



**The Backstretched Connexion:  
Youth and Age  
in *The Shepherdes Calender***

This chapter proposes an interpretation of *The Shepheardes Calender* which places the debate of youth and age at the work's core. Spenser used both the thematic content and the formal structure of this minor bucolic convention as the central shaping principle of his major pastoral work. Such emphasis was particularly appropriate, first because pastoral's rural settings on the periphery of civilization correspond to the peripheral states of the human life cycle, and second, because pastoral's projection of dual worlds inspires debate-like comparisons of perception and judgment.

But Spenser did not simply reprocess these essential elements of the pastoral tradition. Rather he modified and enriched his conventional models by disclosing the debate of youth and age through the viewpoint of a narrative persona, a viewpoint which shifts in the course of the poem from identification with youth to identification with age. That is to say, Spenser used the pastoral debate of youth and age as a means by which to externalize the inner conflicts of past and future, of regression and maturation, endemic to adolescence. By patterning his series of eclogues with a phased succession of such debates, Spenser allowed the reader to participate in the reversal of perspective that constitutes the subjective transformation of boy into man. Moving from premises about the psychology of pastoral and about the philosophy of debate laid down previously, this chapter arrives at the conclusion that *The Shepheardes Calender*--a product of its author's youth and addressed to youthful readers--has as its deepest unifying subject the life stage of youth itself.

The mysterious "E.K." 's introductory epistle, "argvments," and glosses, which have traditionally provided the starting point of critical discussion of the *Calender*, focus upon the pervasive theme of youth vs. age. The friend of the poet draws attention to its appearance in obvious places like "Febvarie," where the young and old shepherd and their fabulist counterparts engage in generational battle, or like "Maye," where two old men dispute the issue of youthful pleasure vs. aged

prudence. In the "argvment" that precedes "December," E.K. remarks on the way Colin's old age elegy conflates the seasonal and human life cycles:

Wherein as weary of his former waves, he proportioneth his life to the foure seasons of the yeare, comparing hys youthe to the spring time, when he was fresh and free from loues follye. His manhoode to the sommer, which he sayeth, was consumed with greate heate and excessive drouth ... by which hee meaneth loue ... His riper yeares hee resembleth to an unseasonable harueste wherein the fruite fall ere they be rype. His latter age to winters chyll and frostie season, no", drawing neare to his last ende. I

Later scholars have often quoted this charming passage of critical prose as a guide to the largest movement of the *Calender*. It suggests the contrast between the early eclogues--"Febrvarie," "March," "April," and "Mave"--and the later ones--"September," "October," "November," and "December," a contrast between the seedtime of childlike innocence sown in the rites of spring and the harvest of sombre experience reaped in care, disappointment and resignation.<sup>2</sup>

Along with supplying the topic of specific eclogues and determining the largest thematic contrast of the sequence, youth vs. age appears in some guise in every one of the twelve months. When its presence is not evident, L.K. alerts us to its whereabouts with the motif-hunter's delight in discovery:

Hereby is meant, that all the delights of Loue, wherein wanton youth walloweth, be but folly mixt with bitterness, and sorrow sawced with repentaunce ... euen the selfe things which best before vs lyked, in course of time and chaung of ryper yeares, whiche also therewithall chaungeth our wonted lyking and former fantasies, will then seeme lothsome and breede vs annoyaunce, when yougthes flowre is withered, and we fynde our bodyes and wits aunsere not to such vayne iollitie and lustful pleasaunce. (p. 35)

Despite its tendentious relation to the text, this gloss on the "March" emblem correctly calls attention to the contrast and

progression between youth and age as the *Calender's* typical configuration, an identifiable watermark on every page of the poem.

Spenser draws together the diverse components of his set of eclogues by linking the polarity of youth and age with the extremes of mood between which any segment of the poem oscillates. E.K. names these extremes of celebration and mourning "recreative" and "plaintive," dividing the twelve months into "Rankes" according to which mood dominates. But he also observes that "to this division may everything herein be reasonably applied." (p. 12) At the beginning of "March," for instance, the tone modulates suddenly from plaintive to recreative:

Thomalin, why sytten we soe, As weren ouerwent with woe, Vpon so  
fayre a morow?

The iouous time now nigheth fast,

That shall alegge this bitter blast, And slake the winters sorowe.

#### THOMALIN

Sicker Willye, thou warnest well:  
For Winters wrath beginnes to quell,  
And plesant spring appeareth.  
The grasse nowe ginnes to be refresht,  
The Swallow peepes out of her nest,  
And clowdie Welkin cleareth. (1-12)

And then later in the eclogue it drops off once again into complaint:

But he, that earest seemd but to playe,  
A shaft in earnest snatched,  
And hit me running in the heele:  
For then I little smart did feele:  
But soone it sore encreased.  
And now it ranckleth more and more,

And inwardly it festreth sore,  
Ne wote I how to cease it.  
(95-102)

Throughout the *Calender* these momentary modulations of mood are equated with changes in weather and season and with a fall from innocence to experience that parallels the maturation process. Spenser measures the ebb and flow of emotion at many different intervals with the same oscillating pendulum that clocks the minutes, months and decades.<sup>3</sup>

In organizing his poem with the polarity of youth and age, Spenser made use of the elaborate schemata which dominated traditional conceptions of the natural world-the setting of pastoral. He found one of these systems of correspondence in the *Kalendar of Shepherds*, the peasant almanac which had recently been published in a translation from the original French.<sup>4</sup> He also incorporated elements of the popular psychology of the humours, which presupposed significant relations among elements, passing moods, general temperaments, conditions of the body and the ages of man. According to this theory, youth was naturally sanguine-hot, wet and merry while age was naturally melancholic-cold, dry and depressed.<sup>5</sup> Such a set of norms supplied Spenser with a matrix against which variations and change could be plotted. In "Januarie," for example, he heightens the pathos of his central figure, Colin Clout, by portraying the sad youth's condition as a disruption of the natural order of correspondences:

Such rage as winters, reigneth in my heart, My life bloud friesing with  
vnkindly cold: Such stormy stoures do breede my balefull smart, As if  
my yeare were wast, and woxen old. And yet alas, but now my spring  
begonne, And yet alas, yt is already donne.

All so lustfull leafe is drye and sere, My timely buds with wayling all  
are wasted:

The blossome, which my braunch of youth did beare With breathed  
sighes is blowne away, and blasted. (25-40)

The inverted sequence of this adynaton--the rhetorical figure of nature turned upside down--typifies the traditional bucolic pattern of contrasts by confessing negative, anti-pastoral feelings in the midst of a world postulated as ideal.

While Spenser subordinated all the other themes of *The Shepheardes Calender* to the distinctly Arcadian concern with youth and age, he chose pastoral debate as the work's predominant formal structure. Five of the Calender's twelve eclogues--those E.K. refers to as "Moral: which for the most part be mixt with some Satyricall bitterness"--transmute "recreative" and "plaintive" moods into ideological positions. Here the oscillation of extreme feelings is mirrored in the alternation of opposed arguments, rhetorical appeals and manipulative gambits of antagonistic orators. "Februarie's" confrontation of young Cuddie and old Thenot sets the pattern for the rest. Like "Maye," "Ivlye," "September," and "October," it superimposes layer upon layer of social, ethical, educational, aesthetic, political and religious issues; and it often hides or reveals the specifics of those issues under the universal rubric of generational conflict.

Because Spenser presented these disputes in extremely serious, vehement tones, many early twentieth century critics assumed that he was using the moral eclogues to propagandize his readers, and they expended a great deal of effort proving or disproving that his view was expressed by one side or the other.<sup>6</sup> That critical endeavor turned out to be largely self-cancelling however, and more recent scholars have concurred in the opinion that Spenser rather intended fully to air both sides of the question without arriving at a final conclusion. "Suspension" has thereby become the last critical word on the moral eclogues--the same word so widely applied to the eclogues of Vergil. In "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," Paul Alpers comments that the most important achievement of

Patrick Cullen's book on the *Calender* is displaying the truth of William Nelson's remark that Spenser uses dialogue to show (in Nelson's words) "a valid disagreement in which speakers explore what may best be said on either part."<sup>7</sup> Echoing thus through recent criticism like a pastoral topos itself, Nelson's phrase unconsciously locates the formal conventions of the moral eclogues squarely within the generic boundaries of the medieval *conflictus* or verse debate-boundaries I have delineated in the preceding chapter. The terms of his description of Spenser's purpose--"Explore what best may be said on either part"--allude to the "exploratory" rather than didactic nature of the Ciceronian dialogue, and also translate the motto of the tradition of rhetorical inquiry that produced the verse debate: *et utramque partem*.<sup>8</sup>

Nelson's approach has led other critics to observe that the problematic unity of the complete *Calender* can be extrapolated from the five moral debates. Patrick Cullen, for instance, sees the "central purpose and technique" of the entire work in "a juxtaposition of different perspectives whereby pastoral experience is evaluated."<sup>9</sup> If we accept this view of Spenser's intentions, the four-part paradigm of allegorical verse debate I have offered earlier supplies a reading of the whole collection of twelve eclogues. Its initial setting is always the *locus amoenus* of the recreative landscape. Each eclogue articulates contraries that in some way can be equated with youth vs. age. The wrangling arguments in the five moral eclogues combine with the oscillation of moods in the other seven eclogues to make up the *Calender's* "carpynge." And the ambivalent, inconclusive ending of the sequence--with its premature despair, its missing final emblem, and its palinodal envoi--confronts the reader with the relativity of perspectives. Thus, *The Shepheardes Calender* itself is a version of *debat*.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, having supported the balanced, exploratory interpretation of Spenser's first published work by adducing its medieval generic pedigree, as a reader I am still left searching for a deeper unity by which to apprehend the poem. In

studying a book of this scale and power, I am not satisfied to conclude with a system of dichotomies, ambivalences or "suspensions," no matter how extensive or subtle. Instead, I seek what Heraclitus called "the backstretched connexion" that lies concealed beneath the ceaseless strife of opposites animating all existence "...as in the bow or the lyre." I seek a confrontation with the text not only as a timeless pattern of themes and structures, but as the expression of an individual human being, a writer who communicates his own coherent sense of the world through the evolving point of view of a protagonist and through the temporal sequence of a story. Ila

The key to discovering the central consciousness and the elusive plot line of *The Shepherdes Calender* lies within other stipulations of genre. The Vergilian "perfecte paterne of a poete" specifies the shepherd-pastoralist as epebe, as a young man on the brink of psychosocial and artistic adulthood. In the "Dedicatory Epistle," E.K. refers to this convention to explain both the origin and the end of the work:

His unstayed youth had long wandred in the common labyrinth of love in which time to mitigate and allay the heate of his passion, or else to warne the young shepeherds S. his equalls and companions of his unfortunat foly, he compiled these xij Aeglogues... (P. 10)

Elaborating this idea, E.K. refers to the *Calender* as "the maydenhead of this our common friend's Poetrie." (p. 11) The gesture of offering a maydenhead distills the ambivalent significance of youth's position in the life cycle, its suspension between past and future. Looking toward the past, that gesture marks the nadir of a downward movement, the irrecoverable loss of virginity-and with virginity, the loss of innocence. The powerful nostalgia accompanying this loss has always generated poetry: both the pastoral of youth's idyllic fantasies of an Edenic past and the elegaic complaints of the anti-pastoral of melancholy. But looking forward to the future, the youth's offer of a maydenhead represents the beginning of ascent-the

moment of emergence, of growing up, of entering and being entered by the world.<sup>12</sup> By focussing such intense scrutiny on youth's place in the life cycle, Spenser chronicles the passage from childhood to maturity in *The Shepherdes Calender*. In so doing, he molds the central convention of pastoral, the debate of youth and age, into a prototype of the *Bildungsroman*. In both content and form, this set of eclogues bears significant resemblance to books with titles like *The Prelude*, *Great Expectations*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.<sup>13</sup>

Spenser creates the protagonist of this narrative with the semi-allegorical device of employing a variety of characters to represent different facets of a single "Young Man." Cuddie, Thomalin, Diggon, Willie and Perigot take the traditional social roles of the young bucolic pastor-the bumpkin, the singer, the lover, the fledgling governor or priest. The first among equals in the group of pueri is Colin Clout, Spenser's portrait of the artist. But it is Immerito, the shady persona of the narrator, who encompasses all these facets in himself, and thus becomes the hero of the work: the person who actually grows up.<sup>14</sup>

When one thinks of the whole *Calender* as a story of Immerito's maturation, one's sense of the poem's structure alters. The unstable, tensive endings of each eclogue and the dissonant conclusion of the whole sequence propel the story forward and force the reader beyond the characters' perceptions of themselves-force him to take a larger view that reveals those conflicts as momentary manifestations of a single being's change through time. Thus the pervasive dualism of debate turns into the dialectic of development; the polarity of youth and age is no longer static; it generates the voltage which sets the growth process in motion. As Blake writes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Without Contraries, there is no Progression."<sup>15</sup> Regarded in this way, "Youth" is no longer the first phase in the sequence of "Youth, Adulthood, Old Age," as it has been regarded earlier. Instead, it becomes the middle phase in the sequence, "Childhood, Youth, Maturity." "Youth" in

this sense, is the age of man that, in the words of Kaspar Naegele, "drives a wedge into the continuity of the life cycle."<sup>16</sup>

This Janus-faced quality of orientation toward both past and future defines the concept of youth within many frames of reference. In the physical sense, youth is the period of life when sexual differentiation and desire are dramatically emergent yet incompletely developed, when the voice cracks between soprano and bass, when skin glows and also blemishes. In the emotional sense, youth is the period of struggle between awakening urges and weakened parental imperatives. In the mental sense, youth is the period when the brain first becomes subject to "the onset of epistemological dualism ... the awareness of a multiplicity of truths, from which the individual must choose 'commitment within relativism.'"<sup>17</sup> As a stage of cognitive development, youth is the period of "thinking about thinking; of hyperawareness of the inner processes and states of consciousness."<sup>18</sup>

A corresponding ambivalence also besets youth's social being. During this period, the person's roles are subjected to diametric reversal, since it "*necessarily* coincides with the transition period from the family of orientation to that of procreation ... from the receiver to transmitter of cultural tradition."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, while the person undergoes this "crucial change of individual age roles ... two age definitions still interact within him."<sup>20</sup> Thus conceived, youth becomes the arena of the "debate" of childhood and maturity. Hence, the pastoral debate of youth and age hearkens back to one of the rites of passage which mark the transition from childhood to maturity in traditional societies. This consists of "the dramatization of the encounter between different generations, a dramatization which may take the form of a fight, or a competition."<sup>21</sup>

In fact, all rites of passage ceremonialize the intensification of conflict and the breakdown of structure and meaning that occur at such transitional periods:

Those undergoing the rite of passage are betwixt and between the established states of politico-jural structure. They evade ordinary cognitive classification too, for they are neither this nor that, here nor there . . . the most characteristic midliminal symbolism is that of paradox, of being *both this and that* ... androgenous, both living and dead, human and animal, ground down into homogeneous social matter, to be refashioned anew.<sup>22</sup>

With this in mind, we read "Februarie," for instance, not only as an allegory of the eternal battle of youth and age, winter and spring, passion and reason or pleasure and reality principles. We can also understand it as a young man's projection of the war in his own soul between the claims of past and future, child and parent. In addition to accounting for the unexplained intensity of hostility between the principals, such a reading confirms the text's repeated hints that the antagonists are actually mirror images of one another.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the debate of youth and age in *The Shepheardes Calender* is not merely a vehicle for expressing the clash of literary pastoral ideals or of "traditional pastoral perspectives." Instead, it represents the immediate reality of the confusion, the turmoil, and the incessant interior squabble of conflicting points of view that plague the person coming of age. Using the poetic debate genre to thoroughly immerse the reader in these conflicts, Spenser at the same time dramatizes youth's dilemma with an almost clinical detachment.

Erik Erikson has diagnosed this dilemma as "Role Confusion" which the person negotiating the transition from childhood to maturity must resolve by passing through an "Identity Crisis"--a crisis that issues in an integrated sense of who he is. Indeed, establishing an adult identity can be seen as the overarching task of the stage of youth itself, its end, its teleological definition:

"Ego Identity" is the creation of a sense of sameness, a unity of personality now felt by the individual and recognized by others as having consistency in time-of being as it were, an irreversible historical fact.<sup>24</sup>

Spenser shows this crisis coming to a head with adumbrations of death and rebirth in the later months of the *Calender*. He demonstrates the resolution of the crisis at the very end of the poem in the surfacing of Immerito as narrator and author. Immerito integrates the diverse and conflicting roles that have battled their way through the sequence. His is the "unity of personality" whose single voice at different moments has taken the inflections of young and old, recreative and plaintive, wise and foolish. Immerito speaks directly to the reader with selfconfident resonance that subsumes and absorbs the variety of months, seasons and ages. To recognize that speaker not only at the end, but in all the voices of the *Calender* is to discover the unity of the poem.

Ego identity coalesces during emergence from childhood retreat into the exposure of history. To define himself, the individual finds public figures and ideological positions to which to attach loyalty--or what Erikson calls "Fidelity." But despite his inner imperative for public involvement, the adolescent lacks the coherent sense of self and the set of priorities necessary for serious participation in the *vita activa*. Young people are therefore often allowed or even encouraged to express rapid and radical shifts of loyalty as an exploratory prelude to more permanent identification. This status of relative immunity from the consequences of positions strongly taken has been labelled youth's "moratorium"--a term that suggests the conventional use of the pastoral setting as a protected enclosure for the heated but nevertheless tentative expression of opinions on both sides of controversial questions.<sup>25</sup> By presenting public issues within the Arcadian locus *amoenus*, the moral debates of the *Calender* contain those issues within the framework of youth's quest for identity and fidelity.<sup>26</sup>

The dissolution of the essential social distinction between child and adult during youth which causes stress and confusion in the individual undergoing it also threatens the integrity of the whole framework of social roles, distinctions and mean

ings. For this reason in traditional societies, that transition is guided by patterns of highly ritualized behavior handed down from the past.<sup>27</sup> But in a society bereft of formal rites of passage, or in a historical period-like our own-when traditions themselves are being ground down and refashioned, the consciousness of youth is likely to become a primary arena for the battles between old and new, "Ancient and Modern," orthodox and innovative that generate the historical process itself.<sup>28</sup> The energy given off by such battles frequently takes the form of generational strife, in which youth asserts itself and forges identity by rejecting adult figures of authority, while age insists on protecting its prerogatives and privileges with selfrighteous rigidity. In this sense, the altercation between Cuddie and Thenot in "Februarie" dramatizes a specific historical struggle.

According to one historian, this form of the debate of youth and age dominated politics in the era of Spenser's youth. Generational struggle heats up during periods of rapid social change, when the models and values of the older generation are not strong enough to withstand the challenge of the young or not flexible enough to accommodate it.<sup>29</sup> This phenomena arose in the late sixteenth century England. The Queen and her closest counsellor, William Cecil, Lord Burleigh belonged to what Anthony Esler has called "The Elizabethan Older Generation."<sup>30</sup> Formed amidst the chaotic revolutionary ferment of the middle Tudor decades, their social attitudes crystallized into rigid caution and conservatism-an ideological insistence on the observance of order and degree and on the evils of pride and ambition that verged on the fanatic. Politicians, preachers and poets promulgated this official propaganda with appeals to Christian humility, to the myth of the wheel of fortune, and to the pastoral ideals of old age-the glorification of the mean estate and the rejection of the aspiring mind.

This ideology served Elisabeth well in holding together a shaky commonwealth by centralizing power in the hands of her trusted advisors. But by the last two decades of the century, as her generation grew into their sixties and the generation of

the 1560's--including Raleigh, Marlow, Sidney, Essex and Spenser--approached adulthood, both the ideology and the practise it justified came under fire. During these "bottleneck years," young men of spectacular talent and energy found themselves stymied by the unyielding prejudice of the old folk firmly ensconced in power. Their frustrated drives to find preferment manifested themselves in bursts of adventurism or turned inward into pathological melancholy.<sup>31</sup> Among these young men, aspiration upward became a charged and ambivalent idea--an expression of both loyalty and rebellion, a source of both promise and punishment.

As a member of this younger generation, Spenser was subjected to suppression by Burleigh and his contemporaries. He responded to the double bind with an appropriately schizoid reaction. In Theriot's Tale of the Oak and the Briar, he presents the kind of cautionary fable that the older generation preferred: a story of upstart youth, who, jealous of age's prerogatives and wisdom, deviously plots to topple his elder and then is justly punished. But as noted earlier, the sympathy for old age evoked by this tale is reversed once we discover that the old Oak's pious virtue conceals the old narrator's subtle stratagem against Cuddie, the cowherd boy. In a later poem, Spenser completes this reversal with a direct attack on Burleigh as another old oak shadowing youth:

O grief of griefs, o gall of all good hearts  
To see that virtue should despised be  
Of him, that first was raised for virtuous parts  
And now broad spreading like an aged tree  
Lets none shoot up, that nigh him planted be.<sup>32</sup>

Spenser employs the unresolved dualistic structure of pastoral debate to set forth the dilemma of aspiration vs. humility throughout the later eclogues of the *Calender*. It surfaces in "Ivlye" 's argument between the ambitious upland goatherd and the humble shepherd of the dale. And it returns again in "September" and "October," when downhearted young men

who have attempted to strive upwards return to pastoral vallies discouraged by the lack of room at the top. In all three of these moral eclogues, the polarity of youth and age serves not only to organize literary topoi and psychological states, but also to "glance at" the "graver matters" of state confronting the young men whose life history begins to intersect with social history.

While the February eclogue focusses on what E.K. calls "the reverence due to old age," or what might be designated the problem of the older generation, "Maye" concerns itself with the problem of the younger generation, as seen by two old shepherds. Just as the climate of February was a foe to young Cuddie, so the month of Maying and of the pastoral of youth is out of season for Palinode and Piers. Their dispute over how to come to terms with the rites of spring resembles the argument between the two men of Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale" counselling their friend January how to deal with the young girl, May.<sup>33</sup> The two old men also represent aspects of the young man's maturing self. Palinode voices the retrospective nostalgia of leaving childhood behind, while Piers expresses youth's impatience with the past-its need to set childishness aside and take on self-control and responsibility.

"Maye" begins with an evocative pastoral of youth, Palinode's description of the festival of regreening--reverdie or renouveau:

Is not thilke the mery moneth of May,  
When loue lads masken in fresh aray?  
How falles it then, we no merrier bene,  
Ylike as others, girt in gawdy greene?  
Our bloncket liueryes bene all to sadde,  
For thilke same season, when all is ycladd  
With pleasaunce: the grownd with grasse, the Woods  
With greene leaues, the bushes with bloosming Buds.  
Youghthes folke now flocken in euery where,  
To gather may buskets and smelling brere:  
And home they hasten the postes to dight,  
And all the Kirke pillours eare day light,

With Hawthorne buds, and swete Eglantine, And girlonds of roses and  
Sopps in wine. (1-14)

In accord with the usage of pastoral debate, Piers counters the invitation with a withering reply:

For Younkers *Palinode* such follies fitte, But we tway bene men of elder  
witt.

The month most appropriate for recreative pastoral-according to the *Kalendar of Shepherds*, the month of "hot love"--is the one containing Spenser's most bitterly satirical sentiments.

From the initial confrontations of pastoral perspectives of youth and age, the conversation shifts to the social issue of the relation of the generations--here, the question of how adults should raise their children. Piers introduces this topic with a brief animal tale to illustrate the way parents, particularly mothers dote excessively upon their offspring:

Sike mens follie I cannot compare Better, then to the Apes folish care,  
That is so enamoured of her young one, (And yet God wote, such cause  
hath she none) That with her hard hold, and straight embracing, She  
stoppeth the breath of her youngling. So often times, when as good is  
meant, Euil ensueth of wrong entent. (95-102)

In his later fable of Fox and Kid, Piers attributes this harmful doting to adults' failure to recognize the values of experience their own childish indulgence in the pastoral of youth. The Kid is lovingly described through its mother's eyes as a creature of the May:

Shee set her youngling before her knee, That was both fresh and louely  
to see, And full of favour, as kidde mought be:

His vellet head began to shoote out,  
And his wrethed hornes gan newly sprout.  
The blossomes of lust to bud did beginne,  
And spring forth ranckly vnder his chinne. (182-188)

The "old gate," his mother is a "waylefull widow" whose husband's death has left her full of carefull thoughts about the son she must raise herself. But though experience has alerted her to the dangers of the world, it has not yet taught her to guard and to school her son with sufficient vigilance-nor to resist the blandishments of youth and springtime herself. Sparing the rod that the father would wield, she is captivated by the kid's physical beauty, which reminds her of the sexual attraction of her late husband:

Of my old age haue this one delight, To see thee succede in thy fathers  
steade, And flourish in flowres of lusty head. For euen so thy father his  
head vpheld, And so his hauty hornes did he weld. (202-206)

She forgets that the father was betrayed by treachery when she voices the hope that the son will succeed him. Then she leaves the child by himself and goes to the green wood to play the merry widow. In her innocent indulgence and deluded narcissism, the old woman fails to restrain what Piers in "October" refers to as "the lust of lawlesse youth." Once she leaves, the fox comes and convinces the credulous and charitable kid to open the door to a "sybbe" in need. He distracts the young goat with baubles and infatuates his victim with a mirror that exhibits his springtime loveliness. At the height of enjoyment, he pops the kid in a basket and takes him home for supper. Like many cautionary fairytales aimed at children, this story warns us to beware of love, pleasure and the pastoral of youth.

Spenser refers to the young kid who lacks a father's stern adult-oriented guidance as an "Orphane." E.K. glosses this

word to mean "A youngling or pupill, that needeth a Tutour and a governour"--drawing a connection between inadequate parenting and deficient schooling.<sup>34</sup> The same connection is amplified in the conversations between two old men in another pastoral debate of youth and age, "Eclogue X" in Sidney's *Arcadia*. Here Mastix also finds the source of youth's unruliness in the immaturity of their elders:

What marvaile if in youth such faults be done, Since that we see our  
saddest Shepheards out Who have their lesson so long time begonne?

As for the rest, howe shepeheardes spend their daies,  
At blowe point, hotcocles, or els at keeles  
While, "Let us passe our time" each shepeheard saies.  
So small accompt of time the shepeheard feeles  
And doth not feele, that life is nought but time  
And when that time is paste, death holdes his heeles.  
To age thus doe they draw there youthfull pryme,  
Knowing no more, then what poore tryall showes,  
As fishe sure tryall hath of muddy slyme.  
This paterne good, unto our children goes,  
For what they see their parents love or hate  
Their first caught sence prefers to teachers blowes.  
These cocklinges cockred we bewaile to late,  
When that we see our ofspring gaily bent,  
Woman man-wood, and men effeminate.<sup>35</sup>

Like Spenser's Palinode, Sidney's Geron counters this speech by accusing his old companion of excessive severity and self-righteousness.

Renaissance educators repeatedly addressed themselves to such issues of child discipline in treatises like Ascham's *Scholemaster* and Elyot's *The Governour*. Like Spenser's own teacher, Richard Mulcaster, these writers advocated a middle way--a balance between the extreme positions of Piers and Palinode, Mastix and Geron. Ascham idealized the life-stage of youth "Youth is fittest to all goodness, surely nature in mankind is most beneficial and effectual in his behalf." But he qualified this

praise by asserting the importance of proper training and control by age. Parents are too indulgent, he says; English youth are allowed too much rein, especially in the dangerous years of early manhood.<sup>37</sup>

The significance of "Maye" 's debate over youth and the rites of spring extends by way of questions of child-rearing to encompass the broadest political and religious controversies. According to Lawrence Stone, in the Catholic countries of Europe, "animal spirits of youth were siphoned into religious confraternities, processions and other rituals ... order was maintained by periodic days of social inversion, when the young were allowed to lord it over their elders."<sup>38</sup> Youthful high spirits were tolerated quite widely and both sexual abandon and immoderation of eating and drinking were considered as part of the normal process of growing up. This relatively lenient attitude was reflected in the Italian humanists' notion of the innate purity and innocence of the child. But with the "drive for moral regeneration" accompanying the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, both the laxness toward youth and the seasonal festivities that accompanied it was replaced by a strongly authoritarian approach. At this time the idea came into fashion that the essence of upbringing was breaking the child's will, and only during the sixteenth and seventeenth century did flogging of children become standard practise.<sup>39</sup> This attitude toward children had its most extreme manifestation among the Puritans of the Massachusetts colony, where the death penalty was imposed for disobedience to adults.<sup>40</sup>

Not all the Puritans were this harsh, but they did agree on the intrinsic spiritual danger of the stage of youth itself and on the importance of adult guidance for young people at this "most unsettled age wherein the mind behaves for a long time like the wavering scales, rising and falling, going and coming ere it can settle."<sup>41</sup> This description, from one of the many sermons especially directed toward youth by Puritan preachers, displays a clear understanding of the vacillations of the adolescent mind reflected in the oscillating structures of Spenser's *Calender*. Indeed, E.K.'s account of the poem as a

testament of the author's unfortunate wanderings in the "common labyrinth" of youth offered as a warning to other young men assimilates the work to the tradition of Puritan spiritual autobiography.

On the basis of the polemics in "Maye," Spenser has often been supposed to be a Puritan; but in fact there is no conclusive evidence that he was any more committed to Piers' position regarding childhood and Maying than to the "palinodal" position of his antagonist. Like the other debates in the *Calender*, "Maye" lays bare the irreconcilable alternatives that face the young person in quest of his own identity. Piers' conception of the pastoral of youth as Circean, Satanic temptation is that of the radical Protestants. To the establishmentarians of the monarchy, the aristocracy and the Church of England, these bucolic motifs served as banners of allegiance. By incarnating herself as the virgin queen of the May, Elisabeth used pastoral ideals of innocence to capture the imaginations of both peasants and poets and thereby strengthened her myth of commonwealth.<sup>42</sup> The landed aristocracy, which was responding to economic and social pressures from the rising urban middle class by robbing the peasantry of their ancient rights and dignity, found in those same ideals an expression of their own nostalgia and a source of conveniently obfuscating propaganda.<sup>43</sup> And in the seventeenth century, the pastoral cult of childhood emerged as a form of inner emigration for devout Anglicans--a product of the "cultural despair" wrought by the prospect of deepening civil strife.<sup>44</sup> Despite the appeal of the Puritan perspective, Spenser retained his devotion to these ideals of innocence. Though always qualified and checked, his attachment to the springtime world of pastoral festivity appears not only in Palinode's lovely verses, but throughout the *Calender*. Indeed, the "Aprill" eclogue achieves what many have seen as the poem's redeeming and crowning vision with a recreative song of praise for "Eliza queene of Shepheardes all."

"Maye" ends with a pair of emblems that balance these points of view: "Who cloth most mistrust is most false ... what fayth then is there in the faythlesse?" This conclusion empha

sizes the eclogue's organization of polarities around the young man's dilemma of placing trust. In order to realize identity, he must recognize the presence of forces both in himself and outside that will betray him, that are not to be trusted. But at the same time, he must find a repository of fidelity, a central object of loyalty. If one challenge of youth is to pass beyond the innocent gullibility of Cuddie, Thornalin or the Kidde, another obstacle it must overcome is "faythlessness"-the excessive disillusionment that strips the person of ideals and aspirations and leaves him cynical, floundering and lost to himself.

Diggon Davie of "September" and the Cuddie of "October" both suffer this youthful malaise. They languish from what Erikson calls a "spoiled moratorium"--an extended identity crisis wherein the world's failure to provide adequate objects of fidelity combines with the individual's excessive demands for perfection to yield a "pathognomic picture which all sick youth have in common":

This picture is characterized first of all by a denial of the historical flux of time ... the sick adolescent thus gradually stops extending experimental feelers toward the future; his moratorium of illness becomes an end in itself and thus ceases to be a moratorium.<sup>45</sup>

"September" and "October" both portray the failure of youth's first "experimental feelers toward the future"--its fledgling attempts to claim an adult identity beyond pastoral, in the world of the *vita activa*. In the fall of the year, by the logic of anti-pastoral, the bucolic landscape has turned from utopia to a prison that its young inhabitants are seeking to escape. But disoriented by their exposure to the great world, both Diggon and Cuddie retreat back to Arcadia, the mean estate and their aged companions. Their disappointment and outrage echoes the satirical wisdom of the old men, but it lacks authenticity and smacks of neurotic self-pity. Afflicted with premature disillusionment, Diggon and Cuddie are both associated with

the *adynaton* of the barren harvest, the fruit that rots before it ripens. "Inopem me copia fecit" states the emblem of "September": "Riches make me poor."

The riches which have impoverished Diggon are those of experience. He has had too much, too soon. His journies abroad, like those of many a young "unfortunate traveller," seem to have broadened his horizon at the cost of his fortune and his emotional stability. Along with his innocence he has lost his very sense of self:

Hobbinoll: Diggon Davie, I bidde her god daye: Or Diggon her is, or I missaye.

Diggon: Her was her, while it was daye light, But now her is a most wretched wight. For day, that was, is wightly past, And now at earst the dirke night doth hast... The iolly shepheard that was of yore, Is nowe nor iollye, nor shepheard more. In forrein costes, men sayd, was plentye And so there is but all of miserye.

(1-29)

After unsuccessfully seeking the "high way of Fame and Fortune, he returns to the country with a sense that foxes and wolves are lurking behind every tree. Now having learned the advice of Piers in "Maye," he feels the need to constantly "liggen in watch and ward from soddein force (his) flocks for to gard." But this reversal of youth's idealistic optimism to a pessimistic paranoia also suffers from extremity. Through most of the eclogue, Diggon seems to take refuge in righteous outcries against the hypocrisy and abuses of those in high places, but at the end he turns to his old friend and admits that he has become unravelled by the failure of his great expectations. He has no idea where to turn next:

Ah but Hobbinoll, all this long tale, Nought easeth the care, that cloth me forhaile. What shall I doe? what way shall I wend,

My piteous plight and losse to amend? Ah my good Hobbinol, mought I  
thee praye, Of ayde or counsell in my decaye.

(242-247)

Sounding like the old and exiled Meliboeus in Vergil's first eclogue--after which the close of "September" is modelled--Diggon feels as if his life is ending along with his youth. It takes old Hobbinoll's extended temporal perspective to recognize that there is a future as well as a past, to convince the boy that a new life still awaits him:

Now by my soule, Diggon, I lament The haplesse mischief, that has  
thee hent But if to my cotage thou wilt resort, So as I can, I wil thee  
comfort: There mayst thou ligge in vetchy bed, Till fayrer Fortune  
shewe forth her head.

(248-257)

Hobbinoll's wisdom of experience finds expression in a topos often associated with the pastoral of old age: the understanding and acceptance of the wheel of fortune's turns. Old Thenot invokes that image of inevitable rise and fall in "Febrvarie," in order to bring young Cuddie down a peg. But in "October," the companion piece to "September" 's dialogue of Diggon and Hobbinoll, old Piers tries to elevate youth's depressed spirit. With the revolution of the year, the wheel of fortune has brought young Cuddie low, fulfilling Thenot's earlier prediction. Now old age, in the person of "Maye" 's puritannical parson, predicts the same wheel's rise and urges youth upward from complaint to recreation:

Cuddie, for shame hold vp thy heauye head,  
And let vs cast with what delight to chace,  
And weary thys long lingring *Phoebus* race.  
Whilome thou wont the shepheards laddes to leade,

In rymes, in ridles, and in bydding base:  
Now they in thee, and thou in sleepe art dead. (1-6)

Cuddie shows the symptoms of what psychologists of adolescence have called the pathology of the *puer eternus*. One of its manifestations is an abnormal lethargy and a tendency to sleep.<sup>46</sup> This common syndrome exhibits the pastoral ideal of *otium* gone otiose, the moratorium gone spoiled, the harvest turned rotten. Like modern therapists, old shepherds in numerous pastoral debates of youth and age prescribe responsible work as the primary cure for this condition.<sup>47</sup> For in work, youth can grow up enough to take the social role of adult for which he is biologically ready. Thus, when Cuddie responds that he is tired of singing the "dapper ditties, that I wont devise/ To feede youthes fancie, and the flocking fry,/ Delighten much," Piers urges him to stop writing poetry as a form of childish play and to treat it as a man's job, for which he will receive the adult reward of fame:

Abandon then the base and viler clowne, Lyft vp thy selfe out of the  
lowly dust: And sing of bloody Mars, of wars, of giusts, Turne thee to  
those, that weld the awful crowne To doubted Knights, whose  
woundlesse armour rusts, And helmes ynbruized wexen dayly browne.  
There may thy Muse display her fluttryng wing And stretch herselfe at  
large from East to West. (37-44)

This kind of work is different from the georgic pursuits of agricultural labor often urged upon young herdsmen by their elders. It is the work of the artist. For the budding poet like Cuddie, work represents not only the purgation of childish play but also the adoption of adult vocation. He is entering the final stage of the identity crisis, which aims toward integrating the individual and society in the form of a tangible productive role, a career.<sup>48</sup> For Cuddie, to grow up means to find his

calling as a poet. This involves leaving the pastoral world of youth and age and taking up residence at the central world of the court, writing the major genre of epic.

Cuddie responds to the old man's exhortation by saying that he would like to rise out of the lowly dust, fly high, stand tall and sing with the voice of trumpets. But he lacks the courage, the confidence and the faith to commit himself. He attributes this lack to the plight of the younger generation at the Elisabethan court:

But ah *Mecoenas* is yclad in claye, And great Augustus long ygoe is dead;  
And all the worthies ligen wrapt in leade, That matter made for Poets on to play:

But after vertue gan for age to stoupe, And mighty manhode brought a bedde of ease  
The vaunting Poets found nought worth a pease To put in preace among the learned troupe. (61-70)

His identity fails to crystallize because of a failure of aspiration; since he has found no repository of fidelity, he prefers to remain in the humble shade. The official propaganda rejecting ambition and praising the mean estate takes on overtones of bitter defeat when espoused by the young man:

And if that any buddes of Poesie, Yet of the old stocke gan to shoote agayne:  
Or if mens follies mote be forst to fayne, And rolle with rest in rymes of rybaudrye:  
Tom Piper makes vs better melodie. (73-78)

Piers offers new encouragement with another line of argument: if there is no worthwhile career for the poet at court, youth can find himself by aspiring still higher, to a heaven of neoplatonic illumination: "Then make winges of thine aspyring wit) And, whence thou camst, flye backe to heauen apace."

But once again Cuddie is brought low, in a dramatic sequence revealing that he still does not truly want to grow up. The young man claims he cannot rise out of the "loathsome mire" on the wings of lofty love, for love's Tyranny has sapped the powers of the poet, as testified by the hopeless case of his friend Colin Clout. This, of course, is not the same platonic love that Piers recommends to elevate his spirit. Rather it is "the lust of lawless youth," straining and sickening at its own Arcadian limits of "carnal perfection." Cuddie continues to gainsay Piers with his own idea of a platonic theory of poetic composition:

Who euer casts to compasse weightye prise, And thinks to throwe out  
thondring words of threate: Let powre in lauish cups and thriftie bitts  
of meate, For *Bacchus* fruite is frend to Phoebus wise. And when with  
Wine the braine begins to sweate, The numbers flowe as fast as spring  
cloth ryse. Thou kenst not *Percie* howe the ryme should rage. O if my  
temples were distaind with wine, And girt in girlonds of wild Yuie  
twine, How I could reare the Muse on stately stage, And teache her  
tread aloft in buskin fine, With queint *Bellona* in her equipage.

(103-114)

E.K. and other commentators have missed that fact that this is a parody of the platonic doctrine of *enthousiasmous*--a version of divine inspiration appropriate not to the genuine initiate, but to the *puer eternus*. His adolescent method of "getting high" means taking a ride rather than flying on his own wings, means evading identity rather than forging it. Spenser makes this quite clear when he shows Cuddie's intoxicated, Coleridgean vision leading him not upward and out toward the future, but downward and back toward the past, toward a pastoral existence that has become cynical and cowardly:

But ah my corage cooles ere it be warme, For thy, content vs in thys  
humble shade:

Where no such troublous tydes han vs assayde, Here we our slender  
pipes may safely charme.

(115-118)

In the final winter eclogues, Spenser's account of the sorrows of youth deepens in gloom and contracts in focus as the year descends to the period of longest night. Since the *Calender's* opening in "Ianuarye," its young shepherds have been accumulating losses. Spring brought the departure of sexual innocence; summer saw the destruction of simple trust in people, ideas and institutions; autumn yielded the disappointment of great expectations and the letdown attendant upon intoxication. Now, in "November," the young man confronts the loss of life itself-like those others, a loss built in to very process of growth. "November" is devoted to a pastoral elegy mourning the death of the young girl, Dido. Her death signifies both an "unnatural" disruption of the natural cycle-coming as it does before the prime of her life-and it also signifies the failure of the cycle itself, which even in the normal course of events, ravages the beauty of spring with autumn and old age. In mourning Dido, "the fairest May ... that ever went," we mourn the demise of the very ideals of the pastoral of youth-the recreative spirit, the music of invitation and escape: "The mornefull Muse in myrth now list ne maske/ As shee was wont in younghth and sommer dayes." To the young person, mourning the loss of youth means facing the loss of his own life; he experiences the departure of his childhood self as equivalent to personal extinction:

Why doe we longer hue, (ah why liue we so long) Whose better dayes  
death hath shut up in woe? ... Now is time to dye. Nay time was long  
ygoe, 0 carefull verse. (72-81)

Dido's death brings the final disillusionment of growing up by revealing the fact of universal mortality. Teaching the frailty

and limits of earthly life, it prepares the survivors for their own impending decease.

"December" sharpens and intensifies the feeling of doom. The speaker takes a final retrospective inventory of the year's losses and sees his life as a series of disappointments, failures and falls from Eden:

Thus is my sommer worne away and wasted, Thus is my haruest  
hastened all to rathe: The eare that budded faire, is burnt and blasted,  
And all my hoped gaine is turnd to scathe. Of all the seede, that in my  
youth was sowne. Was nought but brakes and brambles to be mowne.

My boughes with bloosmes that crowned were at firste, And promised  
of timely fruite such store, Are left both bare and barrein now at erst  
The flattring fruite is fallen to grownd before, And rotted, ere they  
were halfe mellow ripe: My haruest wast, my hope away dyd wipe.

(97-108)

In this powerful lyric of despair, Spenser equates Colin with "Eelde," the medieval allegory of old age and saturnine melancholy. The strongest effect of the passage resides in its vision of human aging as an aborted natural process—its imagery of rot preceding ripeness. Spenser quite likely discovered that imagery in "The Reeve's Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales*:

But ik am oold, me list not pley for age;  
Gras tyme is doon, my fodder is now forage;  
This white top writeth myne olde yeris;  
Myn herte is also mowled as myn heris,  
But if I fare as dooth an open-ers,  
That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,  
Til it be roten in mullock or in stree.  
We olde men, I drede, so fare we:  
Til we be roten, kan we nat be rype. 49

Like the Reeve, Colin finally becomes a "negative senex" who threatens youth with the spectre of its own worst fears of the future the target of the downward trajectory that the young men have been following since early spring.

Colin has felt like an old man ever since the *Calender's* opening in "lanvuarie," when as a young herdsman's boy he was just beginning to experience the pains of sexual love-the incongruity between burgeoning desire and barren frustration:

Such stormy stoures do breede my balefull smart, As if my yeare were  
wast, and woxen old. And yet alas, but now my spring begonne, And  
yet alas, Yt is already donne.

You naked trees, whose shady leaues are lost Wherein the byrds were  
wont to build their bowre: And now are clothd with mosse and hoary  
frost, Insteade of bloosmes, wherewith your buds did flowre: I see your  
teares, that from your boughes doe raine, Whose drops in drery ysicles  
remaine.

Al so my lustfull leafe is drye and sere, My timely buds with wayling all  
are wasted: (29-48)

The same inversion of youth and age reappears in "Iune," when young Colin replies to old Hobbinoll's recreative invitation with the stern voice of an elder:

And I, whylst youth, and course of carelesse yeeres Did let me walke  
withouten lincks of loue, In such delights did ioy amongst my peeres:  
But ryper age such pleasures cloth reproue, My fancy eke from former  
follies moue To stayed steps: for time in passing weares (As garments  
doen, which wexen old aboue) And draweth newe delightes with hoary  
heares. (33-40)

The young man expresses his subjective world-weariness--his feeling of being experienced--with the objective correlative of physical senescence. By "December," this process has become obsessive. From simile he has switched to metaphor, and from metaphor to literal belief. Here Colin presents himself as a full embodiment of the archetype of *senex puer*: the aged boy who appears elsewhere in poems by Shakespeare, Raleigh and Desportes. This archetype of age-in-youth models the self-image of all the young men in the latter half of the *Calender*.

Colin's last words of departure read more like a young person's suicide note than the testament of a real old man:

The carefull cold hath nypt my rugged rynde, And in my face deepe  
furrowes eld hath pight: My head besprent with hoary frost I fynd,  
And my myne eie the Crow his clawe dooth wright. Delight is layd  
abedde, and pleasure past No sonne now shines, cloudes han all  
ouercast.

Adieu delightes, that lulled me asleepe, Adieu my deare, whose loue I  
bought so deare: Adieu my little Lambes and loued sheepe, Adieu ye  
Woodes that oft my witnesse were: Adieu good *Hobbinoll*, that was so  
true, Tell Rosalind, her Colin bids her adieu. (134-156)

In contrast to Thenot or Piers or Hobbinoll, the Colin Clout of "December" doesn't convey the impression of being a real old man. The portrait in the accompanying woodcut, the introductory description of a "gentle shepherd (who) satte beside a spring ... in secreate shade alone ... (making) of loue his piteous mone," and the delicate, effete style of his complaint all suggest a *senex puer* rather than a literally aged herdsman. In terms of clock time, Colin is just eleven months older than the "Shepherds Boye" who ushered in the year. Indeed, modern psychological studies have noted the connection between youth's experience of itself as aged and its proclivities for real or attempted suicide:

Between the ages of sixteen and twenty, suicide is very frequent and less so afterwards. People at that age have very often that strange kind of melancholy sadness and they feel like old people and have an expression in their faces as if they knew all about life and felt very, very old, so what would be the use of playing about with the others, of dancing . . . and they retire in a kind of grandfatherly or grandmotherly attitude toward life.<sup>50</sup>

Numerous commentators have followed E.K. in observing that "December" 's old age elegy imitates Clement Marot's *Eglogue ... au Roy soubz les noms de Pan et Robin* (1539) just as "November" 's threnody for Dido imitates the French poet's pastoral elegy for the death of the queen mother, Louise.<sup>52</sup> In both cases, Spenser adapted poems about actual old people to create the sense of age-in-youth. Marot's *Eglogue*, written when the poet himself was old, ends not with despair but with gratitude for the king's patronage. "December" abandons Marot's model at line 96, with the introduction of the *adynata* of ripeness and rot. This rhetorical figure is elsewhere associated with premature aging of youth rather than with literal senescence. In *As You Like It*, for instance, Rosalind uses the device to check the know-it-all cynicism of Jaques and Touchstone: "You'll be rotten ere you be ripe, and that's the right virtue of the medlar." (III,ii, 112) The figure also appears in the Daphnis elegy of Theocritus' first *Idyll*. Indeed this very *adynaton* associates the Colin Clout of "December" with the dying young vegetation god known severally as Adonis, Osiris and Tammuz.<sup>52</sup> An ancient Mesopotamian text compares the yearly demise of Tammuz to plants that wither before their time: "tamarisk that in the garden has drunk no water/ whose crown in the field has brought forth no blossom."<sup>53</sup> So young-old Colin moans:

The fragrant flowres, that in my garden grew  
Bene withered, as they had bene gathered long.  
Theyr rootes bene dried up for lack of dewe  
(109-111)

Though he is the sickest of the sick young men in the *Calender*, Colin nevertheless remains the poem's exemplary character. Not only is he the cynosure of all the other herdsmen who quote his verses and worry over his emotional condition. As an avatar of Daphnis, he takes on some of the heroic qualities of all romantic youth. The melancholy singer who distills music out of his pain will always be admired-especially for the Wagnerian dirge he sings on his own deathbed, victim of a mysterious love-wound. Colin is somehow blessed in his affliction of youthful morbidity-whether we think of that affliction as the "Elisabethan malady" of neoplatonic genius or as the germanic *Weltschmerz* of the budding *Ueberschmerz*. His very despair breeds the eloquence that makes him a "mirror" of his contemporaries-their reflection as well as their ideal. In his studies of the Renaissance young men, Luther and Hamlet, Erik Erikson has shown how the extremity of adolescent trials is crucial to the later development of leaders:

successful ideological leaders are postadolescents who make out of the contradictions of adolescence the polarities of their charisma ... always convinced that what they felt as adolescents was a curse, a fall, an earthquake, a thunderbolt, in short a revelation to be shared with their generation and many to come.<sup>54</sup>

It is through the repeated falls of Thomalin, Willye, Perigot, Cuddie and Colin that Immerito realizes the perfect pattern of the poet.

Though the tone of the *Calender* seems to spiral downward to darkness as it draws to a close, the work is not, like *Hamlet* or *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, finally a tragedy of youth unable to come of age. In the last four eclogues, a complementary helical movement upward balances the entropic descent, suggesting redemptive possibilities of rejuvenation and rebirth. Spenser accomplishes this reversal of tone with explicit pastoral conventions of closing and also with a trick of design that is less obvious but more integral to the structure and affective strategy of the poem as a whole.<sup>55</sup>

The poetry of anti-pastoral complaint often ends with tentative reversals of feeling-expressions of solace and hope that attend the conclusion of a grief cycle. Spenser follows this modal pattern first in "November," when, after eleven stanzas of "carefull verse," Colin modulates to the "ioyfull verse" affirming a new life after death in "fields aye fressh, the grasse aye greene." And in "December," Spenser offers a final reply to Colin's inventory of the wasting forces of time with an appended emblem and *envoi* asserting the time-transcending qualities of art. These appendices may at first appear, like a Chaucerian retraction, somewhat gratuitous and uncalled-for by the overall tone and structure of the poem. But in fact Spenser prepares for the reversals early along in the sequence. While the young shepherds pass from spring's recreation to wintry gloom in the last half of the year, the old herdsmen who appeared in the early months as antagonists of youth's pleasures and ambitions return in later eclogues as exponents of recreative pleasure and aspiration. While the young characters become fixated on the past, the old characters become oriented toward the future.

For example, the same Thenot who, in "Febrvarie," mocked and threatened Cuddie's attachment to love and who in "Aprill" condemned Colin for being "a foolish boy that is with love yblent," attempts, in "November," to cheer Colin up by urging him to sing "as thou were wont, songs of some jouissance." And the same Piers who in "Maye" so vehemently rejected the rites of spring, returns in "October" to exhort Cuddie to aim for the heights and seek delight at the court of the Queen, where songs

Of love and lustihead tho mayst thou sing, And carrol lowde, and  
leade the Myllers rownde, All were Elisa one of thilke same ring. So  
mought our *Cuddies* name to Heauen sownde.

(51-54)

The reversals coalesce in a pattern: as the year proceeds, youth ages and dies, while age itself becomes more youthful.

What does this signify? If, as I have argued, all the characters of the *Calender* speak with the voices of a single Young Man, the pattern of youth aging and age becoming youthful represents Immerito's childhood passing away and his maturity coming to birth. Employing the pastoral debate's relativity of perspectives in a subtle but concrete way, Spenser moves us in the course of the year from the child's entropic view of the life cycle to the adult's understanding of aging as advance. This shift in self-perception is the subjective counterpart of physical and social maturation.

Spenser achieves this effect through a serial use of the debate genre. By showing the antagonists disengaging from their allegorical roles and reversing positions in later encounters, he extends the conventions of the *conflictus* to communicate a sense of the personality's growth in time, to communicate, that is, the paradoxical interaction of constancy and change which defines human identity.<sup>56</sup> Such a conception of personal identity as a unity of opposites realized through growth in time prefigures the principle of "dilated being" that Spenser formulates explicitly as a verdict of his last pastoral debate at the conclusion of *The Faerie Queene*:

I well consider all that ye haue sayd, And find 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: And  
turning to themselues at length againe, Do 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.  
(VII,vii, 58)

At this juncture, one may wonder why, if Spenser intended *The Shepheardes Calender* to record youth's coming of age, did he end the work with such a bleak prospect as "December" 's?

Why, among the several young men he portrays, did he not find one individual who managed to fly with some success? Why, indeed did he give no indication within the text that by the time the book was published in his twenty seventh year, he himself had weathered most of the storms it recounts? For in that year of 1579, the "new Poete" had attained a position with good prospects as secretary to the Bishop of Rochester, had apparently resolved his differences with Rosalind and married her and had proved his mettle as an up and coming man of letters. 57

First of all, Spenser wrote, or at least conceived his eclogues in the years before 1579, while he was still struggling with the problems of maturation and identity.<sup>58</sup> But more important, he fashioned the whole *Calender* to comply with literary conventions that precluded any simply resolved closure. The debate of youth and age has no end; its generic function is to demonstrate the limitations of human perception at any moment in time. And pastoral poetry, conceived as the writer's juvenilia, is thereby restricted to youth's own circumscribed and contradictory view of itself as seen from within. Only once that stage of life has passed does hindsight reveal the nature of its struggles as the shaping growth of individual identity. As is true of the *Bildungsroman* in general, the rough crossing chronicled in the *Calender* doesn't reach calm waters until the book is over. The moment of arrival is in fact announced by an epilogue, recorded in the cautious but confident and satisfied tone of Immerito's *envoi*:

Goe lyttle Calender, thou hast a free passeporte,  
Goe but a lowly gate emongste the meaner sorte.  
Dare not to match thy pype with Tityrus  
hys style, Nor with the Pilgrim that the Ploughman  
playcle a whyle:  
But followe them farre off, and their high steppes  
adore,  
The better please, the worse despise,  
I aske nomore.

With the added perspective of several more years and from the stable vantage point of the full-fledged adult, the same

narrative persona, Immerito, looks back at his earlier pastoral stage of life. In it, he recognizes the prelude to his emergence as the triumphant "I" who proclaims his identity at the opening of *The Faerie Queene*:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,  
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds,  
Am now enforst a far vnfitter taske,  
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds.

Seen from this later moment, the death that Colin greets at the end of "December" is even less of a permanent doom than Dido's. Instead it appears as the dramatic projection of the experience of "the discontinuity between youth and adulthood" enacted in primitive rites of passage by "symbolic death as children and rebirth as adults":<sup>59</sup>

the central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living ... But he returns to life a new man, assuming a new mode of being.<sup>60</sup>

Seen as part of such a process of initiation, Colin's rapid demise makes sense. His death, though real, is not to be confused with the death of Immerito or Spenser, but rather is to be identified as the death of their youth. The experience of initiation is not limited to primitive rites; according to Mircea Eliade, it "lies at the core of every human life."<sup>61</sup> As the climax of what Erikson called the identity crisis, what Jung called the process of individuation and what William James called the conversion of the twice-born, the initiatory ordeal takes place at the borderline of mental illness and creativity. Eliade's account provides an apt commentary on the direct relevance of the *Calender's* concluding painful recognitions:

... any genuine human life implies profound crises, ordeals suffering, loss and reconquest of self, "death and resurrection." whatever

degree of fulfillment it may have brought him, at a certain moment every man sees his life as a failure. This vision does not arise from a moral judgement made on his past, but from an obscure feeling that he has missed his vocation; that he has betrayed the best that was in him ... This means ... dreams of a new, regenerated life fully realized and significant.<sup>62</sup>

Just as Immerito is resurrected after the symbolic aging and dying of the young people in the *Calender*, so young Daphnis and his vegetable-god predecessors are reborn after passing through the darkness of winter. By timing Colin's death to coincide with the close of the year, Spenser hearkens back to the origins of the calender itself. Initiatory rites conducting children into adulthood usually take place during periods of New Year celebration, like Rosh-Hashonah-Yom Kippur or Christmas-Epiphany.<sup>63</sup> The litany of past faults and failures that Colin intones in "December" resembles the confession and atonement rituals that form part of such calendrical festivals and that enable the whole society to purify and regenerate itself. During rites of passage and during New Year's festivals, time stops and reverses direction. The young adult succeeds the old child; the infant new year grows out of the one which is old and dying. At these "liminal" points of the life cycle and seasonal cycle, all sorts of normally ordered polarities get scrambled.<sup>64</sup> just as adolescent Colin grows unnaturally senescent in December, young and old exchanged roles during the winter solstice celebrations of the Roman Saturnalia. Such ritual reversals express a "rekindling of hope for the abolition of past time."<sup>65</sup> The "descent into the chaos of blurred distinctions and broken forms" and the consequent rebirth and emergence of embryonic form reenact in the present the creation of the cosmos out of the chaos which is imagined to have taken place "in the beginning."<sup>66</sup> The original purpose therefore of all calendars was to transcend time rather than to quantify it. Whether Roman, Mesopotamian or Aztec, they were divided to mark and predict the occurrence of liminal festivals and thereby to make possible the repeated experience of "Eternal

Return." The *Janninya Upanishad Brahmana* states that "the gate of the world of Heavenly Light" is to be found "where sky and earth embrace" and the "ends of the year" are united.<sup>67</sup> According to Buddhist scripture, Winter is the symbol of the great release, combining death with birth.<sup>68</sup> And E.K. assures us that Christian doctrine distinguishes itself with what is in fact an identical conception of the yearly cycle:

we mayntaine a custome of coumpting the seasons from the moneth lanuary, vpon a more speciall cause, then the heathen Philosophers euer coulde conceiue, that is, for the incarnation of our mighty Sauioir and eternal] redeemer the L. Christ, who as then renewing the state of the decayed world, and returning the compasse of expired yeres to theyr former date and first commencement, left to vs his heires a memoriall of his birth in the ende of the last yeere and beginning of the next. (p. 13)

Standing by the gate of the other world, where the ends of the year are united at the end of "December," Spenser as Immerito concludes his pastoral with an avowal:

Loe I haue made a Calender for euery yeare,  
That steele in strength and time in durance shall outweare:  
And if I marked well the starres reuolution,  
It shall continewe till the worlds dissolution.

From this point, he looks forward to the time when youth and age no longer will debate, for time itself will be no more.

But it is not only in the apocalyptic framework of the "Great Sabaoth" or Last Judgement that *The Shepherdes Calender* alludes to an anagogical level of meaning. Spenser's double cycle of aging and rejuvenation also presents itself in the "too much loved nature" that all pastoral sets forth. As the wheel of the year revolves, the fresh greenery of last spring shrivels and dries, while the germs of next year's blossoms sprout from old and toughened twigs. When these opposing orientations of natural process converge in the mind of the beholder, like

opposing phases of a wave movement they cancel each other out-leaving behind a momentary epiphany of timelessness. Heraclitus, "the heathen Philosopher," declares:

as the same thing there exists in us living and dead and the waking and the sleeping and young and old; for these having changed round are those, and those having changed round are these.<sup>69</sup>

Whether we imagine it as the "backstretched connexion" ordering natural cycles or as the core of personal identity, this nameless "same thing" remains the final generic intimation of the pastoral debate of youth and age.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition: The Minor Poems*, eds. Charles Grosvenor Osgood and Henry Gibbons Lotspeich (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), 1, 113. All later references are to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," *CE*, 34, 1972, pp. 364-5.

<sup>3</sup> William Nelson, *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> *The Kalendar of Shepherdes*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer (London, 1892).

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Babb, *The Elisabethan Malady* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1951), pp. 10-11, 134; also "On the Nature of Elisabethan Psychological Literature," *John Quincy Adams Studies*, pp. 509-522.

<sup>6</sup> These critical disputes are amply represented in the commentaries of the Variorum edition, particularly on pp. 600-609.

<sup>7</sup> Alpers, p. 365. Also Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 32; William Nelson, p. 46. And see Isable McCaffrey, "Allegory and Pastoral in *The Shepherdes Calender*," *ELH* 36 (1969), p. 105.

See chapter four of this study Cullen, p. vii.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter four, above

<sup>11</sup> Fragment 212 in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, ed. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 193.

<sup>11a</sup> Though it has been considered risky to identify the "implied author" of any work with the actual person who wrote the book, I join several recent commentators in assuming that the conflicts chronicled in the *Calender* were in fact experienced by the real author, that the various young men in the *Calender* are aspects of himself, and that the discreet voice of Immerito that frames the work is also Edmund Spenser's. See, for instance Richard Helgerson, "The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career," *PMLA* 93 (1978) 895-6.

William Nelson makes the crucial observation that Spenser explores "the principal subject of the *Calender* . . . time and man . . . not to expose Mutability but to examine human states in terms of their past and future." (p. 37) However, I don't agree with his inference that the structure of the work is essentially cyclical and contains no forward moving plot line. I shall argue that the work's repeated juxtapositions of past and future result from the particularly Janusfaced character of youth as a transitional period in the life cycle

13 My approach in what follow bears a number of resemblances to that in A. C. Hamilton's classic essay, "The Argument of *The Shepherds Callender*" (*ELH*, 23, 1956, 171-82). Hamilton sees the calendar as essentially tied to the "ritual source of pastoral" (174) in the poet's lament for himself as a dying and reborn being. He states that "the poem's major theme becomes the attempt to find himself." (174) Hamilton sees the plotline or "argument" of the poem as a series of encounters leading to "the rejection of the pastoral life for the truly dedicated life in the world." (181). I see the plot movement and the rejection of pastoral and consequent affirmation of the *vita activa* as ultimately attributable to the passage from youth to maturity, a passage which Hamilton doesn't emphasize. Other writers however have remarked in passing upon the association of pastoral with *Bildungsroman*:

*Arcadia* is a story of a young man's temporary withdrawel from his normal milieu, his ardent dedication of poetry and his return to the world from which he had exiled himself. In that way it is a *Bildungsroman*.

See Ralph Nash, ed. *Arcadia and Piscatorial Eclogues* by Jacopo Sannazaro, (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1960), Introd. p. 24. The generic relationship among pastoral, *Bildungsroman* and debate bears further examination. In *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1974) Jerome Hamilton Buckley lists these principal elements of the *Bildungsroman*: childhood, conflict of generations, provinciality, larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, search for vocation and worthy philosophy. (p. 18) All these themes are also prevalent in pastoral. Wilhelm Dilthey's definition of the *Bildungsroman* also fits the *Calender*: "the regulated development of life is observed; each stage has intrinsic value and at the same time forms a basic for a higher stage. Dissonances and conflicts of life appear as necessary growth points through which the individual must pass on his way to maturity and harmony." *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Leipzig and Bern, 1934) p. 394, cited in Martin Swales *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse*, (Princeton: Princeton Univerity Press, 1978), p. 3. A more recent essay, that came to my attention after this chapter was written, makes the observation of SC's relation to the *Bildungsroman* its central point. Bruce R. Smith also affirms that the essential theme of the work is the author's discovery of his own identity. Though he correctly connects Spenser to his successors, Smith doesn't show the sources of *Bildungsroman* in the preceding pastoral tradition. "On Reading SC" in *Spenser Studies*, ed. Patrick Cullen and Thomas Roche (Pittsburgh: U. of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), pp. 89 ff.

14 Dilthey observes that the *Bildungsroman* portrays the tension between "the *Nebeneinander* of possible selves within the hero and the *Nacheinander* of linear time and practical activity." Cited by Swales, p. 29.

15 *The Complete Writings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 149. Patrick Collin, in *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral*, discusses the *Calendar's* texture of contraries at great length. He describes them as the perspectives of winter vs. spring, Arcadian vs. Mantuanesque literary traditions, tragic vs. comic modes:

The *Calendar* is organized around recurring juxtapositions of the perspectives of winter (withdrawal, chastity, asceticism, self denial, age) and the perspectives of spring (Participation, love, indulgence, self-assertion, youth) . . . the natural year . . . represents the unstable world that man must adapt to and ultimately triumph over, and it symbolizes in its own precarious balances of winter and spring the balance-in-opposition necessary for man and pastoral society within the natural world. (p. 123)

Youth vs. Age is one way of looking at the polarity, but Cullen doesn't think of it as also signifying stages of a process. This avoidance of the dialectical character of all of Spenser's polarities leads to unfortunate omissions in what is otherwise a brilliant interpretation. For instance, Cullen sees "December" as proof of Colin's failure, "demonstrating . . . the penalty of the promise extended man," as opposed to "November," which demonstrates the reward. In his discussion of "December," Cullen conspicuously fails to quote from the *Kalendar of Shepherds*, whose description of the correspondences of the months and ages informs his discussion of the other eclogs. The *Kalendar's* December emphasizes that the darkest month of the winter solstice is also the month of reversal and rebirth, when the days again start getting longer--i.e., the month of Christmas. By entering and taking sides in the old critical controversy about whether or not Colin "fails," Cullen loses some of the advantage gained in this perception of the balance of both sides in the SC's debates. They do present morally untenable extremes of attitude, as Cullen points out; these extremes are shown not *in vacuo* however; but as relative to stages of development. Colin doesn't fail; he is outgrown.

11 Kaspar D. Naegele, "Youth and Society: Some Observations," in *Youth: Change and Challenge*, ed. Erik H. Erikson (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 46.

17 From a study by William Perry cited by Kenneth Kenniston in "Youth': A New Stage," *The American Scholar*, Winter, 1970, p. 646.

From studies by Jerome Bruner and Jean Piaget, cited by Kenniston, p. 647.

S. I. Eisenstadt, *Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1956), p. 30.

20 Ibid. p. 31.

11 Ibid.

12 Victor Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality," in *Secular Ritual*, ed. S. Moore and Barbara Meyerhoff (Amsterdam, 1977), p. 37.

11 See discussion of "Februarie", in chapter four.

24 Erik H. Erikson, "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity" in *Youth: Change and Challenge*, p. 11; also *Young Man Luther*, second edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), pp. 14 ff.

11 *Young Man Luther*, p. 43. Erikson introduced his concept of youth's "moratorium" in connection with Luther's stay in a monastery.

21 Erikson, "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity," p. 20; *Young Man Luther*, pp 41-2.

17 In *Birth and Rebirth: Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Culture*, trans. Willard Trask (N. Y.: Harper, 1958), Mircea Eliade defines "initiation" as:

The body of rites and teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of a person ... as a result of a basic change in his existential condition ... the novice has become *another...* (p. 10)

See also, Terence Turner's discussion of how the transformational condition of youth attains a "transcendent" and "cybernetic" relationship to the whole social structure. "Transformation, Hierarchy and Transcendence: A Reformulation of Van Gennep's Model of the Structure of Rites of Passage," in *Secular Ritual* ed. S. Moore and Barbara Myerhoff.

18 On the traditional association between the *topoi* of the Battle of Ancients and the Moderns, The World Upside Down, and the Debate of Age and Youth, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, Bollingen Foundation, Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 94-101; 251-6.

29 Eisenstadt, p. 33.

30 *The Aspiring Mind of the Elizabethan Younger Generation* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. xiii. This book applies the generational theories of cultural history developed by Dilthey, Karl Mannheim, Henri Peyre, Ralph de Toledano, Ortega y Gasset to the specific case of Tudor England. See also Julian Marias, *Generations: A Historical Method*, trans. Harold C. Raley (University of Alabama Press, 1970). Esler's work is also cited by Louis Adrian Montrose in "The Perfecte Patterne of a Poete: The Poetics of Courtship in SC,- *TSSL* 21, 1 1979, p. 36. Montrose follows a parallel approach to mine, showing how many of the conflicts portrayed in the moral eclogues reflect ideological issues dividing Spenser's society.

31 Esler, p. 67 ff.

32 "The Ruines of Time," lines 449-453.

33 The debate of youth and age is central to *The Canterbury Tales*-it dominates the "Miller's Prologue and Tale," "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale," the "Pardoner's Tale" and the "Merchant's Tale."

34 Curtius points out that the theme of the decline of standards in education is a medieval topos often associated with the debate of youth and age. p. 94.

39 *The Poetry of Sir Phillip Sidney*, edited by William Ringler (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 27-8.

36 An analogous debate about youth, education and pleasure finds its way into the conversation of younger and older brothers in Milton's *Comas*.

37 *The Scholemaster (1570)* ed. by Lawrence V. Ryan (Ithaca: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1967), p. xxvi-xxix.

311 Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 375.

-19 Stone, p. 163.

40 David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History* (New York, 1977), pp. 149 ff.

41 S. R. Smith, "Religion and the Conception of Youth in Seventeenth Century England," *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 11, 1975, p. 497.

42 C. L. Barber, "Holiday Custom and Entertainment," in his *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (New York: Meridian, 1963), p. 30 ff.

43 James Morrell Swan, "Courtesy and Rent: Some Versions of Pastoral and History," in "Pastoral, History and Desire: A Psychoanalytic Study of English Renaissance Literature and Society," Diss. Stanford, 1974, pp. 108-196.

44 Leah Sinaugoulou Marcus, *Childhood and Cultural Despair* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978).

45 Erikson, "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity," pp. 15-16.

46 Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus* (Zurich: Spring Publications, 1970), p. 1-3.

47 Ibid., p. 1-4.

48 Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, second edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 262.

49 *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 55. Paul Alpers says that December's Colin neither expresses despair nor confesses failure, but rather that his is "the traditional act of the old shepherd who submits to the nature of things. ("The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral,") pp. 365-6. But there is a sense of regret here that can hardly qualify as consolation. Its expression is typical of another tradition of old age elegy centering on unmitigated despair. See, G. L. Colffman, "Old Age from Horace to Chaucer," *Speculum IX*, 1934, pp. 249-278. Chaucer's Reeve utters a succinct *adynaton* of unripe-rotteness that aptly expresses what Erikson calls the typical disgust of old age (*Childhood and Society*, p. 268-9). The "open-ers" that the Reeve uses to identify "we olde men" is defined by the OED as "open-arse ... an old name of the medlar, fruit and tree." The medlar fruit "resembles a small brown-skinned apple, with a large cup-shaped "eye" between the persistent calyx lobes. It is eaten when decayed to a soft pulpy state."

51 Marie-Louise von Franz, 111-19.

52 Variorum edition, pp. 417-424.

53 Thomas Perrin Harrison, *The Pastoral Elegy: An anthology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1939), p. 1; Frank Kermode, *English Pastoral Poetry* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952); Northrop Frye, "Levels of Meaning in Literature," *KR* 12, (1950): 258.

13 Sir J. G. Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, ed. Theodore Gaster (New York, 1959), pp. 284-5.

54 "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity," p. 22.

55 This reversal is noticed but not accounted for by Patrick Cullin in *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral*, p. 9. In an essay published after this chapter was written, Harry Berger covers some of the same ground. He too observes the pattern of exchange of posture and role between youth and age. But he sees the reversals primarily as symbolic of the failure of both youth and age to break free from the nostalgic illusions of what he calls "the Paradise Principle." Berger does not, as I do, also consider this reversal as redemptive. See "The Aging Boy: Paradise and Parricide in Spenser's SC," in Maynard Mack, ed. *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 25 ff.

56 Spenser was neither the only nor the first writer to use the debate of youth and age in a serial manner to create a sense of character changing over time. In "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," Chaucer's Alison narrates her autobiography as a sequence of such battles, in which she gradually switched sides from youth to age. And Sidney's Geron, after engaging in battle with young Phillisides, makes peace between his young and his old dog from an intermediary perspective and then argues *against* the position of old age presented by Mastix in the following poem.

57 Alexander C. Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1945), pp. 45-8.

58 According to his biographer, the period between young Spenser's departure from Cambridge in 1574 and his employment by the Bishop of Rochester in 1578 remains "obscure years," during which his whereabouts are unknown. (Judson, p. 46). This might have been an interval of retreat, experimentation or "moratorium."

58a Both Helgerson and Montrose emphasize the likelihood that Spenser himself was quite uncertain about the outcome of his pioneering commitment to the poet's vocation. Bruce Smith notes that tentativeness and doubt are characteristics of the typical *Bildungsroman's* ending.

59 Eisenstadt, p. 32.

60 Mircea Eliade, *Birth and Rebirth*, p. xiv.

61 Ibid., p. 135.

62 Ibid., p. 135.

Montrose similarly interprets Colin's demise, though without reference to his passage from childhood to adulthood: "Colin's end is the end of Spenser's beginning. . ." p. 61

63 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return* trans. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1954), p. 52.

64 According to Victor Turner, "liminality" is a condition-outside the socially defined matrix of status and role-that a person enters during any "non-worldly" experience, be it erotic passion, consciousness alteration, or the passage from one state to another. "Variations on a Theme of Liminality" in *Secular Ritual*, ed. S. Moore and Barbara Myerhoff (Amsterdam, 1967), pp. 36-52). Also *Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969). "I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now" goes the chorus of Bob Dylan's "My Back Pages."

65 Eliade, *Myth*, p. 62

66 Ibid. p. 54.

67 Ibid., p. 65.

68 Manly P. Hall, "The Four Seasons of the Spirit," (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1965), p. 23.

69 Heraclitus, Fragments 212, 205, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, pp. 192, 195.