegall, Britomart, Talus, Isis, and even Arthur unsettle relationships not only between justice, authority, and power, but also between truth, change, and history. For instance, though Artegall and Talus appear to represent authority and justice divorced from human passions, these characters both demonstrate a form of human wrath that mimics Radigund's cruelty and vengeance.

Radigund, the enemy of the Knight of Justice, is ruled not by law, but by her passions.³³ She had earlier defeated Sir Terpin in battle, and when he refused to become her servant, she had ordered him hanged. Artegall, intervening in the hanging, had usurped her decree. So when she sees Sir Terpin still alive and in Artegall's company, "All sodainely enflam'd with furious fit, / Like a fell Lionesse at him she flew."³⁴ Knocking him senseless, she places her foot at his head "Weening at once her wrath on him to wreake."³⁵ When Artegall intervenes to save Terpin, "She fiercely towards him her selfe gan dight, / Through vengeful wrath & sdeignfull pride half mad."³⁶ In contrast, Talus, the Iron Man, merely kills, efficiently and apparently without emotion, sending the Amazons flying before him like sheep.

³³ Despite the distinctions noted, a female figure who rules through self-absorbed passions in lieu of true law has traditionally been a common misogynistic conceit, and Lucifera in Book I is but one example.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, V.5.39.5-6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, V.5.40.4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, V.4.43.2-3.

Radigund continues to seethe with anger long after the battle, when “full of heart-gnawing grief”³⁷ and wounded pride she spends the night plotting revenge. The next day, in her single-combat battle with Artegall, she is driven by her passions, as “She at the first encounter on him ran / With furious rage.”³⁸ In addition, this particular passion is specifically equated with cruelty and vengeance. In her attack “she hewd, she foynd, she lasht, she laid on euey side”³⁹ and “still her crueltie increased more.”⁴⁰ Even when Artegall ceases his attack and stands unarmed, she “gan renew her former crueltie”⁴¹ and “more increast her outrage mercilesse, / The more that he with meeke intreatie prayd, / Her wrathful hand from greedy vengeance to have stayd.”⁴² Her rage, cruelty, and vengeance appear on the surface to contrast to Artegall’s coolheadedness and mercy.

But in fact, Artegall resembles Radigund in disturbing ways, just as terrorism and tyrannicide can appear comparable. Her rage and cruelty bracket the one-on-one combat, but his rage and cruelty lie, literally and figuratively, at the center of it. As she begins to weaken, “he gan fiercely her pursew”⁴³ and begins hammering her like a smith beating an “yron anduile.”⁴⁴ Now fighting offensively, “Halfe her shield he shared quite away.”⁴⁵ He fights with increasing aggression, and “at her strooke with puissance fearefull,”⁴⁶ shattering the rest of her shield. He stands over her and “her sunshynie helmet soon vnaced, / Thinking at once both head and

³⁷ Ibid., V.5.47.1.

³⁸ Ibid., V.5.6.3-4.

³⁹ Ibid., V.5.6.9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., V.5.7.3.

⁴¹ Ibid., V.5.14.4.

⁴² Ibid., V.5.14.7-9.

⁴³ Ibid., V.5.7.5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., V.5.8.2.

⁴⁵ Ibid., V.5.9.2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., V.5.10.7.

helmet to haue raced."⁴⁷ But we see his rage and cruelty most clearly in the moment that it dissipates. He sees her face, and "At sight thereof his cruell minded hart"⁴⁸ is moved, and he drops his sword. The narrator comments, "No hand so cruell, nor no hart so hard, / But ruth of beautie will it mollifie."⁴⁹ The simile is effective only because Artegall possesses the cruelest hand and hardest heart, a trait commonly required in terrorist violence.

A similar dynamic appears not only in the battle with Radigund, but in Artegall's earlier battle with the Britomart, the female Knight of Chastity, at the wedding tournament in Book IV. In this episode, Britomart remains disguised as a man, and Artegall fights in disguise as the "saluage knight," unaware that his "foe" has fallen in love with him in a magical mirror and is engaged in her own quest to find him in Faerie Land. During the battle, Artegall shows us a preview of his fight with Radigund. After a setback, he nurses his wounded pride, plots revenge and attacks Britomart in a rage, "full of despiteous ire / That nought but spoyle and vengeance did require."⁵⁰ In this earlier battle, the narrator also describes Artegall with the phrase "Ah cruell hand, and thrise more cruell hart."⁵¹

The resemblance between Radigund, Artegall and Britomart extends to Talus as well. As an Iron Man, Talus does not even appear to be human. Yet it is not his detachment from emotion that makes him inhuman, but his raging cruelty—cruelty linked, like Radigund's, to *passion*. The relationship is emphasized when both Artegall and Radigund simultaneously appear in the image of Talus:

⁴⁷ Ibid., V.5.11.8-9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., V.5.13.1.

⁴⁹ Ibid., V.5.13.5-6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., V.6.11.4-5.

⁵¹ Ibid., V.6.16.8.

. . . Like as a Smith that to his cunning feat
The stubborne mettall seeketh to subdue,
Soone as he feeles it mollifide with heat,
With his great yron fledge doth strongly on it beat.

So did Sir Artegall vpon her lay,
As if she had an yron anduile beene,
That flakes of fire, bright as the sunny ray,
Out of her steely armes were flashing seene,
That all on fire ye would her surely weene.⁵²

Wielding a great iron fledge, Artegall attacks Radigund and she is simultaneously transformed into an iron woman, flashing steely arms like fire. At this point, distinctions between the iron man/woman and the irate man/woman begin to collapse, accentuating the collapsing distinctions between just violence and political terrorism.

Spenser emphasizes this collapse in the language itself, and Britomart is drawn into the same cycle of iron, violence, rage and cruelty. Nathaniel Wallace has pointed out that in the following stanza, when Britomart halts Talus's killing spree and frees Artegall, "the repeating phoneme, 'ire,' prominent as the crucial 'b' rhyme of the stanza, acquires priority of interest as very much a word in its own right and as an echo of 'iron'."⁵³

⁵² Ibid., V.5.7.6-9 – V.5.8.1-5.

⁵³ Nathaniel Wallace, "Talus: Spenser's Iron Man," *Spenser Studies* 10 (1992), 278.

Tho when she had his execution stayd,
She for that yron prison did enquire,
In which her wretched loue was captiue layd:
Which breaking open with indignant ire,
She entred into all the partes entire.
Where when she saw that lothly vncouth sight,
Of men disguiz'd in womanishe attire,
Her heart gan grudge, for very deepe despight
Of so vnmanly maske, in misery misdight.⁵⁴

He notes that "the conjunction of 'iron' and 'ire' tends to accentuate the extent to which the intemperance of anger is implicated in many of the crimes and at least some of the judgments in Book V."⁵⁵ Additionally, Artegall's captivity in the "yron prison" is worth noting, for this relates directly to the role Calidore plays in Book VI.

Artegall is not the only embodiment of Justice in Book V, for Isis also plays an important role, here figured as conferring the blessings of justice and equity. But the traditional story of Isis includes the usurpation of her husband and brother's throne by Set, who must eventually be overthrown by Isis's son Horus, thereby restoring the original political order. The priests at the Temple of Isis, where Britomart experiences her dream vision of the future, wear mitres decorated with the sun and the moon symbolizing the two gods Osyris and Isis. Interestingly, Radigund's description, rather than Artegall's, duplicates these images. Her shield is decked with

⁵⁴ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, V.7.37.1-9.

⁵⁵ Wallace, "Talus: Spenser's Iron Man," 278.

stones "that shined wide, / As the faire Moone in her most full aspect, / That to the Moone it mote be like in each respect."⁵⁶ Later in the battle with Artegall "Halfe of her shield he shared quite away, / That halfe her side it selfe did naked show,"⁵⁷ juxtaposing the half-moon of the shield and the half-exposed body of Radigund. The juxtaposition grows stronger as we shift from shield to face, for when Artegall shatters the second half of her battle shield, her face becomes her shield, now even more powerful though the ornaments have disappeared:

But when as he discovered had her face,
He saw his senses strange astonishment,
A miracle of natures goodly grace,
In her faire visage voide of ornament,
But bath'd in bloud and sweat together ment;
Which in the rudeness of that euill plight,
Bewrayd the signes of features excellent:
Like as the Moone in foggie winters night,
Doth seeme to be her selfe, though darkned be her light.⁵⁸

There is unusual power associated with Radigund's shield: it is an image of the moon and therefore Isis (and an aspect of justice). The only other character in *The Faerie Queene* who carries an enchanted shield is Arthur. Linking the shield and the moon, Radigund's face becomes

⁵⁶ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, V.5.3.7-9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, V.5.9.2-3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, V.5.12.1-9.

an enchanted—and enchanting—shield of beauty that protects her from Artegall and allows her to triumph over him.

There are, of course, many images of moons in the poem, since Diana, the Moon Goddess, is also the Goddess of Chastity, associated with Britomart, Belphoebe, and Elizabeth. But the simultaneous images of moon and sun used to describe Radigund most explicitly link her, in the context of Book V, with Isis and Osyris. For instance, when Artegall hammers upon her with his metaphorical iron fledge, “flakes of fire, bright as the sunny ray”⁵⁹ flash from her arms, so that “all on fire ye would her surely weene.”⁶⁰ The harder Artegall strikes, the more Radigund resembles the sun. The very next line, “But with her shield so well her selfe she warded,”⁶¹ juxtaposes the images of the sun and the moon that we see in the Temple of Isis. The juxtaposition occurs again when Artegall prepares to behead her and “her sunshynie helmet soone vnaced, / Thinking at once both head and helmet to haue raced.”⁶² The helmet like the sun, the face like the moon—these images also inform the preceding stanza, where we move from shield/moon to helmet/sun: “Hauing her thus disarmed of her shield, / Vpon her helmet he againe her stroke.”⁶³ Later in her battle with Britomart, Radigund will share the fate of Osyris and be dismembered. Thus, Radigund embodies the symbols of Osyris (the god of Justice) and Isis (the Goddess of Equity), as even Artegall does not.

The relationships between Radigund and these figures represent something other than simple inversions. The nature of authority and justice, the philosophical center of the Book, is not inverted in Radigund’s city. Instead, the episode raises disturbing questions about the nature

⁵⁹ Ibid., V.5.8.3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., V.5.8.5.

⁶¹ Ibid., V.5.8.6.

⁶² Ibid., V.5.11.8-9.

⁶³ Ibid., V.5.11.1-2.

of Artegall's "Justice," for when Britomart encounters the statue of Isis in the Temple, the goddess has a foot placed upon a crocodile. We learn that the crocodile represents Osiris kept under control by Isis, but in Britomart's dream vision, the same crocodile, which threatens to devour her, also represents Artegall in his future role as her husband. In fact, the relationship between Artegall and Radigund threatens to expose "just authority" as a pun—it is *just*, that is, *simply* authority imposed through physical violence. Whether Radigund rules or Artegall rules, whether they seize power through tyrannicide or terrorism, the cosmic order of authority and justice through violence remains unchanged. True and false justice, divine and human wrath—these concepts become more unstable with each reiteration.

This, of course, is the point, because these are characters who are encountering figures of themselves experienced through time—past versions of self-images. The Proem's beginning in Book V, "So oft as I with state of present time / The image of the antique world compare,"⁶⁴ duplicates the juxtaposition of past and present, just as the trees in the Garden of Adonis bear flowers and fruit simultaneously. The co-existence of multiple times extends to the characters. Nature's reply to Mutabilitie most clearly illuminates this dynamic:

I well consider all that ye haue sayd,
And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
They are not changed from their first estate;
But by their change their being doe dilate:

⁶⁴ Ibid., V. Proem, 1-2.

And turning to themselves at length again,
Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:
Then ouer them Change doth not rule and raigne;
But they raigne ouer change, and doe their states maintaine.⁶⁵

The Radegund episode functions as a conflict between order and time, like the Mutabilitie Cantos. If Radigund represents a version of Artegall, she represents a version *in past time*. For Spenser, *past time* necessarily implies a more barbaric time, which unsettles the terrorist impulse toward replacing a current social structure with a previously superior, and thus purer, form.

The battles Artegall fights first with Britomart and then with Radigund reinforce their comparison in time. In his first two encounters with Britomart, Artegall disguises himself as the “saluage knight.” In his savage mode, he enacts the role that Radigund will later enact with him, plotting revenge out of wounded pride, attacking madly, and responding with unreasonable rage. During this attack, Britomart enacts the role Artegall will later enact with Radigund—fighting defensively at first, then responding in kind, and so forth. In his encounters with Radigund, Artegall encounters a savage version of himself, his own past which he is ultimately unable to overcome. In fact, he notices this himself, for when Radigund attacks him in her fury, “he that had like tempests often tried”⁶⁶ recognizes her fighting style for he has experienced it before. The phrase suggests not only that he has countered enraged attacks against himself, but that he has personally experienced the rage that leads to such attacks. Britomart “frees” him from the past, in a sense, by destroying Radigund. But the past can never be completely

⁶⁵ Ibid., *Mutabilitie*.7.58.1-9.

⁶⁶ Ibid., V.5.6.6.

eradicated. Within the nature of Artegall and Britomart, the "ire" that they despised in Radigund remains within themselves, as the violence that gave way to the current social order remains available within that order, to be tapped by future actors and judged by future witnesses.

Attempts to subdue the past—both as the Other and as the Self—extend beyond the characters and remind us of elements of the contemporary past that Spenser's readers both recognized and repressed. Maryclaire Moroney argues that the Dissolution "chang[ed] forever British attitudes towards their past."⁶⁷ The destruction of the Dissolution extended beyond the political structures of the medieval church to encompass the entire cultural heritage which had developed in its wake, including the monastic libraries, which were "defined as both heretical and treasonous, and liable to destruction on both counts."⁶⁸ Iconoclasm functions as a terrorist act on par with tyrannicide, a spectacle of violence in which the perpetrators act out their own symbolic exchange. Iconoclasm, like tyrannicide, indicates a shift in power relations, a transformation of the status quo, and a new reality that brings rewards to some and penalties to others. Like tyrannicide, the audience of the violence, including in this case Spenser's reading audience, are invited to judge the violence performed and offer approval or condemnation.

Not surprisingly, there were those who recognized in the destruction of Roman Catholicism the destruction of their own cultural history—the destruction of their artistic heritage. Resistance to the destruction was not limited, therefore, to religious conviction, but included deep intellectual dismay at the enormous cultural losses being sustained, a dismay which expressed itself in cultural mourning for decades to come. As Moroney points out, "[w]hile

⁶⁷ Maryclaire Moroney, "Spenser's Dissolution: Monasticism and Ruin in *The Faerie Queene* and *The View of the Present State of Ireland*," *Spenser Studies* 12 (1998): 108.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

the Continental poets whom Spenser admired and translated were contemplating the ruins of Roman antiquity, the English poet was surrounded, both in England and in Ireland, by the ecclesiastical remains of Britain's immediate past.⁶⁹ She notes that "the sheer weight of material destruction sustained by the medieval church was a fact that neither Spenser nor his contemporaries could completely repress or ignore,"⁷⁰ as the hegemonic amnesia necessary for sustaining political authority was always threatening to dissipate. The "dismembered body of the medieval English church,"⁷¹ as Moroney identifies it, recalls the dismembered body of Radigund in Book V. And the inability to escape from the knowledge of this destruction recalls the image of Sir Sangliere, doomed by Artegall to carry about the decapitated head of his Lady whom he, in his rage, had dismembered.

Justifying Terror

Artegall's violent imposition of "Justice" in Book V, along with his overthrow of multiple tyrants, brushes up against concerns about terrorism and its justifications. The possibility that Artegall is a violent usurper, rather than a figure who re-instates just rule, offers readers the opportunity to weigh the difference between just and unjust violence, much as Spenser's contemporaries were engaged in critical conversations about terrorist violence in western Europe throughout the period. Artegall *could* be engaged in terrorism himself, and Talus remains particularly vulnerable to the label. First, as Applebaum has noted, while fear can be the source of political power, it is a specific type of fear that terrorists appeal to: "terrorist organizations have often attempted to prove to a public that nothing but chaos would follow

⁶⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 118.

⁷¹ Ibid., 119.

unless the regime was changed, or unless the group's specific demands were met. ...fear is an underlying energy of modern political society, and it is over the distribution of this energy that sovereign regimes and terrorists will often struggle."⁷² Artegall's narrative in Book V insists that without the imposition of true Justice, violence and chaos will continue unabated. But terrorist violence is also highly symbolic in what it is attempting to communicate through performative acts. The need to communicate, as well as destroy or threaten, makes terrorist violence by its nature controversial, as no enactment of violence can be guaranteed to deliver the message as intended, and no terrorist can control the ways in which the message is ultimately received—whether with relief, horror, approval, qualified skepticism, or outrage. The extreme violence of Talus, for instance, invites readers to ponder the nature of justice in Book V.

At the same time, in the "symbolic exchange" of terrorist violence, "acting out the violence is already a shift in power relations, already a transformation of the status quo, bringing rewards to some and penalties to others."⁷³ Artegall's confrontation of Radigund operates as a symbolic act intended to overturn the status quo of power and impose a new order. His initial failure to complete the *coup d'états* draws our attention to the symbolic nature of his battle with Radigund and asks the reader to find him justified in his acts. Applebaum notes that, uniquely for terrorism, a crime must occur which is clear to the participants, whether they are agents, the victims of the crime, or the witnesses—in this case Spenser's readers. The crime is not disputed, but the justification for the crime is an appeal to "a higher, alternative law."⁷⁴ Once again, Artegall and Talus skirt very close to criminality in their imposition of justice. Talus murders

⁷² Applebaum, *Terrorism Before the Letter*, 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

scores of people and must be actively restrained from murdering more, clearly transgressing the rules of warfare as understood by Britomart. Radigund certainly believes that Artegall is guilty of a crime by interrupting the execution of Sir Terpin. The readers are thus thrust into the dialectical nature of the conflict, much as they are involved in the dialectical nature of terrorist violence. As Applebaum has noted,

Although some acts of terrorist violence may have what seem to be highly limited objectives—the freeing of political prisoners, the receiving of a ransom, an agreement toward the changing of a national policy—a deeper quarrel is almost always at stake, and usually the deeper quarrel is exactly what the act of violence is intended to address.⁷⁵

The violence focuses on the limited objectives—in this case the overthrow of specific tyrants—while it simultaneously both “articulates and tries to resolve, irreversibly, in its own behalf” the larger ideological conflict. Moreover, even after the performance of violence, “decisions are still to be made, the quarrel is still to be negotiated, and the concepts of criminality and justifiability are still to be contested, dialectically, with words and actions.”⁷⁶ Book V offers its readers all of these elements—unique acts of violence against specific figures, a proem which lays out the larger concerns of just rule within a corrupt political world, and the invitation to reflect discursively on the characters’ claims to one side versus the other. Punishment meted out, we leave Book V attuned to the fine distinctions between just and unjust violence.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 20.

Rejecting Terror

The violently imposed cultural amnesia of Book V shifts and in Book VI, Sir Calidore the Knight of Courtesy pursues and destroys a Blatant Beast to prevent its sacrilegious violence against a monastery. As time passes, discovering the dangerous truths of Book V becomes less urgent than knowing which truths to reveal, and when to exercise self-restraint and put a halt to wanton destruction. The violence of Book V invites readers into the discourse of terrorism, but ultimately nudges them into an acceptance of Artegall as justified in his actions, though with uneasy caveats. The symbolic exchange of Una for Radigund, in the spectacle of one-on-one combat, re-establishes an order that the poem approves. But the same violent impulses toward disruption in Book VI, in the form of iconoclastic violence, get a different treatment. Here the reader is asked to find the line beyond which such violence will be resisted.

The Proem to the Legend of Justice suggests the possibility that, though we might believe in Artegall's ability to discern true and false justice through authorized versus tyrannical rule, the possibility remains that such a judgment could be manipulated through ideological biases. Bowman points out that Artegall "cannot adhere to meaningful distinctions between Britomart and Radigund."⁷⁷ Unlike the false Florimell, who simply disappears when placed next to the true Florimell, thus eliminating the need for difficult judgments of true and false, the tyrannical co-exist in the same place as the just and can only be sorted out through violence. Moreover, the crocodile at Isis's feet recalls the necessity to restrain that violence in the interests of true justice and equity. The Proem to Book VI presents us with a paradox that recalls the paradox of Book V. Once again, the narrator contrasts the antique and perfect to the new and

⁷⁷ Bowman, "Distressing Irena," 166.

corrupt. But the emphasis shifts to Courtesy rather than Justice. This time, true Courtesy exists only in the past; manifestations of present Courtesy are weak imitations: "Of which though present age doe plenteous seeme, / Yet being matcht with plaine Antiquitie, / Ye will them all but fayned showes esteeme, / Which carry colours faire, that feeble eies misdeeme."⁷⁸

Like Artegall before him, Calidore moves in stages toward evolving versions of himself. He appears in the beginning of Book VI to value internal virtue over external rewards, but this is not enough. In the first canto, we discover a paradox in Calidore, which mirrors the paradox of the Proem. He appears to resist the narcissism of Faery Court, "For he loathd pleasing, and base flattery."⁷⁹ But then he encounters Artegall, "Who whenas each of other had a sight, / They knew themselues, and both their persons rad."⁸⁰ Artegall and Calidore read themselves in each other when they recognize each other. Each views the other as a mirror and assumes that they can read the image in "that glasse so gay" and yet so deceptive.⁸¹ Calidore even views himself quite literally as continuing in Artegall's place, when he says "where ye ended haue, now I begin."⁸² He will now enter the labyrinth from which Artegall has emerged, in which he will also encounter, among other things, the vestiges of monasticism that Artegall and Britomart appeared to have destroyed in Book V, an ideological tyranny that iconoclasm is focused on destroying.

Calidore's great enemy, the Blattant Beast (offspring of Envy and Distraction), destroys his enemies with rusty iron teeth and leaves massacres in his wake. In this sense, he bears an uncanny resemblance to Talus, albeit a Talus somewhat rusty with age. But unlike Talus, he cannot be controlled, and his rampages contrast clearly with the personal restraint that forms

⁷⁸ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, VI.Proem.4.6-9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, VI.1.3.8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, VI.1.4.6-7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, VI.Proem.5.6.

⁸² *Ibid.*, VI.1.6.1.

the basis of Courtesy. The Beast can kill immediately or over a period of time by inflicting a deadly wound. Like the wound of cupid, the Beast's wound also appears incurable:

No wound, which warlike hand of enemy
Inflicts with dint of sword, so sore doth light,
As doth the poysnous sting, which infamy
Infixeth in the name of noble wight:
For by no art, nor any leaches might
It euer can recured be againe.⁸³

The hermit caring for the wounded Timias and Serena recognizes that this is a wound to the mind, particularly the mind's ability to rule over its passions. He tells them that only personal restraint can heal their "inner parts" that have begun to "putrify":⁸⁴

Abstaine from pleasure, and restraine your will,
Subdue desire, and bridle loose delight,
Vse scanted diet, and forbear your fill,
Shun secresie, and talke in open sight:
So shall you soone repaire your present euill plight.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., VI.6.1.1-6.

⁸⁴ Ibid., VI.6.5.4.

⁸⁵ Ibid., VI.6.14.5-9.

The requirement for restraint becomes problematized when the Beast attacks a monastery at the end of Book VI. The Blattant Beast re-enacts earlier attacks on Catholicism, including the destruction of Radegone, but Calidore now pursues the Beast in order to restrain him. Meanwhile, with his “yron teeth,”⁸⁶ the Beast terrorizes the monks, searching “all their cels and secrets neare.”⁸⁷

Spenser juxtaposes the Beast and Catholicism in a highly unusual way, for Renaissance Protestant writers traditionally linked the Beast of Revelation with the Anti-Christ, whom they almost universally claimed to be the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. There are two Beasts in Revelations—the first a blasphemous Beast that wields great power, and a second Beast that forces the world to worship the first; they both serve the Anti-Christ who takes the form of a Dragon. The description of the first Beast resembles the description of the Blattant Beast which so many encounter in the forest:

. . . the beast I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. . . . And they worshipped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”

The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months . . .⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., VI.12.26.7.

⁸⁷ Ibid., VI.12.24.4.

⁸⁸ Revelation 13:1-5.

These images of Beast and Dragon, Anti-Christ and Catholicism, informed Protestant views in Spenser's audience, and his readers must have felt at least a bit unsettled at seeing such a Beast attacking a monastery instead of residing within it. The Beast's attack against the monastery in fact duplicates the iconoclastic violence of the 1530s:

Through all estates he found that he had past,
In which he many massacres had left,
And to the Clergy now was come at last;
In which such spoile, such hauocke, and such theft
He wrought, that thence all goodnesse he bereft,
That endlesse were to tell.⁸⁹

The perspective has shifted. The violence and destruction of people and material goods now appears as the work of a monster, not justice or religious righteousness:

From thence into the sacred Church he broke,
And robd the Chancell, and the deskes downe threw,
And Altars fouled, and blasphemy spoke,
And th'Images for all their goodly hew,
Did cast to ground, whilest none was them to rew;
So all confounded and disordered there.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, VI.12.23.1-6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, VI.12.25.1-6.

The Beast has no allies among the monks. He views Calidore as an enemy as well and flees from him. In the scene that follows, Calidore restrains him from continuing the attack: "th'outrage of his violence he stayd,"⁹¹ eventually using his shield to subdue him. Earlier in Book V, Britomart had been forced to restrain Talus from his equally unrestrained killing in the city of Radegone. Artegall's shield of Justice becomes reiterated in a new form as Calidore's shield of restraint, suggesting that Calidore has indeed encountered his own past—the past he has inherited from Artegall, and the past he must subdue but cannot ignore or forget. If Artegall was confronted with cultural memories that revealed the violent source of political authority, Calidore is left to determine how to control the effects of these memories. If Artegall faces the danger of not recognizing the past, Calidore faces the danger of being unable to contain and subdue that violence as it threatens the present and future. In each case, the methods of violence evoke terrorism and its potential for political upheaval and disruption.

The danger Calidore confronts is the danger of Mutabilitie's sovereignty, the genealogical discourse that "identifies memory itself with revenge."⁹² It is the danger of perpetual intellectual and cultural warfare, a self-inflicted wound against which the only defense is restraint. The violence of the past, when allowed to remain in the past, can be acknowledged. But loosed upon the present it threatens culture with a continuous cycle of repetition. Calidore must determine whether Mutabilitie—Time—will ultimately triumph or whether it will take its proper place as the servant to growth and change. The Blatant Beast threatens to assert the sovereignty of Time over Form, of vengeance over generation. Artegall appears "halfe sad" at the beginning of Book VI, frustrated by his premature recall to Faery Court—his vengeance

⁹¹ Ibid., VI.12.29.3.

⁹² Teskey, "Mutability, Genealogy, and the Authority of Forms," 112.

incomplete. But Calidore demonstrates that Artegall represents as great a threat to himself as to his enemies. Artegall and Calidore both find themselves confronted with memory in dangerous forms. Artegall must remember the dismemberment of the past; Calidore must discover and then subdue this memory, to prevent the dismemberment from putrefying in the present.

Though Adonis is "eterne in mutabilitie" he is also the "Father of all formes," a figure who combines change and form.⁹³ Adonis enacts through his body the words of Nature to Mutabilitie, that though all forms are unstable, "They are not changed from their first estate; / But by their change their being doe dilate."⁹⁴ Through his own mutability, Adonis generates growth and fertility. Yet he does not enact the *sovereignty* of mutability. He does not *rule* through change—he *serves*. He makes no claims, only gives. Venus "of his sweetnesse takes her fill"⁹⁵ as the life in the Garden takes its fill from him. Unlike Time with its scythe, Adonis is a servant to generation through mutability, not a cycle of destruction that prevents generation.

Calidore also eventually enacts the judgment of Nature by serving instead of ruling. He keeps at bay the "rusty" iron teeth of the Beast, the old wounds of violence. Instead of the violent and narcissistic self-repression of Artegall, Calidore practices self-denial in order to serve others. True self-knowledge, like Mutabilitie and the Beast, must be discovered but not unloosed, put to the uses of self-dilation but not allowed unrestrained rule. Courtesy does not reign over others, only over himself. Through Courtesy, the nature of the Beast's wound can be altered—previously unsound and putrefying, it can now become generative. Courtesy bursts

⁹³ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, III.6.46.5, 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, *Mutabilitie*.7.58.4-5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, III.6.46.9.

open the closed cycle of narcissistic self-love and enslavement to the past, offering new possibilities for the future self-in-being.

Calidore and the Blattant Beast thus reverse the ideological judgments of Book V. Specific acts of violence by the Blattant Beast, as claims in a larger ideological controversy, suddenly appear criminally *unjustified*. While the quarrel remains under negotiation, and the Beast's punishment is suspended when it escapes Faery Court, the sympathy of the reader is drawn away from the figure committing acts of terror. The Beast invites the reader's opprobrium, despite a clear political alliance to its ideological cause. In Book VI, the audience at whom the spectacle of violence is directed is invited to interrogate but, ultimately, reject it. In the mythography of terrorism, violent enactors cannot control whether or how their symbolic messages are received by would-be political supporters. In this case, the readers are guided toward a rejection of the specific forms and intensity of the Beast's violence, as it violates community standards of acceptable symbolic action. In a move recognizable to modern terrorists and their antagonists, the Beast has overplayed his role and lost his own supporters in the process.

If terrorism and tyrannicide seek the destruction of the present order through political violence, Calidore's alternative path of personal and cultural growth requires acknowledgment of the past but not enslavement or thralldom to it. History informs but cannot rule, despite the impulse toward purification. The self-in-being cannot grow, "dilate" into new forms, if it remains cocooned and captive to its own past. But though dilation requires this self-in-being to change its state, this process creates a "first estate" that always informs the present.⁹⁶ *The Faerie Queene*

⁹⁶ Ibid., *Mutabilitie*.7.58.4.

asks its readers to consider the dangerous power of terrorism to exploit a myth of the established order, but then offers an opportunity for the same impulses toward destruction to embrace generative possibilities and forestall cycles of vengeance masquerading as divine justice. The pathos of self-inflicted violence and cultural dismemberment yields to the sovereignty of form over time, *being over change*. In its literary interrogation of terrorism and its alternatives, the poem suggests that the path forward, though halting and subject to disruption, requires a clear-eyed awareness of the cultural stakes and political risks. In this sense, Spenser's readers become the cultural witnesses to, and arbiters of, terrorist violence and its consequences, as the poem insists upon their own judgments.

Lori Davis Perry is a Professor of English at the United States Air Force Academy. Her publications focus on modes of violence, anti-Semitism, and the intersections of religion and science in early modern British literature. She retired from the Air Force where she served as an intelligence officer.

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