

“And dearest loue”: Virgilian half-lines in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 25 January 2014**

This paper is concerned with errors and incompletions: to use an Elizabethan term, “vnperfections”, of which my original title fortuitously included one.¹ The half-line I intended to use as a title is in fact “And *dearest* loue”, not “And *sweetest* loue”, but my memory inadvertently slipped to the final line of the stanza in question and transposed the epithets:

*And all about grew euery sort of flowre,
To which sad louers were transformd of yore;
Fresh Hyacinthus, Phoebus paramoure,
And dearest loue,
Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore,
Sad Amaranthus, made a flowre but late,
Sad Amaranthus, in whose purple gore
Me seemes I see Amintas wretched fate,
To whom sweet Poets verse hath giuen endlesse date. (III.vi.45)²*

My confused epithets communicate something important about Spenser’s poetic idiom, as well as his debt to Virgil, and, in this case, to Ovid.³ To a significant extent, it doesn’t seem important who is “sweet” or what is “deare” in this stanza: Spenser’s poetic language does not

* My thanks go to Syrithe Pugh and to David Lee Miller for illuminating comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

¹ See ‘unperfection, n.’, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2016.

² Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2001², Harlow, 349. All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* are from this edition, unless otherwise stated. After this note, as is customary in quoting Spenser, I give in text references to book, canto and stanza number. Hence above the reference is to book III, canto vi, stanza 45. A fourth number, where used, refers to a line or lines within a stanza.

³ See Hamilton’s notes in *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 349, and S. Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid*, Aldershot, 2005, 135–45.

admit of the sharply turned, affective epithets which he would have found in Virgil. One of Spenser's staunchest twentieth-century advocates, C. S. Lewis, went so far as to describe his use of adjectives as "abdications of the poet's true office".⁴ Dear, sweet, sad, it doesn't seem to matter, we might think, so long as it scans. I put it like this because I do not fully believe that to be the case. Spenser's language is complex, various and and devious in the ways it aims to affect its readers. By focusing on *The Faerie Queene's* half-lines, I want to try to illuminate how Elizabethans read Virgil, and to develop an understanding of Spenserian unperfectness in the context of how we should read such moments in *The Faerie Queene*. Are they deliberate? What – if anything – is going on in these minute stylistic allusions to Virgil's poem? What do they tell us about Spenser's attitudes to literary form? Such work is necessarily speculative, since *The Faerie Queene* is, like the *Aeneid*, unfinished; it may have been that had he lived, Spenser might have tidied up all the remaining half-lines. But this is itself a form of biographical speculation. As I show, there are sound textual reasons for believing that Spenser intended the majority of these half-dozen lines as a deliberate counterpoint to the more uniform appearance of the rest of his poem. Part of the connection between Virgil and Spenser's half-lines is that they tend *not* to leave gaps in the sense, so that it is possible for the reader to make sense of metrically "vnperfit" fragments: "Foolish *Narcisse*" follows on logically from "And dearest loue" in the list-lament of III.vi.45 without the need of further emendation. Still, the half-lines demand interpretation: what is at issue is whether they should be read mimetically (that is, as relating to the poem's meaning), or as more or less decorative allusions to the *Aeneid*. As will become clear, my hunch inclines to the former position. Prior to this, I consider how the *Aeneid's* half-lines appeared to Elizabethan readers in translations, to illustrate how 16th-century writers sought to render these eccentric elements of the Virgilian text.

Virgil's Half-lines

There are some fifty half-lines in the *Aeneid*.⁵ According to Aelius Donatus' 4th century AD *Life of Virgil*, these are remnants of Virgil's compositional process – "little struts or props ... to support the structure until the solid columns arrived" – which remained in the text because he could not finish the poem to his satisfaction before his premature death.⁶ Donatus' text is a strange amalgam of different sources. As David Scott Wilson-Okamura explains, in the Renaissance it was further added to, producing a composite which he calls "the humanistic *vita*", and it is this text which was usually printed during the period.⁷ I quote the most important

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 1936, repr. 1985, Oxford, 319.

⁵ See D. S. Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, 2010, Cambridge, 102; see also *idem*, 'Belphoebe and Gloriana', *English Literary Renaissance* 39 (2009), 47–73 (49).

⁶ Quoted in Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil* (n.5 above) 102.

⁷ Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil* (n.5 above) 54.

passage from the Elizabethan translation, probably by Thomas Twyne. This first appeared in the 1573 edition of Thomas Phaer’s translation, *The whole .xii. bookes of the Aeneidos of Virgill*, which Twyne completed after Phaer’s death:

“Varrus at Augustus commaundment did set forth nothinge, as *Virgil* willed he shuld not: but generally perused all, leauing also those verses as they were, still vnperfect. Whiche verses diuers afterward tooke in hand to make vp, but they could not for the difficulty therof, for they be all *Hemistichia*, that is to say half verses[.]”⁸

My concern is not the precise meaning of this passage in relation to the textual condition of the *Aeneid*, a problem considered in depth by John Sparrow, but is rather what it tells us about the Elizabethan view of the half-lines.⁹ Though written long after the events it purports to describe, Donatus’ *Vita* is a work of the first importance to understanding Virgil in Renaissance England. Wilson-Okamura comments that the *Vita* “was probably known to more readers (including, presumably, more poets) than Servius himself”.¹⁰ Certainly, it was given a prominent place in the later editions of Phaer’s translation. Even though the header describes it somewhat sceptically as “Virgils life, set forth, as *it is supposed, by Aelius Donatus*”, a description which perhaps indicates Twyne’s awareness of some of the problems in its transmission, the Donatus Life is the most significant interpretive matter offered to readers in the translation.¹¹ Phaer’s translation is an important, and in my view underestimated, facet both of the transmission of Virgil in 16th-century England and of the poetic Renaissance in England.¹² Here the central point is that 16th-century readers believed on the authority of “Donatus” that the half-lines in the *Aeneid* were evidence of the “vnperfect” state in which the poem was left after the death of its author. Sparrow’s argument – that some of the half-lines may have been deliberate and that Virgil used this device as a conscious innovation¹³ – is relevant to Spenser’s half-lines, yet it is not a view which 16th-century readers would have adopted on the basis of Donatus’s *Vita*.

⁸ Virgil, *The whole .xii. bookes of the Aeneidos of Virgill*, trans. Thomas Phaer with Thomas Twyne, 1573, London, sig. C2v. Twyne’s contributions to the new edition are signalled on the title page: “the first .ix. and part of the tenth, were conuerted into English meeter by Thomas Phaër Esquire, and the residue supplied, and the whole worke together newly set forth, by Thomas Twyne, Gentleman. There is added moreouer to this edition, Virgils life out of Donatus, and the argument before euery booke”, sig. A1r. Twyne signs the dedicatory letter to Sir Nicholas Bacon which immediately precedes the Life (sigs A2r-v), so it is a reasonable assumption that he was also responsible for the translation and its heading discussed below. Unless otherwise stated, all pre-1700 printed materials were consulted through Early English Books Online (EEBO).

⁹ J. Sparrow, *Half-Lines and Repetitions in Virgil*, 1931, Oxford.

¹⁰ Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil* (n.5 above) 49–50.

¹¹ Virgil (n.8 above) sig. A3r.

¹² See R. D. Brown & J. B. Lethbridge, *A Concordance to the Rhymes of The Faerie Queene, With Two Studies of Spenser’s Rhyme*, 2013, Manchester, 49–52, for comparisons between Phaer, Golding and Spenser in terms of rhyming practice.

¹³ Sparrow (n.9 above) 45.

Half-lines in English translations

How should a translator of Virgil deal with these half-lines?¹⁴ The answer to this question is a combination of “it depends when you’re writing” with the related supplementary “it depends on your chosen verse form”. Such caveats betray broader issues of poetic taste and style at particular points in time. Wilson-Okamura has recently revived the idea of “period style”, which he characterises as “the style that, when you are in a period, does not seem like a style at all. It’s not the cut of your clothes, it’s the fabric they are made of”.¹⁵ Translation is a pre-eminent witness to period style, in which we read the tastes of a culture rather than those of the individual, as when Edward Fairfax’s translation of *Gerusalemme liberata* as *Godfrey of Bulloigne* (1600) effectually “Spenserianises” the original: Spenser’s then fashionable idiom conditions the kind of poetry Fairfax finds for the job of translating Tasso.¹⁶

So, for example, John Dryden’s celebrated 1697 translation of the *Aeneid* into rhyming couplets generally avoids half-lines altogether, although he had used them in his earlier version of the Nisus and Euryalus episode.¹⁷ Book 2, which has 10 half-lines in the original, the largest for any single book,¹⁸ has none at all in Dryden’s version; each half-line is smoothed out into regular rhyming couplets and occasional triplets. Virgil’s abrupt, brilliant truncated image of Trojan civilians as prisoners of war, *pueri, & pavidae longo ordine matres / Stant circum* (*Aen.* 2.766–67)¹⁹ becomes Dryden’s almost too elegantly poised couplet, “A rank of wretched Youths, with pinion’d Hands, / And captive Matrons in long Order stands”.²⁰ Note the way Dryden adds the detail of “with pinion’d hands” to fill out the couplet form, and subtly ages Virgil’s *pueri* to “Youths”. The details are certainly plausible, but they are also characteristic expansions of the Virgilian text. Conversely, modern translations tend to have fewer problems accommodating the metrical eccentricity of half-lines. Robert Fagles’s version, with its looser unrhymed lines pitched between five and seven main stresses, easily accommodates shorter lines as a useful variant. In this passage, Fagles has: “Children and trembling mothers rounded up / in a long, endless line”, though the half-line is then filled out as the translator embarks

¹⁴ For an overview of 16th- and 17th-century translations, see S. Brammall, *The English Aeneid: Translations of Virgil, 1555–1646*, 2015, Edinburgh.

¹⁵ D. S. Wilson-Okamura, *Spenser’s International Style*, 2013, Cambridge, 9.

¹⁶ Torquato Tasso, *Godfrey of Bulloigne: A Critical Edition of Edward Fairfax’s Translation of Tasso’s “Gerusalemme Liberata”, together with Fairfax’s Original Poems*, ed. K. M. Lea & T. M. Gang, 1981, Oxford (15–25 for discussion of Fairfax’s idiom).

¹⁷ John Dryden, *Sylvae, or, The second part of Poetical miscellanies*, 1685, London, 1–31. On the two Dryden translations, see R. Sowerby, “Translations of Nisus and Euryalus by Dryden and Byron”, *PVS* 28 (2014), 1–18.

¹⁸ Virgil, *Aeneidos Liber Secundus*, ed. R. G. Austin, 1964, Oxford, 55, commenting on *disce omnes*, l. 66.

¹⁹ Virgil, *Pub. Virgilii Maronis opera*, 1570, London, 173. This edition was printed by Henry Bynneman, who was to publish the Spenser-Harvey Letters in 1580. For the importance of consulting Renaissance texts when discussing the Renaissance Virgil, see Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil* (n.5 above) 4.

²⁰ Virgil, *The Works of Virgil*, trans. John Dryden, 1697, London, 265.

on a new verse paragraph.²¹ The original is respected, but not literally. The comparison of Dryden with Fagles emphasizes the different period styles of the late 17th and early 21st centuries. Where Dryden gives his readers a polished English version of Virgil which edits out the original’s rough edges, Fagles capitalizes on those same roughnesses as a license for his more flexible measures.

Similar contrasts between competing styles may be observed within the 16th century, inasmuch as choices about verse form betoken often complex cultural affiliations. The rhyming couplet in iambic pentameter has not yet established itself as the dominant poetic form in English, and the (almost) natural choice for heroic poetry. The translations Spenser would have known employ a range of forms. Gavin Douglas’s Middle Scots *Eneados* of 1513 (there was an edition printed in London in 1553) is in decasyllabic couplets and avoids half-lines. Douglas was following the precedent of Chaucer rather than anticipating the practice of Jonson and Dryden. His version of the passage quoted above is the more angular and (according to taste) more prolix “The young children, and frayit matrons eik, / Stude all on raw, with mony piteous skreek / About the treasure whimpering wonder sair”.²² Douglas’s version was an important crib for the Earl of Surrey’s pioneering translation into unrhymed blank verse (printed by Richard Tottell in 1557),²³ probably the nearest equivalent in English to the poetic effect of the Latin dactylic hexameter.²⁴ Surrey’s practice is inconsistent in respect of half-lines. On the one hand, he includes several short measures. For instance, his version of book 2’s first half-line (66) is powerfully epigrammatic: “The Grekes deceit beholde, and by one profe / Imagine all the rest”.²⁵ On the other hand, the *stant circum* passage becomes two full lines: “The children orderly, and mothers pale for fright / Long ranged on a rowe stode round about”.²⁶ Surrey’s first line is an English alexandrine (twelve syllables with six major

²¹ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. R. Fagles, 2006, London, 101. For Fagles’s remarks on his procedures as translator, see 389–401.

²² Douglas, *The Aeneid (1513)*, 2 vols, ed. G. Kendal, 2011, London, vol. 1, 96. Kendal’s text presents an even more modernised and anglicised text than the 1553 edition, which reads: “The yong children, and frait matronus eik / Stude all on raw, with mony pietuous screk / About the tressour, quhympersand wordis sare” (Virgil, *The xiiii bukes of Eneados of the famos poet Virgill*, trans. Gavin Douglas, 1553, London, sig. H1v). Arguably, the 1553 variant “wordis sare” (Douglas’s addition to this passage) is as plausible as 1513’s “wonder sair”, given the vocalizations implied by “quhympersand”.

²³ See *Tottel’s Miscellany: Songs and Sonnets of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Others*, ed. A. Holden & T. MacFaul, 2011, London, ix-x, for Tottel’s career. As with most London booksellers, literature was something of a sideline for Tottel, though inevitably it is for his few literary publications that his name has survived.

²⁴ The notion of poetic equivalence is necessarily a complex one; see Wilson-Okamura (n. 15 above) 44–47, who suggests that one complete Spenserian stanza offers a “functional equivalent or analogy” (46) for the aesthetic impact of a single line of Virgilian dactylic hexameter, with Spenser’s final alexandrine substituting for Virgil’s final spondee, and Hardison’s comment on Surrey’s blank verse quoted below.

²⁵ Virgil, *Certain bokes of Virgiles Aeneis turned into English meter by the right honorable lorde, Henry Earle of Surrey*, 1557, London, sig. A3r. The Bodleian has two copies of this book, both of which are reproduced on EBO; I quote from STC / 944:08, because this preserves the beginning of book 2.

²⁶ Virgil (n.25 above) sig. D2r-v.

stresses), the form which incidentally Spenser came to use as the tailpiece for each of his nine-line stanzas. Surrey is inventive and prophetic – O. B. Hardison suggests that “he invented a true English equivalent of sustained heroic verse” – but he had little interest in the accurate representation of the “unperfections” of his Latin original.²⁷

The most extreme Elizabethan Virgil is Richard Stanyhurst’s quantitative version of the first four books (1582). Though widely mocked, Stanyhurst is an important reminder that the triumph of accentual rhyming verse was not a foregone conclusion during the later 16th century.²⁸ Humanists across Europe wanted vernacular verse forms to mirror what they saw as the specialized artifice and technique of Latin verse. The experiment to wrest modern languages to the same metrical demands as Latin was almost natural to a culture educationally and psychologically rooted in classical literature. Spenser was a vocal exponent of quantitative meters at the same moment in time, in the late 1570s and early 1580s. Though Andrew Hadfield’s recent biography suggests that he never invested much faith in the quantitative movement, Spenser published a quantitative poem, and advocated the radical subjugation of conventional English pronunciation, to make it fit better with Latin notions of quantity, even to the extent of insisting that the median vowel of *carpenter* could be extended to make it scan in a classical fashion, on the grounds that “Rough words must be subdued with Vse”.²⁹ Derek Attridge’s study provides the quantitative movement with an epitaph which pays tribute to its curious fascination:

“Probably at no other time have the attitudes towards metre engendered in English minds by a rigorous training in Latin prosody using an unclassical pronunciation fused so completely with the cultural and aesthetic ideals of the age as during the reign of Elizabeth; and however futile the quantitative movement may seem in retrospect, its achievements remain as impressive testimony to the power exerted by that synthesis”.

As Attridge notes, the problem with Stanyhurst’s version is that it “makes very few concessions to the native tradition of English verse” because of his “strict imitation of Latin accentual patterns and restrictions on word lengths”.³⁰ Because he is strict, Stanyhurst imitates the half-lines

²⁷ O. B. Hardison, Jr, *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance*, 1989, Baltimore, 129.

²⁸ For reaction to Stanyhurst, see D. Attridge, *Well-Weighed Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Metres*, 1974, Cambridge, 170–71, 228–29.

²⁹ Edmund Spenser, *Spenser’s Prose Works*, ed. R. Gottfried, 1949, Baltimore, 16; A. Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, 2012, Oxford, 106–09. Spenser’s poem ‘Iambicum Trimetrum’ was published in the correspondence with Harvey: see *Spenser’s Prose Works*, 7–8. Although this is at one level a relatively slight variation on Petrarchan conventions (“Tell hir, that hir sweete Tongue was wonte to make me mirth”), it remains an experimental text which shows the poet willing to imagine the metrical restructuring of English, in line with the aggressive attitude towards linguistic change shown in the letter to Harvey. See also R. Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*, 1992, Chicago (1–3, 25–40) for a historicist and political reading of Spenser’s position in the Letters.

³⁰ Attridge (n.28 above) 235–36, 195.

directly; his version of the *stant circum* passage is curiously effective as it focuses on the terror of the captured “mothers”:

*thear ar eke yoong children in order
With cold hart moothers, for Grekish victorie quaking,
Setled on al sides*³¹

It should be said that this is Stanyhurst at his best. His version of a different half-line passage, (*Aen.* 2.345–46), on Coroebus’ inability to heed Cassandra’s prophecies, is more typical of his clotted syntax and unusual word choices: “His pheers woud prophecyes not at all the yooncker unhappie / Herd”.³² Lexically, Stanyhurst has always been challenging: thus “pheers” means “fere’s” (that is Cassandra, his wife’s mad prophecies),³³ while the decision to put the subject – “the yooncker unhappie” – at the end of the line fights against English’s natural tendency to want to have the subject ahead of the verb.³⁴ By the same token “not at all” struggles for a grammatical function as the reader makes unsteady progress through the line before the arrival of that postponed subject. Phaer’s version of this passage is – perhaps inevitably – closer to the norms of modern English, and is therefore less exciting, though easier to construe: “Vnhappy man, that what his spouse him rauing told in traunce: / Wold not regard”.³⁵ Nevertheless, Stanyhurst’s dedication to getting an English equivalence to the Virgilian text produces a text which is at once curious and impressive in its distinctive poetic idiom. Consider the single broken line, “Herd”, which successfully mimics Virgil’s *Infelix, qui non sponsae praecepta furentis / Audierat*.³⁶ The satirist Thomas Nashe pilloried Stanyhurst for his “Thrasonical huffe snuffe”, yet as Colin Burrow notes, the strange diction is partly a product of Stanyhurst’s cultural location as an Irish Catholic who emigrated to Leiden, and whose version of Virgil resists the cultural hegemony of Protestant English.³⁷ Nevertheless, Stanyhurst is a stylistic cul-de-sac: what might be called an “unherd” argot in an unspoken language.³⁸

³¹ Virgil, *Thee first foure bookes of Virgil his Aeneis*, trans. Richard Stanyhurst, 1582, Leiden, 43.

³² Virgil (n.31 above) 31.

³³ See ‘fere’, n.1, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2016.

³⁴ A literal translation of this passage into modern English would be “The unfortunate young man did not hear his wife’s mad prophecy at all.”

³⁵ Virgil (n.8 above) sig. D4r.

³⁶ Virgil (n.19 above) 159.

³⁷ Nashe in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols, ed. G. G. Smith, 1904, Oxford, vol. 1, 316; C. Burrow, ‘Virgil in English Translation’, in C. Martindale (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, 2006, Cambridge, 25.

³⁸ For a more positive view of Stanyhurst’s linguistic difference, see W. Maley, ‘Spenser languages: writing in the ruins of English’, in A. Hadfield (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, 2001, Cambridge, 168: “The Tudor borderlands were at the cutting edge of linguistic innovation and variation”. See also Brammall (n.14 above) 37–48.

In contrast, Phaer's *Aeneidos* squarely reflects English poetic tastes of the 1550s and 1560s. Its rather lumpen rhyming fourteeners couplets embody a period style: a widely used convention shared by a number of writers at the time, but which fell into disuse during the last two decades of the century. Phaer merits longer discussion, both because his version is the one with the largest cultural reach during the 16th century, and because it is the least familiar to modern readers. Phaer's Virgil also takes us closer to Spenser. It was first published in the decade of his birth, and it is precisely its limitations which can work to remind us of the radicalism of what Spenser was attempting in *The Faerie Queene*. Apart from Douglas's version, Phaer's is both the fullest translation and the most often reprinted. Between 1558 and 1620, it went through eight editions; this compares well with the three editions of *The Faerie Queene* published between 1590 and 1609.³⁹ Phaer died in 1560, having completed books 1–9 and a portion of book 10; the translation was finished by Twyne in 1573, who added a version of Maffeo Vegio's humanistic thirteenth book in 1584.

Modern commentators take a dim view of Phaer's abilities as a poet: Hardison describes the *Aeneidos* as a "competent paraphrase but not a work that conveys the elevation of the original to an English reader", while Ezra Pound had dismissed it as "tenebrous".⁴⁰ Pound was however a huge admirer of Arthur Golding's 1564 translation of the *Metamorphoses*, also into fourteeners. Arguably, his stylistic radar was off beam in both cases: Golding is probably not as good as Pound suggests, while Phaer is certainly not as bad. Pound's opinion was in any case not shared by Elizabethan readers. William Webbe, in his *Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586), saw in Phaer's version a demonstration of the heroic potential of English, even going so far as to suggest that "the cobby it selfe [*i.e.* Virgil's poem] goeth no whit beyond it [*i.e.* Phaer's version]".⁴¹ Webbe was also a strenuous advocate of quantitative metres, so this judgement shows the force of his embattled linguistic patriotism, as he wills the Phaer version against his own stylistic predilections into being an epic contender. Even the usually scabrous Nashe described it as "heavenly verse" in the same text which rubbishes Stanyhurst.⁴²

³⁹ It compares even better with Douglas's *Eneados*: though Douglas's version is manifestly superior poetically, it was printed only once in London (in 1553: n.22 above); Phaer's success is partly a consequence of his use of a more standard English. See Kendal (n.22 above) vol. 1, xxxix, for the manuscript circulation and printing history of Douglas's version. See also Brammall (n.14 above) 19.

⁴⁰ Hardison (n.27 above) 202; *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot, 1954, London, 244; for Pound's admiration of Golding, see *ibid.* 38, 237–39.

⁴¹ Webbe in Smith (n.37 above) vol. 1, 259. For Webbe's "conference" of Phaer with Virgil, see *ibid.* 256–62. For Webbe's use of "cobby" to mean "that which is copied", see 'copy', n. and adj. IV. 8, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2016, citing this passage.

⁴² Nashe in Smith (n.37 above) vol. 1, 315. In the same sentence Nashe was more waspish about Phaer as a man, enigmatically noting that "had it not bin blemisht by his hautie thoughts England might haue long insulted in his wit, and *corrigat qui potest* haue been subscribed to his workes". "Insulted" here has the sense of "boasted"; see 'insult', v, 1.c, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2016, citing this passage.

Like Stanyhurst, Phaer observes all the half-lines in book 2. His rendering of the *stant circum* passage gives a flavour of his translation as a whole. In this case I give a slightly longer excerpt:

*Amids the flore the kéepers stooode, the chief of capteines stout,
Both Phenix and Vlisses false with them their trayn about
The prairie did kéepe, and Greekes to them the Troian riches brought,
That from the fiers on euery syde was raught: all temples sought
And tables from the gods were take, and basons great of gold,
And precious plate and robes of kyngly state, and treasours old,
And captiue childern stooode, and trembling wifes in long aray
Were stowed about and wept.⁴³*

John Thompson long ago pointed out the predictable quality of the caesura in the fourteener, which usually falls after the eighth syllable. For Thompson, this helps to account for the ultimate triumph of the shorter iambic pentameter line, which became freer and less predictable in its placement of caesura.⁴⁴ Though there are exceptions to this rule, the point remains that in the fourteener, metrical pattern tends to “overwhelm” speech rhythm and the rhythm of phrase.⁴⁵ In Robert Lowell’s evocative summary, Golding’s fourteener “seems like some arbitrary and wayward hurdle, rather than the very backbone of what is being said”.⁴⁶ The fourteener is not a metrically flexible form: rather, it tends to constrain syntax and meter to its demands. This passage demonstrates the uneasy dance Phaer has to perform between faithfully rendering the Latin and the exigencies of the form. There is virtually no ambiguity of stress – the iambic pattern is observed almost mechanically. This is why Phaer writes “the gods were take” in place of the more natural English perfect tense, “were taken”: the latter would add a syllable and disrupt the meter, so the inflected participle is sacrificed to the metrical pattern. But he has some success in varying caesura position; sense is not always contained by the couplet form, with some effective enjambments in phrases like “all temples sought / And tables from the gods were take”. The half-line itself helps him to combat the

⁴³ Virgil (n.8 above) sig. F2r.

⁴⁴ There are problems with this argument, particularly in relation to the idea that the iambic pentameter line is always flexible in terms of caesura. Both George Gascoigne and George Puttenham argued that the caesura should always fall after the fourth syllable in a decasyllabic line, and there is significant evidence in the work of poets like Gascoigne, Raleigh and Churchyard that this form – which I characterize elsewhere as the 4 / 6 line – was all but hegemonic in poetic practice during the 1570s and -80s. See Gascoigne in Smith (n.37 above) vol. 1, 54; Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. F. Whigham & W. A. Rebhorn, 2007, Ithaca NY, 162, and C. M. Bajetta, ‘Raleigh’s Early Poetry in its Metrical Context’, *Studies in Philology* 93.4 (1996), 390–411.

⁴⁵ J. Thompson, *The Founding of English Metre*, 1961, repr. 1989, New York, 36.

⁴⁶ Cited by Thompson (n.45 above) 36 n.2. For the full essay, see R. Lowell, *Collected Prose*, ed. R. Giroux, 1987, London, 152–60 (155).

fourteener's tendency to monotony, by virtue of its brevity, its avoidance of rhyme, and the emphasis which the syntax inevitably throws onto the metrical fragment. Nevertheless, this is far from the pointed syntax and imagistic sharpness of the Latin, or the versions of Surrey and even Stanyhurst. Notice the way Phaer introduces the strictly redundant "stowed" to qualify "the trembling wifes", because he does not want to repeat "stoode" which qualifies the "captiue children".

Spenser learnt much from writers like Phaer about keeping a steady beat, but he also varied their practice by his use of syllabic ambiguity, in which stress is shifted according to poetic context. A good example of this is the line "But in lewd loues, and wastfull luxuree" from the climax to book II of *The Faerie Queene*, the Bower of Bliss (xii.80). While this is a perfect decasyllabic line which can be stressed as an orthodox iambic pentameter, I would suggest you miss its full weight unless you are prepared to read the powerful alliterative phrase "lewd loves" as two consecutive syllables which take a strong accent.⁴⁷ There is a similar quasi-spondaic pattern to the line "To which *sad* louers were transformd of yore", quoted above.⁴⁸ *The Faerie Queene* is full of these metrical grace notes to a far greater extent than is usually acknowledged. Spenser achieves metrical variety neither through quantitative experiment, nor through the wrenching of the conventional accent later practised by Donne, but through the cultivation of syllabic ambiguity and variety of caesura in decasyllabic lines and alexandrines.⁴⁹ The imitation of the Virgilian half-lines is part of this commitment to metrical experiment: by interpreting Virgil's poetic lesions as poetic lessons, Spenser achieves variety of effect.

What emerges from these comparisons is that poetic and intellectual fashions in English verse dictate what is picked up in translation in the 16th century. The status of the half-lines varies accordingly. The translations most influenced by humanism are those of Stanyhurst and Phaer, which arguably fail in different ways: one is too eccentric, while the other is too predictable. Both poets urgently want to find English equivalents for the Virgilian half-lines, but they do not turn these features to decisive artistic advantage. The idealist Stanyhurst rigorously reproduces each one; the more pragmatic Surrey, whose verse form would soon become hegemonic, is less determined to follow the patterns of the Latin original.

⁴⁷ See G. T. Wright, *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*, 1988, Berkeley CA, 149–59, for the argument that Shakespeare cultivated "metrical ambiguity" (158). The conventional view is succinctly expressed by J. Dolven, "Spenser's Metrics," in R. A. McCabe (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, 2010, Oxford, 389: *The Faerie Queene* shows a "massive commitment to iambic movement". While this is true, my point is that such "iambic movement" necessarily makes room for the spondaic, trochaic and even pyrrhic iambs observed by Wright in Shakespeare. For another example, consider III.vi.1, "Seemeth that such wild woods should far expel", which on Dolven's account would be scanned as a trochee followed by four iambs. Using Wright's model of syllabic ambiguity, I read this line as a trochee, a pyrrhic, a spondee, and then two iambs.

⁴⁸ My emphases.

⁴⁹ See Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 31–32, for Spenser's preference for a looser, Italian model of caesura placement.

Writing “Virgil” into stanzas

Spenser’s debt to Virgil is both well known and widely discussed.⁵⁰ At what was probably an early stage his career, certainly prior to the death of the Earl of Leicester in 1588, Spenser translated the pseudo-Virgilian *Culex* as *Virgils Gnat*. It was eventually published in the *Complaints* volume of 1591. As Spenser’s title indicates, he was confident of the *Culex*’s connection with Virgil; he was later to borrow the *Ciris* for aspects of Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, again underlining the extent to which he maintained what Colin Burrow suggests was an unusual interest in the *Appendix Vergiliana*.⁵¹ The extraordinary dedicatory sonnet to the long dead Earl of Leicester, which prefixes *Virgils Gnat*, makes explicit the connection Spenser felt between himself and “Virgil”. As Spenser feels himself to have been “Wrong’d” by Leicester, so the translation gives a “clowdie”, or allegorical, account of Spenser’s “evill plight”.⁵² For the purposes of understanding the half-lines in *The Faerie Queene*, and how they may or may not imitate Virgil, the still relatively marginal *Virgils Gnat* provides a template for the ways in which Spenser reprocessed dactylic hexameter verse paragraphs into rhyming stanzas.

Spenser’s most important stylistic decision was to render Latin dactylic hexameters as stanzaic verse: he chose *ottava rima*, the eight-line stanza form with the interlaced rhyme scheme, *Abababcc*, used by Ariosto and Tasso in their epics. This recasting of the *Culex* into a modish verse form gives a flavour of how Spenser reworks Virgil. Wilson-Okamura’s *Spenser’s International Style* worries at an analogous problem: why is *The Faerie Queene* so unclassical, given the importance of Virgil to Spenser and his contemporaries? “Why stanzas for epic”?⁵³ In effect, he suggests, neither Phaer’s fourteeners nor Stanyhurst’s quantitative verse sounds any more “classical” than Spenser’s stanzas. Contemporary epic was pervasively stanzaic.⁵⁴ *Virgils Gnat* then demonstrates at once Spenser’s interest in Virgil as a precedent, and his sense of the possible equivalence between hexameter verse paragraphs and rhyming stanzas. I do not mean to suggest that Spenser (or indeed Sir John Harington)⁵⁵ seriously thought *ottava rima* stanzas were “like” dactylic hexameter; I want rather to underline that Elizabethan culture

⁵⁰ See Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 20–24, for an overview.

⁵¹ C. Burrow, ‘English Renaissance Readers and the *Appendix Vergiliana*’, *PVS* 26 (2008), 1–16.

⁵² Spenser, *Complaints. Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie*, 1591, London. Quotations are from Spenser, *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. W. Oram et al, 1989, New Haven CT, 297–98. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Spenser’s non-*Faerie Queene* poetry are from this edition; line references are given parenthetically in text.

⁵³ Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) chapters 1 and 6.

⁵⁴ This is not an unvarying rule: the chorographical epics by William Warner, *Albion’s England* (1586; 1589, London) and Michael Drayton, *Polyolbion* (1612, London) use fourteeners and alexandrine couplets, respectively. See also Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 33, for Italian experiments with *versi sciolti da rima*, the Italian equivalent of blank verse.

⁵⁵ Sir John Harington, *The Sixth Book of Virgil’s Aeneid*, ed. S. Cauchi, 1991, Oxford. As Cauchi notes, the choice of *ottava rima* was “unusual”, particularly in England, though there were Italian precedents (xviii).

thought stanzaically. Stanzas were the fashionable idiom of poetry and song; the misanthropic Jacques contemptuously asks the singer Amiens for another song in the Forest of Arden by saying, “call you ’em *stanzos*?”; yet in the same scene shows himself to be an accomplished parodist of the form.⁵⁶ Stanzas were ubiquitous: thus the phenomenon of stanzaic Virgils shows the readiness of 16th-century writers to adapt his works to their own preferred tunes.

Despite the massive differences in tone, language and quality between the Latin originals, comparing *Virgils Gnat* with Sir John Harington’s *ottava rima* version of *Aeneid* 6 is instructive.⁵⁷ As English poetry, Spenser’s version is generally elegant and pointed, where Harington’s serves to emphasise the huge aesthetic differences and lack of intrinsic formal reciprocity between the two forms. Virgil of course did not think in stanzas, and Harington’s version shows the pressure of trying to splice the matter of semantically freewheeling verse paragraphs into predetermined, unvarying poetic units. These are not always happy accommodations: Virgilian matter often seems cramped in Harington’s pokier poetic spaces.⁵⁸ In contrast, *Virgils Gnat* shows Spenser assimilating the Latin into a stanzaic idiom chiefly through processes of leisurely expansion: the work of translation is one of unhurried formal transformation. This significantly adds words and lines⁵⁹ to the sparser languours of the Latin original:

*O pecudes, ò Panes, & o gratissima Tempe,
Fontis Hamadryadum: quarum non diuite cultu
Aemulus Ascraeo pastor sibi quisque poëtae
Securam placido traducit pectore uitam.*⁶⁰

Spenser was in his element in the blissful *locus amoenus*, and his version shows the poetic equivalent of the process described by John Donne in ‘A Valediction Forbidding Mourning’ as “an expansion / Like gold to airy thinness beat”, as four Latin lines become eight English ones.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.5.15–56.

⁵⁷ See R. D. Brown, *The New Poet: Novelty and Tradition in Spenser’s Complaints*, 1999, Liverpool, 57–61. Colin Burrow’s 2004 paper to the Virgil Society observes, in the context of his scintillating close reading of the poem as an inventive attempt to find equivalents for untranslatable Latin terms like “the neoteric code-word *tenuis*”, that my study does not directly say whether *Virgils Gnat* is enjoyable. Burrow is right, yet my silence on the aesthetic quality of *Virgils Gnat* does not betoken indifference. See Burrow (n.51 above) 9–10.

⁵⁸ See Brown (n.57 above) 57–58, on stanza 17 of Harington’s version.

⁵⁹ *Culex* has 414 lines, *Virgils Gnat* has 688. Even allowing for the greater semantic weight within an individual dactylic hexameter line in contrast with a decasyllabic iambic pentameter line, this is a significant lengthening.

⁶⁰ *Culex* 94–97 in Spenser, *The Minor Poems: Part Two*, ed. C. Grosvenor Osgood and H. Gibbons Lotspeich, 1947, Baltimore, 552. This edition reprints the *Culex* Spenser probably used, printed by Dumaeus in Antwerp in 1542. See Virgil, *Aeneid VII-XII; The Minor Poems*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, 2000, Cambridge MA, 410.

⁶¹ John Donne, *The Major Works*, ed. J. Carey, 1990, Oxford, 120.

*O flocks, O Faunes, and O ye pleasaunt springs
 Of Tempe, where the countrey Nymphs are rife,
 Through whose not costly care each shepheard sings
 As merrie notes upon his rusticke Fife,
 As that Ascræan bard, whose fame now rings
 Through the wide world, and leads as joyfull life,
 Free from all troubles and from worldly toyle,
 In which fond men doe all their dayes turmoyle. (145–52)*

As Burrow suggests, *Virgils Gnat* is characterized by an almost voluptuous delight in phrase-making. There is a particular enjoyment evident in additions like the line “As merry notes vpon his rusticke Fife”, an activity implied rather than stated in the Latin, and which aligns the shepherd with Spenser’s pastoral persona Colin Clout as a “rusticke” poet.⁶² But this is more than just rich writing – as I have noted, the cultural transaction we witness here is a movement from thinking in verse paragraphs to thinking stanzaically. Each *ottava rima* stanza is a meshed grid of interlaced rhymes, leading to the definitive closure of the couplet. In this case, the stanzaic implications of the work Spenser does with “Virgil” is shown by the fact that the couplet expands on the single word *securam* in the Latin. Spenser’s couplet at once indulges the fantasy of a world free of troubles while taking the opportunity this vista affords for gentle, almost generous moralizing.⁶³ It’s a characteristic touch in a poem which shows Spenser subordinating a classical original to the discipline of the stanza, and experimenting with how stanzaic form may be used in an extended poem. Donne, another poet fascinated by the creative affordances of stanzas as a kind of new poetic technology, anticipated “build[ing] in sonnets pretty rooms”.⁶⁴ This is akin to what Spenser does in *Virgils Gnat*, as the “pretty room” of *ottava rima* becomes a way of reframing the *Culex*.

⁶² Though not used directly by Spenser in *The Shepheardes Calender*, “rusticke” is an important part of E. K.’s defence of archaism (a device to “make his rymes more ragged and rustical”), while the gloss to “Januarye” makes a direct allusion to Virgil’s use of the term in the *Eclogues*. Later poems such as *Daphnaida* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* explicitly identify Colin through epithets like “my rustick quill”; see *The Shorter Poems* (n.52 above) 14, 33, 541.

⁶³ The *c*-rhyme, *toyle: turmoyle*, was probably experienced as a full rhyme by Elizabethan readers, with *turmoyle* sounded as a natural iamb. This is suggested by Spenser’s practice in *The Faerie Queene*, where the word is typically rhymed with terms like *spoile, soyle* as well as *toyle*; see Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 333.

⁶⁴ Donne, ‘The Canonization’ (n.61 above, 96); compare also ‘The Good Morrow’: “love ... makes one little room an everywhere” (*ibid.* 90). In each case, Donne puns on the etymology of *stanza* from the Italian for *room*; see ‘stanza’, n, *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2016.

Half-lines in *The Faerie Queene*

Compared with the *Aeneid*, there are only a few half-lines in *The Faerie Queene*. The ratios seem wrong: where *The Faerie Queene* has around 35,000 lines to the *Aeneid*'s less than 10,000, the latter has 50 half-lines where the former musters around 6. The projected poem Spenser described in the Letter to Raleigh (appended to the 1590 edition) would have been a mammoth of 12, or possibly even 24 books.⁶⁵ As my formulations indicate, there is some uncertainty about the precise number of half-lines. It partly depends on which of the primary texts you consult: *The Faerie Queene* was published in different editions in 1590, 1596 and 1609.⁶⁶ Wilson-Okamura gives the following tally based on A. C. Hamilton's standard modern text: II.iii.26.9; II.viii.55.9; III.iii.50.9; III.iv.39.7; III.vi.45.4; and III.ix.37.5. He plausibly suggests that these instances "all occur in a Vergilian context".⁶⁷ I would add to this a few significant anomalies. II.x.24.8–9 in some copies of the 1590 edition is garbled, presumably as the compositor struggled to understand the Welsh text in the manuscript.⁶⁸ The reader of III.vi.26.4 in 1590 encounters a half-line, "To seeke the fugitiue" (the runaway is Cupid, who has fled from Venus in high dudgeon), which sticks out in the same way as "And dearest loue" would later in the same canto in the 1609 edition. By 1596, this loose end is tidied up with the rhyming formula "both farre and nere".⁶⁹ Finally, though it does not create a half-line, the change to I.x.20 in the 1609 edition is significant. In 1590 and 1596, this stanza is an "unperfect" eight-liner; in 1609, it is completed with the addition of a fifth line, "Dry-shod to passe, she parts the flouds in tway". Though some scholars have argued in favour of the eight-line version on the basis of numerological and theological patterning, the change is clearly authorial, and suggests that Spenser generally placed the satisfaction of the stanzaic pattern ahead of other considerations.⁷⁰ What follows from this is that those remaining half-lines are stylistically and thematically significant: the correction of I.x.20 supports the view that the "And dearest loue" fragment, introduced in the same edition, is authorial.

⁶⁵ Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 132. For the Letter to Raleigh, see *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 714–18.

⁶⁶ All published in London; conventionally abbreviated as 1590, 1596 and 1609; see *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) xx, 736. 1590 contains books I–III; 1596 reprints these books with some alterations and adds books IV–VI. 1609 adds the Mutabilitie Cantos, with again a number of textual changes, many of which appear to be authorial.

⁶⁷ Wilson-Okamura, 'Belphoebe and Gloriana' (n.5 above) 49.

⁶⁸ The correct reading is "That not *Scuith guiridh* it mote seeme to bee, / But rather *y Scuith gogh*, signe of sad crueltee"; i.e. "not *the green shield* as it may seem to be but rather *the red shield*"; see *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 251. Uncorrected copies reduce this to: "That not [] he mote seeme to be. / But []", where visually the gaps on the page seem to recall the lacunae in Eumnestes' library in the previous canto, "worm-eaten, and full of canker holes" (II.ix.57); see *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, London, 332, using the British Library copy on EEBO, and *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 742, and Fig. 1 below.

⁶⁹ See *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 745.

⁷⁰ See *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 128, 738, and A. Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, 1964, London, 145 n.1. See below for discussion of the probable authorial revisions incorporated into the 1609 edition.

Yet it is important to be clear that this textual evidence points in different directions. That the attractive half line of 1590, “To seeke the fugitiue”, could be resolved into a full pentameter in 1596 may imply that Spenser’s unrealised intention was to fill all such gaps. On this account half-lines may be – as with Virgil – relics of the compositional process, and of the difficulties imposed by the search for rhyme.⁷¹ “And dearest loue” might conceivably have been plugged by a six-syllable iambic formula, such as “lamented more and more”.⁷² Spenser’s stanza makes his half-lines typographically apparent as ruptures in the fabric of his poem, which are invariably surprising to readers trained to expect stanzaic unity and uniformity. This is why I cite the press variant of II.x.24: the violence of the semantic gaps in the British Library copy illustrates the way in which any deviation from the typographic form of the stanza impinges on the reader’s consciousness, and potentially disrupts and reorients the reading experience (see Fig. 1).⁷³ When we see gaps like this, we are predisposed to try to make sense of them, either by filling them in (as I have with III.vi.45), or by allegorizing them as symbolic spaces.

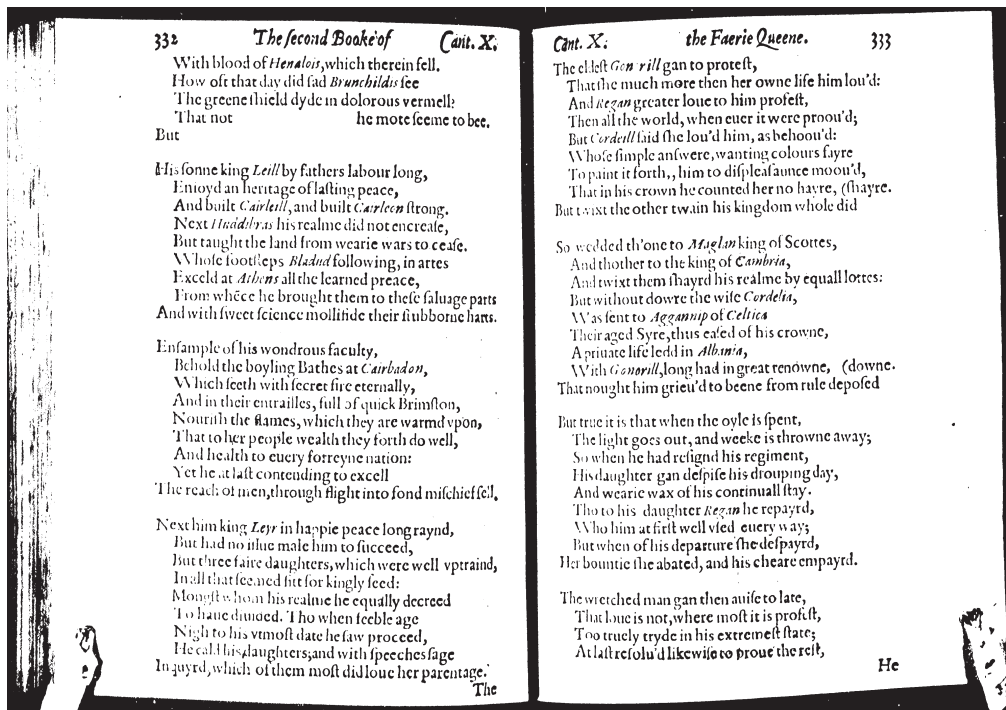


FIG. 1 showing the uncorrected version of II.x.24.8–9 in the British Library copy, reproduced from EEBO.

⁷¹ See Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 71–75, for discussion of the ways in which *The Faerie Queene* is ordered around the search for rhymes.

⁷² Improvised from Arthur Golding’s phrase “His flames augmented more and more” in his version of the Hyacinthus story; see Arthur Golding, *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, ed. M. Forey, 2002, London, 300 (10.184).

⁷³ For discussion of Spenser’s use of the white spaces around stanzas to manipulate readerly attention, see T. Krier, ‘Time Lords: Rhythm and Interval in Spenser’s Stanzaic Narrative’, *Spenser Studies* 21 (2007), 1–19.

One of the most widely discussed half-lines is the blazon of the virgin huntress Belphoebe (a symbolic representation of Elizabeth I), itself an echo of the description of Venus as a huntress in *Aen.* 1:

*So faire, and thousand times more faire
 She seemd, when she presented was to sight,
 And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
 All in a silken Camus lylly whight,
 Purfled vpon with many a folded plight,
 Which all about besprinkled was throughout,
 With golden aygulets, that glistred bright
 Like twinckling stares, and all the skirt about
 Was hemd with golden fringe*

(II.iii.26)

Again, the rupture of the formal design is visually striking. The Spenserian stanza's formal design interlaces three different rhymes on the pattern *Ababbcbcc*, where the final line is an alexandrine. The special character of the alexandrine within the stanza is shown by the typography in all early editions (and most modern ones), whereby the first and ninth lines of each stanza are justified to the left while the median seven lines are set slightly to the right. Poetically and spatially, the slouching alexandrine rounds out the stanzaic space (see Fig. 1). Spenserian alexandrines have a marked tendency to fall into two equal six-syllable hemistichs, as in a line from a few stanzas prior to this: "She broke his wanton darts, and quenched base desire" (II.iii.23).⁷⁴ In the case of stanza 26, the final line is a maimed half measure, blatantly failing to satisfy the pattern.

What then is the function of such half-lines – are they oversights, or are they deliberate attempts to turn poetic shortfall to artistic advantage? In this case, there is no simple explanation. Louis Montrose suggested that the incomplete alexandrine is a moment of spectacular poetic tact, or "conspicuous silence", on Spenser's part: as the blazon goes down Belphoebe's body, from her "Camus", or chemise, to her "skirt", the poet refuses to go beyond "the golden fringe" of Belphoebe's attire to what lies beneath.⁷⁵ As A. C. Hamilton puts it, the half-line potentially "indicates the poet's distraction when he contemplates Belphoebe's genitalia, and necessarily moves lower".⁷⁶ To the contrary, Wilson-Okamura insists: "There

⁷⁴ See J. Hollander, 'Alexandrine', in A. C. Hamilton *et al.* (eds), *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, 1990, Toronto, 15–16 (15).

⁷⁵ L. A. Montrose, 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text', in P. Parker & D. Quint (eds), *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts*, 1986, Baltimore, 327.

⁷⁶ In *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 184.

are crotch lyrics, but no crotch epics, and no epic crotches. For blazonneurs, the epic subject is breasts” – the half-lines are “allusion-markers” to Virgil and nothing more.⁷⁷ What this doesn’t explain is why Spenser should formally allude to Virgil *here*, beyond the fact that that this episode is “modeled on Aeneas’ encounter with Venus” in *Aeneid* 1, a passage, it should be said, which does *not* include any half-lines.⁷⁸ Perhaps this stanza tells us little more than that Spenser’s half-lines are, like Virgil’s, both tantalizing and hazardous to interpret categorically.

And yet the failure to correct this half-line in either 1596 or 1609 suggests deliberation. Similarly, the fact that it occurs in the middle of what A. C. Hamilton calls the poem’s “longest and most ecstatic blazon” – a passage which at one level idealises Elizabeth I – is also provocative. Surely a “mistake” in a set piece of this kind would have been corrected?⁷⁹ Such questions should lead back to the extraordinary poetry of this stanza, which embodies much of the charge of Spenser’s diction and his invention of a poetic language which seemed strange even to his contemporaries.⁸⁰ Spenser’s archaic diction is another gesture in Virgil’s direction.⁸¹ In the process of blazoning Belpheobe, Spenser deploys a consciously inflated vocabulary with archaic lexis, where words are chosen partly for their unfamiliarity and partly for their ornamental glitter. “Purfled”, “plight”, “besprinckled” and “aygulet” contribute to a richly ornate surface, which underlines Belpheobe’s exceptional exceptionalness. Spenser, we might say, polishes his verse to convey verbally a sense of Belpheobe’s shimmer “That quite bereau’d the rash beholders sight” (II.iii.23). In this context, it could be suggested that the non-alexandrine mimetically enacts the narrator’s amazement at the character he describes. Like David Lee Miller, I tend to think the half-line comprises both that amazement and “a displaced representation of what cannot be displayed” beneath Belpheobe’s clothing.⁸² Syrithe Pugh offers a different perspective:

⁷⁷ Wilson-Okamura, ‘Belpheobe and Gloriana’ (n.5 above) 49–50. For a rejoinder, see D. Lee Miller, ‘Spenser and Historical Stylistics; or, The Case Against the Case Against Close Reading’, *Spenser Review* 45.2.29 (Fall 2015: <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/spenseronline/review/item/45.2.29>): “this argument assumes the half-lines can only be doing one thing: not that, but this. There is no reason the half-line in question can’t be doing both of those things and more”.

⁷⁸ Wilson-Okamura, ‘Belpheobe and Gloriana’ (n.5 above) 49. Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid I-VI*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, 1999, Cambridge MA, 282–91, *Aen.* 1.314–417; the first acknowledged half-line is at 1.534. See also Virgil (n.19 above) 130–33.

⁷⁹ *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 183–84. Hamilton also notes that the line stands at “the centre of the ten stanzas” that describe Belpheobe. 1590 includes a final sheet of “Faults escaped in the Print”, which does not correct this line; see *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, 606 (British Library copy).

⁸⁰ For examples of contemporary reaction to Spenser’s “grandam words”, see R. M. Cummings (ed), *Spenser: The Critical Heritage*, 1971, London, 280–314 (288).

⁸¹ See Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 60–62, a discussion which defends Spenser against the strictures of in particular Sidney and Jonson.

⁸² Lee Miller (n.77 above).

“The gap here is about what is unrepresentable *either* because it is numinous and sacred, like a Platonic Idea, *or* because the viewer is so lewd and the narrator so chaste, *or* because there are some (satirical) things which it is dangerous to mention out loud. All of these are difficulties of representation, and by leaving a gap, Spenser is leaving it up to the reader to decide which difficulty is at stake. We have to fill in the gap, as it were, and in doing so we must decide whether *The Faerie Queene* is to be a praise poem, or a dramatic poem ... or satirical.”⁸³

Spenser’s failure to complete his description of Belphoebe’s skirt shows him failing to finish the edge – the fringe – of his stanza. What we read here is a gap which betokens poetic bewilderment in the face of his subject. Rather than being a sign of the poet’s constraint, it is a mark of his inventive formal freedom, which underlines the difference between stanzaic verse and verse paragraphs, as the unfinished edge hovers into semantically uncertain space on the white page.⁸⁴ At the same time, as Pugh highlights, the gap underlines the interpretative work the reader has to do. Allusion markers they may be, but the half-lines demand more active interpretation from the alert reader.

Elsewhere in the poem, there is less ambiguous evidence that half-lines are a deliberate variation of Spenser’s usual stylistic palate. Later in Book II, he uses a similarly curtailed alexandrine to suggest the delicate reciprocity which is developing between the book’s hero, Sir Guyon, and his rescuer, Prince Arthur:

*As to the Patrone of his life, thus sayd;
My Lord, my liege, by whose most gracious ayd
I liue this day, and see my foes subdewd,
What may suffise, to be for meede repayd
Of so great graces, as ye haue me shewd,
But to be euer bound*

*To whom the Infant thus, Faire Sir, what need
Good turnes be counted, as a seruile bond,
To bind their doers, to receiue their meede?
Are not all knights by oath bound, to withstood
Oppressours powre by armes and puissant hond?
Suffise, that I haue done my dew in place.
So goodly purpose they together fond[.]*

(II.viii.55–56)

⁸³ In correspondence with the author.

⁸⁴ Compare Montrose’s conclusion: “the poet protects himself by conspicuously censoring himself, marking the constraint upon his text with a lacuna” (n.75 above, 328).

The suggestion that Arthur interrupts Guyon goes back to Ralph Church, who in his 1758 edition noted that, because neither the 1596 nor 1609 editions complete the hemistich, he was “inclined to think *Spenser* never intended to fill it up. The speech of Sir *Guyon* is plainly finished: The Prince breaks in upon him: *-Faire Sir, &c.*”⁸⁵ Church’s reading is lent further support by the way in which the b- rhyme of stanza 56 modulates from Guyon’s interrupted word, *bound*. In interrupting Guyon, Arthur suggests that he need not be “bound ... as a seruile bond”. Appropriately, the narrative moves forward with the line “So goodly purpose they together fond”, in which the past participle of *find* punningly comprises the fondness which is developing between the two knights. Indeed, this rhyming cluster is noteworthy because it includes two metaplasmic rhymes, *fond* and *bond*, in which Spenser changes conventional orthography for the purposes of rhyme, as though to draw attention to his transgressive freedom with word forms.⁸⁶ These are relatively small gestures, yet they take place against the backdrop of the repudiation by Pyrochles (a personification of intemperate anger) of Arthur’s “princely bounty” and his subsequent decapitation earlier in the canto (II.viii.51–52). Read in the light of John Kerrigan’s *Shakespeare’s Binding Language*, which pays meticulous attention to the language of bond and obligation in Shakespeare, this passage shows the way in which Spenser was similarly attuned to the register of social contract and (here) amicable or chivalric obligation. As Kerrigan notes: “During Shakespeare’s lifetime the cluster of words around *bind*, *bound*, and *bond* was used of so many kinds of connection – bonds of kin, allegiance to a monarch, material threads and cords, being bound by good will or service ... that usage was coloured with implications that allow binding as act and description to draw fields of meaning together.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Guyon’s truncated alexandrine, with its restitution in the following stanza, shows a Spenser prepared to manipulate lineation on the basis of hints he found in the *Aeneid*, for symbolic effect. In Kerrigan’s terms, Arthur repudiates the notion of the “seruile bond” outlined by Guyon, to reassert the old-fashioned – yet still operative within the idealist structures of *The Faerie Queene* – chivalric oath which binds knights “to withstond / Oppressours powre”. Meanwhile, these literal, metaphorical and textual works of severing and restoration anticipate the allegory of the human body in the House of Alma in the next canto.

It is striking that the half-lines listed by Wilson-Okamura occur in the first half of *The Faerie Queene*. The anomalies I have added to this list further stress that this is a phenomenon – or perhaps more strictly an epiphenomenon arising from Spenser’s imitation of Virgil and his complex stanza form – of Books II and III. It may be therefore that the half-lines’

⁸⁵ *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Ralph Church, 4 vols, 1758–59, London, vol. 2, 164–65. Accessed via Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

⁸⁶ See Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 26–27, 259, 366.

⁸⁷ J. Kerrigan, *Shakespeare’s Binding Language*, 2016, Oxford, 10–11.

appearance is significant in terms of the allegorical agendas of these books. Book II is the Legend of Temperance, a core Aristotelian virtue; Book III is the Legend of Chastity, usually understood in a broader sense of appropriate sexuality, while both books further Spenser's epideictic concern with British chronicle history – what he calls “matter of iust memory” in the Proem to Book II – in the episodes in the House of Alma and Merlin's cave.⁸⁸ Moreover, like Phaer and Surrey, Spenser would have been aware of the differential numbers of half-lines in different books of the *Aeneid*: thus the concentration of half-lines in these books of *The Faerie Queene* may be another aspect of Spenser's intertextual allusion to Virgil. As I suggested earlier, though the Donatus *Vita* explains the *Aeneid*'s half-lines as compositional relics, Spenser could well have read them more in the manner of Sparrow, as stylistic variables. In this view, the occurrence of half-lines in *The Faerie Queene* Books II and III would echo the higher number of such lines in *Aeneid* 2. The half-lines of II.iii.26 and II.viii.55 might be read in terms of the book's symbolic concern with sexual conduct and bodily function: Spenser breaks his alexandrines at moments which lend themselves to mimetic reading. I turn now back to Book III to see if the half-lines there may be approached in the similar ways.

Book III's half-lines fall into two categories. Those at III.iii.50 and III.ix.37 are part of the dynastic matter which runs through both Books II and III, modelled both on the *Aeneid* and on the Virgilian strategies employed by 16th-century poets like Ariosto.⁸⁹ The second example undermines an unreliable speaker, the philandering Paridell, whose narrative recaps the fall of Troy. As his story turns to his “linage”, which he claims to “deriue aright” from Paris, the gap in lineation serves to suggest the wrongness of that derivation: “To *Paridas* his sonne. / From whom I *Paridell* by kin descend” (III.ix.37).⁹⁰ The incomplete line at III.iii.50 shows a different pattern. It stands in the place of an alexandrine but is only a pentameter line in the 1590 and 1596 editions, and was extended in 1609 to produce a full alexandrine. The 1590 line “(S)He turnd againe, and chearfull looks did shew” becomes in 1609 “(S)He turnd againe, and chearefull looks *as earst* did shew”.⁹¹ This is a passage which uses strong caesuras thematically: the same stanza begins with the abrupt ending of Merlin's prophecy, “But yet the end is not. There *Merlin* stayed”.⁹² Ruptures of this kind – to line length and to

⁸⁸ Proem to Book II, stanza 1. For overviews with bibliographies, see *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 5–17, and R. Graziani, ‘*The Faerie Queene*, Book II’, and T. P. Roche, Jr, ‘*The Faerie Queene*, Book III’, both in Hamilton (n.74 above) 263–70 (Graziani); 270–73 (Roche).

⁸⁹ Wilson-Okamura, ‘Belphoebe and Gloriana’ (n.5 above) 49; for Ariosto and Virgil, see *idem*, *Virgil* (n.5 above) 189–90.

⁹⁰ See D. Fried, ‘Spenser's Caesura’, *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981), 261–80 (271).

⁹¹ My emphasis. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, London, 440; *The Faerie Queene*, 1609, London, 139, both with the erroneous reading of “Shee” for “He”, picked up in the “Faults escaped in the Print” added to some copies of the 1590 edition; see *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, London, 606, using the British Library copy on Early English Books Online. See also *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 744, for textual commentary.

⁹² See Lee Miller (n.77 above) for discussion of this caesural break in the context of *Aen.* 6.882–83.

line shape – are useful counters in a tertiary epic which is committed to what W. H. Auden waspishly called “history in the future tense”, but which is always ominously conscious that “the end is not” yet ideologically certain.⁹³

The second grouping of half-lines takes us back to where we began, with “And dearest loue”. These are affective hemistichs, where the verse seems to break down in response to the pressure of the events. As many scholars have noted, Cymoent’s lament⁹⁴ for her son, Marinell (who turns out not to be quite as dead as he at first appears) alludes to the lament of Euryalus’s mother in *Aen.* 9:

*But if the heauens did his dayes enuie,
And my short blisse maligne, yet mote they well
Thus much afford me, ere that he did die
That the dim eyes of my deare Marinell
I mote haue closed, and him bed farewell,
Sith other offices for mother meet
They would not graunt.
Yet maulgre them farewell, my sweetest sweet;
Farewell my sweetest sonne, sith we no more shall meet.*

(III.iv.39)

Again, the deliberation and poetic design of the rupture is glaring. Not only does the broken line occur at an emotional high point, but Spenser – as so often – breaks his pattern in order to confirm it by other means thereafter. The broken b-rhyme (*well: Marinell: farewell*), though strictly closed by the unrhyming “graunt”, is immediately followed by the internal *rime riche* of a second then a third “farewell” in lines 8 and 9.⁹⁵ The rhetorical hardwiring of this passage is shown by the anaphora of “my sweetest sweet”, modulated to “my sweetest sonne”: the repetition of simple intensifiers and epithets heightens the emotion.⁹⁶ These are virtuoso effects of rhyme and repetition by a writer who senses the way in which an opportune shortfall may serve to emphasise the skilful fashioning of his verse. Spenser was

⁹³ W. H. Auden, ‘Secondary Epic’ in *Collected Poems*, ed. E. Mendelson, 1976, London, 455–56. Auden’s poem pokes fun at Virgil with a mixture of parody and half-lines: “No, Virgil, no ... Wouldn’t Aeneas have asked:– ‘What next? / After this triumph, what portends?’” For commentary on Spenser’s history in the future tense, see B. Van Es, *Spenser’s Forms of History*, 2002, Oxford, 55–58.

⁹⁴ *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 328; Wilson-Okamura, ‘Belphoebe and Gloriana’ (n.5 above) 49. Confusingly, by Book IV, “Cymoent” has become “Cyomodoce”; see *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 325, 779.

⁹⁵ See Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 341 (for the cluster), and 38–42 (for *rime riche*).

⁹⁶ For anaphora, see Puttenham (n.44 above) 282. Puttenham stresses the formal character of the device – it makes “one word begin, and ... lead the dance to many verses in suit” – though his examples (including one from Raleigh) are also passages of heightened emotion.

always a show-off poet, which is perhaps partly why the epithet of “the poet’s poet” stuck to him for so long.⁹⁷

The passage from the *Aeneid* which is paraphrased in this stanza – *nec te tua funera mater / Produxi, pressiue oculos, aut volnera lavi* – does not include a half-line.⁹⁸ Just before this moment, however, Virgil describes the Rutulians exalting over the dead Trojans with a striking half-line:

*Quin ipsa arrectis (visu miserabile) in hastis
Praefigunt capita, & multo clamore sequuntur,
Euryali, & Nisi.*⁹⁹

Mimetic reading is once again hard to resist: as Euryalus and Nisus’s heads are speared, the half-line of forlorn genitives seems to enact the brutal severing the text describes. Cymoent’s lament – with its sense of shortfall and the “maligne” interruption of natural processes – clearly takes some of its stylistic impetus from the deaths of Euryalus and Nisus.

In the case of the Ovidian stanza which I begun with, as already noted, the publication history of *The Faerie Queene* suggests that Spenser corrected it to look as it does. Moreover, that history suggests that Spenser was looking to place a half-line in this canto, and adjusted his intentions at some point after the 1596 edition. In the two editions published during Spenser’s life time, the stanza is a line short:

*And all about grew euery sort of flowre,
To which sad louers were transformd of yore;
Fresh Hyacinthus, Phoebus paramoure,
Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore,
Sad Amaranthus, made a flowre but late,
Sad Amaranthus, in whose purple gore
Me seemes I see Amintas wretched fate,
To whom sweet Poets verse hath giuen endlesse date.*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See P. Alpers, ‘The Poet’s Poet’, in Hamilton (n.74 above) 551, for the history of this phrase and its connections with the Romantic view of Spenser.

⁹⁸ *Aen.* 9.486–87, quoted from Virgil (n.19 above) 365. “I am your mother and did not walk before you at your funeral; nor close your eyes, nor wash your wounds” (Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. D. West, 2003, London, 201).

⁹⁹ *Aen.* 9.465–67, quoted from Virgil (n.19 above) 365. “They even stuck the heads of Euryalus and Nisus on spears – what a sight that was! – and paraded along behind them shouting” (trans. West, n.98 above, 200).

¹⁰⁰ *The Faerie Queene*, 1596, London, 490. 1590’s misprint of “*Marcisse*” for “*Narcisse*” was corrected in this edition.

In both 1590 and 1596, it is printed over two pages, which may have contributed to its missing line, though again there are only a very few incomplete stanzas in this massive poem, and many “perfect” stanza which are printed over two pages.¹⁰¹ The version with the half-line is first printed in the posthumous edition by Matthew Lownes in 1609. During the 1590s, Spenser’s publisher was William Ponsonby; when Ponsonby died in 1604, Lownes acquired the rights to his stock. As Andrew Zurcher has suggested in relation to the *Mutabilitie Cantos* (which first appeared in the 1609 edition), Lownes almost certainly inherited manuscripts and a copy of the 1596 edition marked up with Spenser’s corrections. The 1596 *Faerie Queene* was relatively poorly printed by Richard Field, who incidentally printed Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* in 1593 and 1594, and was a fellow native of Stratford.¹⁰² As J. C. Smith observed long ago, “And dearest loue” seems “a touch beyond an editor”,¹⁰³ particularly given the way the half-line assonates with the a- and the b- rhymes: as I have just noted, Spenser’s ruptures to his patterns often turn out to confirm them by other means. In the 1590 and 1596 editions, the stanza has a preponderance of rhymes on related sounds: the heavy diphthongs of both the a-rhyme (*flowre: paramoure*) and the b-rhyme (*yore: shore: gore*) are relieved by the introduction of the hemistich in 1609. “Loue” neatly assonates with the surrounding rhymes without precisely repeating a pattern which otherwise risked becoming cloying. Repetition with difference is one of the key aesthetic tricks of the Spenserian stanza, and the later version of III.vi.45 is in this respect manifestly superior to the earlier version.¹⁰⁴ Finally, as Hamilton suggests, “There may be a witty point ... the poet’s verse is cut short even as lovers’ lives have been cut short ‘of yore’ and ‘but late’”.¹⁰⁵ Amintas in this stanza alludes to Thomas Watson’s Latin poem of the same name (1585). This sequence of eleven laments was translated by Abraham Fraunce in 1587, a text which may co-opt Watson’s poems to the mourning of Sir Philip Sidney, who had died in 1586.¹⁰⁶ In these contexts, the isolation of “And dearest loue” serves both to amplify the loss of Hyacinthus and “*Amintas* wretched fate”.

There is a further aspect to this half-line which has not been previously discussed, as far as I am aware. This concerns the half-line at III.vi.26 in the 1590 *Faerie Queene*, noted above. The uncorrected stanza reads:

*To seeke the God of loue her Nymphes she sent,
Throughout the wandring forest euery where:*

¹⁰¹ See above for I.x.20.

¹⁰² A. Zurcher, ‘The Printing of the *Cantos of Mutabilitie* in 1609’, in J. Grogan (ed), *Celebrating Mutabilitie: Essays on Edmund Spenser’s Mutabilitie Cantos*, 2010, Manchester, 42, 59 (n.8).

¹⁰³ Quoted in Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, 1977, Harlow, 363.

¹⁰⁴ See Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 243, 348, for the rhyming clusters.

¹⁰⁵ *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 349.

¹⁰⁶ See M. Eccles, ‘Watson, Thomas’, in Hamilton (n.74 above) 727–28, and *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 349.

*And after them her selfe eke with her went
 To seeke the fugitiue.
 So long they sought, till they arriued were
 In that same shadie couert, whereas lay
 Faire Crysogone in slombry traunce whilere:
 Who in her sleepe (a wondrous thing to say)
 Vnwares had borne two babes, as faire as springing day. (III.vi.26)¹⁰⁷*

My aim here is not reinstate the line as printed in 1590, although it is in its own way just as effective as “And sweetest loue” or “They would not graunt”. Cupid’s errancy here is stressed as “the fugitiue” is given prominence – a prominence partly underscored by the half-rhyme of “fugitiue” with “the God of loue” in line 1. In turn, the strong break at the close of line 4 marks the transition from the hunt for Cupid (unresolved in this poem) to the discovery of Chrysogone in the second half of the stanza. The correction of 1596 – inserting “both farre and nere” – is a formulaic rhyming phrase of the kind we encounter throughout *The Faerie Queene*.¹⁰⁸ While it is not semantically necessary (since the same information is conveyed by the second line and the close of the preceding stanza),¹⁰⁹ the change shows two things. Firstly, it reinforces the sense that Spenser *generally* wanted to comply with the form he had created: we see the poet recognising an anomaly which might be easily tidied up. Secondly – and more interestingly – the gap at III.vi.26 in 1590, coupled with the half-line added to III.vi.45 in 1609, hints at Spenser’s sense that this canto in some way required a half-line. Why should it have done so? This canto is one of the symbolic pageants which occur in every book of the poem. It is an aetological myth of the conception and birth of the twins, Belphoebe (who we have encountered already in Book II) and Amoret (whose travails are one of the central foci of Books III and IV). Imitating Moschus’ ‘The Fugitive Love’, the first part of the canto narrates the story of “the fugitiue” Cupid. In the course of their search for him, Venus and Diana find Chrysogone, who has unconsciously given birth to the “two babes”, that is, Belphoebe and Amoret.¹¹⁰ The second half of the canto turns to the Gardins of Adonis – Venus’s “ioyous”

¹⁰⁷ *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, London, 485. For a critical text of the canto, see http://talus.artsci.wustl.edu/spenserArchivePrototype/html/fq1590.bk3_canto_6.html. This gives the text which will be used in the *Collected Works of Edmund Spenser*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

¹⁰⁸ For rhyming formulae, see Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 115–56, where Lethbridge argues for the comprehensively formulaic cast of *The Faerie Queene*. While I have reservations about his interpretation of these formulae, their existence – and poetic importance – is clear from his evidence.

¹⁰⁹ III.vi.25: Venus “forth her damzells sent / Through all the woods, to search from place to place / If any tract of him or tidings they mote trace”.

¹¹⁰ See *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 343. E. K.’s notes to the ‘March’ eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender* indicate that Spenser had translated Moschus’ poem “into English Rymes”; this lost poem may well be incorporated into this canto. See Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. R. McCabe, 1999, London [Penguin ebook], and J. L. Black & L. Celovsky, “Lost Works”, Supposititious Pieces, and Continuations’ in McCabe (n.47 above) 352.

vegetative “Paradise”, where she takes Amoret after her discovery (III.vi.29). III.vi.45 describes the “pleasaut Arber” at the heart of the Gardins, where Venus has stowed Adonis and where she continues to “reape sweete pleasure of the wanton boy” (III.vi.44, 46). It is a floral as well as an erotic paradise, which in its turn emphasises the subordination of these gardens to “wicked *Tyme*” (III.vi.39). The relocation of the half-line from the hunt for Cupid to the Gardins suggests Spenser’s sense that the pathos of the second half of the canto was greater than the first. By removing the line, he stressed the importance of the Gardins of Adonis passage, since the few scattered half-lines in *The Faerie Queene* have the function of Virgilian grace notes, echoes of the *Aeneid* which sparingly demonstrate allegiance and literary affiliation. Though taking place within an Ovidian portion of the poem, the revised half-line conveys a Virgilian sense of *lacrymae rerum*, as it stresses that the Gardins provide no protection against mortality.¹¹¹ I began by citing C. S. Lewis’s dismay with Spenser’s bland adjectives – “dearest”, “sweetest”, “sad”, “wretched”, which seem almost chosen from a list of words typically vetoed by creative writing classes on the grounds that they are exhausted clichés, overdetermined by cultural expectations. How can a sad lover not seem, well, sad?¹¹² Spenser, like Virgil, wrote and thought differently. What connects III.vi.45 with III.iv.39 is Spenser’s determination that the evanescent sweetness of affection will be turned to poetic account through devices such as anaphora and half-line. The revisions to canto VI enable us to see Spenser thinking through these affective questions of placement. One further related point emerges from this revision: Spenser may simply have liked the sound of half-lines, while realising that they had to be used with restraint.¹¹³ To fail to meet the terms of an elaborate stanza form on a regular basis speaks more of poetic incompetence than poetic premeditation: therefore the half-line is a trick you have to deploy with the utmost care, however pleasing you may find it.

In their different ways, all of my examples show the elegant appropriation of the phenomenon of the Virgilian half-line for exceptional purposes. Most formal readings of *The Faerie Queene* unsurprisingly tend to emphasise its uniformity and compliance over and above its few moments of formal eccentricity. For Susanne Woods, Spenser is an aesthetic rather than a mimetic metrist: that is, his formal effects aim for pleasingness of sound which does not

¹¹¹ Virgil (n.19 above) 135, where modern texts read *lacrymae rerum*; the full line *sunt lacrymae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt* is translated by West (n.98 above, 16) as “there are tears for suffering and men’s hearts are touched by what man has to bear”.

¹¹² See ‘sad’, adj., n., and adv, particularly Special Uses, S2, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2016.

¹¹³ The evidence of Spenser’s other work is that he liked stanza forms with varying line lengths: see the inset lyrics in ‘Aprill’ and ‘November’ in *The Shepheardes Calender*, and the weddings songs, ‘Epithalamion’ and ‘Prothalamion’, in *The Shorter Poems* (n.52 above) 72–76, 189–94, 662–79, 761–69. See Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 177, for the ingenious argument that Spenser’s decision to incorporate feminine rhymes in the 1596 edition was because “he was trying to make a big, fat sound”, and my rejoinder in Brown & Lethbridge (n.12 above) 22–23, 47–60. Though I prefer to see literary effects as semantic, this approach does not rule out a sonal angle to the half-lines in Books II and III.

affect “the lexical meaning of the poem’s statement”.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Wilson-Okamura challenges the paradigmatic view that poetic form is related to content: teachers of literature have been propagating a “Noble Lie”, whereas in fact writing poems is more like baking: “the cake comes first, and frosting goes on when the cake is cool. Writing a poem is no different”.¹¹⁵ Ornament is the icing on the cake of content, and readers of Renaissance poetry should be more willing to accept this than we usually are. Spenser’s half-lines, I suggest, point in a different direction. What intrigued Spenser about Virgil’s half-lines was the same thing which intrigued translators whose sensibilities were informed by humanism: that the most perfect poem which had ever been written was studded with moments of poetic shortfall.¹¹⁶ In this respect, the formal purpose of the half-lines is well captured by one of the early commentators on *The Faerie Queene*. In 1751, John Upton suggested that although Spenser had “fettered himself with rhyme, yet he found a way of disengaging himself sometimes from these fetters” through the Virgilian device of the hemistich.¹¹⁷ Like Upton, my suspicion is that the half-lines were something which Spenser very much liked about the *Aeneid*, in addition to the moral allegory of Aeneas as “a good governour and a vertuous man”, which he mentions in the Letter to Raleigh.¹¹⁸ As well as being epic and fixed, Spenser’s forms are in practice both tactical and flexible, and he saw the *Aeneid* as a justification for this.

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¹¹⁴ Susanne Woods, *Natural Emphasis: English Versification from Chaucer to Dryden*, 1984, San Marino CA, 15, 141.

¹¹⁵ Wilson-Okamura (n.15 above) 150. For my comments on this idea, see R. D. Brown, ‘The Scope of Spenser’s Strangeness’, *Spenser Review* 43.3.53 (Winter 2014: <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/spenseronline/review/volume-43/433/spensers-international-style-1/the-scope-of-spensers-strangeness/>).

¹¹⁶ For related reflection on the way Spenser latches onto the ambiguities of the *Aeneid*, see S. Pugh, ‘Reinventing the Wheel: Spenser’s “Virgilian Career”’, in P. J. Hecht & J. B. Lethbridge (eds), *Spenser in the Moment*, 2015, Madison WI, 3–34, particularly 19–25 on Spenser’s reading of Virgil’s *Fama*.

¹¹⁷ John Upton, *A letter concerning a new edition of Spenser’s Faerie Queene*, 1751, London, 28. Upton’s discussion cites Cowley’s erroneous claim to be the first poet to use half-lines in English, and approvingly quotes from his remarks on the aesthetic nature of many of Virgil’s hemistichs, 28–29. Accessed via Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

¹¹⁸ *The Faerie Queene* (n.2 above) 715.