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Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–99) conducted two careers at once: a celebrated poet, he also pursued a lifelong career as secretary to various political and ecclesiastical figures. Richard Rambuss' book explores how this latter career, usually allotted only cursory mention in accounts of Spenser's professional ambitions, informed his poetic career. Working from the fact that contemporary bureaucratic treatises defined the management of secrets as the central occupation of secretaryship, this study provides a careerist context for the attention to secrecy throughout Spenser's poetry. It takes issue with prevailing new historicist accounts which see Spenser's careerism as shaped entirely by a single-minded pursuit of laureateship along a Virgilian route from pastoral to epic. *Spenser's secret career* presents an alternative picture, arguing that for Spenser the manipulation of secrets – his own and others' – provided a strategy of self-promotion for both of his careers. In doing so, this study also considers secrecy in relation to Renaissance formations of power, gender, and subjecthood.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521416634

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First published 1993
 Reprinted 1995

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Rambuss, Richard.
 Spenser's secret career / by Richard Rambuss.
 p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Renaissance literature and culture: 3)
 Includes bibliographical references.
 ISBN 0 521 41663 9 (hardback)
 1. Spenser, Edmund, 1552?–1599 – Political and social views.
 2. Literature and society – England – History – 16th century.
 3. Poets, English – Early modern, 1500–1700 – Biography.
 4. Courts and courtiers in literature. 5. Secretaries – England – Biography.
 6. Secrecy in literature. I. Title. II. Series.
 PR2367.P6R3 1993
 821'.3 – dc20 92–8539 CIP
 [B]

ISBN-13 978-0-521-41663-4 hardback
 ISBN-10 0-521-41663-9 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2006

Cambridge University Press
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For Charlie

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Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1

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Acknowledgments

A number of friends and colleagues have been instrumental in the realization of *Spenser's Secret Career*. Among those who have read and commented on it in its various stages are Julia Reinhard Lupton, Kim Wheatley, Lindsay Kaplan, Margaret Russett, Elizabeth Mazzola, Allen Frantzen, Jean Brink, James Carson, Marcie Frank, Elizabeth Renker, Jennifer Clarvoe, and Orest Ranum. I found the encouragement, direction, and criticism they have provided to be invaluable. It can be no secret that I have learned much from the galvanizing work on secrets and secret subjects undertaken by both D. A. Miller and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. I want to thank Stephen Orgel for his interest in and support of this project. His incisive commentary guided me in determining the final shape of this book. Special thanks to Kevin Taylor and Janet Banks of Cambridge University Press for their care and assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication. Many of the concerns of this book were hatched in an exhilarating seminar on Spenser and sixteenth-century poetics conducted by Jonathan Crewe at The Johns Hopkins University. Furthermore, he read and commented on a number of drafts of the material presented here with his characteristic intellectual generosity and virtuosity. To him I owe a great deal – more than can be conveyed in any number of local citations. But my greatest debt is to Jonathan Goldberg. First, I would like to acknowledge the inspiration provided by the extraordinary body of groundbreaking work on Spenser he has produced. More than that, I want to thank him for the exacting and detailed commentary he provided on successive versions of this project, as well as for the unstinting generosity, encouragement, and friendship he has afforded me at every turn. It is no exaggeration to say that without him this book would not have been written.

I am grateful for opportunities to present portions of this book to audiences at The Johns Hopkins University, Kenyon College, Tulane University, “Spenser at Kalamazoo” at Western Michigan University, Rutgers University, and the 1991 Modern Language Association meeting in San Francisco. Special thanks to William Oram. Grants from The

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0521416639 - Spenser's Secret Career
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Johns Hopkins University and Kenyon College enabled me to complete my research. A shorter version of Chapter 2 has appeared in *ELH*, and I am grateful to The Johns Hopkins University Press for permission to reprint that material here.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Rosalie and Richard L. Rambuss. It gives me pleasure to acknowledge their love and support here. Charles Tonetti made the time spent writing this book a good deal more than interesting. This book is dedicated to him.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>EHR</i> | <i>English Historical Review</i> |
| <i>ELH</i> | <i>English Literary History</i> |
| <i>ELR</i> | <i>English Literary Renaissance</i> |
| <i>MP</i> | <i>Modern Philology</i> |
| <i>PMLA</i> | <i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i> |
| <i>RES</i> | <i>Review of English Studies</i> |
| <i>SEL</i> | <i>Studies in English Literature</i> |
| <i>SP</i> | <i>Studies in Philology</i> |
| <i>SpStud</i> | <i>Spenser Studies</i> |
| <i>TSLL</i> | <i>Texas Studies in Language and Literature</i> |