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"Soveraigne place": Spenser with Henri Lefebvre

Location is one of the primary determinants of "meaning" in *The Faerie Queene*, if not the primary determinant. The present essay uses a Lefebvrian lens to illustrate the tensions inherent in Spenser's attempt to generate spaces intended both to "mirror" and re-"fashion" the various "realms" Queen Elizabeth is invited to "see" in fairyland and to analyze what Lefebvre identifies as the resulting "antagonism" between "a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power." While such an approach helps to reveal the conflicted nature of Spenserian space and the sort of social "discipline" its production entails, the emergent analogy between the two authors allows us to read Lefebvre's own, ultimately frustrated, attempt to articulate "a unified theory of space" as a sort of Marxist "allegory" that repeatedly destabilizes its own premises.

In the beginning was the Topos

—Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*[1]

Why not the Logos? A good question. Location is one of the primary determinants of "meaning" in *The Faerie Queene*, if not the primary determinant. We begin not with a figure in a landscape but a figure in "the" landscape: "A Gentle Knight was pricking on

Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual, Volume XXXVII, 2023.
 https://doi.org/10.1086/722428

the plaine" (I.i.1).[2] The use of articles is essential here: "The Gentle Knight was pricking on a plaine" would initiate quite a different poem. As it is, the unnamed knight's identity will eventually be revealed, but, despite the apparent specificity, "the plaine" will remain elusive. It designates the space, the "fairyland," in which, theoretically, action unfolds into "allegory" to produce "meaning." Its production, according to the account Spenser supplies to Sir Walter Ralegh, serves an avowedly social purpose, "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline" (714). But what sort of society does "discipline" produce? In *La production de l'espace* (1974), which radically conceptualized space not as the locus but as the product of social action, Henri Lefebvre is equally skeptical of discipline's means and ends. "Social space," he warned, "acquires a normative and repressive efficacy . . . that makes the efficacy of mere ideologies and representations pale in comparison."[3] For this reason he was at pains to assert the priority of topos over logos.[4] The latter, as he conceived it, "makes inventories, classifies, arranges: it cultivates knowledge and presses it into the service of power."[5] By so doing, it naturalizes the habitat in which power sustains itself, and this habitat is itself "a tool of power," a spatial facet of hegemony and domination.[6] In what might also serve as a descriptor of allegory, he describes "a society" as "an architecture of concepts, forms, and laws whose abstract truth is imposed on the reality of the senses, of bodies, of wishes and desires."[7]

As all of this suggests, not the least advantage in reading Spenser and Lefebvre "companionably" is the mutually illuminating insights it provides into their respective quests for an elusive "meaning" in a world of bewildering "signs." Indeed, as a version of "that social space wherein language becomes practice,"[8] what I shall henceforward term Spenser's "fairyspace"—identical neither to fairyland nor to England but more akin to a virtual reality disconcertingly conflating aspects of both—arguably captures in its sheer spatial and temporal malleability more of the connotations of the French "*espace*," as Lefebvre employs it, than the terms into which it is usually translated. Lefebvre has previously been seen as providing "a model" for Spenser's "integration of spatiality and materiality," but the present essay will use a Lefebvrian lens to illustrate the tensions inherent in Spenser's attempt to generate spaces intended simultaneously to mirror and re-"fashion" the "realms" Queen Elizabeth is invited to "see" in fairyland, while demonstrating in the process what Lefebvre describes as "the antagonism between a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power."[9] The advantage to such a reading is twofold: while a Lefebvrian approach helps to interrogate the conflicted nature of Spenserian

space and the concept of "discipline" it entails, the emergent analogy between Spenser's project and Lefebvre's allows us to read his own attempt to articulate "a unitary theory of space"[10] through an increasingly digressive discourse as a sort of Marxist "allegory" that repeatedly destabilizes its own premises.[11]

Coleridge famously identified Spenser's fairyland as "mental space," but its recalcitrant physicality defies such sublimation.[12] As Lefebvre observed, the concept of "mental space" creates "an abyss between the mental sphere on the one side and the physical and social spheres on the other," although they are actually inextricable.[13] And their inextricability is what needs to be "read." Although "none, that breatheth living aire, does know, / Where is that happy land of Faery," it may be found, Spenser's narrator informs us, by "certein signes" (II.proem.1). More tellingly, it is a space that encourages translation into the language of governance: "And thou, O fayrest Princesse under sky, / In this fayre mirrhour maist behold thy face / And thine owne realmes in lond of Faery" (II.proem.4). For Spenser no less than Lefebvre, "without the concepts of space and its production, the framework of power (whether as reality or concept) simply cannot achieve concreteness."[14] It is therefore precisely in terms of spatial dominion that Spenser delineates the authority of his poem's dedicatee: "by the / Grace of God Queene / of England, France / and Ireland." That was in 1590. In 1596 he added "and of Virginia" to underscore the queen's claim to the title of "empresse" and, as the poem itself had doubled its size, the poet's claim to that of imperial laureate. Their territories were expanding simultaneously, poetics symbiotically with politics.

This reminds us that for an early modern writer like Spenser logos and topos were intricately connected: the Aristotelian *topoi*, or rhetorical "places," lent content and form to discourse, while tropes such as *topographia*, or the description of place, lent it energeia and praxis. The association persists: as described in *The Location of Culture*, for example, Homi Bhabha's "Third Space" is not a specific location but a discursive site in which "we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves."[15] So far as Spenser was concerned, all the contemporary developments in the understanding, representation, or manipulation of space, from the discovery of true mathematical perspective to Mercator's projection, contributed to the emergence of what Lefebvre has described as "a code at once architectural, urbanistic, and political . . . which allowed space not only to be 'read' but constructed."[16] In fact, spatiality was the medium of power: "what is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? . . . What would remain of the Church if there were no churches?"[17] Seen in this

light, a structure such as Spenser's "House of Holinesse" is not merely an allegorical representation of holiness but an expression, albeit emblematized, of the physical conditions in which it must operate. In *A View of the Present State of Ireland* he uses the ruination of church buildings as an index for the decline of religion, "for the outwarde shewe asure your selfe dothe greatlye drawe the rude people to the reverensinge and frequentinge theareof" (*View*, 223).

In the proem to Book II of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser compares his "land of Faery" to the "many great Regions" of the New World recently discovered "through hardy enterprize," and the analogy with contemporary cartography is exact (II.proem.2). Just as the blank spaces on early modern maps filled with detail as explorers and colonists advanced, Spenser's "plaine" expands into a rich landscape of forests, deserts, castles, and lakes as the questing knights traverse the unpredictable terrain the narrator "maps" onto a grid of books, cantos, and stanzas, allowing related or contrasting events to occur on similar narratological "latitudes" and "longitudes." The nature of this grid is extraordinarily complex, even by comparison with Spenser's precursors in romance, and is better illuminated by reference to Lefebvre.[18] C. S. Lewis deemed Spenser's technique "polyphonic," involving the conscious entanglement of different tales, while in reading *The Production of Space* Edward Soja, one of its most perceptive interpreters, found "that the text could be read as a polyphonic fugue that assertively introduced its keynote themes early on and then changed them intentionally in contrapuntal variations that took radically different forms and harmonies."[19] The remark provides a surprisingly good avenue of approach to the structure of Spenser's work in which the overtly precise patterning throws into high relief the persistent digressions, non sequiturs, displacements, and deferrals that both depend on and resist repetition. Far more is involved here than the traditional *entrelacement* of medieval romance, but intricate patterns of thematic resonance that reflect the fluidity of supposedly discrete "virtues" through the permeability of the apparently distinct spaces in which they operate. The best and perhaps the only way to navigate such terrain, as Lefebvre remarks, is to develop "a variety of conceptual grids . . . to help decipher [such] complex spaces. The broadest of these distinguishes between types of oppositions and contrasts in space: isotopies or analogous spaces; heterotopias or mutually repellent spaces; and utopias, or spaces occupied by the symbolic and imaginary."[20] Their quests take Spenser's knights through all three.

Lefebvre's own categories are as fluid as Spenser's—his "spatial practice," "representations of space," and "representational space,"[21] for example, are

hard to disentangle. The reader is challenged in both cases to determine whether coherence is compatible with verbal slippage and even contradiction. More significantly still, the concept of a unified heroic poem composed of twelve others, all distinct but mutually referential, promotes the type of hermeneutic Lefebvre terms "rhythmanalysis."[22] Within complex, repetitive structures, Lefebvre observes, "rhythms in all their multiplicity interpenetrate one another . . . [they] are forever crossing and re-crossing, superimposing themselves upon each other."[23] Yet while repetition is essential to rhythm, "there is no identical absolute repetition . . . there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference."[24] And fairyspace offers us *repeated difference* in location, character, and event, demanding persistent cross-referentiality in pursuit of "meaning." "Cyclical repetition and the linear repetitive," Lefebvre observes, "separate out under analysis but in reality interfere with one another constantly."[25] Every event in *The Faerie Queene* is structurally "placed" in the space created by the narrative grid: "But for to tell her lamentable cace," the narrator tells us of Una, "And eke this battels end, will need another place" (I.vi.48). By the time we reach that "place" in the following canto, we have witnessed George's fall and understand the stakes more clearly (I.vii.19–20). Character and plot are spatially calibrated.

The Production of Space is very largely a meditation on the politics of social environment through the lens of *Das Capital*, and so far as Marx was concerned, Spenser was "Elizabeth's arse-kissing poet [*der Elizabeths Arschkissende Poet*]," a mere toady to power.[26] "Read" from this viewpoint, the poem might be expected to manifest the sort of "knowledge" that Lefebvre condemns for legitimizing centralized authority.[27] Yet *The Faerie Queene* is famously decentered and notoriously ambivalent. It rather questions than resolves the relationship of poetry to power. Its narrator is both reader and writer, analyzing the complex allegories of Tudor governance to produce his own. "The illusory clarity of [social] space," Lefebvre argues, "is in the last analysis the illusory clarity of a power that may be glimpsed in the reality that it governs, but which at the same time uses that clarity as a veil."[28] In the House of Pride we encounter the first representation of sovereignty in Spenser's poem, and the location is telling: like the vanity houses of Tudor England, the building is "a goodly heape for to behould, / And spake the praises of the workman's witt" (I.iv.5). Its magnificence seems to authenticate its claims to authority: "In living Princes court none ever knew / Such endlesse richesse, and so sumptuous shew" (I.iv.7). Yet despite this, "all the hinder partes, that few could spie, / Were ruinous and old, but

painted cunningly." As one of those "few," the narrator takes us not just behind the facade but right down to the lack of bedrock, to the "weake foundation . . . on a sandie hill, that still doth flit / And fall away" (I.iv.5). In other words, the poem performs a deconstructive reading of the allegory of sovereign power through a critique of its "coded" architecture. And as for the building, so for its disturbingly familiar occupant, "a Mayden Queene" sitting on a "rich throne" under "a cloth of State" and holding a mirror "wherein her face she often vewed fayne / And in her selfe-lov'd semblance tooke delight" (I.iv.8, 10). We are presented with what Lefebvre terms "a reflection that yet generates an extreme difference," one in which "what is identical is at the same time radically other, radically different."[29]

Most unsettling in this respect is the remarkable coincidence between the enthronements of Lucifera and Mercilla (an overt avatar of Elizabeth), who "sate on high, that she might all men see, / And might of all men royally be seene, / Upon a throne of gold full bright and sheene" (V.ix.27). In Lucifera's case the narrator undermines the "message" of enthronement—that the monarch presides *vice Dei*—but in Mercilla's he appears to confirm it: her "cloth of state," for example, is "not of rich tissew, nor of cloth of gold" but "like a cloud . . . whose skirts were bordred with bright sunny beams . . . Mongst which crept little Angels through the glittering gleames" (V.ix.28). And yet, despite her avowed preference for "pardon and remission" over punishment (V.ix.31–32), Mercilla sits in "dreaded soverayntie" (V.ix.34). "Sovereignty" for Lefebvre implies "a space established and constituted by violence,"[30] and the space in which Spenser locates Mercilla is pregnant with threat. The "hall" or "large wyde roome" that leads to the presence chamber is "full of people making troublous din, / And wondrous noyse, as if that there were some, / Which unto them was dealing righteous doome" (V.ix.23). The following stanza assures us that what is "dealt" is "just judgements" (V.ix.24), but immediately afterward Arthur and Artegall see a poet with his tongue "nayld to a post" because "he falsely did revyle, / And foule blaspheme the Queene for forged guyle" in "bold speeches" and "lewd poems" (V.ix.25). What exactly was his crime? The term "blaspheme" suggests that his primary fault lay in rejecting the sort of mystification of political power the narrator seems to promote. Mercilla stands for "peace and clemencie," and the sword at her feet is rusted through disuse. But this is designer rust, for "when as foes enforst, or friends sought ayde, / She could it sternely draw, that all the world dismayde" (V.ix.30). Every detail of the description is resonant with implicit, or even immanent, violence, and the whole episode ends with the execution of Duessa, to whose

"wretched corse" the "last honour" is gratiously yielded (V.x.4). We begin with corporal and end with capital punishment, and the semiology, or "logos," of the intervening space reveals the concealed rationale. In Lefebvrian terms it is both a "dominant" and "dominated" space entailing "a logic of stability that is both destructive and self-destructive."[31] No part of it "can be allowed to escape domination, except in so far as appearances are concerned."[32] "Power," he concludes, "aspires to control space in its entirety, so it maintains it in a 'disjointed unity,' as at once fragmentary and homogeneous: it divides and rules."[33] For both Spenser and Lefebvre the center of power is a "fetishized" space that "cloaks conflicts and differences in illusory coherence and transparency." It "operates ideologically" yet generates its own "falsification."[34] Its ambivalence is its message.

But that was an ambivalence in which Spenser himself was deeply implicated. His recipe for bringing "peace" to Ireland was use of the same "sword" that lies at Mercilla's feet—not, as he professed, to hurt anyone in particular but to combat evil in general, "for evill people by good ordinaunces and government maye be made good, but the evill that is of it selfe evill will never become good" (*View*, 148). This is a distinction that can only be made in "fairyspace," not in the real world, where violence is directed toward persons not concepts. The marked coincidence of spatial vocabularies between *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland* is indicative of an integral link between Spenser's humanist poetics and colonial politics. In many ways the tract is as "allegorical" as the poem, reading the landscape of Ireland as a field of conflict between "civil" and "savage" forces. While the poet sets out "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline," "Irenius" proposes to bring the Irish "from theire delighte of licentious barbarisme unto the love of goodness and Civilitye" by "the discipline of the Lawes of Englande" (*View*, 54). As becomes clear in the Bowre of Blisse, "delighte" is what principally needs to be disciplined. Only where there is "due order of discipline and good rule" (*View*, 211) can we make profitable "commodity" of waste space. At this point, as Soja recognizes, Foucault and Lefebvre coalesce: spatial "discipline" is of the rigorous kind.[35]

Lefebvre's comments on the colonial strategies of the Spaniards in the New World are, in this respect, directly applicable to the very similar venture in which Spenser was involved. "The main point to be noted," he observes, "is the production of a social space by political power—that is, by violence in the service of economic goals. A social space is generated out of a rationalized and theorizing form serving as an instrument for the violation of an existing

space."[36] The "*jus polliticum*," Irenius chillingly explains, "thoughe it be not of it selfe juste yeat by applicacion or rather necessitye is made juste. And this onelye respecte makethe all lawes juste" (*View*, 66). We have reached the point at which, as Lefebvre observes, "reason" becomes "*raison d'etat*," the point "where violence is cloaked in rationality and a rationality of unification is used to justify violence."[37] As power seeks to occlude the nature of its operations, the "social" space to emerge from Irenius's plans will eventually erase the violent history of its own creation in the celebration of a civil norm—the unimpeachable "reason" for violence is peace. What is produced in Lefebvrian terms "is an essentially deceptive space, readily occupiable by pretences such as those of civic peace, consensus, or the reign of non-violence."[38] "Each state," he observes, "claims to produce a space wherein something is accomplished—a space, even, where something is brought to perfection: namely a unified and hence homogenous society."[39]

But *A View* is fatally fractured by a tension between the need to attain such homogeneity and a visceral sense of intractable difference. For Spenser "otherness" is very much a spatial concept. As he depicts them, the indigenous inhabitants of Ireland are not just "savage" figures in a "wilde" plain but embodiments of spatial wastage, and the expansion or contraction of the English Pale is therefore taken as an index of civility or its opposite. In fact, "the moste outboundes and abandoned places in the Englishe pale" are, in reality, "not Counted of the Englishe pale at all" (*View*, 61). Listening to Irenius's plans for the eradication of Irish errors, Eudoxus decides to "take the mapp of Irelande before me and make myne eyes in the meane while my Scollemasters to guide my understandinge to judge of your plott" (*View*, 152). But it is only by alternately laying the maps of Ireland and fairyland over one another, reading them as mutual palimpsests, that the cartography of colonization is revealed. "How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents?" Lefebvre asks, adding that "social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not *things*, which have mutually limiting boundaries."[40]

The operation of overlaying different "maps" in the production of "fairyspace" is performed in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, where the narrator evokes the experience of the country's "in-dwellers" by projecting onto the local topography "etiological" myths of his own creation (VII.vi.55).[41] Thus, the river Bahanna becomes the Molanna, the Awbeg becomes the Mulla, the Funsheon becomes the Fanchin, and the Ballyhoura and Galtee

Mountains become Arlo Hill. Properly understood, etiological myth reflects a people's relationship to their ancestral homeland, attesting to the complex spatiality of culture, but the myths invoked in the *Mutabilitie Cantos* derive from Spenser's own canon, from stories invented in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (1595), where, however, they are claimed to be "no leasing new . . . But auncient truth confirm'd with credence old" (ll. 102–3). Both episodes are set in the environs of Spenser's own plantation, but the "mapp of Ireland" is overwritten to erase indigenous narrative and antiquate the narrative of occupation. Fairyspace allows for the projection of colonial aspiration onto sequestered topography, transforming etiology into a tool of empire. From this point of "view"—and that is what it is—*A View* is very much a "fairy" text, conceived as a literary dialogue, like More's *Utopia*, to promote visions of the "good" place. "Abstract space," Lefebvre argued, "is repressive in essence and *par excellence*—but thanks to its versatility it is repressive in a peculiarly artful way. . . . The fact of viewing from afar, of contemplating what has been torn apart, or arranging 'viewpoints' and 'perspectives' can (in the most favourable cases) change the effects of a strategy into aesthetic objects."[42] It is the aesthetics of *A View* that renders the politics so lethal.

Within *The Faerie Queene* knights quest for honor not "meed," and Mammon, the "Money-god" (II.vii.39), lives underground, out of sight if never quite out of mind—as the several (if generally pejorative) references to money throughout the poem indicate. But what Lefebvre terms "abstract space" is inherently connected with capitalism, his own personal Blatant Beast. His purpose, he tells us, is to expose the reality behind the delusive "pax capitalistica" in which the West rejoices. Like the equally deceptive Pax Romana, he argues, it is "inherently violent" though "seemingly secured against any violence."[43] With the rise of capitalism, he contends, "the degradation of money and the baleful character of the commodity manifested themselves."[44] The term "commodity" is used only once in *The Faerie Queene*, and tellingly in connection with slavery, where it leaves even the captain of the brigands "much appalled" (VI.xi.10). But what appalls the captain presents itself as the alluring opening gambit of *A View*: "if that Countrie of Irelande, whence youe latelye come be so goodlie and Comodious a soyle as yee reporte I wonder that no course is taken for the turninge theareof to good uses, and reducinge that salvage nacion to better goverment and Cyvilitye" (*View*, 43). That is all the cue Irenius needs to produce a space ripe for plantation and hymn the poetics of commodity: "it is a moste bewtifull and swete Countrie as anye is under heaven . . . adorned with goodly woodes fitt for

buildinge of howsses and shipps so comodiously as that if some princes in the worlde had them they would sone hope to be Lordes of all the seas and ere longe of all the worlde" (*View*, 62). What begins as a recipe for cultivation ends as a fantasy of global domination, and all through the medium of "commodity." The motivation of profit, disclaimed throughout the epic, is the inspiration of the colonial quest, and the association between trade and militarization that Irenius proceeds to envisage in the interests of "greate Comoditye" and "muche proffitte" eerily equates to the repressive "abstract" space that Lefebvre so consistently condemns (*View*, 183–84). "Before the advent of capitalism," he argues, "the part played by violence was extra-economic; under the dominion of capitalism and of the world market it assumed an economic role in the accumulation process; and in consequence the economic sphere became dominant. This is not to say that economic relations were now identical to relations of power, but merely that the two could no longer be separated."[45] Driven underground in the poem, Mammon surfaces in the prose to inherit the earth.

Beneath all the differences in terminology and context, one factor unites Spenser and Lefebvre more than any other: the spaces in which they are primarily interested are inhabited spaces, lived environments. Both see spatiality as an expression of bodily identity. "Rhythm," Lefebvre argues, "appears as regulated time, governed by rational law, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body."[46] In fact, social practice is "an extension of the body, an extension which comes about as space's development in time, and thus too as part of a historicity itself conceived as *produced*."[47] It is in the Castle of Alma, shaped like a human body, one remembers, that Guyon and Arthur read, respectively, the Fairy Chronicles and "Briton Moniments," supplying contrasting images of civil success and failure (II.x.5–77).[48] The former projects human aspirations into "fairyspace" to produce a vision of achieved potential, whereas the latter charts the repeated setbacks experienced in attempting to turn an "unpeopled, unmannurd, unproud, unpraysd" land into the "Deare countrey" in which Arthur rejoices, perhaps more sentimentally than rationally (II.x.5;69). In the Castle of Alma space is "read" as what Lefebvre terms "social morphology," "[which] is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure."[49] And Spenser's narrator has no doubt that it is the discipline of temperance that distinguishes "fairy" from "Briton" history. It is the rejection of centers of false or illicit "delighte," such as Phaedria's Isle, the Cave of Mammon, and the Bowre of Blisse, that enables Guyon's quest.

Less clear is the locus of true pleasure. In the enchanted arbor at the heart of the Gardens of Adonis Cupid couples with Psyche to give birth to "*Pleasure*, that doth both gods and men aggrate" (III.vi.50), but that is a "space" inaccessible to the poem's protagonists. It seems to have no equivalent in the "realms" that fairyland "mirrors." "It is a curious and paradoxical fact," Lefebvre commented, "that, while spaces dedicated to sensual delight have existed, they are few and far between . . . it is hard to think of real examples as opposed to literary and imaginative ones—the Abbey of Thélème, the palaces of the Arabian Nights, or the dreams of a Fourier. An architecture of pleasure and joy, of community in the use of gifts of the earth, has yet to be invented."[50] Would he have included the Bowre of Blisse among his "literary and imaginative" exempla, and if so, what would he have made of its destruction? The goal of poetry, according to Horace, was to teach by delighting, to make pleasure an instrument of discipline.[51] At the outset of the fourth book of the poem, however, the narrator tells us that he has been accused of misleading "fraile youth . . . that better were in vertues discipled" by proffering the same sort of "false allurement" and "pleasing baite" as the Bowre itself (IV.proem.1). By incorporating such *loci amoeni* into "fairyspace," he has ironically brought upon himself the condemnation he pours on the Gaelic bards, who are allegedly "so farre from instructinge yonge men in morrall discipline that they themselves doe more deserve to be sharpelye discipled" (*View*, 125). Yet the destruction of the Bowre might just as easily be seen as confirming Lefebvre's sense of the repressive nature of "social space"—a concept he extends to "the locus and medium of speech and writing"—in which "the quest for enjoyment takes place, a quest whose object, once found, is destroyed by the act of taking pleasure itself."[52] Guyon, we are told, "suffred no delight / To sincke into his sence" (II.xii.53), but eventually it does "sinke," and with such effect (or affect) that the Palmer rebukes him (II.xii.69)—and through him, us. But the damage is done by then, and the very intemperate destruction of the Bowre "with rigour pittilesse" (II.xii.83) merely compounds the problem. Allegory—etymologically an "other speaking" or other logos—others itself.

At the close of *The Production of Space* Lefebvre invites a hermeneutic similar to Spenser's when he declares that "this book has been informed from beginning to end by a *project*" that "may at times have been discernible only by reading between the lines." His purpose, enacting his title, is to produce "a different society."[53] For both Spenser and Lefebvre, unity is the goal and fragmentation the experience.[54] Both write at what is perceived

to be a crucial historical moment, Spenser in the midst of a calamitous Irish war and succession crisis, Lefebvre "now that historical time is collapsing" and "catastrophe is already upon us."[55] Both harken for a lost past, and both wish to influence the future. Spenser's allegory is a hermeneutical tool fashioned to interpret history: "recoursing to the thinges forepaste, and divining of thinges to come" in order to provide "a pleasing Analysis of all."[56] Yet such "analysis" presumes a completion that neither *The Faerie Queene* nor *The Production of Space* ever attains. "Our present analysis," Lefebvre states, "will not attain its full meaning until political economy has been reinstated as the way to understand productive activity . . . it will have to be a political economy of space."[57] Even more expressly, "the creation (or production) of a planet-wide space as the social foundation of a transformed everyday life open to myriad possibilities—such is the dawn as glimpsed by the great Utopians . . . by Fourier, Marx and Engels, whose dreams and imaginings are as stimulating to theoretical thought as their concepts."[58] The hope is that "use value may gain the upper hand over exchange value: appropriation, turning the world upon its head, may (virtually) achieve dominion over domination, as the imaginary and the utopian incorporate (or are incorporated into) the real."[59] At this point, "once it has illuminated and thereby validated its own coming-into-being, the production of space (as theoretical concept and practical reality in indissoluble conjunction) will become clear: and our demonstration will be over: we shall have arrived at a truth 'in itself and for itself,' complete and yet relative."[60] "O that great Sabbaoth God," Spenser might reply, "graunt me that Sabaoth's sight" (VII.viii.2).

But the watchword in both cases is "sabbaoth" not "sabbath," Lord of Hosts not Lord of Rest, struggle not victory. Spenser and Lefebvre are equally preoccupied by violence, albeit in different ways. In seeking to diagnose the malaise of modern Western society, Lefebvre surprisingly idealizes its past. "Medieval space" (the space-time in which Spenser sets his poem), he finds, "had something miraculous about it." Before money "ushered in the most opaque and impenetrable relations imaginable," "this was a society which, if not utterly transparent, certainly had a great limpidity. The economic sphere was subordinate to relationships of dependence; violence itself had a sovereign clarity" ("la violence elle-même a une clarté souveraine").[61] As we have seen, the "sovereign clarity" of violence is also one of Spenser's central obfuscations. It was Elizabeth's mercy, according to *A View*, her refusal to countenance Grey's deployment of the "sword's" sovereign clarity, that led to disaster in Ireland (*View*, 159–60).[62] Mercy, it now transpires, was Mercilla's

fault, not her virtue. Lefebvre was equally conflicted. While decrying the "violence" of "sovereignty," he expresses bafflement throughout *The Production of Space* at what he sees as the apathy of the masses. "Why," he asks, "do they allow themselves to be manipulated in ways so damaging to their spaces and their daily life without embarking on massive revolts? Why is protest left to 'enlightened,' and hence elite groups . . . has bureaucracy already achieved such power that no political force can successfully resist it?"[63] It is consequently the duty of the elites to enlighten the "masses."[64] But what would they counsel them to do? The "revolution of space" for which Lefebvre calls "cannot be conceived of other than by analogy with the great peasant (agrarian) and industrial revolutions: sudden uprisings followed by a hiatus, by a slow building of pressure, and finally by a renewed revolutionary outburst at a higher level of consciousness and action—an outburst accompanied, too, by great inventiveness and creativity." Overtly he advocates "inventiveness" rather than violence, yet such positivity should not be seen "as excluding ripostes *in kind* to the violence of established political powers."[65]

The problem is that *Das Capital*, like *The Faerie Queene*, is incomplete: neither Marx nor Spenser provides a road map to Eutopia or "Cleopolis." And, in the absence of a clear destination, *The Production of Space* becomes every bit as digressive as *The Faerie Queene*. In fact, all three texts are characterized by deferrals of closure. None enjoys the sense of telos that lends coherence to structure, unity to constituent parts, and, in Lefebvre's own terms, a harmony of form, structure, and function.[66] Because the "plan" of *Das Capital* "is exceedingly hard to reconstruct," we cannot "rely solely on the application of the 'classical' categories of Marxist thought" in attempting to achieve "*a new mode of production* which is neither state capitalism nor state socialism."[67] There were circumstances that Marx did not foresee, such as partial control of the markets.[68] And neither Hegel nor Marx's critique of Hegel took enough account of space.[69] Marx attempted to rectify this by abandoning his "binary dialectic" (capital vs. labor) to include land, but there remains "a lacuna in his thought."[70] Rather than pretend otherwise, as some other Marxists are alleged to have done, Lefebvre suggests that "the best way to get Marx's thinking into perspective is . . . to look upon it not as an end point or conclusion but rather as a point of departure. In other words, Marxism should be treated as one *moment* in the development of theory, and not, dogmatically, as a definitive theory."[71] This goes a long way toward explaining the experience of reading *The Production of Space*, the sense of moving away from, rather than toward, a conclusion.

It is an experience with which readers of *The Faerie Queene* are very familiar. Though frequently using the imagery, and indeed symbolism, of circularity and concentricity, its narrator never locates a central point. "The beginning . . . of my history, if it were to be told by an Historiographer," Spenser tells Ralegh, "should be the twelfth booke, which is the last, where I devise that the Faery Queene kept her Annuall feaste xii. dayes; uppon which xii. severall dayes, the occasions of the xii. severall adventures hapned, which being undertaken by xii. severall knights, are in these xii. books severally handled and discoursed."[72] As the "twelfth booke" was never written, the fairy court, the supposed center of political and poetical inspiration, is forever relegated to the poem's paratexts—as the poet, by his own account, was relegated to the periphery of empire: "Receive most noble Lord a simple taste / Of the wilde fruit, which salvage soyl hath bred."[73] The "Letter to Ralegh" was designed to "direct" its reader's "understanding" to "the wel-head of the History . . . which otherwise may happily seeme tedious and confused."[74] Its deletion from the edition of 1596 not only exacerbates the lack of a focal point but also problematizes centrality in a very Lefebvrian manner.

The concept of centrality is one to which Lefebvre devotes considerable attention because it encapsulates what he regards as the contradictions at the heart of government.[75] Most alarmingly, and counterintuitively, "centrality is moveable."[76] Over the course of history the locus of power shifts and all spatial configurations alter accordingly. As in the case of ancient Rome, the center is at once the site of power and collapse. In effect, "each period, each mode of production, each particular society has engendered (produced) its own centrality: religious, commercial, cultural, industrial and so on. The relationship between mental and social activity must be defined for each case."[77] As in fairyspace, "the interplay between centre and periphery is highly complex . . . centrality may give birth to an applied logic (a strategy); it may also burst asunder and lose its identity utterly."[78] Written from the margins to the center, *The Faerie Queene* seems designed to illustrate the point. While it provides abundant instances of "symbolic spaces," replicating the "religious and political sites" that Lefebvre deems necessary to sovereignty,[79] their respective claims to centrality are offset by their sheer plurality—the House of Holiness, the Castle of Alma, Merlin's Cave, the Gardens of Adonis, Isis Church, the Court of Mercilla, and many more. Reflecting Elizabethan government in "mirrours more then one" (III.proem.5), Spenser contrives the very effect Lefebvre identifies in power itself: "it is not . . . as though one had global (or conceived) space to one side and fragmented (or directly experienced) space to the other—rather

as one might have an intact glass here and a broken glass or mirror over there. For space 'is' whole and broken, global and fractured at one and the same time."[80] In fact, "the contradiction between the global and the subdivided subsumes the contradiction between centre and periphery."[81]

That contradiction is paradoxically central to Spenser's poetics. In the "October" eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender* the "Princes pallace" is deemed the "most fitt" place for poetry (ll. 79–81), although the young poet Cuddie, identified in the gloss as an avatar of "Colin," "under which name this Poete secretly shadoweth himself," cannot get there.[82] In the accompanying woodcut he stands in an uncultivated pastoral landscape with the grand classical architecture of the palace in the background, seemingly within easy reach yet frustratingly unreachable. In *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, however, Colin does what no other Spenserian character manages: he visits the "centre of power," the court of Cynthia, only to find that "it is no sort of life, / For shepheard fit to lead in that same place" (ll. 688–89). The court is therefore theoretically "most fitt" and practically not "fit" for the literary arts, a contradiction that sums up the relationship between poetry and power. But the story continues in *The Faerie Queene*: in canto x of Book VI, on "an hill plaste in an open plaine" (VI.x.6)—possibly a precinct of the same "plaine" on which the narrative began if, as one suspects, we have been going in circles—Calidore, the patron of courtly courtesy, reverses the poet's journey by visiting the center of poetic power. He has reached what Lefebvre would term a "consecrated space,"[83] where the inhabitants dance in concentric rings about the poet—and all located, it should be noted, in the same canto as the House of Holinesse in Book I, the "grid" enforcing the analogy. But from this miniature Ptolemaic universe the queen is conspicuously displaced, supplanted by Colin's private love, a lady as lovely as Ariadne's crown, which "is unto the starres an ornament, / Which round about her move in order excellent" (VI.x.13). Momentarily this looks like the ultimate coalescence of poetry and power, but, as Lefebvre reminds us, the center is "the place where accumulated energies, desirous of discharge, must eventually explode."[84] As soon as Calidore approaches the ecstatic group, "They vanisht all away out of his sight, / And cleane were gone." But not quite all: "all save the shepheard, who for fell despight / Of that displeasure, broke his bag-pipe quight" (VI.x.18). Few more potent images of poetic alienation have ever been penned.

"A passionate struggle takes place in art," Lefebvre comments, "and within artists themselves, the essential character of which the protagonists fail to realize (it is in fact class struggle!)."[85] As the woodcut for "October" demonstrates, Spenser was acutely aware of the spatiality of class, but Colin's

"despight," graphically landscaped and seascaped across *The Shepheardes Calender*, *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, and *The Legend of Courtesie*, is of a more existential kind, to do with the recalcitrance of experience to "meaning," and ultimately, perhaps, the inadequacy of allegory. "What is the fantasy of art?" Lefebvre asks, to which he answers, "to lead out of what is present, out of what is close, out of representations of space, into what is further off, into nature, into symbols, into representational spaces."[86] But that implies knowing where to "lead." Neither Lefebvre nor Spenser enjoyed such teleological clarity: the former confessed ignorance as to what his counterculture would look like,[87] whereas the latter despairs of the court he would idealize. Both seem to have been relentlessly questing toward something that may rather be lost than found in the "Land of Faerie" or the "transformed" spaces "glimpsed by the great Utopians . . . Fourier, Marx and Engels." Lefebvre supplies their mutual epitaph: "the infinity of the project, easily mistaken (subjectively) for the infinity of meaning, aborts."[88]

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Notes

1. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 174. Quotations from the original text are from Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, 4th ed. (Paris: Anthropos, 2000).
2. All quotations are from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, rev. ed. (London: Longman, 2001). This edition is cited hereafter parenthetically in the text by book, canto, and stanza number. "The Letter to Ralegh" is quoted from this edition parenthetically by page in the text. Spenser's other poetry is quoted from Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. R. A. McCabe (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999). *A View of the Present State of Ireland* is quoted parenthetically by page in the text from *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al., Variorum ed., 11 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1932–58), vol. 9, *Spenser's Prose Works* (1949).
3. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 358.
4. Ibid., 16–17.
5. Ibid., 391–92.
6. Ibid., 21, 307–8; for spatial hegemony, see ibid., 10, 115–16, 307–8, 319, 387.

7. Ibid., 139.
8. Ibid., 5.
9. Ibid., 10.
10. Ibid., 413.
11. See Christopher Burlinson, *Allegory, Space and the Material World in the Writings of Edmund Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38.
12. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Rayson (London: Constable, 1936), 36.
13. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 6.
14. Ibid., 281.
15. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 39.
16. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 7. For Mercator, see Joaquim A. Gaspar and Henrique Leitão, "Squaring the Circle: How Mercator Constructed His Projection in 1569," *Imago Mundi* 66 (2014): 1–24; for perspective, see S. Y. Edgerton, *The Renaissance Discovery of Linear Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
17. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 44.
18. Attempts to "map" the poem more conventionally, in terms of discrete "Briton" and "fairy" realms, do scant justice to the complexity of the literary design. See, e.g., Wayne Erickson, *Mapping "The Faerie Queene": Quest Structures and the World of the Poem* (New York: Garland, 1996).
19. C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. W. Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 135; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 9.
20. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 366.
21. Ibid., 33.
22. Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, intro. by Stuart Elden (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
23. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 205.
24. Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 16.
25. Ibid., 18.
26. Karl Marx, *Ethnological Notebooks*, ed. Lawrence Krader (Assen: Von Gorcum, 1972), 305.
27. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 367, 375.
28. Ibid., 321.
29. Ibid., 185.
30. Ibid., 280.
31. Ibid., 387.
32. Ibid., 387–88.
33. Ibid., 388.
34. Ibid., 393.

35. Soja, *Thirdspace*, 146–49.
36. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 151–52.
37. Ibid., 282, 318.
38. Ibid., 358.
39. Ibid., 281.
40. Ibid., 85–87.
41. For the connotations of "in-dwellers," see Richard McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 263.
42. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 318.
43. Ibid., 387.
44. Ibid., 264. For Lefebvre's definition of "commodity," see ibid. 219, 340.
45. Ibid., 276.
46. Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 18.
47. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 249.
48. For the degree to which our spatial environments are fashioned to respond to our physiology, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
49. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 94.
50. Ibid., 379; see also 167, 383–84.
51. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll. 333–47.
52. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 211.
53. Ibid., 419.
54. For the concept of "unity," see ibid., 219, 281, 370. What is needed, Lefebvre argues, is a "unitary theory" of space (413, 419).
55. Ibid., 277, 415.
56. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 716–17.
57. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 299; see also Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 21.
58. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 422–23.
59. Ibid., 348.
60. Ibid., 67.
61. Ibid., 266–67; *La production de l'espace*, 308.
62. See McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment*, 10–11, 90–97.
63. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 51; see also 365.
64. Ibid., 380.
65. Ibid., 419.
66. Ibid., 147; see also 252.
67. Ibid., 103, 342.
68. Ibid., 420.
69. Ibid., 279.
70. Ibid., 323.
71. Ibid., 321.

72. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 717.
73. "To the right Honourable the Earle of *Ormond and Ossory*" (ll. 1–2), in ibid., 730.
74. Ibid., 718.
75. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 375.
76. Ibid., 332.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 333.
79. Ibid., 34.
80. Ibid., 364–65; see also 184–85.
81. Ibid., 356.
82. Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, 38, 133.
83. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 34.
84. Ibid., 332.
85. Ibid., 354.
86. Ibid., 231–32.
87. Ibid., 381–82.
88. Ibid., 395.