CHAPTER 1

Pedagogy, Education, and Early Career

Andrew Wallace

The earliest record of Edmund Spenser's educational *cursus* puts him at Merchant Taylors' School in St. Lawrence Pountney parish, Candlewick ward, London. It catches him at a moment of transition, since it dates not to his arrival at the school but rather to 1569, the year in which he left London and matriculated at Pembroke College, Cambridge. We do not know when he began his studies at Merchant Taylors'; he may even have joined the school at its 1561 inception. If so (there is at present no way to settle the matter), Spenser's education would have coincided with the school's own formative years, so that the developing theory and practice of the school's program and institutional history might be seen as having charted a course parallel to the poet's own formation. This is a fascinating possibility because Spenser's poetry restlessly inquires into the nature of instruction.

Spenser's time at Merchant Taylors' would have been preceded either by private grounding in reading and writing or by study at what was known as a petty school. Schoolboys in Elizabethan England commonly began their days at 6:00 A.M. (in summer) or 7:00 A.M. (in winter), with the schoolday ending as late as 5:00 P.M. or 5:30 P.M. The curriculum was dominated by grammar and rhetoric, with topics and themes for compositions combining an attention to piety and virtue, so that Christian prayers rubbed shoulders with material gleaned from encounters with ancient Roman writers such as Virgil, Caesar, Cicero, Ovid, Horace, and others. Though curricula varied from school to school, it is possible to generalize with some confidence about school exercises, reading lists, and pedagogical practices during the final decades of the sixteenth century. What standardization there was would have continued to be reinforced by Henry VIII's 1542 statute requiring that public schoolmasters employ *Lily's Grammar*.[1] Latin dominated but did not stand alone: Greek was sometimes introduced in the upper forms of grammar schools; Hebrew was exceptionally rare.[2]

Spenser scholars are fortunate to know a good deal not only about the day-to-day operations of the Merchant Taylors' School but also about the opinions, goals, theoretical commitments, and *praxis* of the school's headmaster, Richard Mulcaster. Mulcaster published two important pedagogical treatises before his 1586 departure from Merchant Taylors': *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* (1581) and *The First Part of the Elementarie* (1582). The usual preoccupations are on view in these texts (education is conceived principally as a means of training students to serve the state, for example) but other, more distinctive views are articulated in the *Positions.* Mulcaster calls for early education to be accessible to girls, for example, and he places a significant emphasis on the pedagogical function not only of activities such as drama but of physical education. *The Elementarie* is more narrowly conceived, dealing as it does with the earliest "elements" of learning while also advancing arguments on the subject of spelling reform.

It is in Mulcaster's *Positions* that we can discern most clearly that Spenser was trained up by a schoolmaster who was keenly sensitive to the affective dimensions of humanist pedagogy. Mulcaster typified humanist pedagogy's double investment in the figure of the loving master and his young shadow: the schoolboy who is ceaselessly exhorted (for example, by Erasmus, by the compilers of *Lily's Grammar*, and by others) to love his master. Programmatic statements by educational theorists could work together with disciplines of memory work and grammatical paradigms in order to suggest that love and instruction were inextricably connected. *Lily's Grammar*, for example, followed ancient grammatical tradition in hanging its paradigms for the Latin language's four conjugations on verbs chosen for their resonance within the schoolroom: *amare* (to love), *docere* (to teach), *legere* (to read), and *audire* (to hear). These paradigms create a kind of economy, a household within which the domestic and affective business of learning unspools itself.

Schoolmasters were exhorted to anatomize, nurture, and stamp out various emotions elicited from schoolboys in the course of teaching, reward, and punishment. Simultaneously eager and timorous, schoolboys were enjoined to long to please their masters, to renounce easy pleasures, and even to blush in the face of their own desire to become learned. An early fifteenth-century writer, Pier Paolo Vergerio, can indicate the longstanding interest among humanists in celebrating the pedagogical utility of the average schoolboy's receptiveness to shame:

> But even if they fear threats and blows, how much better it is when they fear dishonor and disgrace, for from these is born shame, the best

> indicator of virtue at that age. So it is good if they blush when scolded and become better and love their teachers after chastisement, for this, too, is a sign that they love discipline.[3]

Love, shame, and the pink blush they share grade slowly into each other here. English teachers were similarly attuned to the eloquence of the blush and especially to its ability to communicate a schoolboy's emotional worth to his master. William Kempe, for example, noted in his treatise *The Education of Children* (1588) that praise and rewards worked upon schoolboys in subtle and complex ways: "Shall they not encourage thee?" asks Kempe, "Shall they not make thee willing and diligent: as leastwise, though thou be so retchles, that thou carest not for these rewards, yet blush at that which followeth."[4] That last phrase is difficult to parse, but Kempe seems to be asserting that even where praise and rewards as such are not treasured by a child, the fact of *not* earning them (I am putting only the most positive construction on the phrase "that which followeth"; what Kempe has in mind could just as easily be a beating) can still elicit a blush from a recalcitrant schoolboy.

For pages at a time *Lily's Grammar* represents nuances in gerunds, supines, tenses, and grammatical person wholly in relation to the verb *amare*, as though these nuances were grammatical products of the experience of longing and suffering to be loved: "Ego amo, *I love*," "Amas tu? *Doest thou love*?," "Ama, *Love thou*," "Utinam amem, *I pray God I love*," "Amem, *I may or can love*," "Cum amarem, *when I loved*," "Cum amarem, eram miser: *when I loved, I was a wretch*," "Amare, *To love*," "Cupio discere, *I desire to learne*," "Amandi, *Of loving, or of being loved*. Amando, *In loving, or in being loved*. Amandum, *To love, or to be loved*," "Eo amatum, *I go to love*," "Difficilis amatu[s], *Hard to be loved*," "Amo, *I love*," "Amabam, *I loved, or did love*," "Amavi, *I have loved*," "Amaveram, *I had loved*," "Amabo, *I shall or will love*."[5] "Amo magistrum, *I love the Maister*," is the grammar's first illustration of the accusative case.

The schoolrooms in which these grammatical and affective constructions were internalized were volatile not simply because of the threat of physical punishment, not simply because of the brutality that could characterize schoolmasters, but – perhaps more potently – because Renaissance schoolmasters and their schoolbooks understood that the grammar schools staged, over and over, complex emotional scenes organized around love as well as fear, yearning as well as shame. Such scenes were part of an established pedagogical decorum in which the emotional foundations of everything from blushing to forgetting and

stammering could be sussed out with degrees of precision that may well surprise us.

Scholarship on the literary stakes of Renaissance schoolroom practice has made it possible to appreciate just how many of Spenser's most characteristic preoccupations revert to these pedagogical matters. As Jeff Dolven puts it, Spenser is "haunted" by the scene of his instruction.[6] Even as a mature poet he remains "involved" (in the strong Miltonic sense of being rolled around inside something) in the dynamic blend of eagerness and timorousness, daring and caution, fostered by humanist schoolmasters such as Mulcaster. An early version of this blend is on view in the 1569 collaborative publication with which Spenser anonymously and indeed precociously opened his career, the so-called *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* (1569), in which the poet strikes out as, all at once, an English Petrarch, Marot, and Du Bellay, in an ambitious project toward which he almost certainly guided by his schoolmaster's contacts among London's Dutch *emigrés*.[7] I propose that much of what is most dynamic in Spenser's poetry – early, middle, and late – flows directly from the blend of daring and dependence that is already on view in his contributions to *A Theatre*. The voices translated are those of European masters; the verses into which those voices are translated are the work of an apprentice whose work is alternately skilled and awkward, even within the same poem. But through it all the young translator, following his guides, ceaselessly lays claim (as he must) to the visionary and prophetic announcements of the originals.

This interplay between authority and subservience would have characterized Spenser's years at Cambridge, where he began by serving as a sizar (an undergraduate who performs servants' duties) on his way to his BA (1573). He was awarded his MA in 1576. His friendship with Gabriel Harvey, with whom Spenser was a match in age if not in academic profile, provides another instance of the interplay described above, both in Spenser's 1579 *Shepheardes Calender* and in the 1580 publication of letters between Spenser and Harvey. *The Shepheardes Calender* appeared on the scene as though it were already a classic schoolroom text. In it, Spenser and his collaborators (however many they might have been; Harvey was certainly one of them) offer another blend of dependence and daring as the collection seems less to parody schoolroom commentaries on classical and neo-Latin texts than to be possessed by the logic of those commentaries. Like Spenser's contributions to *A Theatre*, the poems of *The Shepheardes Calender* are apprenticeship pieces: not, this time, because their versification and execution are uncertain (indeed they are highly

skillful showpieces in a variety of complex verse forms) but rather because pastoral had, in the wake of Virgil's *Eclogues*, become closely associated with the inauguration of a career rather than a consolidation of mature talents. Though Spenser is not offering a step-by-step recapitulation of Virgil's career, his pastoral collection does explore some of the steps by which an ambitious young writer could seek to make a name for himself, even if the name here is the pseudonym "Immerito." (On the role the *Eclogues* played in Renaissance poetic careers, see the chapter on "Virgil" in this volume.)

Spenser is still signing himself "Immerito" in the 1580 Spenser-Harvey letters, and it is perhaps within these letters that we apprehend most clearly the end result of the patterns of training I have described. These letters are at every level complex public performances and it strains credibility to imagine that Spenser played no role in their publication. Two of the five letters are by Spenser; his contributions to the project include poetry, remarks on and examples of quantitative verse, gnomic commentary on personal affairs, and expectations of travel. Perhaps most noticeably, the letters see Spenser at once writing wittily and confidently to his friend and mentor while also peeping out from behind the achievements and reputations of men (like Sidney and Dyer) to whom he is keen to be seen as linked: "they have me, I thanke them, in some use of familiarity."[8] A postscript to one of the letters lays claim to *The Shepheardes Calender* and meditates the publication of other work and walks a now-familiar line of pride and timorousness with respect to his achievements: "yet trust me (though I doe never very well) yet in my owne fancie, I never dyd better" (18). Still more telling is the playful challenge Spenser issues to his friend on the subject of experiments in quantitative meter in the letter dated October 5, 1579: "You shall see when we meete in London, (whiche, when it shall be, certifye us) howe fast I have followed after you, in that Course: beware, leaste in time I overtake you" (7). This is at once a joke, a warning, and a promise, especially since it comes in the wake of Spenser's assertion, earlier in that same letter, that he would submit himself to any criticism that Harvey might have to offer: "for that, in all things I attribute so muche to your judgement, that I am evermore content to adnihilate mine owne determinations, in respecte thereof" (6).

Spenser's education and early career are characterized throughout by this interplay between the urge toward self-assertion, on the one hand, and the wish to "adnihilate" his own "determinations." This interplay is a continuation of the theory and practice of grammar school pedagogy, in which pain and pleasure, self-assertion and subordination, love and fear

are so intertwined as to become inseparable from his understanding of learning. This preoccupation outlives Spenser's early career and, indeed, plays an important role even in the mature work of *The Faerie Queene*. It is well-known, of course, that Spenser has didactic ambitions for his poem, but the imagination and precision with which he works out his preoccupations is perhaps most clear in his handling of the relationship between Guyon and the Palmer in Book II.

It is still common to read the Palmer, Guyon's companion through the twists and turns of Book II, principally as an allegory of reason (or temperance, or prudence, for that matter), and to read the Palmer's serial withdrawals from and returns to the side of Guyon as the comings and goings of *Guyon*'s reason. Spenser, however, seems to have a much more explicitly and materially pedagogical understanding of the Palmer's role than the traditional interpretation is able to accommodate. Indeed, in sixteenth-century grammar-school parlance a "palmer" was a stick used to strike schoolboys on the palm. The word "palmer" is used in this sense in texts as different as sixteenth-century dictionaries, on the one hand, and Cambridge University Statues, on the other. In the latter, university statutes describing "The Enteryng of a Master in Gramer" assert that the young master will be armed with "a Rodde & a Palmer." During this public ceremony each of these young Masters of Grammar, newly armed with rod and palmer, was to be provided with what the statutes call "a shrewde Boy, whom the master in Gramer shall bete openlye in the Scolys, & the master in Gramer shall give the Boye a Grote for his Labour, & another Grote to hym that provydeth the Rode and the Palmer."[9] Spenser's Palmer, then, carries in his hand one instrument of correction and bears the name of another. But his relationship to Guyon is characterized chiefly by tenderness, as when he broods over the unconscious body of his "pupill" (II.viii.7):

> With trembling hand his troubled pulse gan try,
> Where finding life not yet dislodged quight,
> He much rejoyst, and courd it tenderly,
> As chicken newly hatcht, from dreaded destiny.
> (II.viii.9)

These lines read almost like a new riff on the passages I cited earlier in my attempt to characterize the absorption in the discourse of loving that we find in *Lily's Grammar*'s lessons and paradigms. The Palmer's return to Guyon's side sees the master – for that is what the Palmer is – trembling with love and fear, ready to rejoice at the sign that his pupil is reviving.

Such images, and the specifically pedagogical context in which the Palmer's name sees them operating, are a testament to the hold that the theory and practice of humanist pedagogy had on Spenser's imagination throughout his early career and into his mature work.

NOTES

1 A recent edition with an exceptionally useful and up-to-date introduction is *Lily's Grammar of Latin in English: An Introduction of the Eyght Partes of Speche, and the Construction of the Same*, ed. Hedwig Gwosdek (Oxford University Press, 2013).
2 An excellent guide to the curriculum is Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). The book considers rhetorical training from the grammar schools to the universities. For recent studies of the relationship between pedagogical practices and Renaissance literature see Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (University of Chicago Press, 2007); Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Andrew Wallace, *Virgil's Schoolboys: The Poetics of Pedagogy in Renaissance England* (Oxford University Press, 2010).
3 Pier Paolo Vergerio, "De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus adulescentiae studiis liber," in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) 10–11.
4 Kempe, *The Education of Children* (London, 1588), sig. H2r.
5 See the discussion of this material in Wallace, *Virgil's Schoolboys*, 50–57.
6 Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction*, 59.
7 On this project and on Mulcaster's ties to the Dutch community in London see especially Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 38–44.
8 *Spenser's Prose Works,* ed. Rudolf Gottfried, in *Variorum Edition*, vol. 9 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), 6.
9 See Wallace, *Virgil's Schoolboys*, 210, for the text of the statute.

CHAPTER 2

Laureate Career-Fashioning

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The aggressive clarity with which Spenser began his career tends to obscure its later stages, which took a direction that the young poet could not have foreseen. While it is a commonplace to speak of his late "disillusionment" with Elizabeth I, her court, or the epic project itself, such disillusionment hardly seems to characterize later poems like the *Fowre Hymnes, Amoretti & Epithalamion* or even many parts of *The Faerie Queene's* second installment. Here, after outlining the terms of his ambitious beginning, I'll focus on his mid-career shift and argue that in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* Spenser quietly reconceived his poetic project.

THE LAUREATE PROJECT

Spenser published his first major poem at the probable age of 27. He had contributed poetic translations to the English version of the *Theatre for Worldlings* ten years earlier, but the *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) advertises itself as a notable beginning. E.K.'s prefatory epistle puts him in an ambitious line of classical and European poets. "Our poet" chose eclogues, he says, "following the example of the best and most ancient poets," in order to try their abilities "and as young birdes, that be newly crept out of the nest, by little first to prove theyr tender wyngs, before they make a greater flyght. So flew Theocritus, as you may perceive he was all ready full fledged. So flew Virgile, as not yet well feeling his winges. So flew Manuane, as being not full somd. So Petrarque. So Boccace. So Marot, Sanazarus, and also divers other excellent both Italian and French poetes, whose foting this Author every where followeth."[1] *The Shepheardes Calender* is a first step toward greater things.

While E.K. does not predict that Spenser will write epic – several poets in his list did not – the obvious model for this pastoral announcement was the career of the Roman poet Virgil. Virgil began, as E.K. notes, with pastoral, and then moved on to write the *Georgics* and eventually the *Aeneid*,

inventing a career path of which Renaissance poets were enduringly aware. Recently David Wilson-Okamura has argued persuasively that, instead of understanding the Virgilian progression generically, from pastoral to georgic to epic, we should see it as a movement from low to middle to high style.[2] But, in either case, it was the Virgilian "wheel" that E.K. seems to invoke. Such a model had many attractions. Donatus's fourth-century biography of Virgil, bound with many Renaissance copies of his collected works, asserts that Virgil's poetic success had material consequences: he became rich and served as a trusted counselor to Augustus Caesar. An ambitious Cambridge graduate in his mid-twenties could not do better, it might seem, than to follow Virgil.

When the first part of *The Faerie Queene* was published eleven years later, Spenser redeemed this Virgilian promise. The Proem to *FQ* I quotes what was thought to be the opening of the *Aeneid*, and borrows a line from Ariosto as well, suggesting that Spenser is preparing to overgo both Roman and Italian models, and the triple invocation that follows – to the Muse, to Venus, and to Elizabeth I – makes the stakes clear. This will be a national poem, treating both war and love, and praising the Queen. The epic's recurring hero is Prince Arthur, from whom the Tudors claimed descent. Where the dedication to the *Calender* is signed *Immerito*, "the unworthy one," the epic's dedication to Queen Elizabeth announces the poet as "*Ed. Spenser*," and the exuberant sequence of seventeen dedicatory sonnets succeeding the poem dramatize the poet's right to single out those worthy of praise.

The most acute and influential formulation of Spenser's probable ambitions in these early years has been Richard Helgerson's *Self-Crowned Laureates*, which coined the term "laureate career" and placed his work within the "literary system" of his time.[3] Elizabethan culture, Helgerson pointed out, had little respect for poetry, which seemed trivial and even meretricious by comparison with the serious business of fighting and governing. Roger Ascham, for instance, associates poets with the "quick wits" who learn easily but lack the capacity of "hard wits" for the sustained reflection that qualifies them for membership in the governing class (27). Accordingly, Elizabethan writers, Helgerson argued, tended to fall into two categories, "amateurs" and "professionals." The amateurs were, by and large, courtiers like Oxford, Ralegh, or Essex, whose verse compositions served primarily to display their wit and ability. They rarely printed their poetry, circulating it in manuscript, mostly among their own class. The professionals – playwrights like Shakespeare, pamphleteers like Robert Greene, pens for hire like Thomas Nashe – wrote for money and

came from a lower social stratum. They may have had university educations, but they wrote to make a living. In Tudor England, poetry might put bread on the table but it was not the occupation of a serious man. Despite defenses of poetry by Sidney and others, most amateurs and professionals implicitly accept the dominant view of Elizabethan culture that poetry had limited worth. Helgerson pointed to the repeated pattern in Elizabethan writing, of poets publically repenting of their earlier love poetry even while they published it. Such verse is the work of youth, to be outgrown as the poet matures, hoping to use his talents for more important matters.

Spenser, Helgerson argued, attempted to establish a third category in England, the "laureate" who saw his work as an important contribution to the emerging nation. The laureate poet presents himself as a public figure, modeling his career on the great writers of the classical and European past; he attempts to act as the spokesman for his own nation as Virgil had for Rome or Tasso for Italy. The laureate role was emphatically *serious*, even official: the poet was both the representative of the nation and its teacher. As a public figure he took part in the building of his nation, enabling its culture to inherit and rival that of Rome. For Helgerson, Spenser's attempt to claim laureate status was thus a pioneering attempt to raise the poet's importance above English sixteenth-century norms.

Yet Helgerson's account of Spenser's laureateship sees it ending in nearly inevitable failure. He argues that the *Calender* is already shadowed by anxieties about the possibility of its laureate project. While "April" presents the poet as shepherd-courtier, celebrating his monarch, "October" presents a dialogue in which the poet Cuddie refuses every suggestion that Piers makes for his future song. Poetry, Cuddie insists, doesn't yield a living: "Sike words bene wynd, and wasten soone in vayne" (36). Further, the far more gifted Colin Clout appears to be another version of the Elizabethan love poet whose amorous verse leads nowhere. Oppressed by love, Colin refuses to sing in "June," and by "December" he sees his life as a failure and prepares for death.

This foreboding is fulfilled in the later books of *The Faerie Queene*, in which the public and the private elements of the laureate career separate once more. "Spenser's idea of the poet," Helgerson writes, "was finally an unstable but necessary union of two ideas, embodied in two roles – shepherd and knight, Colin and Calidore – neither of which could be renounced in favor of the other" (99). In his later works the love poet and the author of the *View* split apart and Spenser/Colin comes home "to the