1986

The Poetic Unity Of Edmund Spenser's "complaints"

Linda Mary Vecchi

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

Canada
THE POETIC UNITY OF
EDMUND SPENGER'S COMPLAINTS

by
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
November, 1985

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ABSTRACT

This study offers a revaluation of the Complaints volume. It proposes that Spencer's poems of 1591 are unified both generically and thematically. Chapter One reviews the arguments for accepting the Complaints as an authorized collection of Spencer's works and establishes that all the poems in the volume are complaints.

Chapter Two surveys the critical background of the Complaints poems, bringing together material published from 1591 to the present date and providing an assessment of the various estimates of the poems. Chapters Three and Four consider the development of the complaint genre. Chapter Three looks specifically at the classical and Biblical origins of complaint and at the popular medieval forms of de casibus and de contemptu mundi complaint. Chapter Four considers innovations in both the English and French Renaissance complaints. Chapter Five then considers Spencer's applications of the various forms of the genre in his Complaints volume. Chapter Six concludes the discussion with a consideration of the theme of mutability which unifies not only the Complaints poems but all of Spencer's canon.
For my Parents,

Betty and Renato

With Love and Gratitude
# Table of Contents

1. Certificate of Examination ........................................... 11
2. Abstract ......................................................................... 111
3. Dedication ....................................................................... 11v
4. Table of Contents .......................................................... ii

Chapter One - Is the whole equal to the sum of its parts? .......... 1

Chapter Two - A Critical History of the Complaints ............... 28

Chapter Three - The Medieval Complaint: Origins and Development of the Genre ................................................. 104

Chapter Four - The Renaissance Complaint: Imitation and Adaptation ................................................................. 170

Chapter Five - The Unity of Spenser's Complaints ................. 242

Chapter Six - Time, Mutability, and the Thematic Unity of the Complaints ............................................................ 269

Appendix I ........................................................................... 288

Works Cited ......................................................................... 290

Vita ....................................................................................... 307
Chapter One

Is the Whole Equal to the Sum of its Parts?

[1593], following the favourable reception of the first three books of The Faerie Queene, another work by England's "New Poet" (Ponsonby, Complaints, Preface; in Works, Minor Poems 2:33), Edmund Spenser, was published in London. This thin volume of poems, which includes four translations of works by Virgil, Petrarch, and Du Bellay—"Virgils Gnat," "The Ruines of Rome," "The Visions of Bellay," and "The Visions of Petrarch"—and five original works—"The Ruines of Time," "The Tears of the Muse," "Mother Hubberd's Tale," "Mepopotmos," and "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie"—is easily Spenser's least known work. As H. L. Reddick correctly observed, in his 1928 critical edition of the Complaints, "it is on these Complaints that Spenser's poetic reputation rests" (179). Many early editors and critics of Spenser's poetry, encouraged by the statements made "To the Gentle Reader" by the printer William Ponsonby, considered the small volume of nine varied poems as merely a printer's collection arranged by Ponsonby, without Spenser's permission or knowledge, so as to profit from the poet's fame after the success of The Faerie Queene. In his prefatory remarks, Ponsonby acknowledges the favourable reception of Spenser's great poem and admits that he has subsequently endeavoured by all good means to get into [his] hands.

All quotations from the Complaints and other works of Spenser are from The Works of Spenser, A Variorum Edition. Line references are given parenthetically unless noted otherwise.
such snares. Poems of the same Author; as [he] heard were
disperst abroad in sundrie hands, and not easy to be come
by. Some of them having bene diverslie imbuylid and
purloyned from [Spenser], since his departure over Sea. (33).

Ponsonby's allegations led many of Spenser's early readers and
critics to question the authorization of the published version
of these minor poems. The tone of the printer's remarks does
seem to imply some degree of subterfuge on the part of Spenser's
friends and Ponsonby; yet there is no clear evidence that the
poems included in the Complaints volume were ever out of the author's
hands. The theory concerning the apparently unauthorized publication
of the Complaints considers it to be the result of the actions
of a greedy printer, while a second theory suggests that Spenser's
absence from the text is a ruse used by the poet to show his unwillingness to publish his works (particularly his minor works) for
either money or personal gain, so that the blame for the publication
is placed upon an over-zealous friend or the printer's greed.

Still, a third theory suggests that it was not Ponsonby's greed
but Spenser's continued search for court-favour and patronage
that led the poet to ask Ponsonby to publish these minor poems.

Finally, it has been argued that the inclusion of "Mother Hubber's
Tale," with its overt references to Burghley, Alençon, and other
members of Queen Elizabeth's court, caused Spenser to feign ignorance
of the volume's publication, so that he would not incur the disfavour
of the Queen or her Lord Treasurer. There is some support for
each of these explanations for the apparent lack of authorization
of the Complaints volume; yet none of them fully explains why
Spenser did not publicly acknowledge (or deny) the publication.
of these poems, Spenser may have been ought to make sure that
or even the publication of some of Spenser's small poems, but since
he was the poet's designated printer, it does not seem likely
that he would risk alienating his client by publishing works that
Spenser did not want to have printed. Spenser may truly have
been maddened about these minor poems and not have wished them to
be published, but this is doubtful for a man who was building
his reputation as a poet. And more significantly, if Spenser
had not intended these poems to be published, why did he dedicate
four of them to influential ladies at court? The first poem in
the collection, "The Prince of verse," is dedicated to the Countess
of Pembroke, Mary Sidney, others, "The Tears of the Muse.s,
"Mother Hubberds Tale," and "Monteagle," are dedicated to the
poet's unofficial cousins, respectively the Ladies Strange, Compton,
and Monteagle and Carey. And if Spenser were using these poems
to advance himself in the Queen's favor, it is questionable why
Spenser would select these particular works. None of them is
dedicated to the Queen, and one of the poems, "Mother Hubberds
Tale," is believed to have angered Leicester, the Queen, and Burghley
so greatly that Spenser was sent away to Ireland. This last concern
might have caused Spenser to be somewhat reticent about the poem's
inclusion in the Complaints volume, but by 1591 the matters of
the Queen's possible marriage to the Spanish prince and Leicester's
fate as the Queen's favorite had lost their importance. The

2 This last theory dealing with the tone of Ponsonby's preface
has received the greatest amount of scholarly attention. For
a summary of different views on this topic see the Variorum,
Minor Poems, 2. 181-3.
The works of Spenser were often related to Spenser's own literary output. Many of Spenser's works were published under seemingly false pretenses. For The Shepheardes Calendar he used the pseudonym Immerito and included the "scholarly" preface by his mysterious friend, E. K. The preface to his "Daphnia" states that the work was composed in 1591; yet it was obviously written much later. Similarly, the preface to the Four Hymns contains information which is quite possibly false. For reasons which have confused scholars for generations, Spenser was often disingenuous when describing the circumstances surrounding his works. It is quite possible that the preface to the Complaints is simply another example of this eccentricity.

Whatever the reasons for the poet's reticence, it is evident that Spenser believed that he could trust Ponsonby, who was a fairly well educated man, to present his minor poems in a way that would be pleasing and profitable. It was not until Penwick and Harold Stein published their separate findings on the actual construction of the 1591 Complaints volume that critics finally agreed that Spenser had been aware of the publication of the minor
Poems (Renwick, 175-50; Stein, Studies in Spenser's Complaints 3-24). Stein offers the most compelling evidence for the authorization of the Complaints, citing as proof Spenser's dedication to four of the individual poems in the collection and the existence of several textual variants and revisions in different copies of the Complaints, which could not have been made by anyone but Spenser. Following his investigations, Stein concludes that Spenser had most likely helped to prepare the text of the Complaints for publication himself during the poet's 1590-91 visit to London, and that "the publication of the Complaints was in no sense surreptitious" (3). The question of Spenser's involvement in the publication of the Complaints is an important concern of this study, for if, as I believe, the Complaints is not a mere collection of assorted minor poems, but rather a volume of poems unified generically and thematically, then Spenser's involvement in the volume's publication must be accepted.

The theory that the Complaints is a unified volume of poems has not received favourable consideration from previous critics of the volume. Renwick concentrates, in his commentary on the poems, on "the good passages" and "pretty pieces" (179) which the volume contains, implying that the collection in itself is of insufficient worth to be studied as a whole. And with even greater emphasis upon the alleged lack of coherence in the Complaints, Stein considers the poems of 1591 as a collection which "contains a number of diverse and unrelated poems," requiring "separate consideration" (3). Yet not all of the critics of the Complaints are as assured of the volume's lack of unity as is Stein. Herbert
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Cory, in an early study of Spenser's poetry, argues that in writing the Complaints Spenser was

under the influence of three noble moods: a sorrowful contemplation of that passing of beauty and grandeur which afflicts all high-minded men, but which Spenser was to master at the last in his philosophical cantos on Mutabilitie; a curious and graceful playfulness in contemplation of his own idealism which, at the moment, seemed almost fragile to him in the midst of a ruthless reality; and a spirited arraignment of the English court for its failure to emulate with swift success the high dream of the first books of The Faerie Queene and become a Utopia. (Edmund Spenser 172)

Although we may not now agree with all of Cory's explanations for Spenser's "moods" in the Complaints, his observation that a similar tone or theme is present in all the poems of the Complaints volume is a fairer assessment of the collection than Klein's assumptions that the poems are diverse and unrelated. In more recent criticism, William Nelson has suggested that a similar theme or purpose pervades the poems:

the object is to portray the nature of the world in which we live by contrasting it with a state of excellence from which we have declined and to which we may aspire. (Poetry of Edmund Spenser 83)

As promising as Cory and Nelson's statements are about the similarity in tone or vision of the Complaints poems, neither critic attempts to suggest that the Complaints is a unified collection. Nevertheless, Nelson's definition of the "object" of the Complaints is common to all complaint literature, which in turn helps to substantiate the claim that the Complaints volume is unified generically and thematically.

One initial indication that Spenser's poems of 1591 can be
seen as a unified rather than "diverse" collection of poems is
Ponsonby's remark that he published these particular poems because
"they all seem to contain like matter of argument... being
all complaints and meditations of the world's vanity" (33). Perhaps
Ponsonby realized the thematic pattern of the poems independently;
however, it is more likely that Spenser, while taking the time
to revise and arrange these poems for publication, also took the
time to discuss their generic similarity with his publisher and
may even have left instructions for Ponsonby to note that similarity
in his prefatory remarks. Another indication of the collection's
generic unity is its title. If Ponsonby had simply taken these
poems and published them as a collection of minor works, it is
unlikely that he would have considered using the title Complaints.
The Short-Title Catalogue lists no other contemporary works entitled
simply "Complaints," and it was a fairly uncommon practice, particu-
larly in English Renaissance publications, to give collections
of stylistically varied poems generic titles. Such generic titles
are found in some collections of continental poetry, such as Clément
Maraç's Epigrammes and Pierre Ronsard's Odes or Hymnes; never-
theless, English authors, or their printers, seemed to prefer
titles of a more descriptive nature. Had Spenser not intended
his poems to be seen as complaints, he might have used the collection's
more descriptive subtitle: Sundry small Poems of the World's
Vanities.

Ponsonby's preface points to both the generic and thematic
unity of the Complaints. Following his suggestions this thesis
will consider Spenser's volume of minor poems, entitled Complaints,
as a collection unified by two related methods: first, generically as a volume of "complaints"; second, thematically as a coherent expression of Spenso's concern for the condition of mutability to which all earthly creatures are bound. To discuss the first principle, we must first agree that all the poems in the volume are "complaints." As the critical history in Chapter Two shows, these poems have not always been considered as complaints. "The Ruines of Time" has most frequently been referred to as an elegy, and only recently has Carl Rasmussen suggested that the poem is "less a straight-forward elegy than a complaint" ("How Weak Be the Passions!" 159), although he does not attempt to discuss the significance of this generic reevaluation for the poem. "Mutopormos" has been called a mock-heroic poem or a "delicious jeu d'esprit" (Dr. Selincourt, Spenso's Minor Poems xxxiv), while "Mother Hubbards Tale" has been most commonly discussed as a satire or an "apologue" (Collier, The Works of Spenso lxxii). These designations are not wrong, but when they are made without any reference to the works being complaints as well, they distort our ability to understand the Complaints as a generally unified collection.

Most simply defined, a "complaint" is a lyric or narrative poem of lamentation, which generally takes the form of an oration or monologue. The subject matter of complaint is diverse, which is exemplified by George Puttenham's definition of complaint, in The Arte of English Poesye, as "poetry which is "contrary to rejoicing" (in Smith, ed., Elizabethan Critical Studies 1.49). Puttenham then lists a number of possible subjects for complaint, including:
the death of ... parents, friends, allies, and children, ... the over-throwes and discomforts in battell, the subver-
sions of townes and cities, the desolations of countries, the losse of goods and worldly promotions, honour, and good
renowne, [and] finally, the travailes and torments of love
forlone or ill bestowed, either by disgrace, denial, delay,
and twenty other waiy[es, the well experienced lovers could
recite. (49)

The exact origin of the complaint is hard to determine.

It appears in classical literature, as Dido's Lament in The Aeneid,
and in the Bible, as in the books of Lamentations and Job. Yet
the most popular age of complaint literature seems to have been
the Middle Ages. In its most common form, in the de Casibus complaints
of Boccaccio's De casibus virorum illustrium, Lydgate's Fall of
Princes, and their early English Renaissance imitation, The Mirror
for Magistrates, a grieving figure, or more likely the figure's
ghost, gives a sympathetic listener an account of his or her life.
The speaker's life generally follows a course of rising and falling
action. At first the speaker relates how happy and successful
he or she was, how everyone honoured or feared his or her great
fortune. Then Fortune turns against the figure; he or she loses
the wealth, happiness, and fame which had earlier been of such
great importance. And finally, the speaker ends the tale with
an account of his or her tragic death. The listener is often
a poet-figure, who is instructed by the ghost to write down the
tale so that future generations will learn how to avoid the fate
of the speaker. Although this moral, narrative form of the complaint
was popular during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, it was
not the only form of the complaint known to Spenser. Another
form is the contemptus mundi poem exemplified by Bernard of Cluny's
twelfth century work, De contemptu mundi. The main argument of Bernard's long, didactic poem is that the world is a degenerate place ruled by vanity, where man is tempted towards all kinds of sinfulness. Man's only salvation is to avoid temptation by leading a virtuous, often reclusive, life, and by escaping, through death, to heaven. A third popular form of complaint literature, which Spenser may have known, is the social poem of complaint against the three estates, which was often satirical in tone. This type of satirical complaint grew out of the contemptus mundi literature and became a distinct form of poetry during the turbulent years of the thirteenth-century revolts. John Gower, in the Vox clamantis, defines the three estates as "the cleric, the knight, and the peasant" (3.1.1-2). And in her comprehensive study of The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Ruth Mohl explains each estate's specific duties. The knight, whose estate included all members of the aristocracy, was to govern the secular order of society, while the clergy was entrusted with the governance of the spiritual order. The third estate included all the "providers," whose duty it was to maintain the subsistence of the entire society (341-58). A complaint against the three estates would be written to lament and often to satirize the debasement of these assigned duties by members of the estates. Spenser's Complaints are indebted to these medieval forms of the complaint, but the poet may also have been aware of more modern forms of complaint literature. Thomas Sébillet, in a Renaissance treatise, the Art Poétique François (1548), devotes a chapter to "la Deploration, et Complainte." In his treatise he offers examples of a number of different verse.
forms used for complaints:

les unes faites en forme d'épitaphes, comme la plus part des
auti autres en forme d'éloge, comme celle de Marot sur la mort de Samblançay. Autres en
forme d'éloge, comme celle de Marot sur la mort de feu
Madame la Regente. Autres en forme de couplets distingués
par huitains ou dixains, comme celle du dit sur la mort
du feu Baron de Maleville. Autres déduites en plus long
discours. (178-9)

Sébillet's long list of verse forms for the complaint is of interest
to this study for two reasons: first, since it is generally believed
that Spenser knew this treatise, it is possible to assume that
the many different verse forms found in the Complaints may have
been suggested by Sébillet's examples. Second, Sébillet's repeated
references to Clément Marot's complaints may have led Spenser
to read these poems, which in turn may have affected Spenser's
own compositions.

Briefly, then, how are each of the poems in the volume of
1591 "complaints"? Five of the nine poems are distinguished as
complaints which follow the tradition of Bernard of Cluny's De
contemptu mundi, although Spenser's general use of the short visionary
sonnet, which he adapted from Du Bellay, is considerably different
in style from Bernard's long, didactic narrative. These poems,
"The Teares of the Muses," "The Ruines of Rome," "The Visions

3We know from E. K.'s many references to Marot's
poetry, in the glosses to The Shepheardes Calender
that Spenser was familiar with Marot's verse as early
as 1578-9. As well, since the "Visions of Petrarch"
which Spenser translated for Van der Noot's A Theatre
for 
Worldlings (1569) were taken from Marot's translation
of Petrarch, rather than from the original Italian,
then we know that at a very early age Spenser was
reading the poetry of Clément Marot.
of the world's vanity." "The Visions of Boccaccio," and "The Visions of Petrarch," all view the world as a fallen, vain place, which is ruled by two harsh masters—devouring Time and changeable Fortune.

"The Tears of the Muses" diverges from the usual theme of universal degeneracy by stating that the world's vile nature has led to a similar fate in the poetic world. Here Spenser actually reverses the normal order of medieval contemptus mundi literature. The medieval complaint, as Joseph Kellner describes it, generally moves from "a specific occasion" of disappointment or failure, to "a general observation" of the vile condition of the world, which subsequently "finds expression as a universal complaint against the times" (121). In "The Tears of the Muses," Spenser begins with a universal complaint against the times, which is repeated in the nine separate speeches of the Muses, who subsequently explain how the world's degeneracy has led to a corruption of the poetic arts.

"Mother Hubberd's Tale," while owing much to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and the cycle of medieval Reynard fables, which were popular during the Renaissance, is also indebted to the medieval complaint against the three estates. This form of complaint evolved from the satires which were popular during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which were themselves developed in imitation of the satirical sections of contemptus mundi works by Bernard de Cluny and others. In "Mother Hubberd's Tale" the Ape and the Fox disguise themselves as shepherds, clergymen, soldiers, courtiers, and finally rulers. And through their adventures they display the weaknesses of each of these estates and often satirize the foibles of the
different classes of men.

In these works it is fairly simple to recognize Spenser's use of the complaint traditions; the remaining poems in the collection are more difficult to define as complaints. "Virgil's Gnat," the translation of the Culex, may not at first appear to be a traditional complaint, although Spenser draws attention to the poem's genre. In the introductory sonnet, Spenser suggests the personal reasons why he dedicated this poem to his late patron, the Earl of Leicester, and he states quite simply that "what so by my selfe may not be shown, / May by this Gnatts complaint be easily known" (lines 13-14, my emphasis). Nevertheless, this brief comment would hardly be sufficient proof of the poem's genre, if "Virgil's Gnat" did not follow the well-known form of the moral, narrative complaint. After the shepherd has inadvertently killed the gnat, he falls asleep. In a dream the gnat's ghost appears to the shepherd and tells him of the fates of all the great heroes of antiquity, who have, like himself, given their lives unselfishly so as to save the life of another. Upon awakening, the shepherd repents of his injustice toward the gnat and builds a monument in honour of the insect. Although the poem begins (following Virgil) with a long and complicated preamble, which is not found in the simpler forms of the medieval complaints (a matter which is discussed more fully in Chapter Five), "Virgil's Gnat" is generally a moral complaint, told by the ghost of the gnat, in the style of the dé casibus poems.

"The Ruines of Time" is in many ways an elegy on the Dudley family in general and Philip Sidney in particular; yet in the
poem Spenser is consciously following the traditions of de casibus complaint. The poem is basically the monologue of a ghostly figure, the Genius of Verlaine, who laments the loss and abandonment of her city, and by association the loss and abandonment of all great and powerful things and people. Spenser indicates to his audience that the poem should be seen as more than just an elegy on the Dudleys when he announces, in his dedication to Mary Sidney, that he has "conceived this small Poeme, intituled by a generall name of the worlds Ruines" (34). In Spenser's eyes Time has ruined not only the hopes of the noble Dudleys, but also the hopes of the world. In "The Ruines of Time," Spenser clearly follows the traditions of the complaint established by his medieval and early Renaissance predecessors; yet, while he follows these traditions, Spenser also begins to deviate, however slightly, from the established narrative style of complaint. The poem begins in a traditional fashion. A poet-figure is walking along the shores of the Thames, "Nigh where the goodly Verlaine stood of yours" (line 3). He is in a melancholy mood, musing upon the forgotten city, when he suddenly sees: "A woman sitting sorrowfull weeping, / Bending her yellow looks" and crying: "streames of teares" (9-10, 11). As in a complaint, the woman, the Genius of Verlaine, begins her mournful tale and the poet-auditor listens quietly. Later, however, when Spenser begins his laments for the Dudley family, he breaks away from the usual narrative stance of complaint. The poet-figure has been sitting quietly listening to Verlaine's tale, when suddenly she addresses the poet, calling him "Colin" (225), and encouraging him to take an active part in praising Leicester and the other
deceased members of the Dudley family. "Awake, and to his Song a part apply: / And in the whiles you mourn for his decrease, will with my mourningplaints your plaints increase" (236-8).

At this point we lose sight of Verlaine, as the poet himself continues the narrative. The poet's active participation in "The Ruines of Rome," however, is only temporary, since Spenser is obliged to conclude the poem with the return of Verlaine as the poem's sole complainant. In "The Ruines of Time" can be found the first signs of Spenser's apparent dissatisfaction with the traditional narrative style of the complaint, which would eventually lead him to develop a new style of complaint in "Mulipotmos."

"Mulipotmos" is the most difficult poem in the collection to define as a complaint, because in the poem Spenser both follows and revives the traditions of the genre to suit his own poetic purposes. One way of seeing "Mulipotmos" as a complaint is to agree with any of the varied interpretations of the poem as an historical allegory. The readings of "Mulipotmos" by Jessie M. Lyons, P. W. Long, and other early historical critics considered the poem as Spenser's representation of an actual complaint of either Raleigh against Essex, Sidney against Essex, Essex against Burghley, or the poet himself against Burghley. However, the necessary arbitrariness of Clarion and Aragnoll as signifiers for any contemporary argument between prominent Elizabethan courtiers greatly diminishes the acceptance of these interpretations as accurate readings of the poem. "Mulipotmos" can be read as a complaint...

4Further readings of "Mulipotmos" as an allegorical poem can be found in Chapter Five of this study.
without turning to information which is external to it. In other works of the volume, Spenser extends the traditions of the medieval complaint, while still maintaining the recognizable features of complaint literature. For "Maiopatmos," the poet relies upon his audience's knowledge of the complaint traditions and their acceptance that the poems in the collection are complaints (made obvious by Ponsonby's prefatory remarks), so that he may experiment with a new form of complaint. "Maiopatmos" is a Renaissance complaint, although elements of both de casibus and de contemptu mundi literature can be found in the poem. Spenser's description of the butterfly Clarion's carefree existence, in the early sections of the poem, follows the model set by the heroes and heroines of de casibus complaints. Like his medieval counterparts, Clarion is proud of the envy which his colourful wings have encouraged in the other members of the court:

Full manie a Ladie faire, in Court full oft
Beholding them, him secretly envidye,
And wight that two such fannes, so silken soft,
And golden faire, her Love would her provide;
Or that when them the gorgious File had doft,
Some one that would with grace be gratified,
From him, would steal them privily away,
And bring to her so precious a pray. (105-12)

As well, he revels in the excesses of his apparent power over all the natural world:

What more felicitie can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight, with libertie,
And, to be Lord of all the workes of Nature,
To raine int'hare from earth to highest skie,
To feed on flowers, and weedes of glorious feature,
To take what ever thing doth please the eye.

(209-14)
But Clarion's fate turns suddenly against him, and as the narrator tells us, he is "Well worthie... to taste of wretchednes" (216). Like the fallen heroes and heroines of the medieval de casibus complaints, Clarion cannot be saved from "heavens avengement" (240). At the height of Clarion's apparent good fortune, the tone of the poem changes. Like the narrator's of the contemptus mundi literature, the narrator of "Muiropotmos" muses upon the dangers, instabilities, and mishaps of this fallen world, and turns to God as man's only salvation:

But what on earth can long abide in state?  
Or who can him assure of happier day?  
Sith morning faire may bring fowle evening late,  
And least mishap the most blissfe alter day?  
For thousand perils lie in close awake  
About us daylie, to work our decay;  
That none, except a God, or God him guide,  
May them avoyde, or remedie provide. (217-23)

In these passages of "Muiropotmos," Spenser indicates his indebtedness to the traditions of medieval complaint; yet there is much in the poem which diverges from such traditions. The most notable change is that "Muiropotmos" is not a monologue. Neither Clarion, nor his ghost, tells the tale; instead the narrator, a poet-figure, has complete power over it. The first line of the poem, "I sing of deadly dolorous debate," by means of the first-person pronoun, announces to the reader that the poet is in control of the narrative. And a few lines later, the poet invokes the muse of tragedy to reveal to him "all the meanes... / Through which sad Clarion did at last decline" (13-4). The opening lines of "Muiropotmos" have usually been cited as evidence of the poem's mock-heroic style; yet it seems likely that Spenser was using the invocation
of the muse not as a mockery of heroic verse, but as an announcement
to his audience that "Muiropotmos" is a Renaissance poem. Advancing
from the narrative design of "The Ruines of Time," Spenser, in
this poem, has no need for a ghostly figure who will, with her
"mourning plaints," this poet's "plaints increase." The poet-narrator
of "Muiropotmos" is not merely an amanuensis receiving the tale
word-by-word from a ghostly speaker; rather, he turns to the "tragick

51 call "Muiropotmos" a Renaissance poem because, although
I believe that it is a complaint, it is distinctively different
from the medieval Complaints whose traditions Spenser is following
in the other poems in the volume. The major difference is the
narrative voice. As I suggest, Spenser draws attention to the
active role of the poet in "Muiropotmos" by opening the poem with
an epic invocation to the Muse of Tragedy. Here, it appears that
Spenser is agreeing with Philip Sidney's definition of the poet
as a seer, and is disagreeing with the medieval conception (particu-
larly evident in medieval complaint literature) of the poet
as merely a scribe, who "comes out the tale told to him by the
ghostly narrator." In "The Tears of the Muses," a poem more clearly
involved with poetry, Spenser also suggests that the poet should
be an active participant in Renaissance complaint. At line 50,
when the poet is calling upon the nine muses to tell him the reasons
for their tears, he says:

Vouchsafe ye then, whom onely it concernes,
To me those secret causes to display:
For none but you, or who of you it learnes,
Can rightfully a fraud so dolefull lay (49-52).

It is a Renaissance belief, adapted from examples of classical
literature, that the poet held special powers which allowed him
to speak directly to the Muse of Poetry. "The Tears" is most
clearly concerned with Renaissance poetry, and it seems that Spenser
was also indicating a similar concern in his development of a
different narrative style in "Muiropotmos." It has recently been
suggested to me by Professor Anne Prescott that Spenser was not
completely innovative in giving his poet-figure a more active
role in his complaints. As the generic history of the Renaissance
complaint will show, in Chapter Four of this study, poets who
capitalized on the popularity of The Mirror for Magistrates began
to write complaints in which the poet had a more active role.
Spenser's participation in this revision of the medieval view
of the poet is part of his attempt to enliven the worn-out traditions
of the complaint and to develop a new style of Renaissance complaint.
Musaeus" (413) to learn how to devise his own sad pates. Other parts of "Mutopotmos" show Spenser's deviation from the traditions of medieval and Mirror for Magistrates complaint, such as his use of Ovidian tales to advance the narrative. In the medieval complaint, the ghostly figure would present a catalogue of the shades of hell as further exempla of mankind's misfortune (as the ghost of the goat does in the poem Spenser is most likely imitating, "Virgil's Goat"). In "Mutopotmos" Spenser prefers to use the lavish Ovidian tales of Astory and Arachne. This use of lavish, sensuous Ovidian tales became the most common feature of later Renaissance lover's complaints, such as Samuel Daniel's Complaint of Rosamond and Shakespeare's Lover's Complaint. In "Mutopotmos" Spenser revises and extends the well-worn traditions of the medieval complaint and helps to revitalize this genre for the Renaissance.

In order to understand clearly Spenser's generic innovations in the Complaints, Chapters Three and Four of this study survey the development of the complaint. Chapter Three briefly outlines the origin of the complaint from its classical and Biblical sources to its development in the medieval de causibus and de contemptu mundi poems. As well, Chapter Three investigates the popular complaint traditions, such as the satirical complaint.

6It is not my intention to imply here that Daniel and Shakespeare were influenced by Spenser's "Mutopotmos" for their use of Ovidian tales in their lover's complaints. Marlowe's Hero and Leander is the better source for the later poet's uses of these tales. I am suggesting that by also using Ovidian tales to advance his poem's narrative action, Spenser was again drawing attention to the Renaissance elements of the poem.
against the three estates and the complaint poems of Chaucer, including *The Book of the Duchess* and the minor lyrics. Chapter Four then follows these forms of the complaint as they were adapted by a number of English and continental Renaissance poets. The popularity of complaint literature is evident from the number of translations, adaptations, and imitations of medieval *contemptus mundi* literature published during the sixteenth century. In 1576 Pope Innocent's *De contemptu mundi* appeared in two separate translations. The first, by Humphrey Kerton, entitled *The Mirror of Mans Lyfe*, was printed twice in 1576 and was reprinted in 1577 and 1586. The second, George Gascoigne's "The View of Worldly Vanities," appeared as part of his *The Droomme of Doomes Day*. As well as these translations of medieval works, several contemporary complaints were also translated into English during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. An anonymous author translated Diego de Estrella's work and gave it the title *The Contempt of the World and the Vanitie Thereof* (1584), and in 1592 the Countess of Pembroke had published her translation of Phillippe de Mornay's work which was given the English title *The Discourse of Life and Death* (Farnham, 69). Another indication of the Elizabethan reader's taste for complaint was the popularity of *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576), a miscellany comprised of serious, moral poems such as a verse translation of Bernard de Clairvaux's "De contemptu mundi." *The Paradise* was reprinted ten times during the sixteenth century, the first edition appearing in 1576 and the tenth in 1606. Chapter Four investigates more closely the sixteenth century's taste for complaint literature and concentrates particularly on two areas.
of Renaissance complaint: the popular tradition of moral, narrative
complaints introduced in England by the authors of The Mirror
for Magistrates; and the short visionary sonnet of lamentation
adapted by Marot and Du Bellay from Petrarch’s Rime sparse. These
two types of the Renaissance complaint are most clearly associated
with Sponser’s Complaints. As well, Chapter Four analyzes Sponser’s
knowledge and use of the poetic treatises of his French predecessors,
such as Thomas Soillot’s Art Poétique Française (1548) and Du
Bellay’s La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Française (1549).

Chapter Five applies the previous two chapters’ broad generic
survey to Sponser’s Complaints of 1591. It analyzes both Sponser’s
use of and divergence from the forms of the complaint as followed
by his English and continental contemporaries. This chapter emphasizes
Sponser’s role as the “new poet,” and advocate of the “new poetry”
initiated in France by the Pléiade poets and continued in England
by Sidney and Sponser. It considers how Sponser conceived of
his works as complaints, and how he experimented with the forms
and conventions of De Casibus and De Contemptu Mundi complaints.
In this volume Sponser experimented with verse forms, narrative

7 One area of complaint poetry which I will not be investigating
is the large area of lover’s complaints. Although this is the
form of complaint most commonly associated with the Renaissance,
it was not used by Sponser for his Complaints of 1591, and so
lies outside the scope of this study. The subject of lover’s
complaints in the Renaissance has already received considerable
attention, for example see: Bjork, “The Renaissance Mirror for
Fair Ladies: Samuel Daniel’s Complaint of Rosamond and the Tradition
of Feminine Complaint,” Crain, “The De Casibus Complaint in Eliza-
abethan England, 1559-1593,” Sermony, “Daniel’s Complaint of
Rosamond: Origins and Influences of an Elizabethan Poem,” Zucca,
Elizabethan Narrative Poetry; and Duncan-Jones, “Was the 1609
Shake-speare’s Sonnets Really Unauthorized?”
styles, language, and all the poetic talents which he brought to his great masterpieces. But in these smaller poems, we see the poet's gradual working-through of his ideas more clearly than in *The Faerie Queene*, for as Renwick observes in his commentary on the *Complaints*:

we turn to the lesser works [of a great poet] to meet the man in his less god-like moments, to watch him experimenting, to hear his opinions, to share his amusements, his personal attachments, his tastes and his grievances. (179)

By looking closely at the *Complaints*, we will be able to learn much more about the nature of these poems and about Spenser's artistry.

The second method which unifies the *Complaints* is the theme of mutability; this theme is the subject of Chapter Six. The problem of the "Worlds Ruine" (Commentary letter, "RT," page 34), the ravages of Time which change and destroy all earthly creatures, was a common Renaissance theme. The Pléiade poets, and particularly Du Bellay in *Les Antiquitez de Rome*, envision the decay of the world with almost unrestrained melancholy. Spenser, too, whether impelled by his reading of the French poets, or by his own perceptions of the "worlds vanitie," often reflects upon the mutability of the world and its effect upon all mortal creatures. In his earliest known publication, the translations of the vision poems for Van der Noodt's *A Theatre for Worldlings* (1569), in the ecclesiastical satires and cyclical death-life-death structure of *The Shepheardes Calender*, and in numerous episodes from *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser shows his concern for the ravages of Time and Mutability upon the world. Moreover, it is possible to see.
that everything that Spenser published up to within eight years of his death, except for the first three books of The Faerie Queene, can be perceived as principally concerned with earthly impermanence and inconstancy. The present view of Complaints coincides with the distrust of Time's sublunary powers and the belief that earthly fame and glory are of only temporary duration, which has been recognized as central to the Theatre for Worldlings and The Shepheardes Calender. The popular critical notion that Spenser becomes disillusioned first toward the end of The Faerie Queene misrepresents the true development of his literary career.

Yet for Spenser, as for many of the great writers and philosophers of the Renaissance, the question of the world's mutability was more than a mere literary topos. Confronted with changes in the social, political, and religious foundations of their culture, as well as with the physical destructiveness of wars, famines, and plagues, the Renaissance man was sharply aware of his mortality. Meanwhile, for the poet, the problem of mutability was interwoven with the popular notions of Fame, Glory, and poetic immortality. In the Complaints Spenser presents the most sustained and wide-ranging exploitation of his age's fascination with this most important theme, which Nelson describes, in his essay on the Complaints,

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8This theme is not only central to the Complaints and the other works mentioned above, but to others of Spenser's earlier compositions, such as his elegies, Daphnaida and Astrophel, and his prose translation of the Axiochus. This last work not only follows the theme of mutability, but as a "Dialogue of Death," contains many of the ideas common to contemptus mundi literature, such as the rejection of all worldly pleasures as vain and the hope for death.
as a "fascination with the strength which is frail, the fame which
is fleeting, the beauty which is dust" (65). In "The Ruines of
Time" Verlame's lament focuses upon the forgotten city which was
once powerful and beautiful, and upon the forgotten Dudleys who
were once honoured and feared. The nine Muses, in "The Teares,"
lament the transformation of poetry caused by man's turning his
back on the honours of learning and art and choosing to follow
only ignorance and barbarism. The complaint of "Virgils Gnat"
symbolizes the changeable fortunes of all inconsequential creatures
who serve the great and the powerful. "Mother Hubberd's Tale"
satirizes the fickleness of men who are discontent with their
lives by presenting the adventures of the Ape and the Fox as they
change from shepherds to priests, to courtiers, and finally to
rulers. Du Bellay's "Ruines of Rome" witnesses the "Eternal City's"
decay and destruction while still attempting to immortalize its
former power and beauty. "Mnepopotmos" has as its hero the symbol
of mutability, the butterfly, which was often depicted in classical
paintings and mosaics as resting upon the top of Fortune's wheel
as a reminder that the things of beauty and delight are evanescent
and quickly disappear. (See figure 1) As well, Spenser emphasizes the theme of mutability in "M نقط by presenting the stories of the metamorphoses of Astory and Arachne. Finally, the "Vision" poems concentrate upon those elements of worldly vanity which Nelson describes as frail strength, fleeting fame, and decaying beauty. The theme of mutability pervades the Complaints and draws together its different poems. Perceiving both the generic and thematic similarities of Spenser's Complaints, we can no longer accept Stein's assumptions, nor is it sufficient for us to give the poems only "separate consideration." Nevertheless, before we consider the generic or thematic design of the Complaints, in Chapter Two we will survey the critical background of the poems from their original publication in 1591 to the present day. Because of critical prejudices and many long-standing misconceptions about the Complaints, these poems have often been disregarded by modern readers of Spenser. The following survey attempts to show that even though the Complaints have always been understood as minor works, they are an important part of Spenser's canon, and they should be considered fairly and with open minds. Chapter Two

9An example of the artistic representation of the butterfly as a symbol of earthly transience can be seen in the attached illustration (figure 1). The mosaic is entitled "Death, the Great Leveler," and it was found among the remains of the ancient city of Pompeii. (Printed in Great Treasures of Pompeii and Herculaneum, 156-7). The illustration depicts a skull in the centre of the mosaic, which is hung by a plumb-line to an A-framed structure; below the skull's chin rests a butterfly, whose wings are outspread. The butterfly rests upon the top of a wheel. On each side of the wheel are two different styles of clothing, the one to the left of the skull is of royal design and material, the other to the right, is the clothing of a poor shepherd. These various symbols make it apparent that the entire mosaic represents the changeableness of Fortune.
Death, the Great Leveler
Mosaic from Pompeii, Museo Nazionale, Naples
is designed to show the wide acceptance of these works by centuries of Spenser's readers in an attempt to re-evaluate the significance of these poems. Since many of the early references to the Complaints are scattered among obscure Renaissance texts and early editions of Spenser's works, I have attempted to bring all the material within one study (even though the critical concerns may at times go beyond the exact limits of a consideration of the Complaints as a unified text) in order to provide the fairest possible assessment of the works. Once we have considered the broad critical views of these poems, we can then return to the specific concerns of the poetic unity of Spenser's Complaints.
Chapter Two

A Critical History of the Complaints

The critical history of the Complaints, as presented in the following survey, fulfills two purposes: first, it offers a study of the tastes and attitudes of the poet's readers from the seventeenth century to the present day. For example, although it is generally believed that by the seventeenth century complaint literature had lost its popularity, Spenser's Complaints, surprisingly, were often alluded to, quoted, and imitated by many different authors. The early references to the Complaints are particularly interesting since they often show an awareness of the themes and purposes of the works of which later critics appear unconscious. And second, it attempts to confront, as broadly as possible, the various perceptions and misconceptions about the Complaints which have been maintained throughout the volume's history. Part of the survey tries to suggest why the Complaints volume has rarely been considered as a unified whole, yet much of it considers the individual reception and critical reputation of the various poems in the volume. In some cases, particularly in the sections concerning nineteenth and twentieth-century critical readings of the poems, we will distinguish, as Sidney did in his Defence of Poetry, between right-readers and wrong-readers of the Complaints. Therefore, this survey will attempt to point out those studies which have added to our understanding of the poems. Although at times my

1A. Leigh DeNeef, in his Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor, discusses the importance of this distinction for Sidney's treatise and Spenser's poetry (28-9).
conclusions may disagree with or revise earlier readings of the
Complaints, they also rely upon those earlier observations. One
example of this indebtedness can be found in the late nineteenth
century studies of the Vision poems. The conclusions reached
by G. L. Craik and E. Konopel were often inaccurate, but their
careful investigations into the origins of these poems have offered
support for more recent considerations of the influence of the
Platonic poets upon the Complaints.

In order to organize this material, I have divided the critical
history into four chronological periods: 1591-1715, 1715-1805,
1805-1928, and 1928 to the present. These four periods reflect
the changes in the critical view toward Spenser's works in general
and the Complaints in particular. The first period covers the
eyears of acceptance, from the publication of the first edition
of the Complaints to John Hughes' edition of the complete works
of Spenser. Within this age are found the first readers of Spenser's
minor poems, and their responses helped to establish the critical
attitude toward the works. The publication, in 1745, of John
Hughes' edition of the complete works of Spenser marks a signifi-
cant change in the critical views of Spenser's readers. No longer
are the works of the great Renaissance poet accepted with adulation
and without question. Hughes' concern for an accurate text of
the poems and his critical essays about the techniques of Spenser's
poetry encouraged his Augustan readers to look critically at all
the works of Spenser. This is the age of the famous essays of
Thomas Warton, Jr. and John Jerdon, as well as those by lesser
known critics such as Giles Jacob and Philip Neve. The third
period of Spenser scholarship begins with John Todd’s first variorum edition of the complete works of Spenser. Again, this edition signals a change in the critical view of the age toward the Complaints: Todd’s notes and commentaries on the poems question the perceptions of contemporary and earlier readers, and they begin a flurry of journal and newspaper articles by fellow Spenserians who agree or disagree with Todd’s and each other’s findings.

The final period of criticism is marked by the first separate edition of the Complaints since their original publication. W. L. Renwick’s critical edition in 1928 drew attention to these minor poems as works worthy of scholarly attention. Modern techniques which had been used to clarify the more famous works of Spenser were now applied to these lesser known poems.

1591–1715: Admiration and Imitation

The first period of Spenser criticism can be divided into three general areas of interest: biographies of Spenser; general criticism and remarks on the Complaints in the letters, prefaces, and works of Spenser’s contemporaries and successors; and imitations of allusions to the poems in other poetic works. This final area is the most profitable for our consideration of the early reception of Spenser’s Complaints since it shows that the poems were well enough understood by the poet’s contemporaries and followers to be absorbed into the fabric of their own works.

Spenser’s earliest biographers often read many of the Complaints as autobiographical laments of the poet’s own condition.

Lord Burghley was seen as the greatest source of Spenser’s woe,
so that his biographers anxiously searched throughout the poems
for references to the poet's apparent anger at the Queen's Treasurer. 2
Nevertheless, one biography which goes beyond these supposed auto-
biographical matters and shows a considerable understanding of
Spenser's deeper concerns, as they are voiced in the Complaints,
is William Winstanley's "Life of Spenser" written for The Lives
of the Most Famous English Poets (1687). This essay should not
be confused with Winstanley's earlier "Life," which had been published
in the 1664 edition of England's Worthies. The 1684 essay is
very similar to other seventeenth-century Lives of Spenser, but
the 1687 edition contains references to the Complaints that are
not found elsewhere.

Renaissance literary historians are familiar with Winstanley's
reputation as a compiler and plagiarist of the common lives of
the famous English poets. Historians generally agree that Winstanley

2 The passages which Spenser's early biographers
most often refer to when looking for references to
the poet's animosity toward Burghley are: "MHT" 295-906,
"RT" 409-55, and "TM" 463-74. These apparently veiled
references, which contain no obvious connection to
the Lord Treasurer, were reported by Edward Phillips
in his Theatrum Poetarum (1675) to have caused Burghley
to "owe [Spenser] a grudge" (printed in Spenser: The
Critical Heritage 323). How offended Burghley may
have been by these possible allusions in the Complaints
has long been a question. It is possible that these
references were in part behind the apparent "calling-in"
of the poems, and particularly of the most politically
offensive poem, "MHT." Arguments in favor of the
possible censorship of the volume or any of its poems
generally cite the scarcity of printed copies of the
1591 edition, in comparison with the number of MS
copies now extant, the absence of any subsequent editions
of the Complaints after 1591, and the removal of "MHT"
and the revisions of "RT" and "TM" for the 1611 edition
of Spenser's works. For a full discussion of these
matters see Variorum 580-5.
borrowed heavily from the earlier collections of poets' lives published by Thomas Fuller and Edward Phillips. This allegation is proven by Winstanley's essay in the 1684 Worthies, which varies little from those of his immediate predecessors. However, as William Hiley Parker states in his introduction to the modern facsimile edition of the 1687 Lives, "Winstanley was more nearly a scholar than the man [Phillips] he is usually alleged to have plagiarised" (v). Although Winstanley did borrow considerable amounts of material from Phillips and Fuller, for the edition of 1687 he added much information that these biographers had ignored or had been unable to discover. The 1687 essay begins with a little known essay entitled "The Preface to the Reader." The main purpose of this preface is to defend the fame and immortality earned by poets. Of poets Winstanley says:

These are the Men who in their Heroick Poems have made mens Names live to eternity; therefore it were pity (saith Plutarch) that those who write to Eternity, should not live so too. (n.p.)

Winstanley goes on to say that history has shown that forms of literature, books, poems, and such have endured longer than any other monuments to past heroes:

Now above all Remembrances by which men have endeavoured even in despight of Death, to give unto their Names eternity, for Worthiness and Continuance. Books, and Writings, have ever had the Preheminence. (n.p.)

In the rest of the preface, Winstanley cites many classical authorities who have written about the immortality of poetry. Winstanley concludes his remarks on this subject by stating that
by this [preface] you may see that frail Paper is more durable than Brass or Marble; and the Works of the Brain more lasting than that of the Hand. (n.p.)

When the reader turns to the "Life of Spenser," there at first seems to be no significant change between this essay and Winstanley's earlier life of 1684. Nevertheless, a closer examination shows that he has revised the life mainly by adding information about Spenser's Complaints. In the 1684 essay, Winstanley briefly mentions "Virgil's Gnat," calling it "a little fragment of Virgil's excellency" (printed in Critical Heritage 328). Following this quick reference, there immediately begins a lengthier discussion of The Faerie Queene. Nevertheless, in the revised essay of 1687, after repeating his remark on "Virgil's Gnat," Winstanley mentions both "The Ruines of Rome" and "Mother Hubberds Tale," saying:

Then he translated Bellay his Ruins of Rome; His most Unfortunate Work was that of Mother Hubberd's Tale, giving therein offence to one in authority, who afterwards stuck on his skirts. (89)

The most significant revision of Winstanley's later "Life of Spenser" occurs in his discussion of "The Ruines of Time." In the 1684 "Life," Winstanley had referred to Spenser's admiration for Sidney and the poet's comments upon his dead friend in "The Ruines"; but in the later version, he ties Spenser's poem to his earlier remarks on poetic immortality from the preface. Winstanley quotes lines 400-13 of "The Ruines of Time," stating that in these lines one may see "what account he makes of the world, and of the immortal
Fame gotten by Poesie" (90). Winstanley's revisions for his
1667 "Life of Spenser" help to show that the poet's seventeenth-century
readers were both familiar with the Complaints and responsive
to the theme of poetic immortality presented in them. Further
evidence of the popularity of the Complaints in the seventeenth
century can be found in the letters, prefaces, and works of the
poet's first readers.

The criticism of Spenser's poetry by his contemporaries and
immediate successors is scantier and more generalized than we
would wish. The lengthiest criticism is given to discussions

3 Interestingly, Winstanley transposes the two
seven-line stanzas so that they appear in the following
manner:

In vain do earthly Princes then, in vain,
Seek with Pyramids to Heaven aspir'd
Or huge Collosses, built with costly pain;
Or brazen Pillars never to be fir'd;
Or shrines, made of the metal most desir'd,
To make their Memories for ever live,
For how can mortal immortality give?

For deeds do die, however nobly done,
And thoughts of men do in themselves decay,
But wise words taught in number for to run,
Recorded by the Muses, live for aye;
Ne may with storming showers be wash'd away,
Or bitter breathing with harmful blast,
Nor age, nor envy, shall them ever wast
(408-13, 409-7).

The effect of the transposition of these two stanzas
is to present poetry as the answer to Spenser's rhetorical
question in line 413, "how can mortal immortality
give?" This is not the first appearance of these
inverted stanzas of "RT." John Weever in his Ancient
Funerall Monuments (London, 1631) also quotes these
lines in this manner. It is possible then to assume
that Winstanley did not use a copy of Spenser's Complaints
to revise his 1687 "Life" of the poet, but rather
he used what information and resources were common
to his age.
of the Faery Queene, and the modern literary historian must be content with brief remarks and subtle allusions to Spenser’s minor poems. However, the appearance of any reference to the Complaints is significant in light of their relative neglect by modern literary critics. The apparent personal attacks believed to be contained in some of the Complaints’ poems account for some of the attention given to these poems, but many later Renaissance readers also seem to have been interested in specifically literary matters. One poem in particular, “Mother Hubberds Tale,” seems to have captured the interest of the poet’s contemporary and seventeenth-century readers. Gabriel Harvey offers the fullest and harshest criticism in his letter to Spenser, written after the publication of the Complaints. The letter rebukes Spenser for having allowed his anger to override his reason and warns the author that the poem’s publication might harm Spenser’s reputation in the future:

I must needs say, Mother-Hubbard in heat of choller, forgetting the pure sanguine of her sweete Faery Queene, wilfully over-shot her malcontented selfe. . . . If mother Hubbard in the vaine of Chaucer, happen to tell one Canticular Tale; father Elderton, and his sone Greene, in the vaine of Skelton; or Scoggin, will counterfeit an hundred dogged Fables, Libles, Callunies, Slaunders, Lits for the whetstone, what not & most curtishely, snarl, & bite where they should most-kindly fawne, and lice. Every private excesse is daunorous: but such publicke enormities, incredibly pernicious, and insupportable: and who can tell, what huge outrages might amount of such quarrellous, and tumultuous causes? (Poure Letters 7; in Works of Harvey 1.164)

Fortunately, most of Harvey’s misgivings about “Mother Hubberds Tale” did not come true. Nevertheless, some important critical observations were made by this Renaissance reader. Harvey is
the first to recognize that in the "Tale" Spenser is following
Chaucer as an English author of moral beast fables. Perhaps Spenser
and Harvey, at some earlier point in the poem's conception, had
discussed the Chaucerian elements of this work, but Harvey's public
announcement of this similarity between Spenser and his greatest
poetic predecessor draws attention to Spenser's conscious efforts
to connect this poem with the traditions of medieval literature.

Toward the end of this first period of Spenser criticism,
John Dryden, in his famous essay, A Discourse Concerning the Original
and Progress of Satire (1693), appears to respond to some of Harvey's
earlier misgivings. Dryden refers to "Mother Hubberds Tale" as
the only English example of the true form of satire, which he
sees as having descended from Varro, "the most learned of the
Romans" (Essays of Dryden 2.64), who was the first Latin author
to imitate the satirical style of Menippus. Menippian satire
is most easily identified by its mixture of poetry and prose.
But Dryden argues that Varronian satire, as he calls it, does
not need to be of mixed forms, but is most commonly recognized
by its variety of subject matter and inventiveness of story.
Dryden considers these elements of Varronian satire as necessary
for good satire, and he believes that Spenser's "Mother Hubberds
Tale" contains these elements. In his essay, Dryden places Spenser's
poem within a long and continuing satiric tradition:

This we may believe for certain, that as his [Varro's] subjects
were various, so most of them were tales or stories of his
own invention. Which is also manifest from antiquity, by
those authors who are acknowledged to have written Varronian
satires, in imitation of his; . . . Many of Lucian's dialogues
may . . . properly be called Varronian satires, particularly
his True History, and consequently the Golden Ass of Apuleius,
which is taken from him. Of the same stamp is the mock deification of Claudius, by Seneca, and the Symposium or Caesars of Julian, the Emperor. Amongst the moderns, we may reckon the Encomium Moriae of Erasmus, Barclay’s Euphormio, ... In the English, I remember none which are mixed with prose, as Varro’s were, but of the same kind is Mother Hubbard’s Tale, in Spenser; and (if it be not too vain to mention anything of my own), the poems of Absalom and Mac-Fleckno. (66-7)

In some ways Dryden’s remarks in 1693 respond to Harvey’s questions posed one hundred years earlier. Harvey had wondered “what huge outrages might amount of such quarrelous, and tumultuous causes” as the publication of “Mother Hubbard’s Tale” in 1591. By 1693 Dryden had answered Harvey’s concerns; yet rather than seeing “outrages” and tumults, the later poet saw in Spenser’s poem a continuation of a classical and continental literary form in England, which he and his Augustan successors would develop beyond the limits of its earlier examples.

“Mother Hubbard’s Tale” was the poem most often given critical attention by Spenser’s contemporary and seventeenth-century readers, partly for its apparent satire of Elizabethan politics and partly for its unique place as the only example of a verse satire in the poet’s canon. Other poems from the Complaints volume received some, though slight, critical attention from Spenser’s earliest
Nevertheless, the most fruitful area of interest for this first period rests with the numerous allusions and imitations of the Complaints in the works of Spenser’s successors.

During the early years of the seventeenth century Spenser’s works were often imitated and alluded to. The poets who referred to Spenser’s Complaints in their own works can be divided into two groups: those who absorbed the purpose of these poems into the fabric of their own efforts, such as Michael Drayton and, to a lesser extent, John Weever; and those who simply use extracts from the poems to hopefully increase the value of their own works.

4Henry Chettle, in his Englandes Mourning Garland, printed in 1603, turns to Spenser’s "RT" as a source of inspiration for his own panegyric to his patron. Referring to the lines concerned with Spenser’s early patron, Leicester (222-4), Chettle remarks:

I can not now forget the excellent and cunning Collin; indeed... complaining that a liberal Mecenas long since dying, was immediately forgotten, even by those that living most laboured to advance his fame (printed in Variorum 7.2.294).

As well as the original compositions, Spenser’s translations, which were included in the Complaints were also favourably regarded by some early readers. William Lisle, in the prefatory epistle to his 1628 translation of Virgil’s Eclogues, suggests that Spenser’s translation of the Culex ("VC") may have intimidated later English translators from attempting to follow him (see Critical Heritage 147). The only critic who seems to have commented upon (or at least alluded to) the entire Complaints volume is Sir William Temple. In his essay "Upon Poetry," published in the second part of his Miscellanea (1690), Temple places Spenser in the company of Petrarch and Ronsard as unequalled poets "upon the Subjects of Love, Praise, Grief, Reproach" (see Critical Heritage 222). Although Spenser does not follow, in strict terms, the poetry of Ronsard in the Complaints, Ronsard, as the most famous poet of the Pléiade, represents the influence of this school of poetry upon the Complaints. The subjects which Temple mentions are, on the whole, the subjects of Spenser’s Complaints.
The most famous imitators were the poets known as "Spenserians," who were led by Giles and Phineas Fletcher and Michael Drayton. These poets were generally interested in the Spenserian stanza and diction which had been developed in *The Faerie Queene*. Few of the seventeenth century "Spenserians," except for Drayton, seem to have taken much notice of the poet's minor works. Drayton shows a more persistent interest in the various works, major and minor, of "Grave morrall Spencer" (Drayton, "Epistle to Reynolds," in *Works* 3.228). Being a younger contemporary of Spenser, Drayton in his works bridges the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and shows the significant changes in poetic taste between the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. In some respects Drayton is an Elizabethan poet who simply lived beyond the age of Elizabeth. His most famous literary works are decidedly Elizabethan in their style, language, and genres. Drayton wrote pastorals, sonnets, amorous complaints, and a long, narrative historico-topographical poem, which all show a great debt to earlier Elizabethan poets and particularly

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In *The Purple Island*, Phineas Fletcher briefly relates the popular tale of Burghley's disfavour for Spenser and quotes the two famous lines from "RT" which are believed to have been directed toward the Lord Treasurer: "Oh may that man that hath the Muses scorn'd, / Alive, nor dead, be ever of the Muse adorn'd" (21.6-7; *Poetical Works* 2.16). These two lines are almost, but not quite, and exact quotation from "RT" 454-5. It is most likely that Fletcher was quoting from memory, which would account for the slight variation in these two lines.
Drayton's indebtedness to Spenser for much of the style and description of the *Poly-Olbion*, especially his allegorizations of the many rivers which help to narrate his tales, is evident throughout the poem. Yet for the interests of this study, Drayton's description of Hertfordshire, in the "Sixteenth Song," will be looked at more closely. Song Sixteen follows familiar ground; here the river, "Old Ver," and the well-traveled Watling Street "talk of auncient things; / What Verlam was before she fell, / And many more sad ruines tell" ("Epigram," lines 1-3). Drayton relies on Spenser's "Ruines of Time," not only for historical information about the ancient city of Verlame, but also for various descriptive phrases. Drayton alludes to Spenser's poem in the opening lines of the "Song" when he introduces the river Ver: "That Ver of long esteem'd, a famous auncient Flood / (Upon whose aged Bank olde Verlamechester stood, / Before the Roman rule) here glorify'd of yere" (11-13). Watling, "the Ancient Street" (21), then asks his old friend, the river Ver, to tell him the cause of the drastic change which has befallen this land:

I-faine would understand, why this delightfull place,  
In former time that stood so hie in Natures grace

In later time is turn'd a hotte and hungry sand,  
Which scarce repays the seed first cast into the Land.  
(31-2; 35-6)

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6His pastoral, *The Shepherd's Garland*, was published in 1593. The next year he published a sonnet sequence, *Idea's Mirror*, and two lover's complaints, *Matilda* and *Piers Gaveston*. His greatest work, *Poly-Olbion* was begun during the reign of Elizabeth, but was not completed until 1612.
Somewhat reluctantly, Ver tells the tale, for which Drayton artfully adapts the story told by Spenser's "Genius" of Verlaine, maintaining not only some of the earlier poet's phrases, but also the tone of anger and abandonment felt by the forgotten city:

Thou saw'st when Verlam once her head aloft did beare
(Which in her cinders now lies sadly buried here)
With Alabaster, Tuch, and Porphery adorn'd,
When (welneare) in her pride great Troyovant she scorn'd.
Thou sawest great-burthen'd Ships through these thy valleys pass,
Where now the sharp-edg'd Sithe sheeres up the springing grasse:
That where the ugly Seale and Porpose us'd to play,
The Grasshopper and Ant now lord it all the day:
Where now Saint Albans stands was called Holme-hurst then,
Whose sumptuous Palace we see neglected now agen. (43-52)

In these ten lines can be found many echoes of "The Ruines of Time": line 43 states "Thou saw'st when Verlam once her head aloft did beare," which contains the similar idea of ancient nobility as "Ruines" line 36, "I was that Citie, which the garland wore";
line 44 of Drayton's poem is almost identical to "Ruines" line 40, "And lye in mine owne ashes, as ye see"; Drayton's line 45, although more detailed in its description, recalls "Ruines" lines 85-6, "To tell the beautie of my buildings fayre, / Adorn'd with purest golde, and precious stone"; and Drayton's line 46, "When (welneare) in her pride great Troyovant she scorn'd," telescopes an entire stanza of Spenser's "Ruines":

There too for warlike power, and peoples store,
In Britannie was none to match with mee;
That manie often did able full sore:
Ne Troyovant, though elder sister shee,
With my great forces might compared bee;
That stout Pendragon to his peril felt,
Who in a siege seaven yeres about me dwelt. (99-105)
The remaining lines of Drayton's poem quoted above, as John Selden notes in his illustrations to the poem, show a debt to "that Noble Muse" who spoke "in the person of Verlam" (in Works of Drayton 314), which he then illustrates by quoting "Ruines" lines 134-40 and 148-54. Selden's illustrations cites Spenser's "Ruines of time" as the source for Drayton's story of Verlam; but only by comparing Drayton's lines closely with those of Spenser's poem can we appreciate the careful way in which Drayton has reshaped almost half lines of "The Ruines of Time" into ten lines of the

Poly-Olbion. Yet Drayton's understanding of Spenser's complaint goes beyond his ability to recast the story of Verlame to fit his own tale. He also understands that the ruin of Verlame is a sign of the greater ruin of the present age, and like Spenser's "Genius" of Verlame, whose complaint moves from the sorrows of a forgotten city to the heroes of the Dudley family, and finally to the forgotten arts of poetry symbolized by Sidney's death, Drayton's river Ver becomes enraged when he recalls all the great heroes who lie buried in the monastery at Saint Albans, but who are now forgotten:

Behold that goodly Fane, which round now doth stand,
To holy Albon built, first Martyr of the Land;
Who in the faith of Christ from Rome to Britaine came,
And dying in this place, resign'd his Glorious Name.
In memory of whom, (as more than halfe Divine)
Our English Offa rear'd a rich and sumptuous shrine.
And Monastery here: which our succeding kings,
From time to time endow'd with many goodly things.
And many a Christian Knight was buried heere, before
The Norman set his foote upon this conquered shore.
And after those brave spirits in all those balefull stowres,
That with Duke Robert went against the Pagan powers,
And in their Countries right at Cressy those that stood,
And that at Poyters bath'd their bilbowes in French blood;
Their valiant Nephewes next at Agin-court that fought,
Whereas rebellious France upon her knees was brought,
In this religious house at some of their returns,
When nature claym'd her due, here plac't their hallowed urnes.
(59-76)

And following this he cries out against a modern age of pandering poets who will not rail against the abuses of the times and who will allow "devouring Time" to destroy all the heroic memories of the past:

Lives no man, that this world her [Time's] grievous crimes dare tell?
Where be those noble spirits for ancient things that stood.
When in my prime of youth I was a gallant flood,
In those free golden dayes, it was the Satyres use
To take the guilty times, and raile upon abuse.
But soothers find the way preferment most to win;
Who serving Great mens turnes, become the bauds to sin.
(81-90)

After this outburst, Watling takes over the narrative so that the angry river will calm down, and Drayton no longer needs to use Spenser's poem. But in fact, Drayton had no more to say about "The Ruines of Time," for in the first 90 lines of his "Sixteenth Song," he has presented a comprehensive response to his predecessor's entire poem. Drayton's absorption of the design and spirit of "The Ruines of Time" into the fabric of his own poem shows his thorough understanding of the work. Another seventeenth-century author, John Weever, also shows that he understands the larger purposes of Spenser's Complaints, even though his responses to the poems are less complex and imaginative than Drayton's.

In 1631 Weever published a book on Ancient Funerall Monuments, and he turned to Spenser as an authority on the topic. Weever seems to have understood the dichotomy between the transience
of earthly monuments and the immortality of poetic monuments which Spenser presents in his Complaints and particularly in "The Ruines of Time" and "The Ruines of Rome." Weever describes all the variety of monuments which have appeared throughout history, and he agrees that books are the most preeminent:

A Monument is a thing erected, made, or written, for a memorial of some remarkable, action, fit to be transmitted to future posterity. And thus generally taken, all religious Foundations, all sumptuous and magnificent Structures, Cities, Townes', Towers, Castles, Pillars, Pyramids, Crosses, Obelishes, Amphitheatres, Statues, and the like, as well as Tombs and Sepulchres, are called Monuments. Now above all remembrances (by which men have endeavoured, even in despight of death to give unto their Fames eternitie) for worthinesse and continuance, booke or writings, have ever had the preheminence.

(117)

Weever then quotes a number of authorities on the subject of poetic immortality, such as Horace, Martial, and Ovid. Following these authorities, Weever concludes that

Bookes then and the Muses workes are of all monuments the most permanent; for of all things else there is a vicissitude, a change both of cities and nations. (3)

As authorities on the changeableness of nations and cities, Weever first quotes Ovid and then turns to "Bellay in his ruines of Rome, translated by Spenser" (4), using as an example 'Sonnet 3' ("Thou stranger, which for Rome in Rome here seekest"). Weever also
refers to "The Ruines of Time" in order to speak "Of walls, towres, castles, crosses, forts, rampiers, townes, cities, and such like monuments, here in great Britaine, which by age, warres, or the malignitie of times, are defaced, ruined or utterly subverted" (4). Following these, he quotes the lines spoken by Verlaine, beginning: "I was that Citaire which the garland wore..." (36-42). Weever then concludes Chapter One with a long quotation from "The Ruines of Time" (400-13), citing this passage as an example of the vanity of such Princes who (Absalon like) thinke to gain a perpetuitie after death, by erecting of pillars, and such like monuments, to keepe their names in remembrance; when as it is onely the Muses works which give unto man immortality. (5)

Much later in the work, Weever refers to "The Ruines of Time" for the last time. In Chapter Eight he speaks "Of the sanctitie ascrib'd sometimes to ancient funerall Monuments, and of the argent desire most men have and ever had to visite the Tombes and Sepulchres of eminent and worthy persons" (Table of contents, p. pag.), and he suggests that perhaps someone might wish to visit the remains of "Saint Alban." Unfortunately, he notes, Spenser reminds us that,

Of it there now remains no memory,  
Nor any little monument to see,  
By which the Traveller, that fares that way,  
This once was she, may warned be to say.  
(39: quotation from "RT" 4-7)

Weever is not a poet, and his gleanings from the Complaints are not managed with Drayton's artistry; nevertheless, he shows that the important theme of poetic immortality which Spenser had emphasized...
throughout the volume of poems was recognized and understood by Spenser's seventeenth century readers.

Several other sixteenth and seventeenth century poets and dramatists borrowed from or alluded to the poems in the Complaints volume in their works, but there is no evidence that they understood the larger thematic concerns of the poems. Rather, they appear to have turned to Spenser in the hope that his fame might increase the value of their slight efforts. Thomas Rogers, the author of Leicester's Ghost (composed between 1602-04), a violent polemic against the Earl of Leicester, borrows from two of the Complaints poems, "The Ruines of Time" and "The Ruines of Rome." Robert Greene, it appears, turned to the Complaints for the material in his prologue to Alphonus (1599), for which he adapted parts of "The Teares of the Muses," "Virgil's Gnat," and "The Ruines of Time." And the anonymous author of Locrine (1595) borrowed extensively from "The Ruines of Time," "The Ruines of Rome," and "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie." It appears that during the first century of their existence, Spenser's Complaints were familiar to a large group of poets, dramatists, and antiquarians; however, only a few of these individuals seem to have been interested.

Other writers showed even less imagination than these authors. The author of Selimus (1594) borrowed from Locrine. (For a full analysis of the borrowings from Spenser in Locrine and Selimus, see Hubbard, Shakespeare Studies 17-35; Collins, Plays and Poems 1.70-2; and Streit, 28-33.) An author, only known as J. O., apparently used the narrative design of "M" for his poem The Lamentation of Troy. And Thomas Nash might have been imitating "MHT" when he wrote his satirical work entitled Father Hubberd's Tales, The Ant, and the Nightigaule (1604).
in the larger poetic or thematic concerns of the volume. This observation should not surprise us. Although the Complaints were being read during the seventeenth century, the mood of the age had changed from the times of Spenser. The questions of mutability and poetic immortality, which had been so central to the thought of Elizabethan England, were less vital to successive ages. For some readers Spenser maintained only an historical interest. This was less true for an influential work such as The Faerie Queene, but for minor works, such as the Complaints, we must accept the fact that their impact was less significant. Nevertheless, those early readers, such as Dryden and Drayton, were influenced by the works in the Complaints' volume, and their efforts helped to maintain the popularity of these works.

Three names that are not mentioned above as early readers of the Complaints are those of Spenser's most famous poetic successors: William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and John Milton. Jonson makes slight references to "The Ruines of Time," in The Masque of Queens (1609), but neither Shakespeare nor Milton refers specifically to the Complaints in any of his works; yet it is hard to believe that these authors were not familiar with even the minor poems of their great predecessor. Because of this belief, many modern scholars and critics have tried to discover some relation between the works of these great authors and Spenser's Complaints.

9While describing the procession of ancient queens in his masque, Jonson turns to "the grave and diligent Spenser" as an authority on the Briton Queene, "Bunduca," and he quotes lines 108-11 of "RT" for historical evidence (Ben Jonson, 7.310).
therefore, for our consideration of these authors' appreciation
for the poems, we shall rely not on the words of the authors them-
selves, but on the investigations of present-day Spenserians.

Louis S. Friedland, in an early article, tries to "prove
Milton's familiarity with, and possible indebtedness to, another
poem of his favorite poet" ("Milton's 'Lycidas'" 247-8), by analyzing
Spenser's "Ruines of Time" in relation to Milton's "Lycidas."
Friedland admits that he is not attempting to find verbal parallels
among the two works, since Milton is not actually imitating Spenser.
Rather, Friedland's article focuses upon the ways in which:

both poems are marked by a like interchange of moods, --now
mournful, then argumentative and speculative, then the mood
of the higher hope, and again the reversion to the sorrowing
undertone, followed by the sad serenity at the end. (247)

As well, Friedland considers the ways in which "the personal views
of both [poets] are strikingly similar," although he is quick
to add that they are "of course, not identical" (247). No one
can argue with these findings, and the excerpts which Friedland
selects for his comparison do show a remarkable similarity between
the two works. Nevertheless, as Friedland himself admits, the
similarities are "characteristic of all great elegies" (247).
With this disclaimer in mind, Friedland is able to say that Milton
was following Spenser in some ways for the elements of his great
elegy, but only in the way that Spenser followed in the traditions
of his poetic forefathers -- at times maintaining the traditions
and at others reshaping them to form his own distinctive elegiac
style. Friedland's article is of interest, but it can also be
misleading, for ultimately it cannot in any definitive manner
"prove" Milton's "possible indebtedness to another poem of his favorite poet."

Johnson's comments on and criticisms of Spenor are well documented, and although his remarks are often harsh, they show a fair appreciation and thorough knowledge of the earlier poet's works. Johnson's familiarity with the Complaints can be assumed from his brief mention of "The Ruines of Time" in The Masque of Queens, but the extent of his knowledge of these minor poems is difficult to assess. In an article published in the 1959 English Miscellany, Jackson I. Cope argues that Johnson was quite familiar with Spenor's Complaints, and that after reading what Cope calls "Spenor's worst book," Johnson "fired it in his mind and turned it to a new poem" (66). Johnson's new poem is the "Epistle to Elizabeth Countesse of Rutland," which was composed in 1599 and later published in The Forrest (1616). Although Cope sees it as a "peculiar poem," because "a number of particular commonplaces have been yoked by violence and ingenuity together" (61, 63), the variety of "familiar tropes" (61) is not unusual if the person to whom the poem is written is considered. The "Epistle" contains the following familiar themes: a condemnation of the world wherein "all vertue now is sold" for "almightie gold" ("Epistle," lines 1,2; in Ben Jonson 111); the immortality of poetry over all other forms of worldly monuments; and a reference to the poet's own verses as a "gift of immortality to Elizabeth. It is true, as Cope has recognized, that these themes appear in the Complaints; nevertheless, as Cope must also admit, these "familiar tropes" are used by many Renaissance poets for their panegyric verses.
Why Jonson included these particular tropes in this one poem, I believe, may have more to do with the subject of the poem, Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland, than with Spenser's Complaints. Elizabeth was Philip Sidney's daughter, and therefore she was familiar with both the ways of the court and of poetry. It does not appear strange that Jonson would have begun his panegyric to Elizabeth by pointing out the failures of court life. The poem then continues with a long discourse upon the merits of poetry, which lie beyond the riches of gold or "those other glorious notes, / Inscrib'd in touch or marble" (43-4). Here Jonson not only honours Elizabeth, but her father as well. In a poem dedicated to any other figure such a long discussion on the immortality of poetry would have been out of place, but to the daughter of Sidney, no more appropriate tribute could have been paid. The poem concludes with a commendation of Jonson's verse; however, not for their own excellence, but for the excellence of the lady to whom the poem is dedicated. Jonson may have remembered some of the more distinctive lines of the Complaints (as well as lines from other verses in honour of Sidney and his family by various Renaissance authors) when he turned to write his panegyric to Elizabeth, but I find it hard to believe that Jonson would have ransacked the pages of his Complaints volume to find the appropriate material for this poem. Evidence that Jonson did not do this may be found in the poem itself.

He tells Elizabeth that she will be honoured by his verses because,

There like a rich, and golden pyramed,
Borne up by statues, shall I reare your head,
Above your under-carved ornaments,
And show, how, to the life, my soule presents
Your forme impress there: not with tickling rimes,
Jonson often adapted the works of other poets in accordance with his own doctrine of imitation, but he was not the type of poet who "filch'd" from the works of others. Jonson may have had Spenser's Complaints, and particularly the first poem dedicated to the Sidneys, "The Ruines of Time," in mind when he sat down to write his "Epistle to Elizabeth Countesse of Rutland," but it is doubtful that he "turned open Spenser's Complaints" (Cope, 63) as a guide for his Muse. Jonson may have been indebted to Spenser for a part of his "Epistle," but the Complaints cannot be seen as his only source.

Until most recently, scholars generally agreed that there was no evidence for poetic influence between Shakespeare and Spenser. Some early literary historians believed that there must have been some relation between the two great Elizabethan poets, but their arguments were always based upon conjecture. Nevertheless, in a recent article, A. Kent Hieatt convincingly argues that Shakespeare was apparently influenced by Spenser's "Ruines of Rome" for certain images of mutability, ruination, and Time found in Shakespeare's Sonnets ("The Genesis of Shakespeare's Sonnets" 800-14). By analyzing a number of "verbal echoes" from the "Ruines of Rome," which appear throughout Sonnets, Hieatt has shown Shakespeare's indebtedness to his famous contemporary. Shakespeare's close attention to the images of mutability and devouring Time, which are recurring images in the Complaints, also seems to show that the later poet
understood the thematic design of at least one of the poems in the volume. Evidence for these three poets' familiarity with Spenser's *Complaints* is scarce, but as Hepatt's study has shown, further careful investigations of the works of Spenser's poetic successors may prove a wider acceptance of the *Complaints* in the century after Spenser's death than has hitherto been considered. 

During the first one hundred and twenty-five years after the publication of the *Complaints*, these works were not forgotten. They were frequently imitated or copied; they were at times criticised; and they were now and then reflected upon and absorbed into the works of new poets. The *Complaints* did not achieve the acclaim of Spenser's major works; yet neither did they fall victim to "black oblivions rust" ("Ruines of Time" 98). In the second historical period of this survey, during the age of the critical essayists, Spenser's minor poems received some serious consideration. They were still at times imitated or copied, but by this time poetic tastes had changed dramatically, and critical analysis was overtaking literary emulation.

1745-1805: The Critical Age

The publication in 1715 of John Hughes' edition of *The Works of Spenser* marks the beginning of the second period of Spenser criticism. The first period of readers were distinguished by their adulation and emulation of the works of Spenser; in the second period, Spenser's eighteenth-century readers greatly admired the works of the famous English author, but they were at the same time more critical of what they believed to be the poet's failings.
This is the great age of the critical essay, of the articles by Addison and Steele in Spectator papers, of John Jortin's scholarly study of the poet's classical borrowings in his Remarks on Spenser's Poems (1734), and of Thomas Warton, Jr.'s famous Observations on The Faerie Queene (1772). These critics, supported by their knowledge of literary forms, styles, and conventions (and at times by their prejudices), began to look more closely at all of Spenser's works, including his minor Complaints poems. For much of this section of the critical survey, I am indebted to the works of two earlier scholars, Karl Wasserman and Jewel Wurtzbaugh. Wasserman's long bibliography of "Poems Influenced by Spenser's Faerie Queen," appended to his thorough study of Elizabethan Poetry in the Eighteenth Century (1947) offers numerous examples of those eighteenth century poets who imitated (and plagiarized) Spenser's poems, including
poems from the Complaints volume. And Wurtsbaugh's important compilation of Two Centuries of Spenserian Scholarship (1609-1805) is central to our understanding of the early reception of Spenser's works.

The Hughes edition is a good place to start the survey of eighteenth-century views of Spenser's Complaints because it reflects the changing attitudes of this century's readers. Hughes took care to collate, as well as he could, the various earlier copies of Spenser's poems, so that his version would be as accurate as possible. This concern for textual accuracy is reflected later in the essays of Jortin and Warton. Hughes also shows his abilities as a critic of Spenser's works by including three original essays in his edition, "Life of Spenser," "An Essay on Allegorical Poetry," and "Remarks on the Writings of Spenser." Little in the essays is concerned with the Complaints poems, although in

Although Wasserman explains that Spenser's minor poems (excluding SC) "exerted comparatively little influence on eighteenth-century poetry" next to that of The Faerie Queene, some of the Complaints continued to be imitated during this period. "MHT" was the most popular and influenced the writing of three poems: in 1729 James Ralph wrote a blank-verse paraphrase of a short part of "MHT" (892-906), entitled "The Courtier," in 1733 there appeared an anonymous paraphrase of a longer segment of the poem, this time in heroic couplets, simply entitled Part of Mother Hubberds Tale, from Spencer; and much later, in 1774, an unknown author wrote a sequel to Spenser's poem called A Scourge for False Patriots; or, Mother Hubberd's Tale of the Ape and the Fox: Part the Second, which is apparently a satirical attack against John Wilkes. "IM" also appears in an eighteenth-century composition. In 1737 Aaron Hill, who is well-known for his plagiarizing from Elizabethan poets, presented to the Society for the Encouragement of Learning a poem entitled The Teares of the Muses, which Wasserman describes as "a very loose and protracted" paraphrase of Spenser's elegy (147-8).
the "Life" he refers to the "Vision" poems and concludes that they most likely found their original in the Petrarch's Vision mentioned by Harvey in his letter to Spenser published in 1580 as one of Three Proper, and Wittie, Letters (Works of Harvey 1.93-4). And in his "Remarks on the Writings of Spenser" Hughes expresses an interest in Spenser's abilities as a satirist:

In the Poem call'd Mother Hubberd's Tale, we have a Specimen of our Author's Genius in Satire, a Talent he very seldom exercis'd. This Poem is after the old manner of Chaucer, of whom it is an excellent Imitation; and perhaps the antiquated Stile has no ill Effect in improving the Humour of the Story. The Morality of it is admirable. Every one will observe that Keeness of Wit with which he has represented the Arts of ill Courtiers. In the Description of a good Courtier, which is so finely set off by the contrary Characters, it is believ'd the Author had in his View Sir Philip Sidney, of whom this seems to be a very just as well as beautiful Pictur(e. (cviii)

The observations which Hughes makes here are not new or startling, but they show a change in attitude towards this particular poem. Hughes is not interested in the Elizabethan political elements which had been of such great concern to Spenser's seventeenth-century readers. Rather, he is interested in the poem's form (a satire in "the old manner of Chaucer"), its style, language, moral, and presentation of character (both fictional and actual). Hughes' essays reflect the gradual changes in the literary criticism of the age. At times he falls back upon the standard observations concerning Spenser's poetry, but more often he attempts to discover new material about the poet and his works. These discoveries enhance the understanding of Spenser's readers and encourage them to look at the poems in a new and enlightened way.

Of particular interest to this study is Hughes' method of
organizing his edition of Spenser's works. He does not offer any explanation for his ordering, but it might in some way suggest why the Complaints has never been considered as a unified collection of poems. As the following table shows, Hughes seems to have ordered the poems in a quite haphazard manner:

Volumes One, Two, and Three:

The Faerie Queene

Volume Four:

The Shepheardes Calender
Colin Clouts Come Home Again
"Virgils Gnat"

Volume Five:

"Mother Hubberds Tale"
Amoretti
"Prothalamion"
"Epithalmion"
Four Hymnes
Daphnaide
"Mucopotmos"
"Teares of the Muses"
"Visions of Petrarch"
"Visions of Bellay"
"Ruines of Rome"
"Visions of the worlds Vanitie"
Astrophel
"The Mourning Muse of Thestyliis"
"A Pastoral Eglogue"
"An Elegye; or Friends Passion"
"An Epitaph"

Volume Six:

"The Ruines of Time"
Britain's Ida
A View of the State of Ireland
Latin version of The Shepheardes Calender
The Spenser-Harvey correspondence

We might well wish that we had Hughes' explanation for this unorthodox manner of ordering Spenser's works, for he seems to have had absolutely
no regard for chronology or the ordering followed by Spencer's previous editors. Readers may wonder why Hughes divided "Epithalamion" from Amoretti, since Spencer had designed them as complementary poems. And for this study, it is most puzzling that Hughes chose not only to spread the Complaints poems over three volumes of his edition, but to disrupt the order given to the poems by Ponsonby and presumably Spencer in the first edition of the collection. The Hughes edition became the standard text of Spencer's poetry for the next century. His ordering of the poems might well have introduced the idea that the works in the Complaints volume are only a collection "of diverse and unrelated poems" requiring "separate consideration."11

Hughes' edition may have sparked renewed interest in Spencer's poetry; it certainly provoked the writing of numerous critical essays about the poems. The two most positive critical works of this period which helped to formulate some of the early opinions toward the Complaints poems were Jortin's Remarks on Spencer's

11 This style of ordering Spencer's poems achieved wide favour until Todd published his edition of the works in 1805, which generally returned the Complaints poems to their original order. (Todd, believing that "Muir" was first published in 1590, as the date on its frontispiece states, places this poem before the rest of the works in the volume. Another late eighteenth-century example of this haphazard style of ordering Spencer's poems can be seen in Dr. Robert Anderson's 1795 edition of The Works of the British Poets (Boston). Anderson orders his poems in the following manner:

Two volumes are devoted to Spencer's works:
Poems (1734) and Warter's annotations to 'the poems of Spenser included in Podd's variorum edition of 1805. However, not all the critical studies of this period help our understanding of the poems. An early essay by Giles Jacob not only repeats many of the tired anecdotes of the seventeenth century, but contains several inaccuracies. And toward the end of this period, Philip Neve shows the age's growing dissatisfaction for Spenser's poetry. Good or bad, helpful or not, these various essays present the changing attitudes of the eighteenth century toward Spenser's poetry.

Jacob's Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our most Considerable English Poets (1720) is of interest particularly for its early date. In many ways Jacob's essay more closely resembles those of his seventeenth-century counterparts. His interests lie more with the biographical anecdotes which surround the poet's lives than with a careful analysis of their literary efforts. Yet, as a biographical study, Jacob's work is quite inadequate. For example, when Jacob turns to Spenser's life, he often confuses the chronology of some well-known events in the poet's life, making it appear that Spenser went to Ireland, met Raleigh, soon met, and married Elizabeth Boyle (and wrote the Amoretti and "Epithalamion"), was then chased out of Ireland by the rebellion, and finally returned to England poor and discouraged (where he wrote his Complaints). In many ways Jacob's study is closer to the poetic treatises of the Renaissance, such as Sidney's Apology and Peacham's Arte of English Poesie, for as well as the biographical, it contains a defence of the poet as the inspired voice and blessed
sider of his age and a restatement of the ways in which poetry has brought civilization to the world. This essay does little to advance our understanding of Spenser, but it acts as a bridge between the late Renaissance views of Spenser and the later, more detailed critical essays of Jortin and Warton.

Jortin's remarks show a significant advancement over Jacob's efforts. He has no interests in the biographical matters of Spenser's poetry; rather, as Jewell Wurtsbaugh describes it, Jortin's study is a collection of notes on selected passages from The Faerie Queen and the minor poems, "with particular emphasis on classical influences and corrections of the text" (55). Jortin's explanations usually refer to classical or Biblical allusions in Spenser's poems, as well as the poet's diction, frequent ellipses, and abilities as a translator of Latin or Greek texts. The Faerie Queen receives the largest portion of Jortin's energies, but it is interesting to note that, when he turns to the minor poems, the Complaints receive the greatest attention. "Virgil's Gnat" is studied more closely than the other minor poems, even though Jortin's remarks are generally unfavourable. The critic's main argument is that Spenser should not have undertaken to translate the Cidex. His version is in many places wrong, and in some senseless; nor is it any wonder, for the original is so corrupted, that no sense can be made of many lines in it, without having recourse to conjecture, and where it is not corrupted it is often very intricate and obscure. (139-40)

Jortin, as many modern scholars, have also observed, admits that Spenser is not totally to blame for the apparent weakness of his translation; however, this admission does not keep him from correcting Spenser. One word which troubles Jortin throughout his discussion
of "Virgil's Gnat" is Spenser's translation of the word mundus (and its accusative form, mundum), as "world." Jortin believes that for Spenser's usage he should have translated mundus as "heaven".

As an example, Jortin cites "Gnat," lines 156-60:

Hyperion throwing forth his beams full hot, into the highest of heaven gan clime; And the world parting by an equal lot, Did shed his whirling flames on either side, As the great ocean himself divide.

Following this, Jortin quotes the original Latin passage from the Culex:

Tendit ineptius radio Hyperionis arder, Lucidaque aethereo ponit discrimina mundo Qua gacit oceanum flammis in utrumque rapaces. (my emphasis)

He then concludes that Spenser "should 0 have translated mundus [mundo in second line of quotation], the world ["VG" 156]: mundus "here, as in one best writers, is coelum [heaven]" (141-2). 12

Why Spenser chose to translate mundus as "world," rather than as "heaven," may have something to do with the poem's inclusion in a collection of complaints. Mundus translated as "world" emphasizes the theme of mutability and earthly degeneration which Spenser

12A few pages later Jortin again finds fault with Spenser's translation of mundum. He quotes "WG" 373-6, the last line reading "Which once assai'd to burne, this world so wide." The Latin is quoted as saying, "Conati quondam cum sint incendere mundum." Jortin calls attention to the translation of mundum, saying "He translates . . . mundum, the world, which means heaven." He then suggests that perhaps the Latin is corrupted and should have read, "Conati quondam cum sint incendere mundum," translating the last two words, "to scale the heavens" (145).
is focusing on throughout the Complaints volume. In medieval thought, the heavens were considered to be more perfect and less susceptible to change because they were part of the atmosphere which rested closest to God. The world, on the other hand, was the mutable and decaying earth, the home of fallen and sinful man. By translating mundus as "world" and not as "heaven," Spenser could suggest the "Gnat's" participation in the volume's overall consideration of the theme of mutability.

As well as "Virgil's Gnat," Jortin discusses "Mother Hubbard's Tale," "Mutilopotmos," "The Tears of the Muses," "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," and "The Ruines Of Time." Generally, his comments on these poems are much less demanding than those he made for the "Gnat," and he seems content to simply provide a gloss of the various classical texts that Spenser used for his poems. Throughout his commentary Jortin shows his admiration for Spenser's talents, but at the same time he is able to see his faults and to discuss them objectively. In closing his Remarks, Jortin reflects upon his work and its usefulness to a new age of Spenserians:

Thus much upon Spenser: What I have here offer'd on him may be call'd an Essay, or rough draught of a Commentary, deficient indeed in many points, yet in some measure useful and entertaining to a poetical reader of Spenser. (166)

At this time we have only a partial knowledge of Warton's observations on the works of Spenser; yet from his published Observations on the Faerie Queen and his comprehensive study of one stanza of that work, we know that his efforts, like Jortin's, were designed to increase the enjoyment and understanding
Warton's conclusions are not always exact, but for the age, his studies are the finest example of analytic criticism to have been published. It is generally known that Warton, although able to publish only his findings on the Faerie Queen before his death, had been working through the entire canon of Spenser, in preparation for his own edition of the works. Fortunately, a few of his annotations, which had not been previously published, were used by Todd in his variorum edition of Spenser which provides us with some idea of how Warton read Spenser's minor poems, including the Complaints. Warton's comments, at least those used by Todd, generally refer to specific matters of the text of the poems. He is usually concerned with Spenser's possible classical sources, language, and the common phrases or images that can be found in the poems. On rare occasions Todd quotes Warton's analysis of a particularly significant passage. One such occasion is Warton's remarks on lines 642-14 of "The Ruines of Time":

> Whilst all the way most heavenly noyse was heard Of the stringes, stifled with the warbling wind, That wrought both joy and sorow in my mind.

> What Spenser's imagineation here beautifully feigns, is actually brought into execution in the AEolian harp; the effect of whose musick is exactly what our poet describes: "That wrought both joy and sorow in my mind." (Todd, ed., Works of Spenser 7.314)

Warton's comments here, as brief as they are, exemplify his value...

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A dissertation has recently been completed at Edinburgh University which edits all of Warton's notes on the works of Spenser. It is hoped that this work will soon become available to the public.
for his age as a reader of Spenser's poetry. First, his comments underline the power of these lines, and secondly, they direct his eighteenth-century readers' attention to a familiar image ("the Akolian harp") which they may understand more clearly than Spenser's abstract image. Warton's comments only appear in the notes for "The Ruins of Time," "Molopoimes," "Mother Hubberds Tale," "The Tears of the Muses," and "Virgils Gnat." We do not know if Warton annotated the remaining works of the Complaints volume, or if, like many of his contemporaries, he believed that they were not worthy of close critical investigation. Both Jortin and Warton show a great admiration for Spenser's poetry. Nevertheless, they are not afraid to criticise what they believe to be the poet's weaknesses. Not all of Spenser's eighteenth-century critics were as fair or objective, and at times blind prejudices confused rather than clarified the difficulties in Spenser's poems.

Near the end of this period of Spenser criticism there is some evidence that attitudes were changing concerning the merits of Spenser's poetry. Many readers, fellow poets, and critics still honoured Spenser as one of the first great English poets, but not everyone was willing to praise him. One who did not was Philip Neve, who in 1789 published a study called Cursory Remarks on some of the Ancient English Poets, particularly Milton. Neve's obvious preference for Milton unfortunately causes him to discredit the works of other great poets, such as Spenser. Ignoring any references to the poet's life, Neve launches into an attack against both Spenser and his eighteenth-century admirers (specifically, Jortin and Warton). For Neve, Spenser's greatest fault is that
be "submitted, with too much servility, to the fashion of his age, in the prevailing love and deference for all that was Italian" (18). This "infection," as Neve calls it, is so dangerous that the greatest powers of mind, strengthened by the best institution of academical education, did not, in Spenser afford a sufficient antidote against it" (18-9). In Neve's estimation, this weakness in Spenser led to other problems, such as the poet's apparent dependence upon imitation as a means of exercising his Muse.

Neve's attack against poetic imitation, although not specifically directed against the "Complaints," has wide implications for that work, since it, more than any of Spenser's other publications, relies heavily upon the imitation of several authors, Spenser's dependence upon imitation would not have caused a problem, Neve suggests, if the poet had been able to imitate another author with some degree of success:

Of some poets, as following the traces of others, the genius is obscured; as is the case with Spenser. Of others it is, by the same means, illustrated; as is the case with Milton. Spenser obscures himself by imitations, because he is satisfied with what he finds: Milton rises by comparisons, because he will always exceed his original. (20).

As our later discussion of Spenser's imitations in the "Complaints" will show, Spenser was rarely satisfied with just a simple copying of another poet's works. He was too conscious of the teachings of Sidney and Du Bellay, against servile imitators and too good a poet to behave in such a manner.

Neve speaks only briefly of the poet's minor works, and of the poems in the "Complaints" volume, he mentions only "Mortopotmos." Although he has found a good deal to criticize in Spenser's works,
no speaks ill of this small poem. "Musaeotimos," he says, "though the subject be a butterfly, holds a high rank among the beauties of Spenser" (21). We may strongly disagree with much that Neve has to say about Spenser's poetry, but few I think would disagree with this assessment of "Musaeotimos." The eighteenth century witnessed a change not only in the manner in which literary criticism studies were conducted, but also in the adulation and praise of a poet such as Spenser. Neve's remarks are perhaps extreme in their enshrinement of the poet's abilities, but they help to portray the changes in the critical attitude toward Spenser's works that had developed during this century. In the third period of this survey, a new set of literary values and a new style of literary criticism were directed toward Spenser's poetry.

1805-1928: The Modern Period of Literary Criticism

This survey, up to now, has considered both the criticism of the poems in the Complaints volume and examples of imitations or adaptations of them made by other authors; however, in the remaining two periods, attention will be focused only on the criticism of the Complaints. I do not mean to suggest that Spenser's minor poems were not being imitated or adapted during the nineteenth
and seventeenth centuries, for we know that they were. Rather, because of the increased amount of scholarship and criticism of Spencer's works being produced in these later centuries, it seems most profitable for this study to concentrate upon the critical works and not the artistic.

The third period of Spenser criticism begins with the publication, in 1665, of John Todd's variorum edition of the works of Spenser. Todd's concern was not only carefully to compare all extant texts of the poems, but also to collate the various commentaries that had been published by earlier critics, such as Warter, Jarrie, and John Upton, while adding his own observations on the poems. The Todd edition was the authoritative text of Spenser's works for generations, and it helped to maintain an interest in the poet's works which led to the publication, during the next one hundred years, of nearly ten different editions of the works of Spenser. These in turn helped to spark a new generation of Spenserian

The influence of Spenser's poetry, both The Faerie Queen and his shorter poems, on such poets as Keats, Shelley, Clough, and many others is well-known. One later poet of this period, W. B. Yeats, as a recent critic has suggested, shows a particular interest in the Complaints poems. Of course, Yeats' collection of Spenser's poetry contains excerpts from "BT," "PM," and "MHI," and McAlindon considers that particularly those poems influenced Yeats' earlier poetry. McAlindon, "Yeats and the English Renaissance."
critics. For the purposes of this study, the Todd edition shows some important changes from the earlier edition by Hughes. Although he lists the poems in the Complaints volume as Miscellaneous, thereby implying that the poems are not related, and places "Winter's Welcome" before the other poems in the collection, because of its apparently earlier printing date, Todd renames the ordering of the Complaints which they had received in 1591. His prefatory remarks to the edition show little interest in the Complaints poems. He believes that Ponsonby published these poems without Spenser's knowledge or authorization, and because of this he restricts his comments to a few brief biographical notes on the ladies to whom Spenser dedicated some of the poems in the volume. Nevertheless, Todd shows some slight interest in the origin of the "Vision" poems. Referring to Harvey's letter to Spenser (19 June 1580), wherein he remarks on Spenser's Dreames as being similar in style and manner to Petrarch's Visions, Todd concludes:

that the Visions in that book [meaning the poems Spenser translated in 1569 for Van der Noodt's Theatre for Worldlings]; the Dreames commended by Harvey; and the Visions published

15Frederic Ives Carpenter's A Reference Guide to Edmund Spenser (1923), lists the following editions of Spenser's works which were printed in the century following Todd's edition: John Aiken (1806); George Robinson (1825); John Mitford (1839); F. J. Child (1855); P. Collier (1862); J. W. Hales (Globe Edition, 1869-97); A. B. Grosart (1882); and R. E. N. Dodge (1908). As well as editions, the nineteenth century showed its interest in Spenser through the publication of numerous books, essays, and articles on the poet's works, e.g. Craig, Spenser and his Poetry (1845); Hart, An Essay on the Life and Writings of Edmund Spenser (1847); Church, Spenser (1887); Palgrave, Essays on the Minor Poems of Spenser, in Grosart's edition of The Complete Works 4.1x-cvii.
by the bookseller while Spenser was in Ireland, which now regularly from a part of his Works [i.e. "The Visions of Bellozay" and "The Visions of Petrarch"], are originally the same composition, since altered and improved. (1.vii)

This observation, as seen by later references to these poems, in this section, characterizes the major critical argument concerning the "vision" poems during this period of Spenser criticism.

The possibility that the Complaints volume might be considered as a unified collection of poems was not accepted during this period of history. Most early critics seem to agree with F. W. Church's assessment that "the collection is a miscellaneous one, both as to subjects and date." (165). Some poems in the collection were generally ignored by Spenser's nineteenth and twentieth century critics, while others, such as "Hymnopotmos" and "Mother Hubberds Tale," received considerable attention. Unfortunately, even when the poems were not being ignored, they were not always being considered in a way that would increase a reader's understanding of them. Certainly, not all the critical studies were of this nature, but the purpose of this survey is to distinguish between those that help us to understand the poems and those that do not.

Two poems in the volume, "The Ruines of Rome" and "The Tearing of the Muses," received practically no critical attention, and what little they did receive was unfavourable. Like "Virgils Gnat," "The Ruines of Rome" is considered as merely a translation, and one in which, as Hart states, "neither the diction nor the versification appears ... equal to Spenser's usual style." (71). Little about "The Ruines of Rome" seems to have interested its nineteenth and early twentieth-century readers. Padgrave passes
over the poem, without notice, and Cory finds fault not only with
its versification and language, but also with its tone:

"The Hymn of Rome" catches nothing of the finer pensiveness
and troubled stateliness of Du Bellay's Antiquitez...; he
did but paraphrase the grave French poet's solemn lines with
a slumbering tongue. (183)

If "The Hymn of Rome," left Spenser's nineteenth and early-twentieth
century readers uninterested, "The Feares of the Muses" left them
confused and displeased. For this period Elizabethan England
was the Golden World of poetry; yet in "The Feares," one of Elizabeth's
greatest poets laments the degenerate state of verse in his age.
Because the matter of the poem did not agree with the
nineteenth-century's preconceptions of Elizabethan verse, many
critics believed that Spenser wrote "The Feares" at a very young
age. This, the critics felt, would explain the poem's whining
tone, tedious subject, and uninspired versification. "The Feares
of the Muses" has been called Spenser's "poorest poem" (Cory,
175). Hart saw it as "mere croaking verse" (58), and Grosart
labeled it as an "infinitely pathetic poem" (1.185-6). Palgrave
is the only critic who can, at least in part, speak well of "The
feares," but even he has much to say against it:

We have here one of those pieces in which Spenser's fluent
melody and golden wealth of words, his endless variety of
literary resource, his style which never slackens its movement
or falls below itself, are qualities far more noticeable
and important than the long-drawn-out substance of the poem.
We wish to regard it as a fancy piece, a musical iteration
of conventional complaint on the degeneracy of the present
time. If taken otherwise, how little insight, how much unreas-
sonable querulosity, must we not assign to Spenser. (4.1xiii-iv)
One poem which was almost universally censured during this period of history was "The Ruines of Time." Only Palgrave speaks well of it and goes further to suggest that Spenser's purpose in the poem was grander than a simple panegyric to the Dudleys. Most critics agreed that the poem was merely a rather uninspired, poorly structured elegy to the Dudley family in general and Philip Sidney in particular. Dodge's comments, published in his 1908 edition of Spenser's works, summarize the critical attitude prevalent during this period:

The Ruines of Time is mainly official verse, melodious and uninspired. It is the one poem of the volume confessedly written to order—confessedly, in the frank and dignified, letter of dedication. Had Sidney alone been Spenser's theme, or Sidney and Leicester, both his early patrons, this poem might perhaps have been comparable with Astrophel, but the great house to which they belonged having recently lost other distinguished members besides, Spenser saw fit to undertake a sort of necrology of the Dudleys, and the issue was perfunctoriness. (59)16

Nevertheless, not all of Spenser's critics felt that "The Ruines of Time" was a poorly constructed and immature poem. Palgrave, who admittedly rarely censures any of Spenser's works, gives the "Ruines" high praise:

This poem, beginning the series, and striking at once the note audible throughout, we may reasonably hold one of the last in composition. The clearness of the plan and of the

16In agreement with Dodge are Hart, who concluded that the elegy to the Dudley family and Sidney should be seen as "the real object of the poem," whereas the theme of the "Worlds Ruine" is only the poem's "nominal subject" (52-58). Cory, near the end of this period of criticism, accepts the earlier opinions and adds that to his mind "the result [i.e. the celebration of the Dudley family] seems insincere" (174).
pictures presented is in strong contrast with the confused or obscure delineations to be found in several pieces among the Complaints. . . . The Ruines is a lovely piece of melody in his most pregnant and finished manner. (4.1x-ix)

And later in his discussion, he intimates that Spenser may have had a wider purpose in writing this poem than simply complimenting the deceased members of the Dudley family:

The device by which the elegies embodied in the world's Ruines, (as Spenser in the dedication names the poems,) are assigned to the Genius of Verulamium is not, perhaps, signally appropriate; but it has its purpose and value, in enabling Spenser to unite his favourite theme of the havoc wrought by time, especially upon Imperial Rome, with the death of the great persons here commemorated. (4.1xii-ixiiii)

Palgrave, unlike his contemporaries, can see a unity to "The Ruines of lime" and even suggests that there may be "something which ties together the Complaints volume as a whole ("striking . . . the note audible throughout"), although this last point seems only to have been mentioned in passing. His single voice, however, was not loud enough to be heard above the common crowd.

Like "The Ruines of Rome" and "The Tears of the Muse," "Virgil's Gnat" was generally ignored during the early years of this period; but, unlike those poems, it was considered favourably in later years. Jortin's careful analysis of the poem in 1734 had convinced most readers that Spenser's translation could be considered as little more than a paraphrase, and not always an accurate one at that. Following Warton's criticism, published by Dodd, that "Spenser's Culex is a vague and arbitrary paraphrase" (7.361, fn. 2), it appears that few readers felt that the poem deserved any close critical attention. Hart believes that Spenser
could only be responsible for the poem's "versification and alliteration," and admits that "on the whole . . . . . the poem [is] tedious," (to). Nevertheless, critics later in the period began to defend the "Gnat," by focusing greater attention on the original features of Spenser's version of the poem and its allegorical significance. Others, in fact, believe that the "Gnat" is a "passage from the Fables," (LXVII).

Palgrave claimed praise of the "Gnat," saying that "the translation is clever, musical, and brilliant in its cadence," and that "the character of the Faerie Queen is strongly marked by this little poem," (LXVII). As well, he argues with his fellow critics that the poem is allegorical, although he is unable to decipher its meaning:

The choice of the "Gnat" is also curious as another example of Spenser's inveterate passion for allegory; which, however, as we so often find in his work, leaves us uncertain as to its application, (LXVII).

By 1910, Max A. Greenlaw, in his seminal article on Spenser's historical allegories, was attempting "to solve the secret of this riddle rake" (Prefatory sonnet, line 7). Greenlaw argues that Spenser's "exile" to Ireland was planned by Leicester as punishment for the poet's injudicious satire on the queen and her court in "Mother Hubberdale's Tale." The "Gnat," he believes,
- Spenser's poetic response to Leicester's injustice. Once the
encyclopaedic meaning had apparently been solved, the critics
therefore turned their attention to the question of the accuracy
of Spenser's translation of Virgil's Aeneid. O. F. Emerson
confronts Virgil's remarks about Spenser's abilities as a translator
and states that he would not have chosen Scaliger's edition
of Virgil, stating: "I shall rather that the poet used Horace's
translation, which without extensive corruptions and
omissions, is the nearest text to Spenser's Virgil's that" 94-111.
And all early readers of Virgil's work were interested in "Virgil's
Odes," and many of the questions surrounding had been asked
by the 17th century, increasing to our own generation of scholars'
...slopes. Yet was the first editor of Spenser's works to include in his edition the text of the "Heloise" and "Sonnets," and his sources for Spenserian lists and profitable scholarly debate. This in turn was well-documented, and I need only summarize it briefly here (see "Spenser," 111-14). The major issue is whether or not Spenser had used the critical translator of the poems in the "Theatre." Most eighteenth-century Spenserians believed that the work of the translator and translated the poems in as they would have meant that Spenser had altered the 3 - 4th for his "4th volume."Nevertheless, J. E. Chalmers, in 1841, expressed some doubt that Spenser could have translated the early 3.9 gts. and, in 1863, E. Keppel, a Dutch critic, argued vehemently that Spenser could not have been the translator of the poems for the "Theatre." Keppel bases his argument upon what he sees as the inferior quality of the translations for the "Theatre" compared with those poems which were published in the "Thee of Words." The earlier poems, Keppel alleges, show a careful literal translation, while the later translations are "freak and more inaccourate" (printed in "Variorum," 1). Keppel then concludes:

...Spenser, then, be identical with the translator of 1609. If, if a man who argued himself learned and accurate in his photo, may turn out later to be ignorant and careless.

Those critics who believed Spenser to be the translator of all the "Visions" are: Child; Collier; Fulgare; the anonymous author of the 1667 Westminster Gazette articles; Nicholson, in his three articles in Notes and Queries; Fletcher, "Spenser and The Theatre of Worships" (sic?); Friedland, "Spenser's First Translations," followed finally again by Fletcher, "Spenser's First Translations" (a response to Friedland's article).
Jefferson B. Fletcher and Louis S. Friedland in their various articles (see fn. 17) convincingly refuted Koeppel's allegations by asserting that all the "Visions" are thoroughly Spenserian in their tone, imagery, diction, and phrasing. Meanwhile, a secondary issue for debate concerning the "Visions" was whether Spenser had, in translating "The Visions of Petrarch," followed the original Italian of the poet's third Canto or from his in Norto di Madonna Laura, or if Spenser had used a French translation of the poem. Here Koeppel's findings are more correct. Most nineteenth-century critics assumed that Spenser had used the original Italian, since his strong humanist training would have encouraged him to know many foreign languages even at a young age. Koeppel, however, carefully examined the text of the translations for the Theatre in comparison with Clément Marot's French translation of Petrarch and found, due to many verbal similarities, that the translator of the 1569 poems must have been using Marot's French version and not the original Italian. The work of these many scholars has greatly enhanced our knowledge of Spenser's methodology in preparing the "Visions" for publication; but this period's interest in these poems did not stop with such textual concerns.

Many critics saw in the "Visions" (now including Spenser's original sequence of sonnets, "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie") a common theme which appears throughout the Complaints volume and many of Spenser's other works. This is the theme of mutability or of a transient world controlled by Time. For Palgrave this concern was "the dominant note" in Spenser's temperament.
Spenser, during the first half of his career, seems to have been greatly impressed by the short pictorial allegories and emblems, popular in art and in literature at that time, which answered to his own love of the mystical and allusive, and also by that sense of the vanity of life, and the havoc wrought on men and cities by Time, which was, perhaps, the dominant note in his temperament. (4.1xxi)

This temperament, as de Sélincourt noted in his 1912 edition of Spenser's minor poems, may have been influenced by the poet's early associations with the works of the Pléiade poets. De Sélincourt believes that when Spenser translated the poems for the Theatre:

He was doubtless, interested in the work of the Pléiade upon its formal side, but he was attracted to their matter also. His natural addiction to allegory was strengthened by his study of their work; and the recurrent themes of the vanity of the world, and the degeneracy of the times, as well as their insistence upon the immortality which verse alone can bestow, had more than a passing effect upon him. (xxxii)

A fuller discussion of the effects which the poetry and poetics of the Pléiade had upon the Complaints follows in Chapter Five. As well, Chapter Five investigates the interrelationships among the various poems of the Complaints and Spenser's earliest translations for the Theatre, for as Fletcher observed, "in theme and genre, a goodly number of the "Complaints" actually grew out of the early translations" for the Theatre for Worldlings ("Spenser's Earliest Translations" 307).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "Mother Hubberds Tale" received almost universal acclaim. It was seen as the author's "only attempt at satire," as Hart stated in 1847, and it was considered to be "one of the most valuable of [Spenser's] minor poems" (63). The critics of the poem praised Spenser both for closely following the satirical traditions of Chaucer's Canterbury
Hales and for beginning an age of modern English verse satire
which had been continued by Dryden and Pope. Hart signals the
critical note followed by most of his contemporaries in reference
to "Mother Hubberds Tale":

In Mother Hubberds Tale . . . [Spenser] exhibits much practical
knowledge of men, and the motives that govern them, as well
as skill in the adaptation of his style to the subject; being
at once easy and familiar, without becoming trite or vulgar.
He does not, indeed, reach that peculiar sly humour, in which
old Chaucer stands apparently unapproachable; but he often shows a vivacity, terseness, and vigour of expression, that
reminds the reader forcibly of Pope and Dryden. (70)18

Palgrave, similarly, gives the poem high praise:

Nowhere else, I think, has he so nearly rivalled the great
Pilgrimage; nowhere else has he more pregnant descriptive
phrases, satirical strokes of more vigour and incisiveness.
(4.lxvi)

And Collier praises the poem while also pointing out an important
element of its satirical purpose: "Here we meet with a good deal
of severe satire on the times, and on various classes of society,
if not on individuals" (lxxi-lxxii). As we more fully discuss
in Chapter Five, "Mother Hubberds Tale" participates in the medieval
form of popular complaint known as the complaint against the three
estates. Collier's observations on the two main objects of Spenser's
satire in the poem highlight the major themes of these medieval

18Hales, in his "Memoir" of the poet, speaks of its "easy style, its various incidents, [and] its
social pictures" (xlii); and Church claims that "MHT"
"may take rank with the satirical writings of Chaucer
and Dryden for keenness of touch, for breadth of treatment,
for swing and fiery scorn, and sustained strength
of sarcasm" (109).
complaints.

A less worthwhile critical approach to "Mother Hubberds Tale," which continued during this period, was the search for an interpretation of the poem's historical allegory. The best known study of this type is perhaps Greenlaw's theory that Spenser used the form of a beast fable to satirize Elizabeth's court because of the Queen's habit of giving her favourites beastial nicknames ("Spenser and the Earl of Leicester"). Nevertheless, an identification of any of the fictional characters of the "Tale," accurate or not, ultimately adds nothing to our understanding of the poem. During this period of criticism, "Mother Hubberds Tale" was clearly the most widely accepted and highly praised poem in the Complaints volume. The last poem which we are to consider, "Muloapotmos," also received considerable attention from Spenser's nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics.

Although "Muloapotmos" was perhaps the most thoroughly analyzed poem in the Complaints volume during this period of history, little, if any, of the criticism is helpful in improving our understanding of the poem. Critics during this period were quite strictly divided between those who saw the "Fate of the Butterflie" as merely a "delicious jeu d'esprit" (de Sélincourt, xxxiv), and those who believed that their "sage and serious" poet could not have written anything so ephemeral and inconsequential, and therefore believed that the poem must have an allegorical interpretation. Critics who see "Muloapotmos" as only a thing of beauty tend to become as fancy-free in their descriptions of the poem as they claim Spenser was in writing it. For example Hart exclaims that the
The poem is "essentially beautiful," and that
the rhythm of the verse is as flowing and joyous as was Clarion
himself on the bright summer morning, while, for numberless
delicate graces and beauties of thought and diction, the
poem must for ever stand among the poetry of Spenser, like
its own butterfly among the olive leaves in the embroidery
of Pallas! (87)

Palgrave is also enthusiastic about the poem's lyric beauty:

Purer, more sustained power in poetical fancy and invention,
appears in the Fates of the Butterfly than in any other of
the Complaints... The lyric, regarded from this point
of view, is as light and fanciful as winged and ethereal,
as Clarion himself. (4.1xx)

Yet later in his analysis, Palgrave seems to find fault with Spenser's
apparently confused plan for the poem:

The tale... seems even more inconsecutive than Mother
Hubbard's; it neither is a whole as a story, an allegory,
nor a moralization: and one asks in what humour a poet so
sage, and serious as Spenser, an artist so finished, can have
painted this picture? (4.1xxi)

Nevertheless, in responding to his own question, Palgrave shows
how captivated he is by the beauty of "Mnepotmos." He quickly
absolves Spenser of all transgressions in the poem's structure
or design because he believes that "Mnepotmos" contains no story,
allegory, or moralization. It is only a "fairy-web," and in writing
it Spenser was fulfilling his "poet's right, now and then, to
be fancy-free" (4.1xxi). But, in case it is considered that
these observations are only a product of nineteenth-century critical
exuberance, in our own century many critics continued to see
"Mnepotmos" as a light, fanciful, and meaningless, yet beautiful,
work of art. The remarks made by Dodge, in 1908, are representative
of this feeling:

Its subject is a mere nothing; it tells no story that could not be told in full in a stanza; it presents no situation for the delicate rhetoric of the emotions; it is a mere running freeze of images and scenes, linked in fanciful continuity. It is organized as a mock-heroic poem, but its appeal is essentially to the eye. Myths, invented or real, that seem to form themselves spontaneously into pictures, the landscape of the gardens, fantastic armor, the figured scenes of tapestry richly bordered, these are of a poetry akin to the plastic arts... It is rather of the air than of the earth. One might think it an emanation of the theme itself and fancy that the frail wings of the butterfly had been spread for the style, delicately colored, ethereal. (115-6)11

Nevertheless, not every critic during this period believed that the subject of "Mutopotmos" was "a mere nothing." Craik called the poem "a veiled representation," although he had to admit that previous commentators had offered no help in "solving the riddle" which the poem may represent (3.172-3). As the long list of allegorical interpretations compiled by the editors of the Variorum suggests, "later critics [were] bolder" in attempting to discover the allegorical meaning behind Spenser's most enigmatic poem:

The poem shadows forth the romantic relation between the poet and Lady Carey (Long); the feud between Raleigh and Essex (Lyon, Emerson); the fate of Spenser's Muse (Tué), Spenser and Burghley, or "The Poet and the Politician" (Grierson); the amorous Spenser flirting among the ladies of the Court (Legouais); the feud between Sidney and Oxford (Hulbert); Sidney's character and fate (Lemni); any pair of Spenser's admired and detested contemporaries (Stein); a trivial and forgotten incident understood between Lady Carey and Spenser (Smith, Strathmann); the rivalry of Burghley and Essex (Harris).

19Cory is in almost complete agreement with Dodge's remarks; and he quotes this passage in his own study of the poem (188-9).
As can be seen by the variety and length of this list, critics interested in "Maiopatmos" as an allegory appear to agree on only one issue: that the poem must be an allegory because Spenser is an allegorical poet. Unfortunately, the over-zealous desire of these critics to pin-point the exact incident which Spenser may have been referring to in the poem has not helped clarify the meaning of "Maiopatmos."

A third way in which "Maiopatmos" was read during this period was suggested in the earlier quotation from Dodge. In his analysis Dodge states that "Maiopatmos" is "organized as a mock-heroic poem." The most commonly cited mock-heroic elements of the poem are its epic opening lines:

I Sing of deadly dolorous debate,
Stir'd up through wrathfull Nemesis despight,
Betwixt two mightie ones of great estate,
Drawne into armes, and proofe of mortall fight,
Through proud ambition, and hartsweiling hate,
Whilst neither could the others greater might
And disdainfull scorne endure; that from small jarre
Their wraths at length broke into open warre. (1-8)

and the long description of Clarion as an epic hero arming himself for battle (49-105). Nevertheless, after line 105 little of the poem seems to follow any mock-heroic patterns. Instead, Spenser seems to become more interested in the mythological tales of Astery

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For the sake of completeness, in providing all the allegorical interpretations which the editors were aware of, I have not restricted the references to critics who are only in the period presently under discussion (i.e., 1805-1928).
and Arachne, and the lavish description of Clarion's visit to the garden. Yet, even with such slight attention to any mock-heroic conventions, many critics have labeled "Mutilopotmos" as a mock-heroic poem. One such critic, Thomas Nadal, in an early twentieth-century article, argues that in writing "Mutilopotmos" Spenser was influenced by the two mock-heroic poems of Chaucer, "Sir Thopas," and "The Nun's Priest's Tale." Nadal's findings, at best, are inconclusive. Ultimately, the poem itself refutes Nadal's claim that "the spirit of Mutilopotmos is mock-heroic from beginning to end" (656). The poem may open in a grand, epic manner, but at the end the hero is killed without any great acts of heroism within the space of one stanza.

Several important readings of the Complaints poems were made during the years from 1805 to 1928, many of which are followed today. Some stubborn questions concerning dates of composition, textual accuracy, and poetic authority were settled once and for all; while other questions concerning allegorical interpretations, apparent structural weaknesses, and thematic similarities were introduced and left open for further generations of readers to answer. The final period of Complaints criticism follows closely upon the heels of this period. Its attitudes towards the Complaints, until we arrive at our own age of criticism, vary little from those of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its criticism is indebted to the earlier works surveyed here.

1928-the Present: A Period of Transition

In many ways Renwick's edition of the Complaints (the first
separate edition of the work published since 1591), and the critical attention which these poems received after its publication, can be seen as the culmination of scholarly interest in Spenser's minor poems generated by the efforts of the last period's scholars and critics, rather than as a new age of concern for the Complaints poems. Renwick, Stein, and H. S. V. Jones often repeat or summarize the arguments and theories of Greenlaw, Friedland, Keppel, Fletcher, and others, and as well, several of these scholars, such as Friedland and Greenlaw, were still actively participating in critical studies of these poems during this later period. It has only been within the last fifteen years that a new generation of scholars, looking for new areas of Spenser's canon to investigate, have produced many varied and provocative readings of the Complaints poems. Nevertheless, so many of these recent studies depend upon the scholarly works from the earlier part of this period that to separate the later critical works from the earlier ones would suggest a division in critical thought which does not actually exist. In order to present the similarities and the differences between the criticism of the earlier writers of this period and the later generation, I will discuss each poem separately, first surveying the early attitudes of the period and then presenting the later ones.

Renwick's remarks, which open his Commentary on the Complaints poems, exemplify this scholar's transitional position in this last period of Spenser criticism. He agrees with the previous period's assessment that most of the poems are not examples of great poetry:
It is not on these Complaints that Spenser's poetic reputation rests. "None of his greatest things are here. There are many good passages, and pretty pieces which none but he could have written, and innumerable scholarly ingenuities which he obviously enjoyed devising, but only one capital poem, only one whose loss would alter our conception of Spenser--Mother Hubberds Tale. (Complaints 179)

Yet he is also willing to believe that even as minor works, the poems in the Complaints volume are valuable for our understanding of Spenser:

The minor works of great poets, however, like the drawings of great painters, sometimes disclose even more of the personality, the interests, and the habits of their authors than do the elaborate masterpieces. There is a certain partipris in The Faerie Queene, Paradise Lost, Hyperion. Spenser, Milton, Keats fold their singing robes somewhat consciously about them, somewhat deliberately assume the laurel, laying aside some part of the man to soar as The Poet. . . . We turn to the lesser works to meet the man in his less godlike moments; to watch him experimenting, to hear his opinions, to share his amusements, his personal attachments, his tastes and his grievances. (Complaints 179)

Renwick also harshly rebukes the critical interests of the former period's readers for being too narrowly concerned with the poet's apparent animosity toward Burghley and too ready to read all the poet's efforts as allegories:

[Spenser] was not a querulous minor poet, nor was he obsessed with Burghley, though some of his commentators are. He complains that art and learning are insufficiently appreciated in certain high quarters--a complaint which, like all his complaints, might be echoed with equal justice from that day to this--but it is for art and learning and for all their votaries, not merely for himself, that he pleads. There were easier ways, had Spenser cared to take them, either to conciliate or to annoy the Lord Treasurer. (Complaints 183)

And later he continues:

Men naturally seek for allegory in the works of a professed
allegories, but those who have attempted to unravel the complicated meanings of these poems have more rigidly systematic minds than I believe Spenser had; certainly narrower minds. ... We must not allow these side-ellusions to distract us from the main theme, which is not the vanity of Burghley, but the World's Vanity—the fleetingness of strength and power and beauty, the theme of Ecclesiastes which went before and of the Seventh Book of The Faerie Queene, which was to come after. (Complaints 183-4)

Renwick's remarks toward the end of this quotation show his agreement with this period's growing concern for the matter of the Complaints poems over their manner; a concern which is reflected in the critical studies of these poems published in the last two decades. William Nelson, in his 1963 study of Spenser, agrees in many ways with Renwick's feelings about the Complaints poems. He admits that these poems are "not the most attractive" examples of Spenser's work; yet he sees them as being valuable "because they display the range of Spenser's virtuosity in literary construction and because they reflect ... the conceptions which underlie his greater works" (64). The major concern of Nelson's study of the Complaints is in defining the Renaissance's attitude toward worldly vanity, as it is expressed by Spenser:

A complaint of the world's vanity arises from a sense of the inevitable decay of sublunary things. Although such meditation is to be found in the poetry of every age, there are differences in attitude which mirror differences in intellectual and spiritual temper. Like the Middle Ages, the Renaissance relied on its search for the enduring upon its hope for heaven, and rather more than the Middle Ages upon its faith in the permanence of poetry. While the late medieval concern was primarily with the end to which mankind comes, that dance of death which joins in one charnel house king and bishop, tinker and peasant, the Renaissance was awed by the spectacle of power, fame, and beauty doomed to destruction, death becoming a comment on greatness rather than greatness a comment on death. The literary consequence was a fascination with the strength which is frail, the fame which is fleeting, the beauty which is dust. (64-5)
Nelson's perceptions of the changing attitude toward the vanity of the world, as it appears in the complaint literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is more fully discussed in Chapters three and four of this study; but in themselves, Nelson's remarks indicate a wider thematic concern for what Spenser may have intended when he published his Complaints than that which de Sélincourt shows in his comments on the poems published in 1912:

[Spenser's] impressions of the darker side of court life, which had disgusted him ten years before, were not intensified. It was probably when he saw that all his hopes were frustrate and that nothing could be gained by silence intolerable to his impulsive nature, that he collected his volume of Complaints, in which he voices his despair at the neglect of the arts and the degeneracy of the times, and continually attributes them to the sinister influence of Burghley. (xxix).

In many ways this last period of criticism follows closely upon the interests of the former period: many of the poems in the Complaints volume which were ignored by earlier critics are often passed over by these readers; there are still debates over the authority of the works in the volume; and there are still attempts to identify the Elizabethan figures apparently alluded to in the allegorical poems. Nevertheless, this period also shows a greater concern for the themes underlying the poems and the influence upon the Complaints of such varied elements as the works of the French Pléiade and what has recently been called Protestant poetics.

As we have seen throughout the history of the Complaints some poems are considered unworthy of close critical attention. Once again, it appears, that the translations are believed to be less valuable than the poet's original compositions. Renwick-
moves the hardest critic by naming "The Faunes of Home," calling
the translation "unexact and at below" and observing that Spenser
"wrote in haste, and was not expected to hammer out a possible
English sonnet that to render the images of the French original".
(Complaints 244; see also, Jones, Virgil, 62.) "Virgil's Gnat"
has been generally ignored in recent criticism. Renwick and Stein
suggest that Greenlaw's earlier allegorical reading of the poem
may not be the final solution to the poem's "secret," but other
critics are content with Greenlaw's interpretation and devote
a limited amount of attention to the poem's possible sources,
date of composition, and adequacy as a translation.21 Only the
"Faunes of Home" has been considered more seriously in recent
years. As has already been noted, Hreatt convincingly shows that
the "Faunes" could be a possible source for the numerous images
of time, change, and continuance found in Shakespeare's Sonets.
And Andrew Fichter, in an article published in 1984, attempts

21Renwick states that "the occasion of this translation
remains as Spenser left it, enshrined in mystery. . .
no Oedipus has read the whole 'secret of this riddle
rare'" (Complaints 218); and Stein suggests that "to
assume that Leicester would have taken the trouble
to get rid of a nobody like Edmund Spenser by giving
him a job in Ireland is to assign a fictitious importance
to the young courtier-poet, and to assign an equally-
fictious sense of responsibility to the hardened and
proud politician" (76-7). Lotspeich, "Spenser's Virgil's
Gnat," cites A. Dumeus's 1542 Antwerp edition of
Virgil's works as Spenser's source; Jones dates the
translation during the poet's university days, rather
than after his "exile" to Ireland (96); and Hughes,
Virgil and Spenser, considers that "Spenser's rendering
is more diffuse than seems desirable to our taste,
but by standards of his contemporaries it must have
seemed exceptionally 'faithful to both the form and
spirit of the Latin" (309).
to prove that the speaker of the "rules" is not Spenser, but "a person whose limitations . . . Spenser intends his readers to recognize" (144). Although not all of Fichter's arguments are convincing, the appearance of these two recent articles shows that the poems in the Complaints volume, even the translations, are worthy of careful critical investigation.

Not surprisingly, "The teares of the Muses," following Kenrick's remarks that "the poem is, in part at least, a literary manifesto" (Complaints 204), began to receive greater attention from modern critical readers than it had in the past. Jones identifies the French Pléiade in general and Du Bellay's La Défence et Illustration de la Langue Françoyse in particular as the source for Spenser's "manifesto of the new poetry" (88-9). And H. G. Lotspeich and Lily B. Campbell, in two separate articles published in 1935, turn to two different works by Du Bartas for the origin of Urania's appearance as "the Muse of Christian poetry" in the "Teares." Lotspeich identifies the source in Du Bartas' "Fourth Day of the First Week," from his Divine Weekes and Works, while Campbell argues that Spenser would have been aware of Du Bartas' earlier poem, L'Uranie, through the young poet's association with Sidney.

Nevertheless, not all the old attitudes against "The Teares" were forgotten in this period. Stein, and, later, Nelson offer the most negative criticism of the poem. Stein admits that Spenser carefully planned the design of the poem, but he finds that the "ungrateful subject and the rigid structure can be held to account for the vacuity and repetition that are such unpleasant characteristics of the poem" (43). And similarly, Nelson considers that
the weakness of the poem is manifest as soon as it is set
beside Daniel's thoughtful, restrained, yet noble treatment
of the same subject in Musophilus. (71)

In a more recent article, Gerald O'Neill returns to the critical
concerns of the eighteenth century as he questions how a poet
like Spenser could have seen the age of Elizabethan poetry in
the degenerate way it is portrayed in "The Tears." O'Neill argues
with some conviction, that the laments voiced by Spenser's Muses
arise "from the frustration of Spenser's hopes for a new world
wrought by the power of poetry" (52), for as he describes it

poetry, to Spenser, Sidney, and most Renaissance commentators,
is not only all imaginative literature, but what that imaginative
literature could accomplish in the word: a new golden age
of civility and peace, a new culture void of barbarism. (52).

Although "The Tears of the Muses" has never been considered to
be one of Spenser's better or more melodious poems, modern criticism
has found that, as a possible statement of Spenser's poetic theories,
it has a significant value to modern readers.

The status of Spenser's "Visions" changed somewhat during
this final period of criticism. Following Friedland's edition
of A Theatre for Worldlings in 1939, and due to the recent publication
of numerous studies by Dutch-speaking scholars, more consideration
has been given to Spenser's earliest translations for the Theatre.
Nevertheless, at the same time, the later appearance of these
poems as "The Visions of Bélay" and "The Visions of Petrarch,
and Spenser's imitation of them in "The Visions of the Worlds
Vanitie" has received slight and generally unfavourable criticism.

Until most recently, Theatre criticism focused upon matters other
than the literary value of the "Epigrams" and "Sonets." For example, Friedland goes so far as to state that the Theatre is "not at all notable as a literary production" (Theatre xvi). However, a number of more recent studies have begun to consider the literary merits of both Spenser's translated verses and the Theatre as a whole. J. A. van Dorsten, in his chapter on "Spenser's Theatre Translations" in his book, The Radical Arts, sees Spenser's Theatre poems as "undoubtedly . . . the effective beginning of a new period in English literature" (79). Van Dorsten is at times over-enthusiastic in his claims for the importance of Spenser's translations, such as when he argues that the blank-verse translations of Du Bellay are not "an indication . . . of the poet's youth, haste, and inexperience," as A. W. Satterthwaite has suggested, but rather that they show Spenser's attempt to bring about a "neo-classical revolution" in English verse (80). Yet, in many ways, van Dorsten's reading of the poems from the Theatre helps to emphasize the value of these early Spenserian verses. Another recent article which attempts to look at the Theatre as a serious work of literature is Carl Rasmussen's study of "A Theatre for Worldlings as a Protestant

Renwick passes over the early poems almost without comment (Complaints 260); Jones merely restates the arguments of Koeppel, Fletcher, and Friedland as to the authenticity of Spenser's translations (122-4); Stain offers the longest commentary, however, his concerns are generally with the quality of the translations and their date of composition, as well as how they enable modern readers "to analyze Spenser's technique" for revising his poetry (109-67); Satterwaite, "A Re-examination of Spenser's Translations," is only concerned with the question of who translated the "Sonets" from the Apocalypse; and Forester is interested in discovering who translated the prose section of the work.
Poetics." By focusing upon Van der Noordt's prose commentary to the three sets of "Visions," Rasmussen attempts to prove that the prose treatise is not simply an anti-papal diatribe, but that it is actually a theory of poetics based upon the teachings of Calvin and the Book of Revelations. Not all of Rasmussen's findings are convincing, but this article, together with Van Dorsten's study, are an indication of the growing awareness by some modern critics that the Theatrum Orbis has can be valued as a literary work.

Unfortunately, Spenser's revisions of these poems for the Complaints volume and his own work in this emblematic style have not met with the same favourable criticism. Kenrick considers "The Visions of Belphoebe" and "The Visions of Petrarch" with indifference, and of "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" he states that they "are not really visions of the world's vanity, but parables of the limitations of power," and that they are of "little but historical interest" (Complaints 255). Stein's consideration of the revised "Visions" has already been mentioned, while his censure of "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" as "unimportant and derivative" (72) needs no further explanation. The harshest criticism of Spenser's imitation of the vision poetry of Petrarch and Du Bellay comes from Satterthwaite, who calls them "a sequence of twelve dull and colorless sonnets," in which "each sonnet ends with a couplet both ponderous and trite, expressing some quasi-philosophical platitude," and then concludes that the poems are "so feeble" that "any close critical examination of the text [is] a fairly fruitless endeavor" (Spenser, Hobgord, and Du Bellay
As unfair as this criticism appears to be, modern critics seem to have agreed with Satterthwaite's pronouncements. No critical study of the "Visions" has been attempted in recent years.

The history of "The Ruiner of Time" during this last period of criticism exemplifies the changes in critical acceptance of the Complaints. "Time" is the only poem in the Complaints volume in which the accepted opinion of the earlier scholars (Penwick, Jones, and Stein) has been completely reversed by the poem's more recent critics (Nelson, Kasmussen, and Denny). The poem's earlier readers saw "The Ruiner of Time" as a poorly structured, hastily pieced together, and perhaps even incomplete work. Renwick states that the conduct of the poem "is disjointed" and adds that "it is obvious also that the poem was written in fragments and pieced together in haste" (Complaints 109). The visionary sonnets which close the poem, Renwick feels, are of no great intrinsic value to it, and "might well be a relic of the Dreams and Pageants mentioned by Spenser and Harvey in their letters" (Complaints 100). Jones believes that "this largely lugubrious poem" (87)

falls easily into four main divisions: (1) a patriotic lament; (2) a necrology of the Dudley and Bedford families; (3) an eulogy of poetry; and (4) a complaint of the world's vanity.

Yet, as Jones's commentary on these divisions indicates, he does not believe that any of the separate sections of the poem are interrelated. Stein generally agrees with Jones's divisions of the poem, but his criticisms of "Time" are somewhat harsher than those of his contemporaries.
Even a superficial examination reveals the fact that *The Ruines of Time* is not a finished and workmanlike job, that it is uneven in quality, that its transitions are awkward, and that it consists of four loosely articulated sections. (36)

Nevertheless, nearly thirty years later, the critical opinion of "*The Ruines of Time* has changed completely. Rather than seeing the poem as poorly structured and disunified, most recent critics have presented numerous theories which argue for its unity of design, theme, and purpose. Nelson provides convincing proof that, even if the poem was constructed from various compositions, it "stands as an entirely coherent structure" (68). To support his theory of the poem's unity, Nelson explains how "Spenser binds the whole together by a numerical device".

The main part of the poem consists of seventy stanzas of seven lines each; the two sets of visions are comprised in twenty-eight stanzas, in each set six visions followed by an envoy rejecting the vain world and looking to heaven. Six are the days of this mutable world; on the seventh God rests and change ceases." (68-9)

A. Leigh DeWolfe, in the revised version of his 1979 article, agrees with Nelson that "Time" is unified and presents two different sources for its unity—the subject of poetic immortalization and Spenser's carefully planned defense of poetry.

"The Ruins" is indeed unified by Spenser's focus on the function of poetry, but we severely narrow that focus by thinking immortalization is the poet's sole task. Rather, we need to see that Spenser presents poetry and the immortality it confers in a carefully defined Sidneyan context. (Spenser
Finally, Rasmussen, in a recent article, sees a different structural device which unifies "The Ruines of Time." Following a similar course, as the one Fichter had introduced in his article on "The Ruines of Rome," Rasmussen chooses the Genius of Verlaine as an unreliable narrator, and places her in contrast to the right-thinking Spenser. Rasmussen's argument, like Fichter's, is that Verlaine leads the reader down a sinful path of despair, rather than toward true consolation. The correction of Verlaine's misguided lament comes in the two sets of visions which conclude the poem. He sees these visions as "a true consolation," which are "reminiscent of Old Testament prophecy and the Book of Revelation" (p. 23).

The critical acceptance of "The Ruines of Time" changed drastically in the final period of criticism. Early opinions of its strictness and loose structure gave way in later years to a consideration of the poem's structural and thematic unity and its serious subject matter. The critical attitude toward the remaining two poems of the Complaints volume also shows the transitional nature of this final period's critical views.

As in the former period of criticism, the two most popular poems from the Complaints volume are "Mother Hubberd's Tale" and...
"Mepopotmos." Their popularity generally arises from similar bases: both poems are seen as the finest poetic achievements of the Complaints. "Mother Hubberds Tale" because it is considered the only satiric poem in Spenser's canon, and "Mepopotmos" because it is a strikingly beautiful and melodious lyric—and both are believed to have allegorical interpretations.

The two major critical focuses for "Mother Hubberds Tale" are the poem's allegorical interpretation and its apparent structural weaknessess. Greenlaw had established the most plausible reading of the poem as a political allegory in the former period of criticism, and generally, in this last period, his theories are not discredited, although they are at times questioned. Renwick, typically, passes over the possibility of an allegorical reading of the poem. Jones and Frederick Hard basically accept Greenlaw's interpretation, with Hard attempting to discover more covert references to Lord Burghley than previous readers, had found (Jones, 101; Hard, "Spenser and Burghley"). Stein, as well as a number of recent critics, generally agree with the broad scheme of Greenlaw's reading, but they differ in their identifications of the Fox and the Ape.24 Nevertheless, more recent critics, such as Nelson and Kenneth

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24 Stein believes that the political references are not to the Court of Elizabeth in the years 1579-80, but rather to the court, circa 1589-96. He believes the Fox may have been the Lord Treasurer's son, Robert Cecil, who was then gaining power, and the Ape is James VI of Scotland (86-96). Harris, "The Ape in Mother Hubberds Tale," identifies the Fox as William Cecil, the Lord Treasurer, and the Ape as his son, Robert (191-3); and Petti, "Beasts and Politics," who is interested in identifying the references for all the beasts in the "Tale," agrees with Harris's findings.
Atchity, tend to disfavor such narrow allegorical readings of the poem and attempt to find ways to "universalize the satirical vision" of "Mother Hubberd's Tale (Atchity, 162).

The view of the structure of "Mother Hubberd's Tale" also changes, or at least becomes less of a concern, in more recent critical studies. Earlier critics, such as Renwick, state that the poem is "well planned, but not carefully executed" (Complaints 227), and Jones and Stein identify the poem's weakness by claiming that it is actually "two poems joined together" (Stein, 56). Jones believes that a "personal and political satire has been grafted upon the stock of a fable . . . of general satire" (102), and Stein pinpoints the "junction" of the two satires at "around line 943" (57). The apparent division of the poem into two unrelated parts led Stein and a number of earlier critics to conclude that "the two parts must be treated as separate poems" (57). Nevertheless, more recently, readers of the poem have ignored such artificial divisions in favor of interpretations which emphasize the poem's unity of thought and satiric purpose. Nelson considers the main characters of the tale, throughout their adventures, as a pair who constitute "a kind of unit, a counterfeit man, the Ape mocking man in body, the Fox in mind" (75). Atchity perceives a similar universal pattern for "Mother Hubberd's Tale," and suggests that the poem is unified under "three themes of order": 1) "Fortune and the false goods pursued by men who are blind to the fact that they are subject to inconstant mutabilitie' 2) "the contention between the 'commune profyt' [common good] and the 'synguler profyt' [singular good] as we find it developed in The House of Fame and
The Parliament of Fowls, and 3)- "the poet-narrator's attitude toward his artistic role" (162). Finally, in a recent paper, D'Orsay W. Pearson argues that the common renaissance myth of the Golden Age in an Iron World is employed consciously by Spenser throughout the poem and serves "as a measure for corruption of the Ape and the Fox" (2). Although some of Pearson's findings have been questioned by her fellow Spenserians, her basic assumption that "Mother Hubberds Tale" is unified and should not be treated as two separate poems, has been accepted by modern critics of the poem. The last poem to be discussed, "Muirpotmos," has received the greatest amount of attention from Spenser's modern critics. However, unlike "Mother Hubberds Tale" or "The Ruines of Time," critical opinion has changed little in the past one hundred years.

One thing that has changed, however, between the criticism of the former period and the recent criticism of this period, is that more useful and worthwhile readings of the poem have been made in recent years than ever before in the poem's history.

Critics of "Muirpotmos" can once again be divided into three different groups: those who read the poem as a beautiful work of fancy, those who see it as a mock-heroic poem, and the largest group, which is made up of those who believe that "Muirpotmos" is an allegory. Renwick stands almost alone in his belief that "Muirpotmos" is merely "a decorative fancy," which Spenser may have used as a "holiday from the weighty matter of The Faerie Queene" (Complaints 249). Stein seems most naturally inclined to agree with this reading of the poem, stating that

the belief that Muirpotmos is poetry without ulterior motive,
is an old one and a persistent one; based on the lightness, grace, and delicacy of the poem, which seem more suitable to a free fantasy than to a pointed moral or political satire. (101)

However, the weight of critical arguments for an allegorical reading of the poem forces Stein to admit, with some reluctance, "that Spenser probably did have some purpose in Mulioptmos besides the writing of delightful verse" (102). Still, he is unwilling to agree with any of the numerous allegorical interpretations of "Mulioptmos," and finally concludes that:

at present, it must be admitted, there seems to be no theory sufficiently substantiated to warrant any further assumptions about the poem other than that it may be allegorical and is delightful. (105)

Following Nadal's reading of the poem as a mock-heroic work, a second group of critics, who come from both early and more recent generations of readers, have suggested many other possible sources for the mock-heroic elements in "Mulioptmos." Isabel E. Rathborne argues that the poem is "a fragment of a longer mock-epic," for which Spenser had followed the examples of the pseudo-Homeric Batrachomyomachia and Heywood's The Spider and the Fly. And moving away from an attempt to identify exact literary sources, William Wells concludes that the poem is "a harmony of the medieval tragedy and the classical mock-heroic" (545). Nelson agrees that "Mulioptmos" is "in the mock-heroic vein," but he qualifies his statement by pointing out that the reader does not laugh at [the poem's] hero as the does at Chaucer's Chanticleer and Pope's Belinda, for the butterfly Clarion is too beautiful to be absurd and though little is not contemptible. (71)
rather than focusing his narrative upon the mock-heroic battle between a spider and a butterfly, Nelson believes that Spenser holds up for mockery mankind's grandiose visions of power and worldly vanity:

The poet directs his reader to sit in a godlike seat, to look upon the little world of butterflies and spiders so that he may understand how Olympus sees mankind. (77)

A more recent critic, Robert Brinkley, in a 1981 article, turns to Nelson's universalized interpretation of "Mulopotmos" to find a modern reading of the poem's apparent political allegory. For Brinkley,

the poem recreates us both as gods and insects, and for Spenser's immediate audience, the Elizabethan court, the poem mirrors positions at court (674).

Brinkley believes that the sixteenth-century readers of Spenser's poem would have seen themselves as either courtier-gods or courtier-insects, and that the allegory of "Mulopotmos" should be seen as a depiction of Elizabeth's court and the political fate of all those connected with it.

Brinkley's essay comes at the end of a long tradition of allegorical readings of "Mulopotmos." These interpretations can most easily be divided into three groups: political allegory, personal allegory, and a more recent consideration, spiritual or philosophical allegory. The first two methods of interpretation, like their predecessors in the former period, offer little help in understanding the poem. However, the more recent methods have proven to be more profitable.
The critics who consider the poem as a political allegory usually follow the interpretation established by Jessie M. Lyons, and attempt to identify the contemporary figures who may be represented by Clarion and Aragnoll. Viola Blackburn Hulbert, who argues that, if the poem is not allegorical, it is "foolish and pointless," substitutes for Lyen's "Paih-Essex dispute" the "Sidney-Oxford quarrel" (143). For Hulbert, Sidney is Clarion and Burghley is Aragnoll, and the poem describes two quarrels—one specific between Sidney and Oxford, the other general between Sidney and Burghley. Meanwhile, Harris continues his reading of "Mother Hubberds Tale" into his interpretation of "Mutilpotmos," arguing that

Mutilpotmos: and Mother Hubberds Tale (particularly the second part) were companion poems, the one lauding Essex, the other damning Sir Robert Cecil. ("The Butterfly" 302-16)

Harris identifies Clarion with Essex and Aragnoll with Burghley.

Other readers of "Mutilpotmos" saw the poem not as a political allegory but as a representation of Spenser's personal relationships. Jones seems somewhat uncertain whether Spenser was weaving "a fabric of personal and political allegory" (113); yet he tends to favour the personal reading, reversing Emerson's identifications and naming Spenser as the spider and Lady Carey as the butterfly.

C. W. Lemm introduces a unique reading of the poem, suggesting that it does not refer to Spenser's life, but is "an allegory of the life and death of Sidney much like "Astrophel" (332). Lemm's theory has received considerable criticism from his fellow Spenserians, who are displeased both with his careless historical research.
Neither the political nor the personal allegorical readings of "Mulicpolthos" have been satisfying as explanations of the poem. Their focus is often too narrow and their concerns are generally inconsequential. Beginning, however, with Don Cameron Allen's modern allegorical reading of the poem, few critics have been concerned with the possible contemporary figures who may have been represented there. Allen sees "Mulicpolthos" as "an allegory of the rational soul caught in the eternal war between reason and sensuality" (157). The fate of the butterfly, Allen believes, is the fate of all men; Clario's fall to death is seen as an allegory of the fall of man. Subsequent critics of the poem have followed Allen's interpretations. Franklin E. Court calls the poem "a dramatization of disillusionment" (42); Judith H. Anderson focuses on "the spiritual and moral dimensions of the poem" (49); and Ronald Bond states that "Mulicpolthos" is "an allegorical story about the workings of envy" (149). Many of these moral interpretations have questioned the apparent discrepancy between the poem's serious moral subject and the ephemeral appearance of Spenser's lyric.

Judith Dundas, in a recent article, argues that to divide the poem's pleasant appearance from its serious matter distorts the poem's design. Rather, Dundas insists, the modern reader "must learn to put back together the decorative and the significant."
and discover the meaning which lies in the poem's "dazzling surface" (30). Although many of these recent studies have come closer to a critical understanding of "Miiopotmos," no definitive reading of the poem has been given. Perhaps none can be given, and we can finally only agree with Stein's earlier suggestion that "Miiopotmos" "may be allegorical and is delightful."

This rather lengthy survey of the critical history of the Complaints has attempted to present, as completely as possible, a common body of information about the poems. Few readers, even those well-versed in Spenser's other works, are familiar with the Complaints. What we may know about them are the harsher criticisms given by their eighteenth and nineteenth century readers: "The Ruines of Time" is immature and incomplete; "The Teares of the Muses" is dull; the "Visions" are inconsequential; "Mother Hubberds Tale" is interesting as a political satire, but is a poorly constructed poem; and "Miiopotmos" is beautiful, but insubstantial. Gradually these misconceptions about the Complaints have been confronted and re-examined. The valuable early work done by Warton, Kenwick, Friedland, and others has been built upon and expanded by more recent critics. The less valuable criticisms have been put to one side. They are not totally forgotten, but they are no longer considered useful for our understanding of the poems. Any reassessment of the Complaints, such as that proposed by this study, relies heavily upon a clear understanding of the work that has been done before. It is only at this point that we can proceed to a discussion of the generic and thematic unity of Spenser's Complaints.

In order to assess Spenser's poems as complaints, it is necessary
to understand the traditions from which Spenser drew for his compositions. The following two chapters consider the development of these traditions. Chapter Three traces the possible origins of the complaint in classical and Biblical literature and its evolution as a popular literary form in the Middle Ages. Chapter Four then continues the history of the complaint through the Renaissance to Spenser's own time.
Chapter Three

The Medieval Complaint: Origins and Development of the Genre

Before Spenser's poems can be studied generically, some misconceptions about the genre of complaint must be corrected. The two most prominent misconceptions about complaint are that it is a stagnant and unchanging form of poetry and that it was an unimportant form of poetry which arose during the twelfth century and died out as an independent literary form a few centuries later. John Peter, in his important study of Complaint and Satire, was the first to suggest that the complaint, as it appeared in the Middle Ages, was a rigid form of verse which purposefully repressed development:

Indeed, 'by development we understand the revision and modification of content then in its very nature Complaint is bound positively to repress development, to preserve its content in as stable and unchanging a form as possible . . . the general premise of its kind of argument, and the criteria in relation to which it makes its criticisms, cannot afford to change.' (59)

Peter makes this statement in light of the narrow scope of his study, which sees the complaint as a transitional form of poetry, between the classical satires of Juvenal, Horace, and Persius and the later English satires of Marston, Hall, and the great satirists of the eighteenth century. Within his thesis the complaint cannot develop, for as soon as the form of satirical verse changed from the simple confines outlined by Peter, it was no longer Complaint but had been transformed into Satire. It is not my purpose to relate what Peter has said about the development of satire in
England out of the satirical complaints of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, it does not seem necessary to clarify our use of the term "complaint," a problem which neither Peter nor subsequent scholars of the medieval complaint have adequately addressed. Because of the comparative nature of Peter's study, he is often forced to oppose complaint and satire to each other, so that complaint is at times defined by negative reference to satire, as in the following series of comparisons:

while Complaint is usually conceptual, and often allegorical, Satire tends rather to work in the concrete particularity of real life. Secondly, Complaint is impersonal, Satire personal. Thirdly, the range of Satire is usually wider than the range of Complaint; Being personal, Satire can range over a scale as wide as human personality itself. In Complaint, however, the writing is tied to a system rather than a personality, and an accepted and enduring system too. Fourthly, Satire tends to be scornful, often reflecting only a token desire for reform, whereas Complaint is corrective and clearly does not despair of its power to correct. Fifthly, Satire is usually specific. But Complaint is vague, concerned with the abuse rather than the abuser. And finally ... Satire is a comparatively sophisticated mode and Complaint is not. (9-10)

Some of the descriptive terms which Peter uses to define Complaint, such as "impersonal," "vague," and "unsophisticated," arise only from his comparison of complaint with satire, while others help to pinpoint the nature of this form of verse, such as "conceptual, and often allegorical," "corrective," and "tied to an enduring system." Nevertheless, Peter's comparative study ultimately leads him to deny complaint its place as a form of art:

The stasis of Art (the capacity, roughly, to leave the reader's mind at rest, integral and satisfied with it) is precisely what [complaint] lacks, and even at its subtletest it cannot be more than what Collingwood calls
"Magic"—what in non-technical language we should call propaganda. (55)

Subsequent critics of Medieval and Renaissance complaints in many ways follow Peter's critical methods. Like Peter, they tend to look only at a part of the larger complaint tradition, although generally acknowledging that their studies are not comprehensive analyses of the form. For example, Joseph Keller agrees with Peter's estimation that complaint is distinguished from satire by its generality:

[Complaint] is a poem which is general rather than specific—even when the "occasion" is specific; it may be identified as a complaint not because of its title, often contributed by medieval or modern editors, but because of the ways that generality is so frequently expressed. (124)

To deny complaint its place as a form of art and to restrict its purpose only to the area of diatribe or propaganda is to ignore the richness and variety of the genre. In its dramatic form, complaint can be found throughout the dramas of the classical Greek and Roman tragedians, as well as in the medieval morality plays and the dramas of Elizabethan England. In its narrative form, complaint appears in the epics of Homer and Vergil, as well as in the de casibus works of Boccaccio, Lydgate, and the contributors.

Some of the recent studies of the medieval complaint which show their indebtedness to Peter are: Elliott, "Complaint as a Middle English Genre: A Survey of the Tradition Culminating in the School of Piers Plowman," and "Middle English Complaints Against the Times: To Contemn the World'or to Reform it?"; Keller, "The Triumph of Vice: A Formal Approach to the Medieval Complaint Against the Times;" Kinney, "The Temper of Fourteenth-Century English Verse Complaint."
to the Mirror for Magistrates. And in its lyric form, the complaint is used not only by the de contemptu mundi writers, such as Bernard of Cluny and St. Bernard de Clairvaux, but by the authors of the Greek threnoi, by Horace and Ovid, and by numerous anonymous medieval poets.

In contrast to the views established by Peter and Keller, Wolfgang Clemens argues for the richness and variety of complaint:

There are very few literary themes which underwent so many variations and enjoyed so rich a development as that of complaint. (English Tragedy 211)

If we can agree with Clemens that the complaint enjoyed a wide area of development, then it should follow that the second accepted theory about complaint, that it is an uninteresting and short-lived form of poetry, will also be found invalid. Most critics have agreed that the form found its origins or "direct antecedents" (Elliott, "Middle English Complaints" 23) in the de contemptu mundi literature of the twelfth century and that it varied little in appearance throughout Medieval and early Renaissance literary history, but Thomas Kinney has gone the farthest to confine the complaint to a limited point of time and area of influence:

[Complaint] arose in the vernacular in the thirteenth century, developed and became fixed in the fourteenth, persisted briefly into the fifteenth to become assimilated in other literary forms, or disappeared from literary view to survive in letters to the editor, and other manifestations of popular attitudes. (74)

In view of the long history of complaint in classical literature and its wide popularity and variety of form in the literature of Europe and England during both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,
which the following chapters investigate, I find it difficult to accept the attitudes of Peter, Keller, and Kinney which deny the complaint's diversity, complexity, and continued popularity throughout literary history.

The current chapter is concerned with the origins and development of the form, imagery, style, and tone of complaint. We will begin with an investigation of the dual origins of complaint, first in the rituals and literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and secondly in the Old Testament books of the Bible. From these origins in classical and Christian literature, we will see how the branches of complaint grew out of classical literature into de Casibus narrative and dramatic complaints and out of Biblical literature into de contemptu mundi moral and lyric complaints.

At first our concern for the minute details of the particular works under investigation will be greater as we establish the forms and conventions of the complaint. As we continue into Chapter Four, our concern for specific details will become less demanding as we focus upon the transformations and variations of the complaint as it was adapted by various late medieval and Renaissance poets.

If we are to locate the origins of the complaint, we must look at the actual religious rituals of ancient Greece which were the birthplace of so much of western literature. And although these ritual laments cannot be seen as direct antecedents of the later, medieval complaints, they are historically and generically related, and so, therefore, deserve some consideration. As Margaret Alexiou states in her important study of The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition, "the lament was by no means just a spontaneous
outbreak of grief" (4). 2 Even at its earliest conception, lament
"was carefully controlled in accordance with the ritual at every
stage" (4). Within the formal ritual of the burial of the dead,
the lamentations generally began during the προθήσις, or wake.
These ritual lamentations were always sung and wailed by women,
who would be divided into two groups. Those who were actual family
members of the deceased would perform the γοῦς, which is the highly
emotional and grief-stricken wailing. The second group of women
would be made up of professional mourners, who would perform the
threnos, which is the ordered song of lamentation. Each group
would sing a verse in turn, which was followed by a refrain sung
in unison. Thus, the song of lamentation developed into an antiphonal
composition sung by two groups of women. As well as singing and
wailing, the ritual lamentation involved certain gestures symbolic
of the mourners' grief. The women would raise their hands, wildly,
above their heads. The closest female relative to the deceased
(widow, mother, or sister) would clutch at the head of the dead
man, while the other women would reach with their right hands
to touch part of the corpse. Finally, full of grief, the women
would strike their own heads with their fists, tear out their
hair, or rend their clothes and their flesh. Nevertheless, as
Alexiou warns us, we should not see these actions as a display
of wild and frenzied emotions, for "the violent tearing of the
hair, face and clothes were not acts of uncontrolled grief, but

2I am greatly indebted to Alexiou's comprehensive
study of the origins of lament in Greek culture and
literature. Much of what I have to say on this topic
can be found in more detail in Alexiou.
part of the ritual indispensable to lamentation throughout antiquity. In these elements of the ritual lament, we can begin to see many of the conventions which would appear in later literary forms of the complaint.

As the ritual lament was taken over into the various forms of Greek literature, it was adapted to fit the specific stylistic requirements of epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry. In Homer the antiphonal element is obscured and the refrain is reduced to a mere formula. His laments are a highly individualized form of the goos, which is spoken rather than sung, and so developed a
narrative rather than a musical form. The lyre poets, particularly
Kíndar and Simónides, developed the thrános, the formal song of
lament performed by the professional mourners, into the formal
choral odes. Alexiou describes these works as being "characterized
by a calm restraint, gnomic and consolatory in tone rather than

An example which shows both Homer's attention
to the traditions of ritual lament and his adaptation
of these traditions to the individualized, narrative-
form of the epic, can be found in the final book of
The Iliad, as Andromache, Hector's wife and son's mother, who tore their
hair, and ran up beside the smooth-rolling wagon, and touched his head. And the multitude,
wailing, stood there about them. (The Iliad,
"Lattimore trans., Book XXIV, 709-712.)

Homer has the mourners disperse while Hector's body
is brought inside the palace, and there the three
principal female mourners offer their personal laments
to Hector's body. First Andromache, Hector's wife,
tells of her sorrows and her fears. She cries for
herself, now that she is a widow, and she cries for
their son, who may die at the vengeance hands of an
Achian soldier, or who may live a harsh and painful
life. The second mourner is Hecuba, Hector's mother,
who remembers her other sons who were sold into slavery,
and she remembers the shameful way in which Achilles,
treated Hector's dead body. Finally Hélén, Hector's
sister-in-law, speaks of Hector as a gentle-friend
who treated her kindly, and she mourns the loss of
his friendship. For these three set pieces, Homer
adapted the ritual lamentations of the gods. His
mourners are women who are family members of the deceased,
and they perform the ritual gestures of the lament.
Nevertheless, their mourning is not made up of frenzied
wailing and singing; they speak clearly, and they
calmly narrate the source of their individual distress.
passionate and aesthetic." (103), is another related lyric form of
poetry, which is often confused with lament, but which has an
entity distinct from that of the ritual lament, is the elegy.

Although both the ancient threnos and the elegos developed out
of the burial rituals of the ancient Greeks, the elegos were
performed by the men during the common meal on the burial day.
The style of the elegos was consequently hortatory rather than
mournful, and the subject matter was political and military rather
than meditative. In the Greek drama, we find a re-establishment
of the traditional attitudinal lament known as the kommos. Aristotle
clearly defines it as a tragic lament in dialogue form between
chorus and actors (Poetics, 12. 452b). Examples of the kommos

4 An example of a Pandaric threnos is "Life after
Death," nos. 123 in From the Greek, ed. T. F. Higham
and C. M. Bowra (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1943),
pp. 98-9:

For them the sun shines ever in full might
Throughout our earthly night;
There, reddening with the rose, their paradise,
A fair green pleasure, lies,
Cool beneath shade of incense-bearing trees.
And rich with golden fruit.
And there they take their pleasure as they will,
In chariot-race, or young-limbed exercise
In wrestling, at the game of tables these,
And those with harp or lute:
And blissful where they dwell, beside them still
Dwells at full bloom perfect beauty.
And spreading delicately
Over the lovely region everywhere
Fragrance in the air.
Floats from high altars where the fire is dense
With perfumed frankincense.
Burned for the glory of Heaven continually.
(trans., Walter Headlam)

5 For a further discussion of the elegy as a form
distinctive from the lament, see Alexiou, 104-108.
can be found in Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, and throughout Euripides' tragedies. A common feature of these poetic laments, whether epic, lyric, or dramatic, is the hero or heroine's anguish in the face of his/her fate or moira. In Homer, fate appears as a personified and concrete form, Moira, who is the agent of death or bringer of doom. In the tragedies, the lyrical *threnos* is the mournful song of an individual in more general terms, yet as Alexiou suggests,

the fundamental idea in all is the inescapability of a man's allotted fate. It is traditional to much of Greek poetry and thought, and has given rise to a common fund of formulae and formulaic phrases, which can be traced in Homer, lyric poetry, tragedy, verse and prose inscriptions. (113)

As well as these laments for the dead, which passed from ancient ritual into classical literature, Alexiou describes "two other important and ancient types of lament, the lament for the death of gods and heroes, and the historical lament for disasters affecting a city or a people" (55). The Lament for Adonis is a common example of the lament for the death of gods or heroes, whose literary life far outlived its social origins. A fragment of a poem attributed to Sappho contains the earliest recorded appearance of the lament for Adonis in Greek literature:

"Tender Adonis is dying, Kythereia. What are we to do?"

6 Examples of the *kommos* can be found in *Libation-Bearers*, 11. 93ff; *Antigone*, 11. 781-985; and throughout Euripides' Ailcestis, The Medea, Heracles, Hecuba, Andromache, and The Trojan Women.
popular subject of religious laments. Laments for the Virgin date back as far as the sixth century with Romanos' Kontakion, or Mary at the Cross, and continue throughout the Middle Ages to include Symeon Metaphrastes' Planctus and the numerous medieval planctus Mariæ (see Alexiou, 61-78; and Sticca). As well as these religious laments, early Christian literature contains many examples of laments for fallen cities. In these the moral lessons of the Old Testament, such as the Lamentations of Jeremiah, were added to the classical form of laments for fallen cities.¹⁰

These religious laments unite the form and conventions of the classical poems with the conventions and moral purpose of the laments found in the Bible, which is the next area of our investigation into the origins of the complaint:

> Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:15-17, King James Version)

This passage from the New Testament has often been cited as "the central origin of de contemptu mundi literature" (Howard, 38).

It calls upon all Christians to turn away from the things of this world and to place all their love in God. It teaches us that the dangers which the world possesses to tempt mankind away from

¹⁰A popular example of the Christianized lament for the destruction of cities can be found in the numerous laments written for the fall of Constantinople; see Alexiou, 85-90.
Later became known as ubi sunt, is one of the most common conventions of later Medieval and Renaissance complaints, but as we have seen, it is not the only feature of the complaint which found its origin in the launts of classical Greece. As well as the larger features noted already, the Greek classical laments were responsible for several common elements of later complaints. Some of these are the mourner hesitating before she begins her lament because she is unsure of her ability to express her grief or to praise the lost hero, the mourner contrasting the glories of the past with the desolation of the present, and the mourner wishing for her own destruction and cursing the day she was born. Along with these larger conventions, the laments of ancient Greece also produced many of the common images which would appear in later complaints. The association of the laments for heroes with the festivals of Adonis introduced nature imagery into the laments. A contrast would be made between spring (the young hero's life) and fall or winter (his premature death). A young man's growth was compared with a flourishing tree, often a cypress, while his death would be compared with a withering flower. Most likely originating in the laments for fallen cities, but carried over into laments for fallen heroes, are images of pillars, temples, buildings, and foundations which have been destroyed. These images came to represent the loss of support that a people, a city, or a family might feel after the destruction of their homeland or the death

See Alexiou, Chapter 8, "Conventions, themes, and formulae," for a further discussion of the subject, 161-184.
of their leader. Other images of the classical lament which became commonplaces of the later complaints were the storm-tossed ship or the weary horseman, which represented the difficulties of life's journey."

In opposition to those, like Kinney, who see the complaint as a limited literary form which "arose in the thirteenth century," we can see that many of the common features of complaint had their origin in the laments of ancient Greece. Much of the genre's structure, tone, and imagery were introduced into Western literature by means of the threnoi of the Greek lyricists, the kommòs of the Greek dramatists, and the ὕδωρ of Homer. As we move from Greek classical literature, to Roman classical literature, and eventually to the early Christianized forms of complaint, we can see how the early forms of lament were adapted to fit the demands of each new literary age.

When the poets of the Roman Republic, such as Ennius and Accius, adapted the works of the Greek tragedians, Euripides and Sophocles, we may assume that the kommòs was adapted to fit Roman expressions of grief. Nevertheless, it is not until the time of the Empire that an age of new poets could develop an independent style of Latin poetry which included forms of the complaint. In the love laments of Valerius Catō and Catullus, the serious concerns of lost lives and fallen cities were transferred to the trivial matters of lost love and broken hearts. Yet it was not

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9For some additional material on the imagery of the ancient laments see Alexiou, Chapter 9, "The Allusive Method," 182-205.
until the golden age of Augustan poetry, when Rome flourished with poets and philosophers, that the complaint appeared in all forms of poetry, epic, lyric, and dramatic, as it had during the Greek classical period.

Vergil's Aeneid contains many complaints, the most famous being Dido's complaint for Aeneas at the end of Book IV. Although Dido's complaint varies slightly from a traditional lament, since Aeneas is not dead, Vergil follows many of the conventions of the Homeric lament. When Dido sees that Aeneas and the Trojans have gone, she strikes at her breast and tears her hair. She asks numerous rhetorical questions which show the confusion and distress of her impassioned mind. Dido's grief is so great that she curses all life, her own and Aeneas's as well. Finally, she has a funeral pyre constructed for her own death, which is built of "we'ry baleful green denoting death," such as the cypress and the willow (Aeneid, 4.584-705). The details of the traditional lament used by Dido at the end of Book IV perform a dual purpose, for not only is Dido lamenting the loss of her lover Aeneas, but she is simultaneously performing the ritual lamentation for her own death.

In-lyric poetry, Horace's Satires and Odes continued the gnomic and consolatory tone of the Greek lyric laments, while often adding an element of ridicule and criticism against mankind's foolish discontents and desires. The Odes particularly influenced later Medieval and Renaissance complaints' concentration upon such universal philosophic concerns as the impermanence of all earthly things, the inevitability of death, and the mutability.
of the world, 30:2, 4, which opens with a joyful greeting of spring, and ends with a reflection upon the brevity of life, is an example of the form's influence on the complaint: "Equally heavy is the heel of white-faced Death on the pauper's shack and the towers of kings, / and O my dear The little sum of life forbids the ravelling of lengthy Hopes" (1.4.12-5; in Lind, ed., Latin Poetry 100). Later contemporaries of Horace, the most famous being Tibullus and Propertius, developed the erotic love poetry of Catullus into the most original form of Latin poetry, the erotic elegy. As had been true earlier with Catullus, the Latin elegists transferred the emotion and language of the formal elegy to the discussion of unrequited love and forsaken affairs. A generation later, Ovid removed the love-complaint from the masculine-dominated form of the elegy and placed it within the narrative, feminine-centered framework of the Heroides. In the epistolary complaints which dominate the form of the Heroides, Ovid has his female speakers describe their suffering, rebuke their unfaithful lovers, and lament their tragic fate. By writing the Heroides, Ovid returned the complaint to its original purpose, as an outlet for feminine expressions of grief and sorrow, and he produced one of the most influential works for later Medieval and Renaissance amorous complaints.

In the troublesome years of the Empire under Nero, the dramatist Seneca transformed the impassioned, grief-stricken laments of the Greek tragedians into formalized, rhetorical set-speeches. Numerous classical scholars have discussed the rhetorical methods in Seneca's art, and in his study of English Tragedy before
Shakespeare, Wolfgang Clemens looks specifically at the Roman poet's transformations of the dramatic lament. Clemens's argument is that in each of the major *topoi* of lament—the apostrophe to Fortune or invocation to the gods, the rhetorical question, the parallels from mythology and ancient history, and the mourner's desire for death—what the Greek dramatists portrayed as true grief and physical suffering, Seneca presented as stylized, rhetorical decoration (*English Tragedy* 215-23).* Whether Seneca's transformations in the area of the dramatic lament were artistically beneficial or not is immaterial to our discussion. Nevertheless, the changes which Seneca made were immensely influential upon the development of both drama and complaint in sixteenth-century England.

With the advent of Christianity in the Byzantine and Roman Empires, the lament once again underwent significant transformations. In an attempt to restrain the violent public display of grief common to the popular, pagan laments inherited from Greek ritual, the early Church Fathers restricted the numbers of mourners and the occasions for public lamentation at funeral ceremonies. Their restrictions destroyed the unity of poetry and ritual characteristic of the ancient Greek lament, but it did not, nor could it, destroy the lament as a poetic expression of an individual or a nation's grief. The ritual and festivals honoring the pagan god Adonis, for which Theocritus and Bion had written their laments, were outlawed, but the laments for the young god's death and the association of his death with the natural, regenerative cycle of nature were easily transferrable to laments for the death and resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, it was the Virgin who became the most
popular subject of religious laments. Laments for the Virgin date back as far as the sixth century with Romanos' Kontakion, or Mary at the Cross, and continue throughout the Middle Ages to include Symeon Metaphrastes' Planctus and the numerous medieval planctus Mariæ (see Alexiou, 61-78; and Sticca). As well as these religious laments, early Christian literature contains many examples of laments for fallen cities. In these the moral lessons of the Old Testament, such as the Lamentations of Jeremiah, were added to the classical form of laments for fallen cities. 10

These religious laments unite the form and conventions of the classical poems with the conventions and moral purpose of the laments found in the Bible, which is the next area of our investigation into the origins of the complaint:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.  

(1 John 3:15-17, King James Version)

This passage from the New Testament has often been cited as "the central origin of de contemptu mundi literature" (Howard, 38).

It calls upon all Christians to turn away from the things of this world and to place all their love in God. It teaches us that the dangers which the world possesses to tempt mankind away from

10A popular example of the Christianized lament for the destruction of cities can be found in the numerous laments written for the fall of Constantinople; see Alexiou, 85-90.
God are three-fold: "the lust of the flesh, . . . the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The interpretation of these three temptations has formed the nucleus for much medieval de contemptu mundi literature. For example, a late medieval work, Petrarch's Secretum, which in appearance and in spirit greatly differs from the earlier medieval de contemptu mundi diatribes, still uses this passage as its structural model. During a period of self-doubt, Petrarch is visited by the spirits of Truth and St. Augustine. The Secretum presents three dialogues between the poet and his spiritual leader, St. Augustine. The first dialogue is concerned with the lust of the flesh: Petrarch's love of Laura. The second dialogue discusses the lust of the eyes: Petrarch's love of learning. And the third dialogue considers the pride of life: Petrarch's desire for worldly fame by means of his poetry. How The Secretum differs from earlier de contemptu literature will be discussed later, but from this example we can perceive the centrality of the passage from 1 John for contemptus mundi literature.

Nevertheless, as important as this passage is, it is not the only Biblical source for de contemptu mundi and complaint literature. The Old Testament contains many examples of laments and of de contemptu mundi and de casibus verses. The kina (kinah) lament makes its first appearance in Hebrew writing in David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1.17-27:

11As well as those texts which will be discussed in the following section, other books of interest from the Old Testament are Ezra, particularly 9.3-15; Nehemiah 1.1-11; and Habakkuk.
And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: 

And he said: 

O beauty of Israel, 
O high places, 
From the wilderness to Geba: 
How art thou borne down, 
How art thou given to the multitude! 
Among the people 
In the fountain of Silo, 
Which went down to Gilboa: 
Peace be with thee, 
And peace with thy bones, 
In the city of the vineyards, 
Where the troops stood: 
For there was the shield of Saul, 
As he lay, 
And his glory, 
Which descended from thesun. 
And Jonathan loved him 
And called him his son: 
But in me is bitterness of soul, 
And the anguish of my heart, 
Because the voice of the enemy, 
Because the shout of the foolish, 
Is set for my head, 
And my eyes have seen 
The treachery of the king, 
And his rage. 
The mountains of Gilboa, 
Let there be no dew, 
Neither let there be rain, 
Upon you; 
For there the shield of Saul, 
As he lay, 
Was not found; 
And his glory, 
Was not known. 
The voice of the enemy, 
The shout of the foolish, 
Is set for my head, 
And my eyes have seen 
The treachery of the king, 
And his rage. 
The mournful melody of the dirge combined with David's refrain, 

"How art thou fallen, 
O mighty man of war, 
The renowned of the nations!" 

The Old Testament contains two types of laments: historical laments, which report the death of someone or the loss of something after the fact, and prophetic laments, which through the warnings of the prophets, announce sorrowful events to come as signs of God's great power. The Lamentations of Jeremiah exemplify the former, and the warnings of the prophet Ezekiel represent the latter type.

Although 2 Samuel 1.17-27 is the first full example of a Hebrew lament, it is generally believed that the form was known throughout antiquity among the Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Cypriots. An example is the lament for Gilgamesh over Enkidu.
Lamentations describes the destruction of Zion, and like many of the later complaints which would use this Biblical form as their models, the tale is told by two speakers: the poet who wrote the tale and the personified figure of Zion herself. First the poet describes the desolate appearance of the city:

How hath the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: at her gates are desolate: her priests sigh; her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. (Lamentations 1:1-4)

The city has been attacked, defeated, and left in ruins. The poet describes how Zion’s people have either been killed in battle or by starvation or how they have been captured by her conquerors. Her joy has been turned to wretchedness and her beauty and wealth into dust:

How is the gold become dim! how is, the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. (Lamentations 4:1-5)

Yet the most moving verses are those of Zion herself as she mourns her destruction and the loss of her citizens:

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the way of his fierce anger. From above hath
he sent fire into my bones, and it prevailed against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hands, from whom I am not able to rise up. The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed. (Lamentations 1:12-6)

It appears that in her desperation Zion blames the Lord for all her ruin and desolation; yet this is not true. Zion realizes that she is responsible for her transgressions, and her lament becomes a warning to other sinners rather than an accusation against the Lord:

The Lord is righteous: for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow. (Lamentations 1:18)

In Jeremiah's lament for the fallen city of Zion, we find many features that became commonplaces of later complaints against fallen cities. The former greatness of the city and its citizens is contrasted with the present vision of ruin and desolation. The beauties of the city, its gold and its strong young men and women, are seen as mutable and lost forever. And, most interestingly for our later discussion of Spenser's "Ruines of Rome," the deepest expressions of grief and loss are voiced by the personified figure of the city itself. One final element of Lamentations which would appear in later complaints is the internalization by the poet of the personified figure's lament. Zion's reflection upon her own transgressions, and her sorrow for the destruction which God's
punishment brought upon her, causes the poet to consider his own sinfulness and his eventual punishment. Nevertheless, historical laments are not the only sources for these moralized lamentations for fallen cities.

The prophecies of Ezekiel warn the Israelites to turn away from their sinfulness and to embrace God. The prophet scolds mankind because of his desires for worldly vanities and warns him of God’s punishment. With the Lord’s inspiration, Ezekiel sees in a vision the destruction of Tyre and laments its ruin.

Even though at the time of his writing the city is a beautiful and wealthy seaport, Ezekiel warns its prince and its citizens that unless they scorn their worldly treasures and place all their faith in the Lord, the entire city will fall to ruin:

Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy carpenters, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. (Ezekiel 27:27)

Ezekiel’s prophecies speak out against all forms of worldliness, and due to this they were often the models for Medieval de contempu mundi works.

Other Biblical sources for de contempu mundi literature can be found in the Book of Job and the Psalms. Job’s complaint is a valuable source for many conventions of Medieval complaints, and so I will present it in its entirety:

Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness
and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary; let no joyful voice come therein. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day: Because it shut not up the doors of my mother’s womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes. Why did I not die from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck? For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept; then had I been at rest, with kings and counselors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: Or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master: Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter soul; Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingely, and are glad, when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me; and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

(Job 3.3-26)

Many commonplace of later complaints echo these verses. The victim regrets the very day he was born; he questions why he was not allowed to die at birth so as to have avoided this present suffering. The complaint calls down all forms of curses and evil wishes upon his birthday. For him eclipses, devastating storms, and constant darkness symbolize the wretchedness which surrounds his birth. He looks upon death as a pleasant escape from his agony. Death is seen as the great leveller, who equally
puts to rest king and peasant, oppressor and oppressed, master and slave.

Job's resolve against despair, when his worldly treasures are taken violently away from him, introduces the moral lesson of much later complaint literature. Although his family, his wealth, his health, and his dignity have been stripped away from him, he remains strong in his love of God and convinced of his place as one of God's chosen people. Later de contemptu mundi writers would go even farther, and they would instruct their readers to forsake willingly their worldly possessions so that they might devote all their attention to the love of God.

As well as the Book of Job, the Psalms offer numerous examples of complaint. Many of the Psalms speak out against worldly vanity and remind men of their insignificance and mortality. Psalm 39 most clearly presents these familiar complaint themes:

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heareth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish: . . . When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. (4-11)

The length of man's days, his wealth, and his beauty are all transitory things which will pass away in a second. Man's only hope in life, the only constant element in his existence, is God. The complaint and de contemptu mundi writers of the Middle Ages could find in
the Psalms, in Job, and in Lamentations, as well as in many other parts of the Old Testament, the models for their compositions.

Although the *de casibus* is generally considered to be a philosophical form of complaint, which was derived from the writings of classical Greece and Rome, examples of *de casibus* tales can also be found in the Old Testament. The Book of Esther describes the rise to fame and the sudden fall of Haman. We first see Haman as the king's lieutenant who is greatly loved by the king. At one point he boasts to his wife and friends of the great wealth he has acquired through the king's affections.

And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

(Esther 5:11)

However, Haman is shown to be a wicked man who has a great hatred for the Jews and particularly of Mordecai, who had not shown proper reverence to him. Haman tells the king that the Jews despise the king's laws and that they should be destroyed. The king, not being aware of Haman's wickedness, agrees to this plan and passes a decree that all the Jews in his lands be destroyed.

Nevertheless, unknown to Haman or the king, the new queen, Esther, is a Jewess and the niece of Mordecai. Mordecai proves his loyalty to the king by informing on a plot against him. Without Haman's knowledge, the king calls for Mordecai to be honoured, while at the same time Haman plans to have Mordecai killed. Esther hears of Haman's plans and at a banquet confronts Haman with his wickedness against the Jews. The king becomes enraged at Haman, when he
was his lieutenant in a compromising position with the queen,
and it happens that the gallows which Haman had erected for the
death of Mordecai are used instead for the death of Haman. We
see in Esther's story of the rise and fall of Haman a Biblical
model for later *de casibus* tragedies. Haman quickly rises to
fame and power, but his evil leads to his sudden downfall.

The Bible contains within it the models for all later types
of complaint. David's laments in Samuel and the Lamentations
of Jeremiah introduce the form of elegiac complaints. The Book
of Job and the Psalms offer models for the themes and images used
later by Medieval *de contemptu mundi* writers. And the Book of
Esther presents the Biblical model for *de casibus* tragedies.
The Bible together with classical ritual and literature form the
basis for the common conventions of the complaint.

During the Middle Ages, monastic writers, who saw around
them signs of the world's degeneracy and sinfulness, looked to
the Bible and found there a style of writing which scorned the
world's vanity. These writers developed a form of complaint against
the world which became increasingly popular during the troubled
years of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They most often
chose for the title of their verses and treatises the phrase *de
contemptu mundi*, which became the designation for any type of
complaint which rails against the world's degeneracy and calls
upon mankind to forsake the world and to devote all worldly existence
to the glorification of God.

Several works were written during the twelfth and thirteenth
centuries with the title *De contemptu mundi*, but our purposes
will be best served by concentrating primarily on the one written by Bernard of Cluny. Bernard of Cluny's *De contemptu mundi* presents some initial problems to the modern reader of complaint literature. First, as H. C. Hoskier points out in his introduction to the only modern critical edition of the complete *De contemptu*, both our knowledge of the poet and his long poetic work are clouded in error and apparent lack of interest. Little is known about the author, and even his name has not been clearly identified. Hoskier refers to him as Bernard of Morval on the title-page of his edition of the poem, but other scholars and editors of the work have called him Bernard of Morlaix or Morlas. 13 It is known from records of the abbey at Cluny, as well as from Bernard's own preface to the *De contemptu*, which is dedicated to Peter the Venerable (Abbot of Cluny, 1122-1155), that Bernard was a member of the Cluniac order when he composed the *De contemptu mundi*. 14 In order to avoid confusion, therefore, in this study I will refer to the author as Berhard of Cluny.

Another area of confusion for readers of the *De contemptu* is the poem's date of publication. Most early references give the year 1483 for a Paris edition of the poem. However, as Hoskier explains, the 1483 publication is not of Bernard of Cluny's long poem but of a much shorter poem also entitled "De Contemptu Mundi."

13 The confusion derives from our ignorance as to which part of France Bernard was born in. For a fuller discussion of this matter see Hoskier, intro. *De Contemptu Mundi* xiv.

14 The *De Contemptu* is believed to have composed in the period 1140-1150. See Hoskier, viii, xiv.
an is believed to have been written by St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

St. Bernard's "De Contemptu" forms part of a larger

work, De arte bene vivendi bene et moriendi, which was written
during the mid-twelfth century and maintained considerable popularity

throughout the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance (Hoskier,

xiv-xv). Unfortunately, Bernard of Cluny's poem was not as

popular. Because of its harsh criticism of the Roman Catholic
Church, and particularly the satire against the Pope in Book III,

Bernard of Cluny's De contemptu mundi was not printed until 1557

at Basel, although a fair number of existing manuscript copies

suggests that the poem was frequently copied and distributed privately

after its composition (Hoskier, xv).

The scarcity of reliable editions of the poem also creates

a major stumbling block for a modern reader. Hoskier's is the

best Latin edition of the entire work, but for the reader who

is not proficient in Latin there is only one English translation,

Henry Preble's prose translation, which appears in Samuel M. Jackson's

The Source of "Jerusalem the Golden". No metrical translation

of the entire poem has been attempted, so that English readers

are unable to appreciate the artistry of Bernard's "leonine tailed

15 An example of the continued popularity of St.

Bernard's poem can be found in the 1556 English miscellany,

The Paradise of Dainty Devices, which opens with

a forty-line excerpt from this "De Contemptu." A

fuller discussion of this poem follows later in this

chapter. See also Appendix A.

16 All quotations of the De Contemptu are from this

edition.
Nevertheless, Preble's translation adequately supplies a reliable text of the De contemptu mundi. Both the longer De contemptu mundi by Cluny and the shorter, contemporaneous poem by St. Bernard of Clairvaux are important elements for the history of medieval complaint. Cluny's poem, because it is longer and more detailed, offers a more comprehensive analysis of the themes, conventions, and form of de contemptu mundi literature. However, Clairvaux's "De Contemptu," because it was less controversial and more readily available to medieval readers than Cluny's poem, shows us the transmutation of the themes, conventions, and form of de contemptu mundi literature into the popular complaints of the Middle Ages. We will first investigate the elements of de contemptu mundi literature in the larger context of Bernard of Cluny's poem and will then turn to St. Bernard's shorter work.

De contemptu mundi is divided into three books, with each book moving from a more generalized to a more specific subject of lament. Book One opens with a comparison of the glories and beauties of the New Jerusalem and the weaknesses and ugliness of this world. The narrator does not focus on any specific sins; rather, he attempts to survey the great abundance of mankind's transgressions. He conveys a sense of the enormity of man's sins not by detailing all the possible failings, but by admitting, in exasperation, that he is unable to list them all.

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17 For further reference to partial verse translations of the poem by Neale and others, see Hoskier, xiv, xv.
I cannot touch on all details in my poor verse or in prose. As human voice cannot proclaim the joys of the good, so human voice cannot proclaim the woes of the bad. (1.116)

Book Two continues the former book's opposition between a distant and glorious "other world" and the degenerate nature of this world. Nevertheless, in Book Two the other world is not the heavenly New Jerusalem but the mythic Golden Age of the earth's distant past. By invoking the commonplace image of the Golden Age, Bernard of Cluny begins to confine the object of his lament within the limits of man's own experience, and he suggests that, even though his work is written in scorn of the world, Bernard's own thoughts and literary practices are well-grounded in earthly traditions. Book Two focuses upon the more specific sins and vices of the author's contemporary Christians, and its tone and subject-matter resemble other more dogmatic and less literary medieval contemputus mundi treatises. With a harsh and pessimistic voice, the narrator describes the most common vices of mankind: man's greed, gluttony, treachery, and wantonness; women's innate wickedness; and priests' laxity in their religious devotions. Nevertheless, this list of vices suggests one form of complaint which was derived, at least in part, from the second book of the De contemput. As Elliot has noted, the de contemput mundi writings "may have served as models" for what he and others have called the "Middle English

Evidence for Bernard of Cluny's thorough knowledge of worldly concerns, at least as they are presented in classical literature, has been carefully investigated by Kimon Giocaridu, in "Bernard of Cluny and the Antique."
complaints against the times" ("Middle English Complaints", 23).

And particularly, the harsh satire of Cluny's Book Two of his
De contemptu would have served as an excellent model for the many
motifs of universal degeneracy found in these later complaints.

Finally, Book Three contains the most specific object of lamenta-
tion: the sinfulness of most leaders of the Church and particularly
of the current Pope. The harsh satire in this Third Book was
most likely the cause of the De contemptu's censorship until the
sixteenth century. Traditionally, in such treatises, the Church
is envisioned as the stronghold of righteousness and virtue in
an otherwise degenerate world, whose duty rests in leading sinful
Christians back to God. However, in Bernard's De contemptu, the
world's degeneration has been caused by the Church, and especially
the Pope. Nevertheless, ultimately the De contemptu mundi does
not end with the pessimism and despair which pervades most of
Books Two and Three, By invoking the image of the mythic phoenix,
the narrator encourages his readers to believe that the Golden
Age described at the beginning of Book Two can be found again
and that The New Jerusalem envisioned in Book One will be attainable
to a new generation of Christians who have risen from the ashes
of this degenerate world:

There is an Indian bird only one of which lives, called
the phoenix. Trustworthy report says that he turns
to ashes and rises in this way. He becomes a worm and
then a bird, ceases to be weighed down and flies away
with wings. Thus he is born again and seen to be as
before. This shows that your limbs can rise again from
death. Thy dead flesh shall rise then; man, doubt not!
(3.171)
For the purposes of this study, Books One and Three contain the most worthwhile information. Book Two, with its more traditional satire on the vices of medieval man, although influential in developing many of the familiar motifs found in later satiric complaints, does not demand a close critical study at this time. We will, however, in our later discussion of Spenser’s “Mother Hubberds Tale” in Chapter Five, consider the developments of these satiric motifs. One of the universal concerns of much complaint literature is the question of the impermanence of the world. For Bernard, the greatest opposition between the vision of the New Jerusalem and life in this world, is the permanence of life in the after-world compared with the earth’s transitoriness. Nothing that we have here on earth will last forever. The clearest sign that man has fallen away from God is that he prefers “the fleeting to the permanent, the fallen to that which stands, the last to the first of things, and spurn[s] the high, all-bent upon the low” (Contemptu mundi 1.114). Throughout Book One, and particularly in the ubi sunt section which comprises the last half of the book, Bernard uses particular images to represent the transience of the world and man’s existence within it. “The world,” says Bernard, “rolls like a wheel driven in the whirl of death” (1.121). The New Jerusalem is a “city without time” (1.112); whereas the world, rolls like a wheel and so is depicted as a wheel, as prone to roll, and change, and tumble down. Uncertain is its fixity, unstable its stability. It goes and comes, like the sea, bad now, tomorrow worse. (1.127)

Man, as a creature of the earth, also falls victim to change and death. His flesh, rose-like, blossoms, then dies and falls to
dust. The span of man's life on earth is like a flowing river or "shifting sand" (1.122). Bernard warns us that "in the morning [man] stands upon the earth, in the evening [he] is carried out for burial" (1.122). The glory and fame which men strive for on this earth also disappears to nothing:

[Man] is thought rich in his rich name and surviving glory; . . . He becomes a mirror, a sound, this upright, this good man; this was he so famous of birth, so strong in ancestry, filled with the spirit of Achilles. Fame called him a man; presently the fame fades and withers away itself, flourishing a little while, then battered and torn and enfeebled. Presently, when it has passed away, the man has ceased to be or to be named. (1.124-5)

If the man is a famous prince, his fame may last a while longer than the average man's, but time will eventually erase his name as well. In an extended ubi sunt passage which describes the fall of the great ancient heroes, Bernard of Clairvaux uses the motif which Boccaccio would make famous two hundred years later in his De casibus virorum illustrium:

> Where is the glory of Babylon now? Where now dread Nebuchadnezzar? Where the vigor of Darius? Famous Cyrus where? They have passed away and left no trace. Their fame remains and is fixed while they have sunk into decay. What are the halls and the splendor of Julius? Thru art gone, Caesar, thou wast more cruel than thyself, more mighty than the world. Thy arm, thy wars, thy forces were driven in fury that thou mightest fill the surface of the world with blood, and scale the stars with thy glory. Thou didst wrongfully try thy strength with thine elderly son-in-law, and wast no loyal father-in-law or ally to him. Thou who art ashes now wast as man great as the world. Or was thy ambition to subdue the city and the world a sham? Behold, thou art resolved into a heap of dust, an arm of ashes. Pierce Caesar, thou art stripped bare and become next to nothing.

> Where now are Marius and Fabricius who knew not gold? Where the noble death and memorable course of Paulus? Where now the divine Philocles, and the heavenly
voice of Cicero? where Cato's peacefulness to his countrymen and wrath against the rebellious foe? Where now is Regulus? Or Romulus? Or Remus? The rose of yore exists in name alone; mere names we hold. Quickly as the swift-fleeting path of a ball, these passing hearts and bodies strong have gone. A little while the tide of the ancients maintained its height and quickly fell; there glory ended; all their life passed by. We, too, are taken off and go away like them, go to the regions below, losing the sky, fainting in soul. (1.126)

In the centuries following Bernard of Cluny's writing of the *De contemptu mundi* the images of the wheel, the rose, the flowing stream, and the shifting sand became common elements of complaint literature. Similarly, the themes of the transience of all earthly existence and the vanity of human desires for fame and glory would appear throughout the complaints of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The Cluniac was not the first writer to use these images and themes, since most of them can be found in classical literature or the Bible, but his use of them in the *De contemptu mundi* made them the common stock of complaint for centuries.

Book One of the *De contemptu* is important because it contains many of the common elements of later complaints. Book Three contains many of these elements as well, but it also contains a unique passage on the ruin of Rome which is of particular interest to this study.

Book Three is primarily a satire against the Pope and his inability to lead the Church or its people. Nevertheless, toward the end of the book, Bernard turns his attention away from the living Pope and confronts the dying city of Rome. The manner in which Bernard discusses the degenerate condition of Rome recalls the later poetry of De Bellay's *Antiquitez du Rome* and Spenser's
translation, "The Ruins of Rome." As the later poets of the
Renaissance would do, Bernard personifies Rome and addresses the
city directly:

"Rome, thou art no more," lo, thou totterest, may,
goest to pieces in melancholy fashion. . . . Thou wastest
in ruins, city without laws, without fathers. . . . 'Tis
right for me to say, to write: "Rome, thou art no more."
Thou liest buried under the ruins of thy walls and thy
morals. Thou art fallen, famous city, sunk as low as
thou wast hight before, the higher thou wast, the more
utterly art thou shattered and cast down. 'Tis right
for me to write, to say: "Rome, thou hast perished."
Thy walls cry out: "Rome, thou art fallen." (3.167-8)

Rome, the Eternal City, the home of the Pope, Christ's vicar on
Earth; symbolized for many Christian authors the hope that God's
power and love could overcome the mutability and degeneration
of the earth. Nevertheless, this idealized vision of Rome appeared
in sharp contrast to the actual condition of Rome as it was seen
by Bernard of Cluny in the twelfth century as well as by Du Bellay
in the sixteenth. Rome is not eternal; she is mutable, filthy,
and decayed like all things of the earth. The similarity between
this passage and Du Bellay's sonnets, particularly the third sonnet
of the Antiquitez ("Nouveau venu qui cherches Rome en Rome"),
is considerable. And although it goes beyond the scope of this
study to suggest that Bernard's Third Book of the De contemptu
mundi may have been a source for Du Bellay's sonnet sequence,
it seems proper to assume that both poets were working from a
common font of images and themes developed in the classical and
Biblical laments for fallen cities. As well as his particular
attention to the destruction of Rome in Book Three, Bernard of
Cluny's De contemptu mundi introduces many of the central themes
and images of later complaints. He focuses his poem on the idea that the earth and the things of the earth, man and his creations, are transient. The images he uses to present this theme—the wheel, the rose, the sea, and the sand—intensify Bernard's argument that man vainly puts his trust in the mutable things of the earth rather than in the permanent glories of Heaven. Finally, the tone of the "De contemptu mundi" introduces many of the varied narrative voices of later complaints. The narrator is at times a harsh and angry preacher railing against man's transgressions, at times he is a sarcastic reviler of man's follies and weaknesses, and at times he is a nostalgic dreamer, who looks upon the past glories of mankind as a symbol of both man's present degeneration and his future regeneration. These three voices, these themes and images, would be heard and seen frequently in the complaints of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Mentioned earlier was a poem also entitled "De contemptu mundi" which is contemporaneous with the poem just under discussion. Hôskier suggests that this second poem is, without a doubt, by the more famous twelfth century author and theologian, St. Bernard of Clairvaux:

St. Bernard of Clairvaux also wrote a poem entitled "De contemptu mundi"—an effort of some 100 lines only, of a very mediocre sort, beginning:

O miranda vanitas: o divitiarum Amor
lamentabilis: o virus amarum. Cur tot viros
(xiv)

Although Hôskier seems certain of the poem's authorship, other medieval scholars have doubted the attribution. The main source
of doubt is that, although St. Bernard is a well-known author of twelfth-century prose treatises, the "De contemptu" is the only poem ever attributed to him. The only piece of evidence which supports the claim that St. Bernard wrote the "De contemptu" is the heading to a Latin poem on the subject of worldly contempt which opens the sixteenth-century miscellany, The Paradise of Displeasing Devices:

The translation of the blessed S. Bernard's verses containing the unstable felicity of this wavering world. (5)

Nevertheless, this poem begins:

Cur mundus militat sub vana gloria
Curius prosperitas est transitoria?
Tantum habitur eius potentia
Quam vasa figuli quae sunt fragilia. (5)19

It is possible that the forty lines of the poem translated for The Paradise form only a section of the longer poem by St. Bernard. Nevertheless, whatever the work's authorship, the ubi sunt poem which begins "Cur mundus militat," was extremely influential during the Middle Ages. The central ubi sunt passage of the poem lists the names of the great Biblical and classical worthies with little sense of nostalgia:

Where now is Samson's invincible arm,
And where is Jonathan's sweet-natured charm?
Once-famous Solomon, where now is he
Or the fair Absalom, so good to see?

19The poem also appears in Twenty-One Medieval Latin Poems, ed. E. J. Martin, but it is listed only as "Anonymous (13th century)."
Whither is Caesar the great Emperor fled,
Or Croesus whose show on his table was spread;
Cicero's eloquence now is in vain;
Where's Aristotle's magnificent brain?
("Vanity of this world" 13-20, in *Medieval Literature* 919)

All these great men are the same now as all things of the earth,
"Food for the worms, dust and ashes" ("Vanity" 29). The images
of this poem, as with Bernard of Clairvoy's *De contemptu mundi*, illustrate
the transience of earthly things and the vanity of mankind's trust
in them. All worldly triumphs are "like vessels the potter casts
out of frail clay" or like "letters imprinted in ice" ("Vanity"
4, 5); they will soon be destroyed. Man's earthly existence and
all his worldly endeavors are compared to the moon waxing and
waning, to a play, to the passing of the seasons, to bubbles on
the water, and to the blowing of wind. The poem's final stanza
calls upon man to forsake the world and to turn toward heaven:

Call not your own what one day ye may lose;  
The world will take back all it gives you  
 to use.  
Let your hearts be in Heaven, your thoughts  
in the skies;  
Happy is he who the world can despise. ("Vanity" 37-40).

As an authority on the prevalence of worldly vanity, St. Bernard
was often referred to by later poets of *De contemptu mundi* verses.
One poem, "The Sayings of Saint Bernard," possibly composed around
1275, seems to have been quite popular, since the modern editor
of the Vernon Ms. lists five manuscript versions. The poem, which cites St. Bernard's unnamed "Hoc" as its source, repeats many of the common themes of de contemptu mundi literature: man is worm-fool, his life is unstable, the world is his foe, and it tempts him with earthly pleasures and then leaves him desolate. At times attached to "The Sayings of St. Bernard" is an ubi sunt poem which has been given the title, "Ubi sunt [sic] qui ante nos fuerunt [sic]." The poem's ubi sunt form resembles that of the Latin poem attributed to St. Bernard; however, it asks, only where are the hunters and lovers of old, and unlike the poem attributed to St. Bernard, does not consider the loss of the great heroes of the Bible and the classical world.

The popularity of the themes of de contemptu mundi literature throughout the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries can be seen from the number of lyrics that survive which are centered around the subjects of worldly vanity, man's decay, and the mutability of the world (see Appendix I). Thomas of Halles' "A Love Rune," which he wrote in the thirteenth century for a young girl who had entered a convent, speaks of the vanities of the world which she will avoid by choosing to become a bride of Christ:

This world fareth быlynde;
Hvenne on cumeth, another goth;
That wes bfore nu is bylynde.
That er was leof, nu hit is loth.
Forthi he doth as the blynde

20As well as the version in the Vernon Ms. Furnivall lists the versions from MS. Laud 108, fol. 198a; MS Harl. 2253, fol. 106a; MS Digby 86, leaf 125, back; Digby 86, leaf 126, back. EETS 117, pp 51-22 add 751-63.
That in this world his love doth.
Yet nowen t-se the world aswende.
That woule goth forth, abak that soth.
(lines 33-40; in Middle English 157)

In the fourteenth century, the anonymous Parliament of the Three Ages blends three separate medieval poetic themes, including ubi sunt, to form one powerful poem on the subject of the vanity of worldly endeavours. Old Age instructs the lustful young lad and the wealthy and powerful lord in the instability of the world by presenting the histories of the Nine Worthies. Age concludes that even though these men were powerful and famous, they could not escape from earthly decay and death:

Now haife, I nevered yow the names of nyne of the beste
That ever were in this worlde waste uppon erthe
And the doghyeste of dede in thair dayes tyne,
Hot doghyestes, when dede comes, ne dare noghte habye.
(lines 61-4; in Middle English 190)

The fifteenth century saw the publication, in Scotland, of the poems of William Dunbar. His poetry covers many different areas—religious poetry, love poetry, and the poems of court life—but some of his most memorable poems were written on the subject of worldly vanity and the mutability of the world. One of Dunbar's lyrics uses as its refrain the familiar Verse from Ecclesiastes, "Vanitas vanitatvm et omnia vanitats," which was also quoted by the author of The Parliament of the Three Ages. Dunbar's "The Lament of the Makeris" considers the subject of Death as the Great Leveler who has destroyed all men, rich and poor, and who will take the author as well:

Our pleasance heir is all wane glory.
This false world is but transitory,  
The flesh is brukè, the flesh is sle;  
Timor mortis conturbat me.

One to the ded gois all estatis,  
Princis, prelota, and potestatis,  
Baith riche and pur of ai degre;  
Timor mortis conturbat me.
(5-8, 17-20; Dunbar 178)

The example of these few poems from the thirteenth through the  
fifteenth centuries, together with the list of works cited in  
Appendix A, suggests the long and continuous history of de contemptu  
mundi literature throughout the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, contemptus  
mundi literature is not the only source for the Renaissance complaint.  
Another branch of the complaint is derived from the narrative  
tradition of poetry known as De casibus, which takes its name  
from the title of Giovanni Boccaccio’s De casibus virorum illustrium.  
De contemptu mundi and de casibus are not totally divergent  
forms of poetry. As we have seen in the long catalogues of dead  
and fallen heroes in the ubi sunt passages of contemptus mundi  
verses, the basic idea of de casibus did not originate with Boccaccio.  
And, similarly, the thematic concerns of de casibus are related  
to those of de contemptu mundi. Boccaccio and the later medieval  
de casibus authors focused their attention on mankind’s weaknesses  
and mortality, and they looked upon the world as a variable and  
vain place ruled by fickle Fortune. Nevertheless, there are some  
noticeable differences between de contemptu mundi literature and  
de casibus: The two types of poetry differ most significantly  
in their form. De contemptu mundi is generally a lyric and meditative  
form of poetry, most clearly influenced by the Bible; whereas,  
de casibus is generally a narrative and dramatic form of poetry,
which follows a tradition of classical thought and literature.

These two forms of complaint, although related, remained distinct throughout the Middle Ages, and their differences help to account for the wide variety in the form of Renaissance complaint.

Our discussion of de casibus will concentrate upon Boccaccio’s influential work so that we can study the form's style and conventions. Once we have closely considered the form of the de casibus, we will more briefly look at some other medieval de casibus works. Boccaccio’s de casibus is an encyclopedic history of the tragic falls of mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve and ending with the capture of King John of France by the English at the battle of Poitiers. Earlier classical authors, such as Hyginus, Suetonius, and Livy, had compiled the histories of illustrious men, and Boccaccio used these works as sources for the De casibus (Hall, ed., Fates of Men, intro. x-xi). Nevertheless, as Louis Brewer Hall remarks in the introduction to his English translation of the De casibus, "Boccaccio ... transformed the manner in which history and biography had been written in the great collections before his time" (xiii).

Rather than simply describing the lives of ancient princes, as the early historians had done, or compiling an encyclopedic catalogue of the woeful lives of sinful mankind, as the medieval de contemptu mundi writers had done, Boccaccio devised a radically different form of historical narrative, which combined some of the elements of the classical histories and the medieval encyclopedias while it also added much that was new.

From the classical histories Boccaccio gathered the factual materials related to the lives of the illustrious men of ancient
Greek and Rome, such as Theseus, Agamemnon, Xerxes, Mark Antony, Nero, and Pompey. He also borrowed from classical thought the mythological goddess of Fortune. As Howard Patch explains in his thorough study of the Goddess Fortuna, the continued existence of this one figure throughout the literature of the classical world, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance constitutes a significant element of Western literary culture that must be carefully examined.21

The classical world, and particularly imperial Rome recognized Fortune as the controlling power in a changing world. Patch describes the burgeoning popularity of the goddess as an obvious outgrowth of the world view of the citizens of the Roman Empire:

The Empire was an essentially romantic period, when Rome, with a limitless ambition for worldly conquest, ventured forth into the unknown, and in nearly every turn of human life felt the risks which imply chance. It was, moreover, a time of religious skepticism, with a general dabbling in foreign creeds, and without much spiritual depth. At such a time Fortuna naturally came into her own. To men who felt that life showed no signs of fairness, that whatever lies beyond is at best dubious, that the most you can do is to take what comes your way, Fortuna represented a rueful, if at some times flippant, summary of the way things go. (12-3)

In the works of Ovid, Pliny, and Horace Fortune is characterized by her fickleness, her instability, and her capriciousness. Because of the power of Fortune a man could rise quickly to success and as quickly fall to ruin; whether the man was virtuous or sinful would make no difference.

21As well as Patch's important study of Fortune as she appeared throughout Western literature, a more recent book by Frederick Kiefer, Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy is central for our understanding of this subject.
With the advent of Christianity, Fortune's powers over mankind were questioned. A view of the world as being ruled by chance and the whims of a capricious goddess was in direct conflict with the teachings of the Christian faith, which held that the world was controlled by a rational God who had a providential plan for each creature on the earth. These beliefs left no ground for the vagaries of Fortune. Nevertheless, although the early thinkers 'from Lactantius and St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas' (Pate, 16) taught that Fortune's powers were illusory and that the goddess had no real existence, in medieval works of art Fortune still existed as a power in man's life.

Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* appears as a transitional work between the classical and Christian views of Fortune. In Book II, meter 1, Philosophy describes the goddess Fortune as she had been described throughout classical history, as a dominant power in the world:

> With domineering hand she moves the turning wheel,  
> Like currents in a treacherous bay swept to and fro;  
> Her ruthless will has just deposed once fearful kings  
> While trustless still, from low she lifts a conquered head;  
> No cries of misery she hears, no tears she heeds,  
> But steeled hearted laughs at groans her deeds have wrung.  
> Such is the game she plays, and so she tests her strength;  
> Of mighty power she makes parade when one short hour  
> Sees happiness from utter desolation grow.' (56)

Boethius seems to suggest, in this verse, that Fortune controls the lives of all men. He continues the classical image of Fortune's wheel, which turns and raises poor men to power and wealth, while it lowers mighty kings to ruin. Yet Boethius' vision of Fortune's power has changed from the way she had been viewed in the classical
world. Philosophy instructs Boethius that all men are not subject
to Fortune's powers, but only those who by their own choice allow
themselves to be ruled by her:

once you have bowed your neck beneath her yoke, you
ought to bear with equanimity whatever happens on Fortune's
playground. If after freely choosing her as the mistress
to rule your life you want to draw up a law to control
her coming and going, you will be acting without any
justification and: your very impatience will only worsen
a lot which you cannot alter. Commit your boat to the
winds and you must sail whichever way they blow, not
just where you want. (55)

Although not overtly Christian, these words of Philosophy agree
with early Christianity's teachings that Fortune is not omnipotent
and that a virtuous man, who is strong in his faith, can remove
himself from Fortune's dominion.

Later medieval writers used the figure of Fortune to represent
the world's mutability and man's vulnerability to the temptations
of worldly things. Most medieval writers attempt to Christianize
the pagan goddess, either by arguing that she does not exist or,
more commonly, subsuming her powers under the greater powers of
God. Dante, in the seventh canto of The Inferno, presents the
clearest picture of Fortune as the Christianized "general minister"
of the world:

"This Fortune, that thou speakest of, what is it
Whose talons grasp the blessings of the world."

He thus: "0 beings blind! what ignorance
Besets you! Now my judgment hear and mark.
He, whose transcendent wisdom passes all,
The heavens creating, have them ruling powers
To guide them; so that each part shines to each,
Their light in equal distribution pour'd.
By similar appointment he ordain'd,
Over the world's bright images to rule,
Superintendence of a guiding hand
And general minister, which, at due time,
May change the empty vanities of life
From race to race, from one to other's blood,
Beyond prevention of man's wisest care:
Wherefore one nation rises into sway,
Another languishes, e'en as her will
Decrees, from us conceal'd, as in the grass
The serpent train. Against her mouth avails
Your utmost wisdom. She with foresight plans,
Judges, and carries on her reign, as theirs
The other powers divine. Her changes know
None intermission; by necessity
She is made swift, so frequent come who claim
Succession in her favors. This is she,
So execrated e'en by those whose debt
To her is rather praise; they wrongfully
With blame requite her, and with evil word;
But she is blessed, and for that recks not:
Amidst the other primal beings glad
Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults.
(Canto 7, 78-96)

For Dante, Fortune's powers are benign whether or not they are perceived as such by man. She is "blessed" and her powers are "divine." Her changeableness is "ordain'd" by God so that she might plan, judge, and carry on her reign. In his representation, Dante unites the classical and the Christian traditions of Fortune.

Fortune still remains an arbitrary and capricious power who controls man's life; but now she is totally subservient to God, and her mutability has become part of His providential plan.

Jean de Meun, in the second part of The Roman de la Rose, presents another aspect of the Christianized view of Fortune. De Meun, through the voice of Reason, attempts to prove that Good Fortune is bad and that Bad Fortune is good: "You'll doubt me, but the statement's true, and found / Written in treatises: more profitable/ To man bad fortune is than easy lot" (4839-41). He explains that a life of good fortune deludes a man into believing that he is all-powerful, that his wealth will last forever, and
that he will always be surrounded by loyal, trustworthy friends. "Ill
Fortune,” on the other hand, says Reason to the Lover.

Upsets men’s high estate and tumbles them
Low in the mire from off her turning wheel
And, like a stepdame lays upon their hearts
With vinegar, this teaches them the truth
That none should boast they’re Fortune’s favorites;
For no security they have. (482-92)

But whether Fortune is good or bad, De Meun seems to agree with
Boethius that a valiant man can fight and overpower her:

He is no adversary good and strong
Who struggles not when Fortune seeks to beat
And with her cudgelings discomfit him.
He should defend himself most vigourously
And not give in; for Fortune faintly fights,
In palace or in dunghill, if opposed.
Who struggles well may win at the first blow.
Who fears her is not brave; who knows her strength
And knows his own should not be tripped by her
Unless he voluntarily falls down. (5852-61)

De Meun, who at an earlier age had translated Boethius’ Consolation,
extends the earlier poet’s limitations of Fortune’s powers. As
we see, de Meun believes not only that man must choose to fight
Fortune or to allow himself to fall beneath her powers, but also
that Fortune, rather than being the omnipotent goddess of classical
mythology, is a weak adversary whom man can easily conquer.

In the fourteenth-century Italy of Petrarch and Boccaccio,
the question of Fortune’s power was still a controversial topic.
Although Fortune appears throughout Petrarch’s verses as a poetic
symbol of the world’s flux and change, in his prose works the
goddess’s powers are greatly diminished, and her very existence
is denied. In Petrarch’s De remediis utriusque fortunae, mankind
is instructed to oppose Fortune's capriciousness with wisdom and spiritual devotion. Unlike his poetic predecessors, Petrarch can find no benefits from Fortune's apparent control over mankind, and he includes in his treatise remedies against both bad and good Fortune. That Boccaccio was familiar both with Petrarch's De remedii and Dante's vision of Fortune in The Inferno is commonly accepted. When we turn to the De casibus, we can see how the views of Fortune portrayed by these earlier poets influenced Boccaccio's depiction of the fickle goddess and her powers to control mankind.

In the fable of the Fight between Poverty and Fortune, which Boccaccio records at the beginning of Book Three of the De casibus, the poet shows how he agrees with the Christianized views of Fortune set out by his predecessors. At first Boccaccio tells us that after reviewing the downfalls of the great personages of Books One and Two, he had begun to wonder especially by what ways, what powers, what causes they were all overthrown. It seemed to him that for the most part they called their adverse fortune down on themselves. (67)

These ruminations remind Boccaccio of a fable which his old instructor, Andalo, had told him as a youth in Naples. Boccaccio records that one day when Andalo was reading to his pupils he came to a passage which read: "Do not blame the stars when the fallen bring about their own misfortune" (68). In order to explain this statement, Andalo tells a fable about the day when Poverty fought against and conquered Fortune. As the fable is told, Fortune laughs at "the skinny, scrawny, sallow, and scaly" appearance of
Poverty as they meet one day along the road (68). Poverty challenges Fortune to a battle. At first Fortune only laughs, since she is apparently so much stronger than Poverty; but Fortune is soon provoked to fight, and Poverty overcomes her with ease. As the victor, Poverty requests that Fortune follow one law:

In your [Fortune's] judgment—which it seems was an error of the ancients—you can raise up and bring both success and failure. I wish on my own to remove the means of your power from you, and I command that you make Misfortune fast to a stake in public, and you make him secure with chains, so that he is not only unable to go into anyone's home, but also cannot go from there unless he goes with the person who released his bonds. (71)

Through this fable Andalò proves what was meant by the saying that men bring about their own misfortunes. Since Misfortune is chained to a stake, he cannot be released unless a man unchains him. In other words, a man's actions will bring about his own destruction. Fortune has nothing to do with his downfall, since she has been forced to relinquish that power as her pledge to Poverty. Throughout the De casibus Boccaccio returns to this image of Misfortune chained to a stake as a symbol of man's responsibility for his failures. Generally, this view of Fortune agrees with the Christianized views of earlier medieval poets; yet Boccaccio's depiction of Fortune is not nearly as orthodox as those of Jean de Meun or Petrarch. In the fable of Poverty and Fortune, Poverty commands that Misfortune be chained, but she allows Good Fortune to go wherever she may like. Unlike De Meun and Petrarch, Boccaccio seems to suggest that, as long as Fortune is beneficial to mankind, she is welcome in the world.

This view is more closely connected to the thought of the classical
world than to that of the Christianized Middle Ages. This discrepancy between the classical and the medieval views of Fortune seems not to be clearly resolved in the *De casibus*. The co-existence of these two opposing views of Fortune in one work is an indication that the *De casibus* is an early Renaissance work. At times its philosophy and content look back directly to the works of ancient Greece and Rome; while at other times the *De casibus* shows its attachment to the ideals and doctrine of the works of the Middle Ages.

One example of the *De casibus*' medieval heritage can be seen in the work's encyclopedic design. Considering the work's medieval design, Derek Pearsall suggests that the *De casibus* does, systematically and comprehensively, what the Middle Ages did as a matter of habit; that is, teaches virtue by multiplying examples of the mutability of Fortune to those who put their trust in the world. Both concept and form were ingrained in medieval consciousness, and every reflection on death, mortality or Fortune that catalogued the illustrious dead as a *memento mori* or elaborated the *ubi sunt* formula, was contributing to the *Fall* tradition. (232)

Pearsall's comments remind us of how closely the *De casibus* adheres to the style and purpose of earlier medieval works, such as Boethius' account of the fall of Croesus in Book II of *The Consolation of Philosophy* (2.57–8); the long passage in *The Roman de la Rose*, where Reason speaks to the Lover of the instability of Fortune; and cites as examples the lives of Seneca, Nero, Croesus, and Manfred (6:183–900); or the long *ubi sunt* passage quoted earlier from Bernard of Cluny's *De contemptu mundi*. But examples of the falls of illustrious men are not the only similarities between
Boccaccio's <i>De casibus</i> and earlier medieval works. On its "ascetic side," as Farnham suggests, the <i>De casibus</i> is "an earnest and effective contribution to the literature de <i>contemptu mundi</i>" (71).

This suggestion implies that <i>de casibus</i> literature, at least thematically, is a part of <i>de contemptu mundi</i> literature. In fact, the moral teachings of the <i>De casibus</i> are similar to those of the earlier <i>de contemptu mundi</i> works. Each work emphasizes that man should not put his trust in this mutable world; that man is drawn toward vices and sinfulness, such as gluttony, lust, and deceit; and that man's sins will be punished unless he forsakes this evil world and turns his attention to God. At times Boccaccio adopts the reviling tone of the <i>de contemptu mundi</i> writers. He calls men "miserable creatures" and laments over their despicable natures:

We do not care for the sky, remarkable for its clear serenity, the brilliant sun, the silvery moon, the glittering stars, and the other permanent beauties of the heavens circling around us in continual motion. God, calling us to the true glory with paternal affection, promising us His eternal kingdom, His unfailing truth following His judgment, all this we despise as a lie. I do not know by what madness it is that with deadly seriousness we fix our eyes on the ground, stop up our ears, harden our heart, and while we do not see what cares worldly glitter may hide, what poisons it may bear, and what chances it may be subject to, we think only of all the delights that have fallen to us and forget what God has taught us. Worse, we see that glitter drops, falls, is reduced to nothing; but still, to our misfortune, we imagine it to be fixed and everlasting. (86-7)

As the earlier medieval authors had done, Boccaccio contrasts man's attention to transient, worldly possessions with his disregard for the permanent beauties of heaven and the promise of eternal glory with God.
Although the De casibus is in many ways a medieval work, there is much in it that is innovative and looks ahead to the works of later Renaissance writers. The encyclopedic catalogue of illustrious men is a structural device used by many medieval writers; yet Boccaccio reshapes the simple structure of the catalogue to create a new narrative approach, which, as Hall suggests, enables Boccaccio to keep the general order of historical time, yet still permits him to enliven the presentation with continual motion and variety. (Intro. xiii)

Boccaccio's technique was to place the falls of illustrious men within a visionary framework, wherein the author sits meditatively in his room and is visited by the ghosts of figures from ancient history who tell their tales to Boccaccio while he writes them down. Boccaccio dispels the monotony of the earlier historical or moral catalogues by varying the narrative style of the tales. At times the ghosts address the author directly and tell their own stories, others appear to him dolciflly, complaining, and he then proceeds with their stories. There are occasional disputes, such as between Fortune and Poverty, or conversations between Boccaccio and his characters, such as the author's dialogue with Petrarch or his debate with Brunhilde. Boccaccio varies the procession of ghosts by changing the perspective, so that longer accounts alternate with group-chapters, in which numbers of the unfortunate pass by with only brief mention.

Yet there is another element of Boccaccio's De casibus which is more indicative of its Renaissance spirit. 'The Renaissance man's desire for fame and glory in this world are the distinguishing
features which divide the Renaissance mind from the medieval.

This Renaissance spirit appears in Boccaccio's defense of man's desire for worldly glory, exemplified in the life of Alcibiades, and in the author's defense of his own desire for fame. Boccaccio's concern for these earthly desires in the De casibus is one of the features which distinguishes this work from its medieval predecessors.

Boccaccio admits that Alcibiades brought the tragic "circumvolutions" of life upon himself; nevertheless, the author feels that he must offer some defense for this great man's life:

I am glad to excuse this most prominent man and others like him in a few words. Rarely do I discover anyone content with his lot. This does not seem extraordinary. Our soul is implanted with a divine gift comprising a fiery strength, a divine beginning, and an insatiable desire for glory. When the soul is a great one, hot, weakened by bodily sloth, it cannot be restrained in the little prison of the breast. It goes out, and its magnitude fills the entire world. Easily it transcends the stars, and, driven by fire, it burns with this sublime desire. Spurred by hope for the great things, as well as by eloquence, the soul regards laziness with horror; by whatever strength it has, it tries to drag along the mass of the body to which it was fastened at birth. But sometimes, deceived, the soul then goes in the opposite direction; though itself light, it is dragged downwards by the weight of the body. (102)

This was Alcibiades' fate; his noble spirit's desire for glory was not strong enough to overcome the limitations of his body, so that ultimately this great man "suffered an obscure and chaotic death" (102). What Boccaccio is suggesting here is quite different from the moralizings of his medieval predecessors. Alcibiades fell not because of his overweening pride, but because his soul was too great. Boccaccio gives man's desire for glory a divine,
not a worldly, vain, which makes the search for glory a virtue rather than a vice. Rather than calling upon man to forsake the world and seek a reclusive, meditative life, as the de contemptu mundi authors had suggested, Boccaccio calls mankind to the active life:

no one, unless he were torpid and dull, would prefer to live in idleness and calm in preference to fighting the continual tempest of the ocean waves. (103)

Similarly to his defense of man's search for glory, Boccaccio supports his own desire for fame. Toward the end of his long study, the author describes his exhaustion and unwillingness to continue the difficult task. Boccaccio's constant attention to the transitoriness of earthly things has left him in despair about his own aspirations for worldly fame:

Do you yearn to extend both your days and your name by a reputation acquired in scribbling anew about the ruin of the men in history? Oh, what an empty desire! The hour will come, and is here now, which will take you away from the things of this world. It will destroy your fragile body. It will turn you to ashes. I pray you, when you will no longer experience things of the moment, even if the tongues of all the earth will sing the praises of no other name but yours, what honors and pleasure will be left to you then? When the physical form by which you are known has been lost, everything transitory has really been lost to you. I venture that it is uncertain whether your name, which you are trying to glorify to those who come after you, will be commonly known to many others, or even whether it is now. (202-7)

This passage presents the common protests voiced by medieval de contemptu mundi writers against man's desire for worldly fame. What good is worldly fame if all the things of the earth, including the memory of a man's reputation, are transitory? Boccaccio has
almost exhausted his desire to continue his task when he is suddenly
visited by the spirit of Petrarch. Through the figure of Petrarch,
it is explained to Boccaccio that his desire for earthly fame
is not senseless and selfish, but rather it is, like Alcibiades'
desire for glory, virtuous:

The renown that you condemned a little while back is
actually a benefit, greatly desired by all men. While
it is sought in different ways, it is acquired only
through virtue. Therefore, if someone condemns renown,
he must necessarily condemn the practice of virtue.
Moreover, since we have entered the world, we recognize
that light is more esteemed than darkness, and renown
is granted to us by a divine gift; the reputation of
our deserts is borne on the light even to the ends of
the earth. With the greatest luster renown leads the
spirit of those who merit it up to the heavens, as if,
they were on a paved highway. Renown makes very long
our too brief span of mortal life, and as if she bears
witness to the honors earned by, one who is dead. It
is by this means that we praise and honor Moses, Aristotle,
Virgil, Scipio Africanus, the Catos, and others, as
if they were actually present. We feel a great pleasure
within our souls for the renown that they receive from
us, for we believe by our labors we will be able to
earn the same thing from those who come after us. And
thus, in hope, we anticipate a future glory. What man
esteems this as insignificant, for surely his body is
not enough for him? (204)22

Boccaccio's views of man's desire for worldly glory and fame
and his imaginative narrative design distinguish the De casibus
as an early Renaissance work. Its influence upon later works
of history, narrative poetry, drama, and complaint has been fully

22 It seems likely that Boccaccio took this discussion
of the divine nature of fame out of Book III of Petrarch's
Secreto, a work with which Boccaccio would have been
very familiar.
recorded. Nevertheless, the De casibus is in many ways a medieval work, planned upon a medieval narrative structure and conceived within a medieval vision of the world. And it was to be generally as a medieval work that the De casibus was imitated and translated for many centuries.

Two famous translations of the De casibus were published in the years following its original Latin publication. In 1400 Laurent de Premierfait produced an almost literal prose translation of the De casibus. This work was greatly expanded upon the request of the Duke of Berry and was published in 1409. As Florence A. Smith remarks in an early article, Premierfait's translation and expansion has, "in both spirit and style ... made the De casibus into a very French book, and has also made it more mediaeval" (522). In most cases the figure of Boccaccio is removed from the French De casibus. Premierfait gives a complete chronicle of every person mentioned in Boccaccio's work, so that the variation between individual and group-chapters is totally lost, and he includes numerous digressions. Premierfait's text removes the elements which were innovative in Boccaccio's work and returns the De casibus to the medieval form of an encyclopedic catalogue. Nevertheless, Premierfait's expanded translation of the De casibus is important to us, not because of any intrinsic literary merits which the text may contain, but because John Lydgate used Premierfait's work for his English translation of the De casibus. In 1431 Humphrey, Duke of Glouchester

A short list of works which show the influence of Boccaccio's De Casibus upon subsequent literature are: Farnham; Campbell; Patch; Wright, Boccaccio in England; From Chaucer to Tennyson; Bergin, Boccaccio.
commissioned a clerk by the name of John Lydgate to translate
Premierfait's French version of the Decasibus into English.

The Decasibus had achieved a considerable degree of popularity
in the years following Premierfait's translation, so much so that
Charles d'Orleans requested that a copy of the book be sent to
him so that he might comfort himself during the long years of
his English imprisonment. Lydgate worked upon the text of his
translation for nearly eight years, the outcome of which was a
book which differed from both Boccaccio's original and Premierfait's
translation. In the Prologue to Book I of The Fall of Princes,
Lydgate defends the practice of transforming an original text
as the translator's right:

Thus men off crauffed may off due riht,
That been inventiff & han experience,
Fantasien in ther inward sith
deuises nowe ther thurh ther excellence;
Expert maistres han therto licence
Fro good to bettir for to chagne a thyng,
And semblably these clerks in wriyng,

Thyng that was maad of aucours hem beforne,
Ther may off nowe fynde and fantasie,
Out of old chaffe trew out ful cleane corn,
Make it more fresch and lusti to the eie,
Ther subtil witt and ther labour applie,
With ther coloures agreable off howe,
Make olde thynges for to soome newe. (1.15-28)

Modern opinion tends to disagree with Lydgate's suggestion that
he has made Boccaccio's "olde" book "newe." Rather, like Premierfait,
Lydgate amplifies the French translator's already well-padded
text, adding minute details about the lives of each person, including
gory descriptions of the tortures suffered by the guilty sinners,
and moralizing upon the fallen, despicable nature of mankind.
As Derek Pearsall suggests, "if there is any movement" in Lydgate's moral vision as it is presented in The Fall, "it is backward," away from Boccaccio's nascent humanism "to more conventional moral positions" (242).

Lydgate's moralizing appear most strongly in the "Envoys," which he attached to the end of each story upon the request of Duke Humphrey. The envos cover a wide range of moralizing lessons; in Book One, for example, the envoy to Nimrod's story warns against the sin of pride, while the envoy to the life of Antiochus lists all kinds of vices which the tyrant's despicable life has exemplified. As well Lydgate's envos offer advice on political matters. The tragedies of Oedipus and Jocasta, in Book One, lead Lydgate to warn princes against the dangers of civil strife; while the tale of Machæus the Tyrant, in Book III, causes Lydgate to moralize upon the "Vice of Tyranny." Nevertheless, the most common subject for the envos is Lydgate's concern for the mutability of the world. It is not surprising in a book which focuses so much attention upon Dame Fortune that the subject of mutability should be of major importance, for as Lydgate describes Fortune in his Prologue to Book One:

That thynges all, wher Fortune may atteyne,
Be transitory of condicion;
For she of kynde is hasti & sodeyne,
Contrarious hir cours for to restrayne,
Off wilfulnesse she is so variable,
Whan men most truste, than is she most chaungable.
(Prologue 1.107-12)

Yet Lydgate's preoccupation with man and the world's mutability far outweighs the attention it is given in either Boccaccio's
Lydgate's preoccupation with worldly mutability:

Mint! Princis, remembre that your power
Is transitory: no while abiding,
As this tragedie hath rehearsed hear
Bi evidencis ful notable in shewing,
And bi examples, in substance witnessyng,
That all tirantia, platli to tyme,
Must from thur staat sodenli declyne.

Phebus is freshest in his myday speer,
His benys brightest & hattest out spredyng;
But cloudi skies ful offfe approche neer
Eclipse his ligt with ther unwar comyng;
Noon erethel ioye is longe heer abidyng,
Record of Titan, which stound[ei]meel'doth shyne,
Yit foward nyht his streyms doun declyne.

When that Fortune is fairest off hir cheer
Bi apparence, and most blandisshyng,
Thanne is [she] falsest ech sesour offf the yer,
Hir sodeyn chaunngis now up now doun turyng;
The nyhtngale in May doth fresshli syng,
But a bakwynter can somer undermyne
And al his fresshnesse sodenli declyne.

Al erethel blisse dependith in a weef,
In a ballauncon oneuenli hangyng;
O Pryncis, Prynce, be most souereyn & enterre,
In this tragedie concerneht to be redyng,
Now that estatis bi ful powre exchangyng,
Whilom ful worthi, ther lyues dede fyne,
When fro ther noptisses they war maad to declyne. (1.3102-29)

Lydgate reminds his audience that examples of the world's mutability
can be found not only in the falls of princes, but that we are
constantly reminded of the world's transitoriness by the passing
of day into night, by the change of the seasons from summer to winter, and by the death and decline of all earthly creatures. Throughout the nine books of The Fall of Princes, Lydgate returns to the theme of worldly mutability. A recognizable passage is Lydgate's "Envoy on Rome" which closes Book Two. This passage should not be confused with the translation of "The wordes of Boccas o-geye Rome" which appears in Book Eight of both the original Latin and the English texts. Although the tone of Boccaccio's lament, "Oh, most unhappy Rome! Into what darkness and sorrow have your avarice, dissensions, and mad ambition led you?" (page 213) is similar to Bernard of Cluny's cry against Rome in the De contemptu mundi, Boccaccio believes that the cause of Rome's destruction was the sinfulness of its citizens and leaders rather than its fate as part of the mutable world:

Cause, to conclude, of al thi wrecchynesse,--
Fals'ambicieun, pride and lecherie,
Lyuysioun, malicious doubilnesse,
Rancour, hatred, covetise [sic] envie,
Which set aside al good[=] policie;
In breef reprehysd, for short concluisyon,
Hawe be cheeff ground of thi destruccioun. (E.2563-9)

Almost half of Lydgate's earlier envoy against Rome is a long

24Examples can be found in the Envoy on Duke Arsinoe (IV. 3345-3492), in the Envoy on Mithridites, which Lydgate entitles "An Envoy of Worldly Variance" (VI. 1709-59), and in the Envoy on Julius Caesar (VI.2892-2918). As well Lydgate devotes a chapter to a nostalgic "Description of the Golden World" (VII. 1353-1243), which in a conventional manner contrasts the golden age of Saturn's reign of the world to the leaden world of Jupiter's reign, and he claims that it was in the reign of Jupiter that worldly mutability began.
...ubi sunt poem which is reminiscent of the poem by St. Bernard quoted earlier. Lydgate's main argument in the envoy is that Rome has fallen to ruin, first because she was born by means of violence and deception:

Rome, remember off thy foundacoun,
And of what people thou took[e] the gynnyng:
Thi buldnyng gan off fals discouneroun,
Off slauhtre, moordre & outraives robbyn,
Yevyng to vs a major knovylchyng,--
A fals begynnyng, auctours determyng.
Shal be processe come unto ruyn. (2.4460-6)

...and secondly because the Romans were pagans. Therefore, Lydgate's "Envoy on Rome" follows two medieval patterns of thought which differ from Boccaccio. Boccaccio considers the fall of Rome as a just punishment for the city's vices, which introduces an idea of earthly retribution for sins that later Renaissance authors would exemplify; however, Lydgate continues the medieval Christian view toward the fall, which argues that the city's destruction is the result of its violent and pagan origins and that it or its peoples' only salvation rests with God, "For non but Crist may save the fra ruyn" (2.4557).

In style and purpose Lydgate's "Envoy on Rome" is similar to many of the medieval de contumtu mundi works. By means of the ubi sunt style, Lydgate reminds his readers of the transience and mutability of even the most powerful and beautiful of earthly creations. The different visions of Rome seen by Boccaccio and Lydgate typify The Fall of Prince's movement backward away from Boiaccio's nascent humanism toward more conventional, medieval moralizings. Although Boccaccio is saddened by the fallen appearance...
of Rome, through the rubble he can see the remnants of the city's earlier glory:

To the dishonor of the present rather than to the glory of the past, you (Rome) witness both man's instability and, though it is half-decayed, the magnificence of antiquity. (214)

Nevertheless, for Lydgate, Rome's past is witness only to man's instability; its glory is its shame, and its only salvation rests in God.

A third medieval work which appears to be modeled upon the De casibus is Chaucer's "Monk's Tale." The Tale's subtitle refers explicitly to Boccaccio's work, "Here begyneth the Monkes Tale De Casibus Virorum Illustrium," and its opening stanza places the Tale firmly in the tradition of de casibus literature:

I wol biwaille, in manere of tragedie,
The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree,
And filling so that ther was no remedie
To bryng hem out of her adversitee.
For certein, when that Fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hire witholde.
Lat no man truste on bylynd prosperitee.
Be war by thys enseamplis tewe and old. (3181-85)

As previous critics of "The Monk's Tale" have noted, Chaucer did not look exclusively to the De casibus for the material for the monk's seventeen tales of the falls of illustrious men (and one woman) and the vagaries of fortune.25 Chaucer was equally as

familiar with the other sources for de casibus exempla which have been discussed above, including the Bible, The Consolation of Philosophy, and the Roman de la Rose. Although he uses a mixture of short and long narratives, as Boccaccio did, Chaucer did not imitate the linking technique of the De casibus, so that the seventeen tragedies are only loosely connected, except in the case of the Biblical tales (Lucifer, Adam, Samson, and "Nabugodonosor"), by the malicious presence of Fortune (see Soccola). The tales themselves are neither greatly original nor imaginative, and we are not upset when the Knight and the Host interrupt the Monk's apparently endless stream of "wo and heaviness." "The Monk's Tale" is the only example in Chaucer's canon of the de casibus, and from the Host's harsh criticisms at the end of the tale, it may be deduced that Chaucer found this medieval form of literature neither instructive nor entertaining.

"The Monk's Tale" may be Chaucer's only example of de casibus literature, but this does not mean that he was unfamiliar with other forms of the complaint. In many of his works, including The Book of the Duchess, Anelida and Arcite, and several of his shorter lyrics, Chaucer shows his familiarity with a popular form of the complaint which was developed by the French court poets.
such as Machaut and Proissart, which was known as complainte amoureuse. This form of the complaint contains many of the same topoi as the earlier works we have been looking at: the speaker, male or female, laments his or her loss; he/she reflects upon the transience of all earthly things, on the inevitability of death, and on the vagaries of Fortune; finally, the complaint may end with the speaker’s hopeful wish that the future may bring better things. The difference between this popular form of the complaint and the earlier, philosophical complaint is that the source of the speaker’s distress is not the sinfulness and decrepitude of the world, nor even his/her own weaknesses, rather it is the loss of the speaker’s lover, either by death or, more commonly, by abandonment which causes the speaker to moan and wail. Of course, the classical model for the lover’s complaint is Ovid’s Heroides, which we have discussed earlier.27

The complainte amoureuse was a popular form of verse in fourteenth-century France. And Chaucer is generally credited with introducing

26 Chaucer’s association with the French Medieval court poets has been well documented; for example, see: Clemens, Chaucer’s Early Poetry; Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition; Pelen, “Machaut’s Court of Love Narratives and Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess”; Reiss, “Dusting off the Cobwebs: A New Look at Chaucer’s Lyrics”; Wimsatt, “Anelida and Arcite: A Narrative of Complaint and Comfort,” and Chaucer and the French Love Poets.

27 This point is clearly presented in Nancy Slay’s “Chaucer’s Complaint! A Genre Descended from the Heroides.”
the form to England through his *Book of the Duchess*. Both the French and English lover's complaints became known for their formal and stylized expressions of loss and grief and for their elaborate stanza forms and rhyme schemes. Lumsden, "Anelida and Arctite: A Narrative" 5; Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry 142-5. Nevertheless, Chaucer, in some of his lyrics, such as "The Complaint of Mars" and more dramatically in *Troilus and Criseyde*, shows a dissatisfaction with the limitations of the French complaint. As Wolfgang Clemen suggests, in "The Complaint of Mars," "conventional elements... are presented in a different context and [they] fulfil a new function" (Chaucer's Early Poetry 1987). And also Chaucer "revise[s] and amplifies" the tired conventions of the lover's complaint by at times "weaving in... more serious questions" (189). In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer takes a subject which could have been managed through the conventions of the lover's complaint, and turns it to something more. Rather than lyric simplicity, Chaucer presents the complexity of drama; rather than conventional pronouncements of grief and misguided love, there is psychological intensity. As R. H. Robbins argues,

> When characterization becomes more complex, frame more elaborate, problems more immediate, then the complaint breaks down. The way out leads to *Troilus and Criseyde* (*The Lyrics* 324).

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28 The generally accepted source for *The Book of the Duchess* is Guillaume Machaut's "Judgement du Roy de Behaigne," and other French Complaints by Machaut and Froissart, such as the *Remede de Fortune* and *Fanteigne amoureuse* (Machaut), and the *Paradys d'Amours* (Froissart), have been cited as models for Chaucer's *Anelida and Arctite*. See: Wimsatt, "Anelida and Arctite: A Narrative of Complaint and Comfort."
After Chaucer, the lover's complaint remained in England as a popular form of courtly poetry, although it experienced no significant advances in form or purpose. It once again flourished in the early sixteenth century in the love complaints of Wyatt and Surrey, and the other authors published in Jottels Miscellany as well as in the other numerous sixteenth-century miscellanies. As we will see in Chapter Four, the lover's complaint appeared with renewed vigor late in the sixteenth century in the narrative complaints of Samuel Daniel and his contemporaries. The amorous complaint's popularity is a small part of the evidence for Tudor and Elizabethan England's preference for all forms of complaint literature. This chapter has attempted to show how the genre of complaint developed from antiquity through the Middle Ages. In those many centuries, parts of the complaint's form, style, language, and imagery became conventionalized and solidified. In the following chapters we will see how the complaint was transformed, enriched, and reconditioned to suit the needs of Renaissance poets. At first we shall look briefly at the broad spectrum of sixteenth-century complaint, as it appeared in England and in France. We shall then turn our attention to Edmund Spenser's Complaints, and, in order to produce a unified study of the genre, show how widely he drew upon the classical, medieval, and Renaissance forms of complaint, as well as upon his individual vision of the world's vanity.
Chapter Four
The Renaissance Complaint: Innovation and Adaptation

To continue the previous chapter's historical survey of the complaint, this chapter traces the adaptations and transformations of the genre as it was developed by numerous Renaissance authors. Nevertheless, this chapter does not presume to be a comprehensive study of the Renaissance complaint. The topic is a massive one, and demands more space than this study will allow. The main thrust of my analysis is to establish the English and French complaint traditions of which Spenser would have been aware, and to outline those traditions which proved to have the greatest effect upon the development of his Complaints. As well as considering the ideological changes which occurred in complaint, I shall also consider the two distinctive forms of the genre. In England the publication of The Mirror for Magistrates, rekindled the Elizabethan reader's interest in narrative, as capus tells, while in France, the Complaints of Clément Marot and the sonnets of Joachim du Bellay satisfied the French reader's taste for lyric poetry. What this continuing historical survey will show is that the English, narrative form of complaint was derived primarily from the Latinus tradition of Boccaccio and Lydgate, whereas the continental, lyric form grew out of the de contemptu mundi poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Finally, I propose that Spenser, while being sympathetic toward the native tradition of narrative complaints used by his contemporaries, Daniel, Lodge, Shakespeare, and Drayton, did not turn primarily to this form for his own Complaints, rather, he followed the continental tradition of Marot and the Pléiade poets.
Many of the changes in society, politics, religion, and the arts, which we most often consider as indicative of the Renaissance may be seen as reasons for the popularity of the complaint in sixteenth century England and France. When the world appears to be in a state of flux, a man will naturally turn toward a traditional system of values in order to produce a sense of stability in his life. In complaint literature one can find a set of beliefs to make a difficult life bearable. Complaint attempts to ease our fears about death by reminding us of the difficulties of life. It shows us that change is a part of our earthly existence and instructs us to place our trust in the permanence of God. Because of its medieval philosophy, complaint found a favorable audience among the troubled citizens of sixteenth-century England and France.

Nevertheless, although sixteenth-century complaints shared the philosophy of the Middle Ages, they were significantly different works from their predecessors. The Mirror for Magistrates and Petrarch's Secretum show a much greater interest in man's individual achievements and failures than either The Fall of Princes or the De Contemptu Mundi. In the latter works, worldly ambition, fame, and glory, when pursued with honour, are seen as virtues rather than as sins. Not only in moral vision but in form as well, Renaissance complaints differed from those of the Middle Ages.

Less so in England, where the taste for long narrative, de casibus complaints remained strong, than in France, new forms of complaints were being introduced. The Pleiade poets attacked their predecessors' uses of such medieval forms as the complainte, and put in its place the emblematic sonnet, such as those found in gu Bellay's...
Les Antiquitez de Rome. Throughout the sixteenth century subtle changes were wrought upon the complaint's form and moral vision, but its ultimate purpose always remained the same. Although it speaks of such harsh realities as the imminence of death and the vanity of worldly endeavors, complaint offers consolation in a hope of better things to come. This opposition between a vision of earthly despair and heavenly hope seems to have captured the Renaissance imagination. Spenser turned to it again and again in The Faerie Queene and in his Complaints. And numerous other Renaissance poets confronted it in their complaints.

Two of the most distinctive ideological changes between the Medieval and the Renaissance mind appear in the Renaissance complaint. The first change is an apparent shift from an other-worldly atonement for sins, perhaps best exemplified by Dante's Inferno, to an earthly form of justice and divine retribution, found, for example, in The Mirror for Magistrates. The second ideological change is a diminished emphasis on the heavenly rewards extolled by contemptus mundi works, and an increased concentration upon the earthly rewards, such as fame and glory, best exemplified by the third dialogue of Petrarch's Secretum. 1 Farnham was the first critic to analyze the predominance of tragic retribution as the force behind The Mirror for Magistrates. He explains that, because of the renewed interest in de casibus tales, which the 1559 Mirror produced in

1Farnham, Medieval Heritage, speaks most strongly for these changes in the attitudes of the Renaissance mind. Other proponents of these beliefs are Lily B. Campbell, Tudor Conceptions of History and Tragedy and Shakespeare's Histories; and Howard Baker, Induction to Tragedy.
the problem of tragic retribution proved to have a fresh urgency. Denial that the world of the flesh had its perceptible laws of tragic cause and effect was still in conflict with affirmation, but affirmation was gaining greatly in confidence. (271)

Most critics who agree that the Mirror argues most strenuously for "tragic retribution" offer as evidence Baldwin's statement of the "chiefest ende" of the Mirror printed in the work's "Dedication":

For here as in a looking glas, you shall see (if any vice be in you) howe the like hath been published in other heretofore, whereby admonished, I trust it will be a good occasion to prove you to the sooner amendment. (Campbell, ed., lines 57-60, pages 65-6)

Farnham ultimately concludes that "of the nineteen stories in the Mirror of 1559: a good majority may be said to be primarily tragedies of retribution for sin or fault" (283). Meanwhile, his concluding remarks show how far Farnham believes the Renaissance view of tragedy has surpassed its Medieval predecessors:

Again and again its [The Mirror's] authors return to an attack upon the tragic mystery, with a persistence that Boccaccio and Lydgate do not have and with far stronger conviction that there is a "salary of sin" paid here upon earth or that there is a chartable course whereby man's faults bring him down to ruin. The external impulse toward tragedy has its recognition from them. Call it Fortune, the stars, or, more properly, God. But the internal impulse, chiefly the lust and the will (in the sense of carnal appetite) which man may choose to follow or not to follow, has grown for them to be the more effective cause of tragedy. The idea that tragedy is the natural portion of any man in high place, simply because he has climbed upon Fortune's wheel and must meet the downward turn eventually, is still present. The correlative idea that true safety lies in lowly positions and in scorn of ambitious action is also present.
But these ideas are now overshadowed by others which
William allow that an ambitious prince, by studying
the lessons of tragic stories, may avoid tragedy.

Like B. Campbell, and subsequent critics of The Mirror, have generally
agreed with Farnham's conclusions. For example, Campbell suggests
that the authors of the Mirror "substituted an analysis of divine
justice for the older philosophizing on the uncertainty of fortune"
(Mirror for Magistrates, 56). Nevertheless, more recent criticism
of the Mirror has questioned the overall dominance of "tragic
retribution." After a careful analysis of the nineteen stories
of the 1559 Mirror, William Peery concludes that many of the tales
are not primarily tragedies of retribution, but rather are dominated
by capricious Fortune, and contain moralizing on the themes of
contemptus mundi. He suggests that tragedies which contain even
small amounts of contemptus mundi thinking cannot primarily be
tales of tragic retribution:

The more stress we find placed on contemptus mundi as
the moral to be drawn from a tragedy of capricious Fortune,
the less likely is the world of that tragedy one in
which good deeds will be rewarded and evil deeds punished.
Such a tragedy of capricious Fortune preaching the contemptus
mundi sermon, then, is not likely to be primarily a
tragedy of retribution. (118)

Peery shows that out of the nineteen original tragedies of the
1559 Mirror five are tales of capricious Fortune which contain

2For those critics who disagree with Farnham's
conclusions concerning "tragic retribution" in the
1559 Mirror see: William Peery, "Tragic Retribution
in the 1559 Mirror for Magistrates;" Henry Ansgar
Kelly, Divine Providence, and Frederick Kiefer, Fortune
and Elizabethan Tragedy.
strong elements of *contemptus mundi* (those of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester; Thomas Montague, Earl of Salisbury; Henry VI; George Plantagenet, Duke of Clarence; and Edward IV); another eight tales appear to divide responsibility between Fortune and the individual, but are also tales where Fortune plays a significant role and where, in at least five of the tales, *contemptus mundi* is still present (the tragedies of Robert Trevisan; the two Rogers, surnamed Mortimer; Owen Glendower; Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland; William de la Pole; Duke of Suffolk; Jack Cade; Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York; and Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick); four more are tales in which Fortune plays a less significant rôle (or no rôle at all), but where the attitudes of *contemptus mundi* are present and where responsibility is seriously divided (the tragedies of Richard II; James I of Scotland; John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester; and Richard Plantagenet, Earl of Cambridge); and that only two of the original tragedies can be considered as tales of retribution where Fortune makes no significant appearance and *contemptus mundi* themes are not present (those of Lord Mowbray and Lord Clifford) (116-28).

Modern criticism of the *Mirror* has not denied the existence of "tragic retribution" as an element of the early Elizabethan vision of tragedy, but it has suggested that the early writers of the Renaissance were aware that the traditional powers of Fortune were still at work in the world. As Howard Baker has pointed out, early *contemptus mundi* writings were responsible for two strong elements of thought in the Renaissance concept of tragedy: the realization of the vanity of worldly ambitions and the acceptance
is visited by the personified figure of Truth. Nevertheless, unlike philosophy in The Consolation, the spirit of Truth does not act as Petrarch's tutor. Rather, she brings with her the ghost of a person whom Petrarch greatly admires and respects, St. Augustine, and she calls upon him to attempt a cure of the poet's "dangerous and long malady":

Augustine, dear to me above a thousand others, you know how devoted to yourself this man is, and you are aware also with how dangerous and long a malady he is stricken; and that he is so much nearer to death as he knows not the gravity of his disease. It is needful, then, that one take thought for this man's life forthwith, and who so fit to undertake the pious work as yourself? He has ever been deeply attached to your name and person; and all good doctrine is wont more easily to enter the mind of the disciple when it already starts with loving the Master from whom he is to learn. (4)

As master and disciple, for the next three days, St. Augustine and Petrarch study the poet's weaknesses and shameful earthly desires. As Philosophy had done in her cure of Boethius, at first using "gentler medicines" until the patient grew strong enough to accept "more powerful remedies" (Boethius, I.49), St. Augustine begins with simpler lessons and waits until the third day to confront Petrarch with his most serious offenses.

In each of the dialogues there is a battle of wits. St. Augustine is a harsh task-master. He accuses his pupil of grave sins and weaknesses; he rebukes and admonishes him; and finally he pushes his disciple to come to an understanding of his own failings. Petrarch, on the other hand, treats his master with the greatest respect; yet he defends himself skillfully, showing his learning and his confidence. Still, in each dialogue, St. Augustine is
of the immediate of death (192). These two lingering vestiges of contemptus mundi thought can perhaps account for the contradictory attitudes toward Fortune and retribution which appear in the stories of tragic failings outlined in The Mirror for Magistrates. A belief in Fortune is compatible with the earlier contemptus mundi attitudes, since she will eventually destroy all earthly things and men. But to believe in divine retribution, suggests that man has the ability to control his destiny. It suggests that he can choose to be successful and prosperous, and that only a wrong choice will lead to destruction and a violent death. The authors of the Mirror were conscious of this later proposition, but because of their own experiences in the world, they were more content with the first. These lingering contemptus mundi attitudes may also account for the tension and uneasiness which Petrarch feels toward his worldly successes as he defends them in his Secretum.

In Chapter Three it was shown how Petrarch's Secretum is structured around the principles of contemptus mundi literature. Evidence for the Secretum's place in the lists of this literary form is given by the editor's note, which ends the work:

Francis Petrarch, Poet, Most illustrious Orator, his Book, which he entitled Secretum; In which three days' discussion concerning Contempt of the World is carried on: Finis. (Petrarch's Secret, colophon, n.p.)

In the Secretum (whose English subtitle in the translation used here, The Soul's Conflict with Passion, suggests the author's troubled state of mind) Petrarch follows the model of Boethius' Consolation. During a time of self-doubt and despair, the poet
the victor as he shows Petrarch the errors of his thinking. Even in the powerful debates of the third dialogue, it seems that St. Augustine has persuaded Petrarch to forget his love of Laura and to forsake his desires for poetic immortality. At first, when St. Augustine names Love and Glory as the two strong chains which continue to hold the poet's soul in bondage, Petrarch is enraged:

Great Heavens! what is this I hear? You call these things chains? And you would break them from me, if I would let you? ... Pray what have I done that you should desire to relieve me of the finest passions of my nature, and condemn to everlasting darkness the clearest faculties of my soul? (109-10)

The poet defends his life with great vehemence. His love of Laura has been most honourable and more, since to love one "who is the image of virtue" (111) is a blessing and not a weakness. Similarly, he defends with great eloquence his pursuit of learning and his desire for poetic immortality. Ultimately, however, St. Augustine apparently succeeds in proving to Petrarch that he has lived foolishly. The master convinces his disciple that his love for Laura has been vain and harmful, and he offers the poet a way to cure himself. Petrarch must forsake his love in all ways—in thought and in actions. He must convince himself that his love for Laura is senseless, and he must remove himself from her sight forever. Reluctantly, Petrarch admits to his errors in Love and accepts his master's advice. Nevertheless, when the discussion turns to a possible cure for Petrarch's desire for glory, we realize that the cure is neither as harsh nor as thorough as the cure for Love. Petrarch questions St. Augustine as to the extent he must go to shun ambition:
But I have yet a last request to make, which is that you will give me your definite judgment on this point. Is it your wish that I should put all my studies on one side and renounce every ambition, or would you advise some middle course? (182)

In other words, Petrarch is asking, "Do you want me to follow the ways of contemptus mundi?" St. Augustine's response is surprisingly unorthodox:

I will never advise you to live without ambition; but I would always urge you to put virtue before glory. Here, therefore, is the rule for you to live by—follow virtue, and let glory take care of itself. (182-3)

Rather than prescribe Medieval contemptus mundi, St. Augustine accepts glory as a part of the world and only asks that his pupil should first extol virtue, the highest of classical, and subsequently Renaissance, ideals. As the third day of dialogue comes to an end, we feel again the power of St. Augustine's persuasive arguments. Petrarch seems convinced that his worldly pursuits have been only vanity, and he cries out in anguish:

Ah! would that you had told me all this before I had surrendered myself over to these studies! (190)

Nevertheless, at the last possible moment Petrarch's attention is drawn to "a crowd of important affairs" (191), and we realize that the pupil is not prepared to forsake the world. Finally, Petrarch admits that, although he is grateful for the lessons of his master, he cannot withdraw himself from his worldly concerns, particularly his pursuit of learning:

I am not ignorant that, as you said a few minutes before, it would be much safer for me to attend only to the
Although the Secretum is structured around the ideals of Contemptus mundi, the work's own philosophy seems to contradict those same ideals. This tension between the form and the matter of Petrarch's Secretum represents the uneasiness of the Renaissance mind as it considered the universal questions of mutability and death. All the traditional values and beliefs called upon mankind to follow the "safer . . . the straight path of the way of salvation," while simultaneously, the new spirits and ideals awakening in the Renaissance man thrust him into the dangerous "bypaths" and the "many crooked ways" (192) of the active, ambitious world. It should not be surprising, then, that complaint became an immensely popular form of poetry in sixteenth-century France and England, for in their complaints Renaissance men and women could find solace in the strict confines of a traditional system of values. Nor should it be surprising that toward the end of the century the old forms of complaint were transformed, as Petrarch had transformed the matter of Contemptus mundi, to support the ideals of a new age. Nevertheless, before we turn to the later age's transformation of the complaint, we should consider the widespread popularity of the genre during the sixteenth century both on the Continent and in England.

Sixteenth-century England's taste for complaint can be shown in many ways. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Farnham presents numerous examples of English translations of Contemptus mundi
literature, including Boethius' *Consolation*, Seneca's *De Remediis fortuitorum*, Petrarch's *De Remediis*, and two separate translations of Pope Innocent's *De Contemptu Mundi*, that were all published during the last half of the sixteenth century (58-9). As well as these translations, England produced many of its own original compositions in the genre of complaint. Among these are some of the poems of John Skelton: George Cavendish's *Metrical Visions*, the poem in the 1576 miscellany, *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, as well as *The Mirror for Magistrates* and its "progeny" (Farnham, 304-39).

From the early Tudor period, John Skelton's elegy to Edward IV exemplifies how the traditions of complaint are well grounded in native English literature. The poem "On the Death of the Noble Prince King Edward the Fourth" opens with a traditional lament upon the world's mortality: "How may I endure when that everything ends? / What creature is born to be eternal?" (lines 3-4). It questions the subject of the transience of the world: "What is it to trust on mutability, / Seeing that in this world nothing may endure?" (18-19). It considers "Lady Fortune" (26) as the controlling figure in man's life, and it contains a long *ubi sunt* passage which calls upon "Saint Bernard" (62) as the poet's authority for saying that "a man is nothing but a sack of stercory, / And shall return unto worm's meat" (63-4).

Somewhat influenced by Skelton's poetry, but more deeply indebted to Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* as George Cavendish's *Metrical Visions*. In the words of the work's modern editor, A. S. G. Edwards, the *Visions* are the first English work "to apply in a sustained
Manner the form of de casibus tragedy to contemporary Tudor history."

("The Date of Cavendish's Metrical Visions," 131). Although earlier 
critics of the Visions considered it to be, using Parnham's term, 
one of the Mirror's "prophēy," Edwards argues convincingly for 
an earlier date for the work. One quickly notices Lydgate's 
influence on Cavendish's poetry, and ultimately Edwards must admit 
that Cavendish not only owes an "extensive verbal debt" to the 
Fall, but that

the Metrical Visions seem to attempt to reproduce the 
whole apparatus and ethos of the Fall of Princes. 
(Metrical Visions 11)

Cavendish models his work strictly upon the structure of the Fall. The 
work opens with a Prologue which announces the reasons for Cavendish's 
desire to compose the Visions. This Prologue is followed by numerous 
de casibus visions of varying length, each concluded by a moralizing 
envoy. As the title suggests, the Metrical Visions continue the

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3 For those critics who believe the Visions to be a later work than the Mirror see: Parnham, 273-4; 
E. P. Hammond, 36b; R. S. Sylvester, ed., xxvi, n. 
2. Edwards concludes that Cavendish began to work 
on the Visions as early as June of 1552 or 1553, and 
that he stopped working on them by the middle of 1554 
(except for a few revisions and additions, such as 
the epitaph on the death of Queen Mary, which were 
made in 1558 as Cavendish prepared the fair copy). 
This reevaluation of the date of composition makes 
the Visions one of the direct descendents of the Fall 
rather than one of the many imitations of the Mirror. "The 
Date of Cavendish's Visions," 128-32; Introduction, 
Metrical Visions, 7-9.
long tradition of medieval vision poetry. In the Prologue, we find the poet-narrator musing upon the vagaries of fortune, "How some are by fortune / exalted to Riches / ... And some oppressed in languor and synkes" (lines, 8-10). He apparently falls asleep, and in his dream he is visited by the notable figures of recent English history, including Cavendish's patron, Cardinal Wolsey, King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and finally Queen Mary. As in the Fall, when each speaker concludes his/her tale, Cavendish adds an envoy in which proper moral lessons are drawn for the reader. Although the Visions are poetically less influential than either the Fall or the Mirror, since they were not published until the nineteenth century, nor were they widely circulated in manuscript form (Edwards, Visions, intro., 13), their existence shows the continued interest in the narrative form of de casibus complaint in Tudor England.

Finally, the two most popular examples of English Renaissance complaint are The Mirror for Magistrates and The Paradise of Dainties. These two collections of complaints went through several editions during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The influence


5 The Mirror was first printed in 1559 and was republished with numerous additions and emendations in 1563, 1571, 1574, 1675, 1578, and 1587 (Campbell, intro. The Mirror, 34-48); the Paradise, although rarely considered or read today, was most popular during the reign of Elizabeth. Nine extant editions have been recorded, 1576, 1578, 1580, 1590, two editions in 1596, 1600, and 1606; however all copies of the 1577 edition appear to be lost. (Rollins, ed., The Paradise, intro., xiii).
of the Mirror upon the subsequent Elizabethan drama and narrative
poetry has been well documented. Farnham, for example, devotes
an entire chapter of his study to the "progeny" of the Mirror,
including both less skillfully planned collections of narrative
complaints, such as Richard Robinson's The reward of hick-friesse
(1574) and Anthony Mundy's The Mirror of Mutability (1579), and
single poems by such authors as Churchyard, Whetstone, and Gascoigne
(1504-1539). These de casibus forms of complaint, together with
their late sixteenth-century amorous extensions by Daniel, Lodge,
Shakespeare, and Drayton, are the works most often considered
when one discusses the complaint in Elizabethan England. Nevertheless,
the popularity of The Paradise of Diuitie Devices during the latter
half of the sixteenth century suggests that the meditative form
of contemptus mundi complaint was also an element of the native
tradition of which Spenser would have been aware as he was composing
his Complaints.

We have already discussed the Paradise briefly in Chapter
Three in context of the collection's opening work, the translation
of St. Bernard's "De contemptu mundi." The overwhelming popularity

6See: Farnham; Campbell; Baker; Zocca, Elizabethan
Narrative Poetry; Grabe, The Mutible Glass. This
last work by Grabe considers not only the influence
of the Mirror for Magistrates, but looks at the profusion
of "Mirror" books throughout the literature of the
Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

7Churchyard, "Syr Symon Burleis Tragedie" (1575);
Whetstone, The Rock of Regard (1576); Gascoigne, Complainte
of Philomene (1576). Gascoigne's amorous feminine
complaint precedes by twelve years the trend for de
casibus love complaints, which form is commonly said
to have been introduced by Samuel Daniel's Complaint
of Rosamund (1592).
of the Paradise during the reign of Queen Elizabeth is often hard for the modern reader to understand. As Elizabeth Pomeroy has presented in her study of *The Elizabethan Miscellanies*, the Paradise seems to have run against all the familiar conventions and forms of the other Elizabethan collections. Whereas the better known Tottel's Miscellany printed the works of famous poets, used the innovative form of the sonnet, and employed as its theme the popular concerns of romantic love, the Paradise contains the works of very few well-known poets, uses the older forms of fourteens, poulter's measure, and ballads, and maintains a somber, didactic theme of *de contemptu mundi*. The co-existence of the Paradise and Tottel's Miscellany as popular forms of Elizabethan literature is, in Pomeroy's words, one of the clearest examples of the Elizabethan age's "dialectic of moral and amorous verse" (53). Pomeroy centres her discussion of the Paradise around the premise that it is one of the last appearances of the proverb in poetry (rather than in narrative or drama), stating that "it is a unique, and nearly final, flowering of the proverb in poetic form" (56). This attention to the aphoristic nature of the Paradise is interesting for this study particularly when the reader recognizes that one of the poems in Spenser's *Complaints* also follows the style of proverbs in poetic form. Although "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" is not as incessantly proverbial as the poems in the Paradise, the constant use of proverbs or *sententiae* for the final thought in each of Spenser's twelve sonnets ("So by the small the great is oft diseased" [sonnet 2], "Lo how the least the great may reprove" [4], and "So weakest may anoy the most of might" [10])
for example) emphasizes Spenser's moral "to love the low degree" (line 164) and connects in style and design Spenser's later poem with the Paradise. 8 One poem taken from the additons to the Paradise made in 1585, "In prays of the Snaile" (#122), will suffice as an example of the two works' similarities. Pomeroy sees this poem as a possible "burlesque of the constant moralizing and proverbial wisdom" of the Paradise (69). Nevertheless, she must admit that "it is hard to insist on an ironic tone in this poem" (69), for, in fact, there is little in the poem which supports an ironic reading. The facts of the anonymous poem in the Paradise is the common attributes of the snail, particularly his slowness and his willingness to stay close to home, since he carries his home on his back. These simple characteristics are contrasted to man's desire to travel around the globe seeking "sweete repose abroad" (line 7), and his tendency to be rash and hurried in his pursuit of ambition and worldly fame. The narrator of the poem decides to take the snail as an emblem for his own life and cherishes the lessons he has learned from this small, inconsequential creature. In many ways the snail is like Spenser's "Remora" ("VWV," sonnet 9), "Tedula" (3), or the "Gnat" of another poem in the Complaints ("Virgils Gnat"). These small creatures, because of their apparent

8 The belief registered by Renwick and Stein that "VWV" was an earlier composition of Spenser's written at about the time that he revised the sonnets he had translated for Van der Noot's Theatre in 1569 is perhaps supported by the more proverbial nature of these poems. Spenser was most likely influenced by the aphoristic quality of the French poems, but he may also have been following an early appreciation for the proverb which is reflected in the Paradise.
insignificance, can offer good examples to men who believe themselves
to be greater than they actually are.

Spenser's "Visions of the World's Vanities" shows some affinity
with the Spirit of the Paradise, but we can be thankful that he
generally looked elsewhere for inspiration for his Complaints.
There are no striking poetic lines in the miscellany; alliteration
abounds, and many poems seem to have been selected for their rhetorical
prowess rather than for their poetic energy or inspiration. Pomeroy
suggests that the alliteration and excessive repetition in the
poems might have been included because they were designed for
musical accompaniment (56), for, as the printer's dedication states,
"the ditties . . . will yeeld a farre greater delight, being
as they are so aptly made to be set to song in partes, or song
[sic] to instrument" (Paradise, "The Epistle," 4). The idea that
these generally dull, unimaginative poems were designed for music
is startling when we consider that on the Continent, in the preceding
decades, a group of French poets had joined together to create
a "new poetry," and one of its main attributes was the combination
of the beauty and energy of music and poetry. The poetry of Clément
Marot, Joachim Du Bellay, and Pierre Ronsard often shares with
the poetry of the Paradise the same subject matter, and yet the
French poems are far superior. Perhaps the young schoolboy Spenser,
when asked in 1569, to translate the French poems of Marot and
Du Bellay for Jan van der Noodt's Theatre for Worldlings, noticed
the difference between these French complaints and the native
poems like those published later in the Paradise. We cannot know
this for certain, but we do know that when Spenser began writing
his Complaints, he did not turn to the tired forms of \textit{contemptus mundi}; poems found in the \textit{Paradise of Daintie Devices}, nor did he turn to the narrative complaints of \textit{The Mirror for Magistrates} or its progeny. He found his inspiration in an earlier generation of French poets—the precursors and members of the \textit{Plaide}. As we will discuss more fully in Chapter Five, Spenser's serious temperament drew him naturally to the themes of \textit{contemptus mundi}; while his perception of himself as England's "new Poet" encouraged him to follow the methods of France's \textit{Plaide} poets. In the works of these poets, and particularly Du Bellay, he would discover both the matter and the form for his \textit{Complaints}.

Before we move to a consideration of the French complaint tradition, we should mention briefly the popular form of complaint in England during the 1590's. Although Spenser's \textit{Complaints} do not participate in the tradition of feminine complaints, a survey of the genre cannot ignore England's unique contribution to the form. Although the form has its classical origins in Ovid's Heroides, Churchyard's "Shore's Wife," added to the 1563 edition of the \textit{Mirror}, became the model for later feminine complaints.

\footnote{The 1590's feminine complaints have been widely studied, for example see: Farnham; Zoča; Edwin D. Craun, "The De Casibus Complaint in Elizabethan England, 1559-1593;" Gary F. Bjork, "The Renaissance Mirror for Fair Ladies;" Samuel Daniel's \textit{Complaint of Rosamond} and the Tradition of the Feminine Complaint;" Cecil Seronsy, "Daniel's Complaint of Rosamond: Origins and Influence of an Elizabethan Poem;" Ira Clark, "Samuel/Daniel's 'Complaint of Rosamond;';" Ronald Primeau, "Daniel and the \textit{Mirror} Tradition;" Maron-Sofie Røstvig, "A Frame of Words: On the Craftsmanship of Samuel Daniel;" Richard Jardin, Michael Drayton and the Passing of Elizabethan England.}
In the tale the ghost of Jane Shore stands boldly and tells of her tragic death. She is hardly repentant, claiming that it was not her fault that she was born so beautiful and that she was so weak against the advances of a king. Her only defense appears to be the adage: "A pliant heart entails many a thief."

Although Churchyard's depiction of Jane Shore is dynamic when placed against the many wooden characters of so much of the Mirror, the depth of characterization is hardly evident when it is compared with the way heroines are portrayed in later feminine complaints. These complaints are derived from a conflation of the moral, narrative complaints of the Mirror and the short Petrarchan sonnets by Wyatt and Surrey published in Tottel's Miscellany. From the sonnets are taken the themes of passionate, often illicit, love affairs, frail beauty, and love's inconstancy, and these are adapted to coincide with the form of the narrative complaints. With the publication in 1592 of Samuel Daniel's Complaint of Rosamond, followed a year later by Thomas Lodge's

10The close association between the feminine complaints and the Petrarchan sonnet has been recognized by one other critic. Katherine-Duncan-Jones, in her article "Was the 1609 Shakespeare Sonnets really Unauthorized?" has noticed a significant structural similarity between the feminine complaints and the later sonnet sequences to which they were often attached. She even suggests that there may have been a stronger ideological association between the complaints and the sonnets when she states, "In both Daniel and Lodge there appears to be some deliberate counterpointing of a sonnet sequence in which a male lover reflects on his unrequited love, and a verse narrative in which a woman reflects on her betrayal by a man" (169). Since the later sonnet sequences are successors to the earlier sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey, we can perceive how closely associated these two forms are.
Complaint of Elstred, the focus of the English narrative complaint is transferred from attention to the moral depravity of an historical figure as a model for present and future ages, to a concentration upon the psychological agonies of an individual's guilt and suffering. As Farnham suggests, the temptation to present sentimentality in these complaints is often overpowering (as is the case with Michael Drayton's Matilda [1594] and Shakespeare's Lucrece [1594], although Shakespeare's poetic achievement raises his work to a higher plane); yet neither Daine nor Lodge gives way to sentimentality (320-4). Their heroines are not seen as weak victims of either malicious Fortune or lustful kings. Their complaints are not whining catalogues of suffering and ill-fortune. Rosamond and Elstred admit their guilt to themselves and to the world, and their complaints show their anguish and shame. In these later complaints we see the predominance of "tragic retribution" which Farnham had attributed to the earlier complaints of the Mirror. As Farnham's study has shown, the portrayal of psychological tension in these feminine complaints opened the way for the drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The English Renaissance complaint reached its most popular form of expression in the narrative de casibus poems styled upon the Mirror for Magistrates. In France the de casibus complaint was also introduced by Premiersf's vernacular translation of Boccaccio's work. Nevertheless, in France, the earlier form of lyric de contemptu mundi verse seems to have gained greater acceptance.

In his comprehensive study, Three Centuries of French Poetic Theory, 1328-1630, W. P. Patterson discusses over a dozen poets.
and theorists from these centuries who either wrote complaints or defined their existence as a common genre of French lyric poetry. Among the poets who wrote complaints, Patterson includes Guillaume Cretin (1472-1525), Jean Lemaire de Belges (1473-1525), Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549), and Clément Marot (1496-1544). Among the theorists who studied the complaint, Patterson mentions Guillaume de Machaut (1290?-1377), Jean Molinet (1435-1507), and Thomas Sobilet (1512-1589). In the Prologue to Le Dit du vergier (1370?), Machaut offers a simple list of the genres he employs in his writing, which includes the *complainte*:

Pour moy aident et consilier
A faire quis et chansonnettes,
Pleynnes d'onneur et d'amourettes,
Doules hoques et plaisans lais,
Motès, rondiaux et virelais
Qu'on clame chansons baladès,
Complaintes, baladès enties,
A l'onneur et a la loange
De toutes dames sans losagne.
(in Patterson, 81-2).

And in his *Remède de fortune*, Machaut provides a model for the *complainte*. Molinet's *L'Art de Rhetorique Vulgaire* (1493) offers little in the way of concrete evidence for the complaint's continued popularity except for a brief mention of Arnould Greban as the master and possible inventor of the French *complainte amoureuse* (Langlois, ed., 225). Of the early French Renaissance theorists, 11

11 For a fuller discussion of Machaut's generic divisions in his poetry, see: Ernest Hoffpüler, ed., *Œuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*. Volume I contains the Prologue to Le Dit du vergier, while Volume II contains both Le Remède and a critical introduction wherein the lyric genres, as taught by Machaut, are discussed and defined.
Thomas Sébillet, in his *Art Poétique Françoys* (1548), presents the fullest analysis of the lyrical French *complainte*. Chapter XTI of the treatise, "De la Déploration, et Complainte," is divided into three parts—a brief definition of the genre, the various forms of verse in which complaints may be written, including epitaphs, élegies, and écloques, and the "Matière de Complainte," which Sébillet divides between matters of death or loss and unfortunate occasions in love. The importance of Sébillet's discussion of the complaint warrants my quoting the chapter in its entirety:

Complaintes et déplorations semblent être comprises sous l'élegie, qui ne les sonderoit au vif. Car l'élegie proprement veut dire complainte. Mais les usages et différentes sortes d'icelles me contraignent t'en faire traité particulier: et l'avisoir au reste que tu trouveras chez Marot et autres clers. Poëtes des complaintes et déplorations: les unes faites en forme d'épitaphes, comme la pluspart des épitaphes qui se font aujourd'hui; les autres en forme d'élegie, comme celle de Marot sur la mort de Samblançaçay. Autres en forme d'élegie, comme celle de Marot sur la mort de feue Madame la Regente. Autres en forme de couplez distinguées par huitains ou dizains, comme celle du dit sur la mort du feu Baron de Maléville. Autres déduittes en plus long discours, comme celles de Marot sur la mort de Robertet: de Herbet, au nom d'une dame surprise nouvellement d'Amour: De de Bése, au nom d'une Dame regrettant l'acere mort de feu Monseigneur d'Orléans, et maintes autres que liras telles lisant les poëtes.

Matière de complainte.—Pource entre tant d'espèces et formes diverses, te reste seulement a choisir celle que tu verras plus propre à la matière déplorable: qui est le plussovent mort facheuse et importune: par fois amoureuse deffortune, c'est a dire desplaisir ou dommage receu de l'Amour. Mais quoy que tu plaignes,
present all these points, I will quote the poem in full:

Le long void de l'âge sur la mer courrouçée
Une montagne d'eau d'un grand brame ondoyant,
Puis trainant saille flotz, d'un gros choc aboysant
Se crever contre un roc, où le vent l'a poussée:
Comme on void la fureur par l'Aquilon chassée
D'un siflement aigu l'orage tournoyant,
Puis d'une aile plus large en l'air s'esbancoyant
Arrêté tout à coup sa carrière lassée:
Et comme on void la flamme ondoyant en cent lieux
Se rassemblant en un, s'aquier vers les cieux,
Puis tumber languissante: ainsi parmy le monde
Errâ la Monarchie: & croissant tout ainssi
Qu'un flot, qu'un vent, qu'un feu, sa course vagabonde
Par un arrest fatal s'est tournée perdre icy.

The sonnet is composed around the four traditional elements of creation—land, the vantage point from which the speaker of the poem stands, generally "le monde;" but specifically "la Monarchie" (Rome); water ("la mer"); the wind ("la fureur"); and fire ("la flamme"). Three of these images are built into word-emblems in the three "comme" clauses which open the two quatrains and the first tercet. The final image of the ground is presented in the final tercet as the tenor of the three preceding similes, and as the larger signifier of the entire poem (i.e., the ruin of Rome). As Daly suggests, one of the most common grammatical forms of the word-emblem is the simile. Du Bellay shows the interconnectedness of these four word-emblems in two ways. First, he disrupts the traditional thought-form pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet by continuing the opening sentence of the poem through the first tercet. This disturbance of the normal sonnet pattern is emphasized even more when Du Bellay ends the sentence in the
Joachim Du Bellay and Pierre Ronsard: 13 Marot's role as a transitional figure can be shown through the example of his complaint poems. Two early complaints, "The Complaincte du Baron de Malleville" and "The Complaincte d'une Niepce, sur la Mort de sa Tante," (both most likely composed between 1520 and 1527) show the younger Marot's close attachment to the poetic styles of the Rhétoriqueurs. In the poem for Malleville, Marot closely follows the model of Chastellain's La Mort du Duc Phillippe by personifying the figures of "la Terre," "la Mer," "Nature," "La Mort," and "Fortune."

Both of Marot's early complaints show a delight in high rhetorical structures, 14 and they both contain a conventional presentation of the themes of death and man's fate on earth. A third complaint, composed later (probably in 1527), begins to show Marot's disaffection with the mannerisms of the older poetic school. "La complaincte du riche infortune messire Jacques de Beaune, seigneur de Samblançay" follows the medieval de casibus tradition, for we are shown how de Beaune rose to power as the Treasurer General for Francis I and later how he was brought to tragic defeat by the deceit of Louise de Savoie and the vagaries of Fortune. Nevertheless, this


14 Some of the rhetorical structures which Marot adopted from the Rhétoriqueurs are an overly Latinized vocabulary, alliteration, punning, and creating long lists of adjectives that would sometimes continue for several lines.
later poem begins to show how Marot was moving away from the stiff, rhetorical style of his father's generation of poets toward a more personal and freer expression of emotion which would exemplify the new school of Pléiade poets. As F. M. Smith states in his critical study of Marot's poetry:

Marot's "Complainte III" is not simply an account of the execution of Jacques de Beauce, seigneur de Semblançay and treasurer of France, but an expression of the pity which was widely felt for this noble and honoured victim of the machinations and rapacity of Louise de Savoie and Montmorency. It is both macabre and compassionate in its evocation of the vicissitudes of Semblançay's life and death. (Clément Marot 167)

Marot's most famous complaint, "La Deploration de Florimont Robertet," (1527) departs even further from the earlier poetic traditions. In this poem the high-flown rhetoric of the older generation of poets is replaced by the simplicity and sobriety of the Bible. Following the writings of St. Paul, Marot has the figure of death present "a moving meditation on redemption through death and eternal life in Christ" (Smith, 168), rather than a formal commemoration of a deceased man. Two later complaints, which are written in the form of eclogues, have often been cited for their association with Spenser: "The Complainte de Loyse de Savoye" (1532) and the "Eclogue au Roy, soubz les nomes de Pan & Robin" (1539), as E. K.'s well-known notes to The Shepheardes Calender claim, are the models for Spenser's "November" and "December" eclogues.

These pastoral laments, built upon the classical models of Theocritus and Vergil, show the changes in the poetry of the French Renaissance. Whereas the earlier poets of the sixteenth century followed the medieval tradition of complaint both in name and in form, the
poets of the middle century, beginning with Marot, turned away from the forms of medieval literature and began to produce poems in the classical types, such as the elegy and the eclogue. Nevertheless, the theme of these poems was unchanged, for as our survey in the previous chapter has shown, the classical world was as familiar with the themes of complaint as was the medieval world. The French poets of the mid-sixteenth century may not have called their works "complaints," but they were still participating in the common traditions of the genre.

One other poem, or sequence of poems, by Marot is of importance to this study. Marot's translation of Petrarch's Rime 323, Le Chant des visions de Petrarque (1533), later shortened to Des Visions de Petrarque (translated into English by Spenser in 1569 for Van der Noodt's Theatre), has received only slight critical attention. Marot's straightforward, almost literal translation has generally been overshadowed by Du Bellay's more expansive and interpretive adaptations in his "Songe," which was attached to the later poet's Antiquitez de Rome. It is true, as Roger Davis suggests, that Marot made few substantive changes in the work, so that he "merely introduces it to a French readership in French" (77); yet Marot does affect one significant change which Davis recognizes. By adding the phrases "devant mes yeux" and "je veux" to his translation, Marot intensifies the reader's involvement in the poem and enhances the meditative, visionary.
tone of the work, upon which both Du Bellay and Spenser would
later expand. Marot's "Visions de Petrarch" also adjusts the
standard allegorical interpretation of the Rime. Numerous Renaissance
Italian and French commentators had agreed that Laura was the
focus of the poem (see Davis, 22-73), but Marot shifts the focus
to the city of Rome. The effect of this change could not have
escaped Du Bellay, when, after his visit to the Eternal City,
he turned to these same visionary poems.

Du Bellay's position as one of the central members of the
Plaidee has always made him a focal point for any study of French
Renaissance poetry. Even more so, his place as a main component
of this study may be assumed when one remembers the number of
poems in the Complaints which are indebted to the French poet's
works. "The Ruines of Rome" and "The Visions of Bellay" are transla-
tions of Les Antiquitez de Rome and the "Songe," respectively.
"The Ruines of Rome" is written in imitation of Les Antiquitez,
and "The Tares of the Muses" is, in part, a response to Du Bellay's
Musagnemachle. One critic has even suggested that there is a
"resemblance in mood" between "Mother Hubbard's Tale" and the Regrets. 16

Leaving out of account the conjectured influence for "Mother
Hubbard's Tale," Du Bellay's presence accounts for almost one-half
of the Complaints. Part of the reason for our current discussion
of Du Bellay is to consider what Spenser found so attractive in

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16This suggestion was made by Geoffrey Bullough,
noted in W. D. Elcock's "English Indifference to Du
Bellay's "Regrets"," 194, fn.1. Bullough and Elcock
both admit, however, that the two works are strikingly
similar in style, form, and narrative approach.
the Frenchman's poetry. With the publication in 1549 of La Différence et illustration de la langue françoys, Du Bellay became the public spokesman of the Pléiade poets. The purposes of this "manifesto", of the "new poetry", have been clearly outlined by Patterson:

La Différence is therefore: (1) a reply to Sembillet, as the spokesman for Clément Marot and his contemporaries; (2) a defence of the French language against the Latinizers who pedantically condemned the vernacular; (3) a program of suggestions for the enrichment of the French language and literature; (4) a call to arms, for France must rival Italy, the only nation in the modern world to produce a literature comparable to the ancient literature of Greece and Rome. (1297)

Du Bellay's program for the enrichment of French literature and letters is based primarily upon the imitation of the ancient forms of poetry--the elegy, the ode, the epic, and from Petrarch, the sonnet. These classical forms would replace the out-dated medieval ones--the rondeau, the ballade, the virelais, and the chanson--forms which Marot and his contemporaries had used and which Sembillet; only the year before, had sanctioned. Nevertheless, the imitation of the ancients had to be more than mere translation or servile

17 The relationship between Spenser's poetry and that of the French Pléiade poets has been carefully analyzed in two important studies: Anne Lake Prescott, French Poets and the English Renaissance and Alfred W. Satterthwaite, Spenser, Ronsard, and Du Bellay: A Renaissance Comparison. An earlier study, also of interest on this topic, is Renwick, Spenser, An Essay in Renaissance Poetry.

18 A thorough discussion of the contents of the Différence and its effect upon French poetry can be found in: Patterson; Tulley; Castor, Pléiade Poetics; Clements, Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade.
copying out of the great works of Horace and Virgil. A classical work must be digested, assimilated, and absorbed into the fabric of one's being and work; you must make it your own. This theory of 'emulation in Renaissance literature has been well covered, and, as Davis has shown, Du Bellay's own application of the theories to his works, such as Les Antiquitez and the "Songe," has proven the value of the Deffence.

Les Antiquitez and the accompanying "Songe" have often been considered for their participation in the new poetic style of the Pléade. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, I wish to consider Du Bellay's Roman vision poems within the tradition of complaint, and particularly as a form of later contemptus mundi verse defined by Terence Cave as vanitas poetry. As our survey of the complaint traditions has shown, the central theme of contemptus mundi literature is the lament against worldly vanity. The various expressions of this theme are almost inexhaustible: the things of this world are unstable; time devours all; old age and death are imminent; and man and all his earthly creations are as worthless as dust. Equally inexhaustible are the images used by poets to place these abstract ideas into a concrete form—the withering flower, the flowing river, storms, sand, and crumbling buildings.

19 For various discussions of Renaissance theories of imitation see: Thomas Greene, The Light in Troy; Stephen Orgel, "The Renaissance Artist as Plagiarist;" G. W. Pym, III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance."

20 I am indebted to Cave for his discussion of Les Antiquitez as a form of vanitas poetry in his Devotional Poetry in France, 1570-1613, 146-56.
As Renaissance poets considered the ideas of worldly vanity, they showed less concern for the long digressions, diatribes, and satires which formed the main structural features of most medieval contemptus mundi works. Their interest focused upon the abstract notions of worldly vanity, and they turned to the sonnet as the most successful form for presenting those abstractions concretely. The sonnet, because of its "epigrammatic nature" (Cave, 147), and its close association with the popular emblem-books of the sixteenth century, is, in Cave's words, "a particularly convenient medium for communicating moral truths, especially those of the vanitas material" (147).

The association between Du Bellay's sonnets, particularly those of the Antiquitez and the "Songe," and the Renaissance emblem tradition has been formerly recognized. Van der Noodt must have realized the emblematic potentialities of Du Bellay's (and Marot's) "Visions," for when he selected them for his Theatre, he had woodcuts made which provided a picture for each of the "Epigrams" and "Sonets." 21 As Peter Daly has divided it, the emblem generally is formed on a tripartite construction: first is the inscriptio, or motto; second is the pictura; and the third part is the subscriptio, or explanation which is often written

21 For a fuller discussion of the emblems in Van der Noodt's Theatre and the contentions surrounding the claim that it is the first English emblem-book, see: Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books and Jan van Dorsten, The Radical Arts.
Nevertheless, the most valuable part of Daly's investigation into the literary manifestations of the emblem is his definition of the "word-emblem" as "a verbal image that has qualities associated with emblems" (55). Daly distinguishes the older form of the word-emblem from the modern concept of the symbol by showing that, whereas the symbol is "multivalent" (many meanings), the word-emblem is "univalent," that is, "the context calls for only one of the several meanings which could be associated with the natural object" (72). We can see, then, in the context of Du Bellay's Antiquitez (or in Spenser's later translation of them), that the images of the wind, the sand, the river, and the ruins all become word-emblems whose single interpretation is the vanity of worldly endeavours.

One sonnet from Les Antiquitez (sonnet 16) will suffice as an example of the main points of our current discussion of Du Bellay's poetry, although many other examples could be chosen from both Les Antiquitez and the "Songe." First, Sonnet 16 is a highly emblematic poem. Secondly, it is a meditation upon worldly vanity using traditional images from nature—water, flame, and wind. Thirdly, it offers a clear suggestion why Spenser may have been attracted to the Roman sonnets of Du Bellay. In order to

22 The study of the emblem in Renaissance literature is an expansive field, and I cannot hope to consider all of the form's complexities here. For a further discussion of the emblem readers should see: Daly; Freeman; Clements, Picta Poesis; and "Iconography on the Nature and Inspiration of Poetry in Renaissance Emblem Literature," Praz, Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery; Henkel and Schöne, eds., Emblemata; and Wimmatt, The Verbal Icon.
present all these points, I will quote the poem in full:

le lon void de loing sur la mer courroucée
Une montaigne d'eau d'un grand brame ondoyant,
Puis taillant mille flots, d'un gros choc aboyant
Se crever contre un roc, où le vent l'a poussée:
Comme on voit la fureur par l' Aquilon chassée.

D'un sifflement aigu l'orage tournoyant,
Puis d'une aile plus large en l'air s'esbancoyant
Arrestez tout à coup sa carrière lasse:
Et comme on voit la flamme ondoyant en cent lieux
Se rassemblant en un; s'aguiser vers les cieux,
Puis tumber languissante: ainsi parmi le monde
Erré la Monarchie: & croissant tout ainsi
Qu'un flot, qu'un vent, qu'un feu, sa course vagabonde
Par un arrest fatal s'est à nue perdré icy.

The sonnet is composed around the four traditional elements of creation—land, the vantage point from which the speaker of the poem stands, generally "le monde," but specifically "la Monarchie" (Rome); water ("la mer"); the wind ("la fureur"); and fire ("la flamme"). Three of these images are built into word-emblems in the three "comme" clauses which open the two quatrains and the first tercet. The final image of the ground is presented in the final tercet as the tenor of the three preceding similes, and as the larger signifier of the entire poem (i.e., the ruin of Rome). As Daly suggests, one of the most common grammatical forms of the word-emblem is the simile. Du Bellay shows the interconnectedness of these four word-emblems in two ways. First, he disrupts the traditional thought-form pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet by continuing the opening sentence of the poem through the first tercet. This disturbance of the normal sonnet pattern is emphasized even more when Du Bellay ends the sentence in the
middle of line eleven. By doing so, Du Bellay places most of the reader's attention upon the accumulated significance of the first three word-emblems; until, finally, he is stopped by the internal "ainsi," which then shifts his focus from the scenes of universal turmoil to the familiar scene of the ruined "Monarchie."

While the reader's attention is redirected, he is also made to see the close association between these universal emblems of the world's transience and the present fallen condition of Rome.

Secondly, Du Bellay describes the elements of nature in such a way that the features of one element overlap with the features of another. The sea is described as a "montaigne d'eau" and later as "flotz." The wind shares with the sea an image of "l'orage tournoyant." Finally, the flame shoots up into "les cielx," into the realm of the winds. The word-emblems of Sonnet 16 participate in what Rosemary Freeman considers the distinguishing feature of emblems, which is that dynamic action is depicted in static form. Freeman views the role of the emblematicist as one who "sets before the eye struggles which are agitating only within the mind and transfixed in one instant events which take place in time" (21). Du Bellay's ability to "transfix" the entire history of Rome within the static images of Les Antiquitez de Rome and the "Songe" reflects the emblematic nature of his poetry.

Sonnet 16 is also important as a meditation upon the theme of worldly vanity. The three natural elements of water, wind,
and flame are all in a state of flux. The waves build themselves
into mountains and are quickly shattered "contre un roc" (line,
4). The wind whips itself into a wild tempest; yet within a minute
all is quiet. The life of "la flamme," at the beginning of the
tercet, enacted a miniature de casibus tragedy. At first it rises
like a spire into the heavens; then it suddenly is seen to "tumbler
languissante" (11). These three apparently transient elements
are compared with "le monde," "la Monarchie" (11, 12), and with
the ancient city of Rome. It, like the sea, has been perched
high above the world on her seven hills, but as Rome's ruins show,
she, too, has come crashing down upon the rocks into a pile of
rubble. Like the raging wind, Rome had the power to rule the
western world; yet now, lying in her own dust, Rome is feeble.
Finally, like the flame, the great Empire of Rome and her citizens
reached high above the bounds of normal men, but now she has fallen
to the greatest despair. Du Bellay's sonnet apparently suggests
that Rome's ruin was fated; that it was to be expected as something
built by mere mortals, particularly when even the great natural
elements of sea, wind, and fire are also subject to the fluctuations
of the sublunary sphere. Sonnet 16 seems, as Robert Griffin
states, "through its multiple and perhaps paradoxical logic, to
argue the usual contemptus mundi lesson" (130). Nevertheless,
what appears to be the familiar contemptus mundi theme receives,
in Sonnet 16, an ironic twist. The result of Du Bellay's irony
perhaps what caught the eye and the imagination of Edmund Spenser,
when he first read Les Antiquitez and led him to translate and
imitate these poems.
The word-emblems of sea, wind, and fire are the source of the irony in Sonnet 46, for whereas Rome is mutable, in actuality the natural elements are not. They may appear to fade away, but they are eternal. From man's weak vantage point the waves may seem to die, the wind may appear to disappear, and the flame may seem to sputter out; but all these elements will rise again. They are eternal in their mutability. This idea, which lies so close to Spenser's own perception of the universe in the Mutability Cantos, may have been enough to capture the mind of Spenser.

Because of his close association with Sidney, Harvey, and the other supposed members of the "Arupagus," Spenser would have been receptive toward the ideals and poetico-aspirations of Du Bellay as the spokesman of the "new poetry." England's "new poet" must have found it even more rewarding to discover that his French counterpart was also concerned with the same moral and universal questions as he was. It is no wonder, then, that when Spenser turned to the serious questions of worldly vanity and mutability he looked to du Bellay as a kindred spirit.

I have, throughout the present chapter, stressed the apparently national differences between the English and the French forms of complaint. For reasons which go beyond the scope of a literary study, sixteenth century English poets and readers seem to have preferred the dramatic monologue form of de casibus complaint, which allowed an individual analysis of one man's (or woman's) sins and failings, whereas the French Renaissance writers and audiences apparently favoured the contemptus mundi complaint, which contains a more universal meditation upon man's weaknesses.
Nevertheless, the distinctions between English narrative de casibus complaint and French lyric contemptus mundi complaint are not always clear. As the survey in the last two chapters has shown, de casibus and de contemptu mundi complaints share a common ancestry, and often within one work strong elements of both forms may be present. As well, as we have seen, both de contemptu mundi and de casibus verses were composed by English and French poets. Even so, the distinctions raised in this chapter are valuable. First, because a wider investigation of the complaint genre in Renaissance literature, both on the continent and in England, needs to be considered. And secondly, because a wider knowledge of the Renaissance complaint should help to explain how Spenser composed and arranged his Complaints volume.

My emphasis upon the close ties between Spenser's Complaints and the poetry of the French Renaissance is not meant to deny that Spenser was aware of and appreciative toward the native tradition of English complaints. His praise of Daniel's Complaint of Rosamond in Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, "But most me seemes, thy Daniel's accent will excel; / In Tragicke plaints and passionate mischance" (lines, 425-6), as well as his own "feminine complaints" in The Faerie Queene, prove that Spenser was conscious of, and indebted to, the amorous narrative complaints of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, Spenser's conscious decision not to write this type of complaint at the height of the form's popularity suggests that the form was not appropriate for his laments against the widespread manifestations of mutability, decay, and worldly vanity which he saw around him. These universal themes of lamentation are
the same which the medieval *contemptus mundi* writers had presented. As well, they are the themes confronted by the authors of The Paradise of Dainty Devices, but Spenser chose not to follow the laborious style of the Paradise. Rather, he turned to the short visionary poems of the French poets, Marot and Du Bellay. In the writings of the French poets, Spenser found the model for his Complaints against Worldly Vanity.

One final mid-sixteenth-century work will exemplify the cross-cultural influence of the visionary poems of Marot and Du Bellay and will show how these works became the models for the Renaissance form of *contemptus mundi* complaints. This work, Jan van der Noodt's *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*, will also show how Spenser, possibly first came in contact with the "new poetry" of the French Renaissance and the old theme of the vanity of worldly endeavours.24

When the Reign of Terror struck the Low Countries in the mid-1560's, many Dutch Protestants fled the persecutions and sought refuge in Protestant England. Van der Noodt, a lower echelon politician and a well-known poet, in 1567, became one of these

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24 It is not my intention to suggest that it was the *Theatre* which first introduced the young Spenser to the theme of worldly vanity. He had, most likely, come into frequent contact with the concept through the sermons and preaching of many Protestant theologians, as well as through his own reading of the Bible. My suggestion is that the impact of working with this material in a poetic context, while he was translating the *Vision* poems, might have been very influential.
A year later he assembled, and had published, a work in Dutch entitled *Het Theatre of Toon-neel* (1568) (Friedland, xiv). Soon a French edition was printed using the original visions by Marot and Du Bellay, which Van der Nooit had earlier translated into Dutch. Along with these visions were four sonnets based upon St. John's Apocalypse, which had most likely been written by Van der Nooit. The earlier versions of the *Theatre* must have attracted some attention because in 1569 an English edition was published. For the translations of the Visions of Petrarch and Du Bellay, Van der Nooit accepted the help of a young schoolboy, Edmund Spenser. The three versions of the *Theatre* contain identical material: 1) a fairly literal translation of Petrarch's *Rime* 323 by Marot entitled "Epigrames," 2) a close translation of eleven of the fifteen sonnets of Du Bellay's "Songe," called "Sonets" (# 6, 8, 13, 14 of the "Songe" were excluded), 3) Van der Nooit's four Apocalyptic sonnets, and 4) a lengthy religious tract used to explicate the preceding visions.

The place of the *Theatre* in the lists of *contemptus mundi* works is exemplified by Van der Nooit's dedication of the English edition to Queen Elizabeth:

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25 For biographical information on Van der Nooit see: Louis S. Friedland's introduction to the *Theatre for Worldlings*; Van Dorsten; Davis; Stein; and Renwick, *Complaints*.

26 For a full discussion of the complexities and arguments surrounding Spenser's participation in the *Theatre* see: Friedland, "Spenser's Earliest Translations;" Pienaar, "Spenser and Jonker Jan van der Nooit;" Forester, "The Translator of the *Theatre for Worldlings;" Satterthwaite, "A Re-examination of Spenser's Translations of the 'Sonets' from *A Theatre for Worldlings.***
For the avoydng of idlenesse, (the very mother and nooure of all vices) I have among other my travayles bene occupied aboute thys little Treatysse, wherin is sette forth the vilenesse and basenesse of worldely things, which commonly withdrawe vs from heavenly and spirittuall matters. To the ende that understanding the vanitie and basenesse of the same, and therwithall considerynge the miserable calamities that ensur thereupon, we might be moved the rather to forsake them, and gyue our seules to the knowledge of heavenly and eternall things, whence all true happinesse and felicitie doth procede. (A.1:1 r,v)

The harsh attacks upon the Catholic Church and the Pepe found scattered throughout the prose-treatise, which forms the largest portion of the Theatre, has generally been used as proof that Van der Noodt and his work were strongly Calvinistic. Nevertheless, as recent criticism has shown, Van der Noodt is far more moderate in his commentary, and the overall tone of the treatise is actually one of harmony and religious tolerance (Daws, 117-21). Considering Spenser's own lack of religious zealotry, we can see that the even and 'fairly gentle' moralizations of the treatise were probably more effective in forming the young poet's moral outlook than they would have been had they been stridently dogmatic.

Appearing to follow the style of the medieval contemptus mundi writers, for the first fifteen pages of the treatise, Van der Noodt repeats with almost unending monotony the main point raised in his dedication, that it is his purpose

to shewe how vaine, transitorie, deceitfull, unprofitable, and uncertain worldly things be, and that heavenly things, only are everlasting, immortal, excellent, good, and most to be desired. (C.1.r)

When Van der Noodt's commentary turns to the vision poems, and specifically the last three poems of the Petrarch's "Epigrams,"
we perceive how he has directed the poems away from the traditional love allegory and toward his contemptus mundi moralizings:

The other three visions following, are in manner all one, notifying hereby that there is nothing wise in this world but mysteries, sorrows, afflictions, and calamities: And all that man doth stay himself upon in this world is nothing but vain fancy, wind, and smoke. (F. iv:v).

Similarly, in his commentary on Du Bellay's "Sonets," Van der Noodt explains that the poems show "that all things here upon earthe, are nothing but wretched miserie, and miserable vanitie." (E. v.r). Meanwhile, the failure of Rome, as Du Bellay describes it, is said to have been caused by the Roman's "superfluitie" of power and riches, and their "worldly pomphousesse" (V. vi.r).

The rest of the prose treatise is concerned with Van der Noodt's commentary on his Apocalyptic sonnets. These poems were most likely not translated by Spenser, and it is possible that the harsher polemical tone of Van der Noodt's commentary would not have appealed to Spenser as much as the more general moralizings on the other poems.

The wide influence upon the young poet due to his participation in the Theatre for Worldlings cannot be denied. Later in his career Spenser returned to his translations, reworked them, and added his own original sequence of visionary sonnets. The title of that sequence, "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," suggests how strongly the lessons of Van der Noodt's treatise had affected the thought of Spenser. Twenty-one years after the publication of the Theatre, a collection of poems was published by England's "new Poet" entitled Complaints. Containing sundrie shall poemes
of the world's Vanity. The subtitle of the volume and the inclusion of the revised translations of Petrarch and Du Bellay's Visions indicate that throughout Spenser's poetic career he was involved with the forms and themes of the Theatre. The Complaints, which is the outcome of that life-long involvement, is the subject of the final two chapters of this study.
Chapter Five
The Unity of Spenser's Complaints

To consider a generic grouping of Spenser's "small Poems" of 1591 does not seem unusual when one considers the poet's entire canon. Like his contemporaries Du Bellay on the Continent and Sidney in England, Spenser was concerned with the specific "kinds of poetry." Following the classical model of Virgil, his first original publication, The Shepheardes Calendar, is a pastoral. His shorter poems include elegies, "Daphnmaid" and "Astrophel," epitalamia, "The Epithalamion" and "Prothalamion," hymns, sonnets, and a second pastoral, Colin Clouts Come Home Again. Spenser's greatest work, The Faerie Queene, both follows and expands upon the traditions of the classical epic. We might therefore assume that, when Spenser called his poems Of 1591 Complaints, he was pointing to their specific generic designation. Although the complaint was not considered a classical genre, as our survey in Chapters Three and Four has shown, it had been widely accepted by many medieval and early Renaissance poets, and its medieval associations were probably appealing to Spenser, who, unlike his contemporaries, thought favourably of medieval literature.

This chapter proposes that each of the poems in Spenser's

1 "The Prothalamion," which Spenser explains in the poem's subtitle as a "spouse's verse," is a creative extension of the classical genre of wedding song; yet by adding the new prefix "pro" to the common root and by defining his neologism in the poem's subtitle, Spenser emphasizes the importance of clear generic designation for his poetry.
volume of 1591 is a complaint, and that as such, the Complaints can no longer be considered as a collection of "diverse and unrelated poems" (Stein, 3). Nevertheless, the purpose of our investigation of these poems is not only to identify them as generically similar, but also to consider how Spenser applied the various forms and traditions of complaint literature, as they have been presented in Chapters Three and Four, to his poems, and how he adapted those forms to the new styles and ideas of Renaissance literature.

Throughout the volume, Spenser shows his understanding of the myriad forms of complaint literature. In the translations of the Vision poems and "The Ruines of Rome," we see his particular affinity with Du Bellay’s modern form of emblematic contemptus mundi sonnet; in "The Teares of the Muses" he applies the familiar form of the medieval contemptus mundi lament to a Renaissance subject, the degeneration of poetry; in "Mother Hubberds Tale" he satirizes Elizabethan society and politics by using the traditional form of the satiric complaint against the three estates; in "Virgil's Gnat" he takes the larger de casibus structure of Virgil's Latin poem and adds to it lines which emphasize the particular concerns for worldly mutability and vanity that unite all the works in the volume; and in the three remaining poems, "The Visiouns of the Worlds Vanitie," "The Ruines of Time," and "Mylopotmos," he experiments with a mixed form of complaint which combines the design and philosophy of both the de contemptus mundi and the de casibus complaints. The variety of forms and styles of complaint found in Spenser's volume of 1591 contradicts Peter's belief that complaint by its "very nature" is bound to preserve its content.
in as stable and unchanging a form as possible" (59). Complaint, like all other literary forms, was changed and adapted to support the attitudes of each new generation of poets. Nowhere are these changes more evident than in Spenser's Complaints.

The Complaints can be divided into three groups: those poems which follow the de contemptu mundi tradition introduced into literary form by Bernard of Cluny and revised by Marot and Du Bellay; those which follow the de casibus tradition established by Boccaccio; and those that can be seen as mixed forms containing elements of both de contemptu mundi and de casibus. In the Complaints volume, the contemptus mundi poems form the largest group. This group includes the two translated Vision poems, "The Visions of Bellay," and "The Visions of Petrarch," "The Ruines of Rome," "The Teares of the Muses," and "Mother Hubbards Tale." The Complaints contains only one example of a separate de casibus poem, "Virgils Gnat." And the last three poems, "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," "The Ruines of Time," and "Multopotmos," are mixed forms. The following pages will analyze the various elements which distinguish these poems as complaints, drawing upon the common traditions of the genre which have been outlined in Chapters Three and Four. In this chapter we will also consider the possible structural unity of the Complaints. Many of the poems share common stylistic features and subject-matter. These similarities help to link the various poems and intensify the generic and thematic unity of the volume.

Because, as Jefferson Fletcher suggested in 1914, "in theme and genre, a goodly number of the Complaints actually grew out of the early translations" ("Spenser's Earliest Translations")
307), our discussion of the contemptus mundi tradition in the Complaints will begin with the last poems in the collection, the Vision poems. "The Visions of Bellay" and "The Visions of Petrarch" are, of course, later revisions of the poems Spenser had translated for the Theatre. In 1569 these poems had introduced the young poet to the emblematic, meditative style of visionary poetry, whose form is central to most of the works in the Complaints. As well, these visions introduced Spenser to the subjects of mutability and worldly vanity, the latter of these being vital for the Complaints and the former being of immense importance for all of Spenser's poetic canon.

How Spenser revised his translations for later publication, particularly his revision of the "Visions of Petrarch," offers a reasonable idea of how he considered his poems to be complaints. Because Du Bellay's views of the world's transience are so compatible with Spenser's, the "Visions of Bellay" required no substantive revision to emphasize the contemptus mundi spirit of the poems. However, the revisions of the "Visions of Petrarch" show Spenser's conscious attempt to make Petrarch's specific laments for the death of Laura into universal visions of worldly vanity.3

Except for changing the unrhymed "Sonets" of 1569 to Shakespearean

2For a fuller discussion of the dates of revision and composition of the Vision poems, see: Renwick, Complaints; Stein; and the Variorum Minor Poems, 2.611-24.

3In a recent dissertation, "Petrarch's "Rime" 323 and its Tradition Through Spenser," Charles Davis demonstrates how throughout history Petrarch's "Rime" 323 has been interpreted as an allegory of the author's sense of loss after the death of Laura; see: 4-67.
rhymed sonnets, Spenser did little to change the appearance or design of Du Bellay's "Visions." He did reinstate the four sonnets which Van der Noodt had originally replaced with his four Apocalyptic poems (§ 6, 8, 13, and 14), but he did not have to amend the poems in any substantive way to bring them within the traditions of complaint. The "Visions" show how strongly Du Bellay was sympathetic toward the themes of contemptus mundi literature. His emblems of the crystalline "stately frame" (sonnet 2), the "triumphant Arke" (4), the majestic eagle (7), and the "Christall" spring (12), all end with the destruction of these earthly things. These emblems, therefore, emphasize the moral that on earth "all is nought but flying vanitee" (1, line 11). The solemn spirit of Du Bellay's "Visions" appear not only in the other vision poems but throughout the Complaints volume. Du Bellay's views of the world's mutability and vanity appear to be so compatible with Spenser's that no revision of the older poet's thought or design seems to have been necessary. This compatibility was not the case when Spenser returned to his translations of "The Visions of Petrarch." Here, he found that more extensive revision was needed. Several earlier critics have noted that, when Spenser prepared the "Visions of Petrarch" for later publication, he added lines to the earlier twelve-line epigrams to make each poem a uniform fourteen-line sonnet (Renwick, Complaints; Stein; Nicholson, "Spenser's 'Visions of Petrarch'). Nevertheless, it is interesting for this study to note that, when Spenser changes the earlier "Epigrams," his revisions perform two functions which had not been part of either Petrarch's Rime 323 or Marot's trans-
In the five poems in which revisions occur, Spenser either emphasizes the speaker's personal involvement and sense of loss in the vision, or he strengthens the poem's contemptus mundi theme. In the emblem of the "Heven and white yeorie" ship (2), Spenser rewrites line 25 and adds lines 24 and 26:

"O great misfortune, O great griefe, I say, Thus in one moment to see lost and drownde So great riches, as lyke can not be found. (Theatre, "Epigrams," 24-6)

becomes:

And perished past all recoverie. O how great rubb and sorrowfull assay, Doth vex my spirite with perplexitie, Thus in a moment to see lost and drown'd, So great riches, as like cannot be found. (Complaints, "VP" 24-8)

The revised line 24 of the "Visions" not only highlights the fact that the richly endowed ship has sunk, but also that her loss is permanent. This realignment of the poem's conclusion emphasizes the futility of man's greed for such earthly treasures. As well, the revised line 25 and the new line 26 show the speaker's own anguish at this emblem of worldly vanity. Similarly, in Sonnet 4 of the "Visions," Spenser's additional lines at the end of the original "Epigram," "And wounds my soule with ruffell memorie, / To see such pleasures-gon so suddenly" (55-6), intensify the speaker's milder grief at the destruction of the magical spring given in line 54 (the closing line of the original epigram), "Which

For a carefully drawn comparison between Petrarch's Rime, Marot's translation, and Spenser's two versions of the work, see: Davis.
yet agrees my hart even to this houre" (The similarity between
the scene depicted in this vision and numerous examples of natural
destruction in The Faerie Queene suggests that this emblem was
a favourite of Spenser). Again, Sonnet 6 concludes with two new
lines (69-70) which show the increased personal involvement of
the speaker, "For ruth and pite of so haples plight / O let
mine eyes no more see such a sight." The depiction of the "faire
Ladie" (71) in the last epigram of the Theatre poems already strongly
suggests the vanity of worldly beauty, and the near-religious
description of her attack by the "stinging Serpent by the heele"
(78) allows for a more serious interpretation of this poem. Never-
theless, Spenser's additional lines at the end of the revised
vision, "Which make this life wretched and miserable, / Tossed
with storms of fortune variable" (83-4), increase the contemptus
mundi tone of the poem. The most significant transformation between
the earlier "Epigrams" and the "Visions" of the Complaints, which
shows Spenser's design to bring these poems within the traditions
of contemptus mundi complaint, appears in the final sonnet. When
Spenser had originally translated Marot's "Epigrams," he had dutifully
translated the four-line envoy which Marot had used to close his
sequence and to address his patron for some remuneration for his
efforts:

My Song thus now in the Conclusions,
Say boldly that these same six visions
Do yeeld vnto thy lorde a sweete request,
Ere it be long within the earth to rest.
(Theatre, "Epigrams" 78-81)

However, when Spenser revised these poems for the Complaints,
he rejected the envoy and composed an original poem, this time in the style of a Spenserian sonnet, which concludes both the "Visions of Petrarch" and the entire volume of Complaints emphatically on the note of contemptus mundi:

When I beheld this tickle trustles state
Of vaine worlds glorie, flitting too and fro,
And mortall men tossed by troublous fate
In restles seas of wretchednes and woe,
I wish I might this weairie life forgoe,
And shortly turne vnto my happie rest,
Where my free spirite might not anie moe
Be vext with sights, that doo her peace molest.
And ye faire Ladie, in whose bounteous brest
All heavenly grace and vertue shrined is,
When ye these rythmes doo read, and vew the rest,
Loath this base world, and thinke of heauens bliss:
And though ye be the fairest of Gods creatures,
Yet thinke, that death shall spoyle your goodly features.
(85-98)

The revisions which Spenser made to his earlier translation of Marot's "Epigráms" are much more than cosmetic. They emphasize the speaker's personal loss and bereavement which is a main ingredient of the complaint, and they intensify the themes of worldly vanity and mutability which unite the entire Complaints volume. When Spenser imitated the Visions of Bellay and Petrarch in his "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," he followed, as we will later see, his predecessors' form and design, but he experimented with the poems' philosophical purpose, making them all his own.

Closely associated with the Vision poems is another sequence "by Bellay," "The Ruines of Rome." These poems are Spenser's translation of Les Antiquitez de Rome, and like their companion piece, the "Songe," they share the form of the sonnet, the design of the emblem, and the theme of contemptus mundi. Nevertheless,
there are some significant differences between the two works. Because "The Ruines" are not vision poems, the speaker is not a passive receptor and transmitter of the dreams which are witnessed by him. Rather, the speaker of "The Ruines" is a self-proclaimed poet, who opens the sequence with an invocation to the "heavenly spirits, whose ashe cinders lie / Vnder deep ruines" (lines 1-2) and closes with a wish that his verses will be immortal, "Hope ye my verses that posteritie / Of age ensuing shall you ever read?" (415-6). As well, the moral pronouncements of "The Ruines" are less clearly defined than those of "The Visions." Du Bellay's judgment of Rome had been fraught with tension, and Spenser's translation maintains the original ambiguities. As Christian moralists, they see Rome's destruction as just punishment for her sinfulness and overweening pride (sonnets 6, 8, 12, 19, 21, and 23); yet as humanists they admire the city for its former power and its great beauty (2, 19, 26, 28, and 29). One notices that one poem, sonnet 19, appears to satisfy both views at once. This poem exemplifies the opposition between Christian moralist and humanist that both authors appear to have been experiencing while they worked on the "Ruines," for within this one sonnet Rome is seen to have contained "All that is perfect" and "All that's imperfect" (253, 254):

All that is perfect, which th'heaven beautefies;  
All that's imperfect, borne belowe the Moone;  
All that doth feede our spirits and our eyes;  
And all that doth consume our pleasures soone;  
All the mishap, the which our daies outweares,  
All the good hap of th'oldest times afore,  
Rome in the time of her great ancestors,  
Like a Pandor, locked long in store.  
But destine this huge Chaos turmoyling,
In which all good and evil was enclosed,
Their heavenly virtues from these woes assuying,
Carried to heaven, from sinfull bondage losed:
But their great sinnes, the causers of their paine,
Under these antique ruines yet remaine. (253-66)

By using the common images and ideas of contemptus mundi, the poets present a simple explanation for Rome's present decrepitude.
In the ancient time, when Rome flourished, it contained all the perfections of the heavenly sphere and all the imperfections of life below the lunar sphere. As long as both elements of good and evil were held within the ancient city, it prospered. Yet in time the virtuous elements of Rome were "carried to heaven" and all that was left were the sinful and the degenerate elements.
This poem shows its association with other Renaissance works which honoured virtue as the highest moral element of man and the world. Without virtue, to keep Rome's earthly desires in check, she fell to ruin.

The tension in Du Bellay's mind, and through it to Spencer's, appears to strain the over-all pronouncements on contemptus mundi found in the sequence, but it cannot eradicate them. The poets are clearly torn between their admiration for the city's past glory and beauty and its present degenerate condition. But ultimately they agree with the views of previous contemptus mundi writers that Rome is a symbol of worldly degeneracy. The predominant emblem of the "Ruines" is the city of Rome, lying in her own rubble, defeated, and entombed in her own grave. Three elements worked together to destroy Rome: her internal divisions, exemplified by the poems on the civil wars (10, 24, and 31); external powers, such as the Germanic conquerors, and Rome's other enemies (11,
The ravages of Time and other powers of the universe (3, 4, 7, 9, 16, 20, and 22). These destructive powers united to make the present ruined state of Rome a symbol of the world's transience and a sign "That all this world shall one day come to nought" (126). This apocalyptic vision is repeated throughout "The Ruines of Rome" and intensifies the melancholic tone which pervades these sonnets. Nevertheless, there is an optimism expressed in the "Ruines" which tempers the sequence's melancholy. Although Rome is in ruins and her former greatness is lost, two forces can resurrect the city to her earlier form, the Catholic Church and the immortalizing powers of poetry. First, as a Roman Catholic, Du Bellay believed that the Pope's presence in Rome would once again make the city Eternal. Sonnet 18 explains how Rome began as the home of shepherds, who then grew in wealth and power until they became kings and emperors. Now, the Pope, "Peters successor" (250), "sheheardlike" (251) shows "that all things turne to their first being" (252). With this idea Spenser suggests that Rome's current debasement is not the end of the city's fame, but only a point in a regenerative cycle. Similarly, in a later poem, we are shown that out of her own ruins Rome "renewe hisseff with buildings rich and gay" (27.375). Yet this time, she will flourish not as the centre of an earthly empire, but as the centre of a heavenly one.

Secondly, as the spokesman for the "new poetry," Du Bellay also believes that Rome's beauty and majesty will rise again through the immortalizing powers of poetry. In sonnets 5, 15, and 25, he honours the great poets of Rome's past and asks for their help.
in rekindling the flames of the ancient city's fame. And in the last poem (32), he prays that these verses will outlive the monuments "in Porphyre and Marble" (441) that have fallen to ruin. When Spenser added his envoy, he responded to Du Bellay's prayer. Here Spenser expresses his deep appreciation for Du Bellay's poetic achievements, and he assures his predecessor that Romo and his own immortality have been preserved:

Bello, first garland of free Poesie
That France brought forth, though fruitfull of brave wits,
Well worthie thou of immortalitie,
That long has travailed by thy learned wits,
Odo Rome out of her ashes to renue,
And give a second life to dead decays:
Needs must he all eternite suruive,
That can to other guee opynall dayes. (449-56)

Spenser's translation of Les Antiquitez portrays the same uneasiness about Rome's past and optimism for her future that Du Bellay had presented. He even translates the "popish" sonnet 18 without revision. This concern for the spirit of Du Bellay's sequence is, as with his close translation of the "Senge," another indication of Spenser's affinity with the circle of "new poets" in England who were awakening in their homeland the same spirit of "free Poesie" which the Pleiade poets had brought to France. "The Ruines of Rome" is a significant part of Spenser's Complaints volume, for they show the extent of Du Bellay's influence on the collection. As we will see later in our discussion of "The Ruines of Time," Spenser's fullest response to the teachings of Du Bellay would appear through his emulation and not his translation of the earlier poet.

The next poem in this group of contemptus mundi verses,
as was mentioned in Chapter One, reverses the normal pattern of such works. In "The Ruines of Rome," we noticed that the specific problem of Rome's degeneracy leads the poet to a universal reflection on the world's fallen condition. This pattern of movement from "a specific occasion" of disappointment or failure to a "general observation" on the vile condition of the world, as Joseph Keller describes it, is the normal structure of a contemptus mundi complaint (121). However, "The Teares of the Muses" moves from a "general observation" on the world's degeneracy to a specific lament for the fallen condition of learning and poetry in the world. Although the poem's title is taken from Harvey's Smithus, vel musarum lachrymae (1578) (Renwick, Complaints 205), its inspiration is generally credited to Du Bellay's Musagneomachie (1550) and his Deffense. Numerous arguments have been raised concerning the possible date of composition of this work. Some believe that it must be an earlier work and date it around 1579-80; others argue that it was written later, probably just prior to its publication in the Complaints (for a summary of these arguments see the Variorum 533-40). The arguments for the poem's later date seem more probable, particularly when one considers its placement in the Complaints volume. Directly preceding "The Teares" is the lament for the poet Sidney and the patrons of poets, the Dudleys, in "The Ruines of Time." With the death of Sidney and so many noble patrons, the state of poetry in Elizabethan England must have seemed doubtful. This concern for the merits of Elizabethan poetry is especially evident when the great accomplishments of the Pléiade are compared with the fractured and haphazard advances in the "new poetry"
by the now defunct Areopagus. When Du Bellay published his complaint of the Muses in 1550, he could see himself as the herald of a new age of poetry; when Spenser composed his, Sidney had been dead for many years, Harvey was embroiled in pedagogical disputes, Shakespeare was a relatively unknown actor and playwright, and Spenser, himself, was "exiled" far from the centre of the poetic circle around Elizabeth's court. It should not be surprising then that what we view as the Golden Age of Elizabethan poetry, Spenser saw as an age of Ignorance and Barbarism. Nor should it surprise us that "The Teares of the Muses" is a sad and dolorous lament for the passing of poetry and learning. The form of a traditional complaint is suitable for such a serious topic.

As the editors of the Variorum have recognized, the nine laments of the Muses each follow "the same triple formula for a 'complaint': apostrophe + narratio + lament or prayer, present or prophetic" (542). And as was noted in Chapter One, the structure of "The Teares" reverses the normal order of medieval contemptus mundi literature by opening with a universal complaint and subsequently narrowing the lament to a specific subject. The subject of the Muses' laments is much more serious than that poets are writing bad poetry. For them, the world has fallen to such a degenerate state that they can find nothing worthy of poetic immortality. Man is no longer virtuous, courageous, or learned; instead his concerns are petty and foolish, and he is ruled by Barbarism and Ignorance. In "The Teares" Spenser uses the larger frame of the traditional contemptus mundi complaint not to show that the world is a degenerate place and that mankind must be taught to forsake
its worldly vanities and to embrace God; but rather, to show that
the world is a degenerate place specifically because Barbarism
and Ignorance are in control and that mankind must be taught to
forsake his ignorant ways and to embrace learning and poetry.
In their laments, each of the Muses responds to the fallen condition
of the world and shows how it has affected her particular form
of poetry. For example, Clio, the Muse of historical verse, berates
men for their "pompous pride" and "foolish vanities" (line 92)
and admits that she can "findeth nothing worthie to be writ, or
told" (100) about these "sonnes of darkness and of ignorance"
(68). The Muse of tragedy, Melpomene, bewails the degenerate
condition of man and shows how closely the themes of tragedy and
contemptus mundi are tied:

Ah wretched world the den of wickednesse,
Deformed with filth and fowle inquitie;
A wretched world the huse of heavynesse,
Fild with the wreaks of mortall miserie;
Ah wretched world, and all that is therein,
The vassals of Gods wrath, and slaues of sin. (121-6)

To her man's life on earth is one long tragedy:

Full of sad sights and sore Catastrophes;
First comming to the world with weeping eye,
Where all his dayes like dolorous Trophees,
Are heap't with spoyles of fortune and of feare,
And he at last laid forth on balefull blear. (158-62)

Paradooxically, one might think that a world in such a state would
supply an unlimited amount of inspiration for tragedies. Yet
Melpomene laments that the present world is not heroic enough
for real tragedies, and that the sorrow and misfortune are only
"Fit for Medusa or Persephone" (164); while she, who is skilled
"in true tragedies" (165), can "find a nought to bash me" (166)
Later in the volume, in "Mulpotmos," Spenser appears to have
discovered a worthy subject for the talents of this Muse as he
calls upon Melpomene to help him tell the story of Clarion's tragic
death. As vital as virtue and heroism are to the Muses' continued
existence, so also is the advancement of learning. Urania, the
Heavenly Muse, presents a ladder of learning which shows what
man can achieve with knowledge:

Through knowledge we behold the worlds creation,
Who in his cradle first he fostred was;
And judge of Nature's cunning operation,
How things she formed of a formelesse mas:
By knowledge wee do learne our selues to knowe,
And what to man, and what to God wee owe. (499-504).

But now man is little more than an animal, steeped in Ignorance
and without "th'heavenlie light of knowledge" (488). Despising
mankind's present fallen condition, Urania decides to forsake
the world and to turn her back on its ignorance, "So loathing
earth, I looke vp to the sky, / And being driuen hence I thether
fly" (527-8). The degeneracy of the world has led Urania to respond
in the manner of the contemptus mundi traditions, forsaking the
world and giving all her attention to the "contemplation of things
heavenlie wrought" (526).

Spenser's "Teares of the Muses," like the lament of the
last Muse, Polyhymnia, shows how "A dolefull case desires a dolefull
song" (541). Nevertheless, although the tone is incessantly melancholic, Spenser presents some hope that not all of Elizabethan
England is so bleak. First of all the poem's own narrator sees
himself as being specially blessed by the Muses:
Vouchsafe ye then, whom onely it concernes,
To me those secret causes to display;
For one but you, or who of you it learnes
Can rightfully aead so dolorous lay. (49-52)

And at the poem's conclusion, he tells us that Elizabeth, herself,
as "Most peerless Prince, most peerless Poetressa" (578) and "Some
few besides" (583) whom she "faouours" (576) have maintained the
light of knowledge and poetry in the court of London. This bit
of panegyric is small recompense for all the wailing of the nine
Muses, but it at least offers some optimism and hope.

"The Teares" may look favourably upon the artistic life
of Queen Elizabeth's court, but the last poem of this group of
verses which follows the traditions of contemptus mundi literature
views the Elizabethan court in a much harsher light. "Mother
Hubbard's Tale" is the most familiar of Spenser's Complaints.

It has been frequently anthologized, and as the survey in Chapter
Two shows, it has received a significant amount of critical attention;
particularly because of its unique place in Spenser's canon as
the only example of a verse satire, and because it is seen as
a precursor of many eighteenth-century satires. Early criticism
of the "Tale" devoted considerable attention to the work's possible
sources (for a summary see Variorum 585-93), including among them
Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Boccaccio's Decameron, Aesop's Fables,
the Reynard cycle, and numerous less familiar Latin and Italian
satires. It is not my intention to add complaint, or particularly
the forms of complaint which derive several features from Bernard
of Cluny's De contemptu mundi, to the long list of sources. Strictly
speaking the Reynard cycle of fables, as a source, is much closer
to "Mother Hubbard's Tale" than is the De contemptu mundi. Nevertheless, "Mother Hubbard's Tale" does contain material common to complaint, and I suggest that we may add to our understanding of the poem if we read it as a satiric complaint against the three estates. Considering the narrative supposedly told by Mother Hubbard and not the frame which Spenser adapted from Boccaccio in order to introduce the narrative, we can see that the poem falls into four sections or scenarios: the Fox and the Ape's escapades as vagabond soldiers; their abuses as members of the clergy; their adventures at court; and their attempts to be the rulers of the animal kingdom. Each situation offers Spenser the opportunity to rail against and to satirize the failings in the three levels of society.

The opening dialogue between the Fox and the Ape places this work squarely within the philosophy of complaint. Complaint

Part of Spenser's perception of "MHT" as a complaint may have been derived from the way in which Caxton presented the Reynard fables in his English editions. Many of the sub-headings which divided the tales use the word "complain," such as: "The complainyt of curteys the hound and of the cattel, Tybert" (N. F. Blake, ed., The History of Reynard the Fox [EEETS, 263] 7.25-31) or "The complainyt of the bere upon the foxe" (19.10-23). The term "complainyt" is used here in its judicial sense of a court proceeding, for in the fables each of the creatures complains to the king concerning Reynard's illegal activities. These complaints and Reynard's responses to them are the frame within which the fables are told. Spenser probably had seen one of Caxton's editions (1481, 1489) or else one of the later sixteenth-century editions, perhaps as Greenlaw has suggested, Thomas Gualtier's 1550 edition ("The Sources of Spenser's 'Mother Hubbard's Tale'" 10). Any of these would have contained the complaint format which might have suggested to Spenser the appropriateness of including this work in his volume of complaints.
usually arises from a feeling of discontentment, and both the Fox and the Ape are discontented with their lots in life. The Fox complains that for all his life he has been held down by "froward fortune" (line 65) and that he has had to watch lesser creatures "lifted vp on high" (66). The Ape agrees with the Fox and explains how he has "wasted much good time, / Still waiting to preferment vp to clime" (75-6). They decide that their fortunes might improve if they start looking elsewhere, since "Wide is the world... and euerie streete / Is full of fortunes, and advenures straunge, / Continuallie subject into chaunge" (90-2). Since these two creatures see themselves at the bottom of Fortune's wheel, they look upon the world's instability with optimism. Yet they do not seem to understand that once they have given the control of their lives over to Fortune they will always be subject to her inconstancy. The structure of the "Tale" works subtly with this idea. In each new situation, the Fox and the Ape appear to have risen high upon Fortune's wheel. Nevertheless, as soon as they reach the top, their treachery is discovered, and they once again tumble to the bottom; usually falling lower than they had been before the adventure began. Spenser did not need to make any overt references to this device, since his sixteenth-century readers would have been well aware of the dangers attendant upon riding Fortune's wheel.

The morning of their adventures opens with a discussion concerning the best way for the pair to travel in the world. Here Spenser begins the social commentary and satire which will run throughout the "Tale." The Fox, like the Giant of The Faerie
Queene (5.2.30-50), is an unreliable judge of society, who sees the unequal distribution of wealth and land as an opportunity to take what does not rightfully belong to him:

For now a few have all and all have nought,
Yet all be brethren ylike dearly bought:
There is no right in this partition,
Ne was it so by institution
Ordained first, ne by the law of Nature,
But that she gawse like blessing to each creature
As well of worldly luvelode as of life,
That there might be no difference nor strife,
Nor ought calld mine or thine: thrice happy then
Was the condition of mortall men. (141-50)

We know from The Faerie Queene that Spenser does not agree with the opinions presented here. The disingenuousness of these lines is also emphasized because they are spoken by the Fox, a common figure of deceit and treachery, who appears throughout the "Tale" as a disruptive element in society.

In the first scenario, the Fox and the Ape, who both consider that the "Beggers life is best" (180), disguise themselves as soldiers, since that profession "now is thought a cuiele begging sect" (198). Soon after, the Ape, encouraged by the Fox, convinces a poor husbandman to hire him as a shepherd. Of course, the Fox and the Ape devour most of the sheep and sneak away during the night, leaving the farmer with his losses. The pair deceives the rest of the county's laborours and simple folk until no victims are left. Here Spenser satirizes the first estate of "providers." He clearly shows that the husbandmen are not at fault (except for their gullibility); the fault rests with the many soldiers who were also part of the first level of society. Like the Ape, who pretends to be the son of a shepherd, "For ere that vnto armes
the soldiers were simple farmers and shepherds who joined the army for money and adventure. When the wars were over, or when they became unable to fight because of their injuries, they began to roam the countryside. They often stole from the farmers, or like the Fox and the Ape, cheated the simple husbandmen out of their livelihoods. The problems caused by these vagabond soldiers is the object of Spenser's first satire.

The second estate which Spenser satirizes in the "Tale" is that of the clergy. This estate was designed to govern the spiritual order of society; yet the clergy often abused their privileges. In his satire, which is reminiscent of parts of The Shepheard's Calender, Spenser ridicules the failings of the Church. We are particularly reminded of the Calender's "Maye" eclogue, not only because there we are given a portrait of the 'bad minister' Palinode, who, like the priest that the Ape and the Fox meet, is "a worldes childe" ("Maye" 73); but also because the allegorical tale of the fox and "kiddie" in the "Maye" eclogue is similar to the situation in the preceding scene of "Mother Hubberds Tale."

In the second scenario, the Fox and the Ape disguise themselves as clergymen in order to escape punishment for their previous thievery as shepherds. While thus disguised, they meet an illiterate priest, who in a minutely detailed account explains the easiest way for an ignorant man to rise to a position of eminence in the Church (353-551). He tells them how pleasant it is to be a priest; how it involves no learning or labour; and how it allows one to eat plentifully and to enjoy the favours of the parishioners' wives.
and daughters. The Fox and the Ape gratefully accept the lessons of the priest and soon acquire a benefice, whose duties and privileges they quickly abuse. In this scene Spenser closely follows the traditions of satirical complaint. Anti-clerical satire is the most common feature of the earlier complaints against the times, dating back to the attacks in Bernard of Cluny's De contemptu mundi. We notice in Spenser's satire, that the abuses of the church are not caused by the fraudulent priests. Rather, such abuses are seen to be part of the Church's normal system. The focus of the poem's anti-clerical satire points out that, although the Fox and the Ape are disruptive elements in society, they are not the only cause of society's disharmony. The actions of the Fox and the Ape are shown to be merely an exaggeration of a normal component of our degenerate society.

The largest portion of "Mother Hubbard's Tale" is a complaint against the third estate—the aristocracy. This complaint is divided into two situations: the first is a general lament against life in the court, and the second is a specific satire upon the intrigues of Queen Elizabeth's court. The satire of court life in many ways foreshadows Spenser's later pronouncements on the same theme by Melibee in The Faerie Queene (6.9.16-25). The Fox and the Ape enter the court with expectations of great things. The Ape dresses as the courtier, while the Fox acts as his groom. By boasting, wearing fashionable clothes, and spending great sums

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6 The field of allegorical interpretation of "MHT" has been the most laboured area of critical discussion. See my Chapter Two for a discussion of the various interpretations; and also, Variorum 568-80).
of money, they make a significant impression upon the court, which is presented as a place of vanity, corruption, and pettiness. The Ape becomes a success because of the devious actions of the Fox. Nevertheless, Spenser is careful not to condemn the court without some exceptions. He offers the description of "the brae Courtier" (717), who has usually been interpreted as Sir Philip Sidney, as a positive model of the ideal courtier, and he draws the Ape as the exact opposite of that model. For a while the Ape and the Fox prosper at court, but as the Mule had warned them, "Courtiars as the tide doo rise and fall" (614). Soon the Fox's deceptions are discovered, and he is banished from court. The Ape, who cannot maintain his high position without his "hustkster man" (925), quickly falls to ruin. Now we can see how far Fortune's wheel has taken the Fox and the Ape. They had been the wealthiest, the most powerful members of court; yet Fortune has brought them so low that they cry for the home they left behind and the life that had seemed so mean and base. It is while they are wandering, dejected and miserable, wishing that they had never left "the sweetnes of contented home" (947), that they happen upon the sleeping Lion, king of the jungle. The story, from this point, is familiar: The Ape steals the Lion's coat and usurps his throne, while the Fox acts as his counsellor; the pair then wreak havoc upon the animal kingdom until Jove must intervene; the Lion is awakened and returned to his throne; and the Fox and the Ape are brought to justice.

The moral of the "Tale" is made quite clear. Society is a frail and precarious system. Although the medieval world had
tried to ignore the fragility of man's relationship with his fellow man by developing an artificial system of responsibility, such as that represented by the three estates, the Renaissance recognized that such systems could only work in the ideal and that life on earth was far from idyllic. It should be recognized that, while the Fox and the Ape apparently disturb the peaceful harmony of society, only once do they act outside the normal behaviour of society. In the first scenario, when they pretend to be shepherds, they actually behave like thieves. Nevertheless, in their adventures in the other levels of society, the Fox and the Ape appear merely as an exaggeration of that estate's weaknesses and failings; they are no more disruptive than their peers. The design of "Mother Hubbard's Tale" clearly represents a satire on the three estates, but Spenser's satire is more complex. He contrasts the actual, disruptive view of society with an unattainable ideal of society as a peaceful, harmonious system. Spenser's satire works because one eventually realizes that the Fox and the Ape do not represent an unusually disruptive element in society, but that they stand for the average members of society whom one meets every day.

The question has often been asked why Spenser chose the Ape as the Fox's companion throughout the "Tale." In the original fables, Reynard the Fox is central, but the Ape is a relatively minor figure. Ernst Curtius' European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages may contain the answer. As Curtius explains, throughout medieval Latin literature the figure of the simia was "applied not only to persons but also to abstractions and artifacts which
assume the appearance of being something they are not" (539).

Spenser uses this metaphorical figure of the ape throughout the
"Tale." It is the Ape and not the Fox who most frequently disguises
himself as something he is not, whether it be a soldier, a priest,
a courtier, or a king. The Fox, on the other hand, always remains
the same, a conniving figure who uses the Ape as his agent. Together
the Fox and the Ape represent an exaggerated portrayal of the
disruptive elements within all levels of society, and they provide
a humourous picture of society's fraility.

"Mother Hubbards Tale" is a different form of the contemptus
mundi complaint from those found in Spenser's other poems; yet
the themes of worldly transience and vanity are common to all.
Society, like all man-made structures, is subject to decay and
mutability, perhaps even more so because its continued existence
depends solely upon the virtuous actions of each of its members.
Disruptive elements in society, such as those represented by the
Fox and the Ape, can easily cause the entire structure to collapse.

It has already been suggested, in Chapter One, how "Virgils
Gnat" may be seen as a de casibus complaint. The structure of
the poem, with its ghostly narrator, its tragic catalogue of fallen
heroes, and its resolution in the acknowledgement of the gnat's
sacrifice, places it within the traditions of de casibus literature.
Nevertheless, there are some questions which surround Spenser's
translation which need to be considered before we can fully understand
this work's place in the collection of Complaints. The first
question is how much of the original Latin poem contains the features
of de casibus literature and how much was introduced by Spenser.
The second is to explain the purpose of the apparently mock-heroic introduction to the gnats complaint, since this form of preamble is not common to other complaints.

Perhaps surprisingly, a close inspection of the original Latin Culex shows that the larger features of the de casibus complaint are present. Virgil's Culex introduces the gnat as the ghostly narrator; it contains the long catalogue of the shades of the underworld (the first group, which acts as a foreshadowing of the shepherd's fate, represents those friends who have killed individuals whom they should have cared for [Culex 231-57; "VG" 337-418]), and the second group contains examples of those virtuous shades who sacrificed their own lives for the life of another [Culex 258-338; "VG" 420-552]); and it ends with the shepherd's building of the monument to honour the gnat's great sacrifice. That Virgil's poem contains many of the features common to later de casibus complaints should not greatly surprise us, since, as the survey in Chapter Three has shown, both Greek and Latin literature contained strong elements of the complaint. Nevertheless, Spenser did add over two hundred lines to his translation of the Culex. As O. F. Emerson explains, many of Spenser's additions are in the descriptive passages, which "he often extends to give freer rein to his descriptive power" ("Spenser's Virgil's Gnat" 96). Yet there are several occasions when Spenser's additions seem to have been made so as to emphasize or introduce the poet's particular concerns for worldly mutability and vanity that appear in the other poems in the volume.

Before the actual ghostly monologue begins, Spenser introduces a more sinister atmosphere into the poem than Virgil had presented.
When the shepherd rests in the lovely glade, Spenser describes his state of mind and situation in much harsher terms than Virgil's description of the same scene:

Pastor, ut ad fontem densa requievit in umbra,
Mitum concepit projectus membra soporem
Ansius insidiis mulus: sed lentes in herbis
Securo pressos somno mandaverat artus.
Stratus humus dulcem capiebat corde quietum
Nis fors incertos tussisset ducere casus.
(printed in Variorum 553.157-62)7

Meanwhile, Spenser's translation seems to suggest that the shepherd's rest will be far less peaceful:

The whiles the Shepheard self tending his stocke,
Safe by the fountain side, in shade to rest,
Where gentle slumbrin sleep oppressed him,
Displaid on ground, and seized every limb.
(237-40, my emphasis)

The simple addition of the words "oppressed" and "seized" convey a sense of violence that is absent from the original poem. They suggest that the shepherd's rest is not peaceful, and they help to prepare us for the snake's attack in the following stanza.

As the Gnat's complaint begins, Spenser draws upon some of the conventions of de casibus tragedies, such as those found in the Mirror for Magistrates, which are not present in the Culex. When the Gnat first appears to the shepherd, Virgil tells us only that

7Many arguments have been raised over the probable edition of the Culex that Spenser would have used. The accepted opinion, however, is that the Dumaeus edition (1542) is the most likely version which Spenser would have seen. The complete Dumaeus Culex is printed in the Variorum, 550-8. I will use this edition of the poem, giving line references parenthetically in the text.
"effigies ad eum Culex devenit: et illi / Tristis ab eventu cecinit convicia mortis" (208-9). Spenser's first picture of the gnat not only contains more description, but it also introduces some common elements of de casibus complaint:

The image of that gnat appeard to him, 
And in sad tearmes gan sorrowfully weep, 
With greislie countenaunce and visage grim, 
Wailing the wrong which he had done of late, 
In stead of good hastning his cruell fate. (324-8)

The gnat appears weeping and wailing. His face shows the violence done to him, and his temper rails against the cruelty of Fortune. The appearance of the gnat's ghost in such a distraught state of mind would have been familiar to any reader of the Mirror and its numerous progeny. Although Virgil's Culex presents the same vision, it has none of the physical description of suffering that is a common feature of later tragic complaints.

At times Spenser makes no substantive changes in his translation from the original, and yet by translating, he makes the work all his own. His translation does more than transfer Virgil's Latin into English. As both Du Bellay and Sidney had directed, the true poet must do more: he must take over the whole body of the work and give it a new life. In "Virgils Gnat" Spenser follows this directive. When Virgil discusses the vicissitudes of man's life and the powers of Fortune, he does so in a straightforward manner:

Illae vices hominum testata est copia quondam, 
Ne quisquam propriae fortunae munere dives 
Iret inenectus coelum super. omne prope quaque 
Frangitur inridiae telo decus. (339-42)
Spenser translates this passage with a fair amount of accuracy; yet he also sees this as an opportunity to draw this poem within the larger context of the *Complaints* volume:

Well may appeare by proofe of their mischaunce,  
The chaungfull turning of mens slipperie state,  
That none, whom fortune freely doth aduaunce,  
Himselfe therefore to heauen should elevate;  
For loftie type of honour through the glaunce  
Of enuies dart, is downe in dust prostrate;  
And all that vaunts in worldly vanitie,  
Shall fall through fortunes mutabilitie. (553-60)

The four lines of the Latin text are fully translated in the first six lines of this stanza, but Spenser's two closing lines are more than just a tag to end the stanza or an addition demanded by the ottava rima rhyme scheme. This is the only passage in the *Goat* which discusses in a philosophic, rather than a narrative, manner the vagaries of Fortune and man's helplessness against them. It is also the passage which is closest in tone and language to the other poems in the volume. Its tone reminds one of the *contemptus mundi* passages in "Mivophtmos," "The Ruines of Time," and the *Visions*, while such phrases as "mens slipperie state," "loftie . . . honour," and "enuies dart" appear throughout the *Volume*. As well, here we notice that Spenser voices the two central themes of the *Complaints*—"worldly vanitie" and "mutabilitie."

Finally, at the end of the *Goat*’s monologue, Spenser expands upon Virgil's text in ways that remind the reader of the earlier

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*See for example: *RT* 42 "unsteadfast state," 197, "O trustlesse state of miserable men," 277 "highest honour shall aduaunce"; *VV* 168 "state most tickle and vnsure"; *VP* 85 "this tickle trustles state".*
sixteenth-century de casibus tales and suggest to us that Spenser saw the Culex as a complaint. The last speech of the gnat, in the Culex, presents the small creature's pain and sense of injustice, as well as a considerable amount of anger toward the shepherd:

Ergo iam sausam mortis, me dicere vinctae
Verberibus saevo congunt ab iudice poenae:
Cum mihi tu sis causa mal, nec conscius admis:
Nec tolerabilibus curis haec immemor audis:
Quae tamen ut vanis dimittens omnia ventis
Digredior numquam redivurus. tu cole fontes,
Et virides nemorum sylvas, et pasua laetus.
Et mea diffusas raptantur dicta per auras.
Eixit, et extrema tristis cum voce recessit. (376-84)

Spenser's translation is true to the original, while at the same time it contains descriptions which intensify the Gnat's suffering and emphasize the point that the Gnat's monologue is a complaint. This emphasis is created by using the word "complaint," and its cognates, throughout the passage, even though Virgil's text never suggests the term:

Me therefore thus the cruelie fiends of hell
Girt with long snakes, and thousand yron chaynes,
Through doome of that their cruelle judge, compell
With bitter torture and impatient paines,
Cause of my death, and just complaint to tel,
For thou art he, whom my poore ghost complaines
To be the author of her ill vnwares,
That careles hearst my intolerable cares.

Them therefore as bequeathing to the wind,
I now depart, returning to thee never,
And leaue this lamentable plaint behinde,
But doo thou haunt the soft downe rolling river,
And wilde greene woods, and fruitful pastures minde,
And let the flitting aire my vaine words seuer.
Thus hauing said, he heauily departed
With piteous criе, that anie would have smarke.
(625-40, my emphasis)
If, as Emerson suggests, "almost forty per cent of the poem" is Spenser's ("Spenser's Virgil's Gnat" 96); then clearly a significant percentage of his additions were made to emphasize the tone and language of complaint with which his sixteenth-century readers would have been familiar. The original structure of Virgil's Culex is in the form of a de casibus complaint, but Spenser's translation enriches the complaint traditions in the poem by adding ideas and phrases common to contemporary de casibus complaints and unites the "Gnat" with the rest of the works in the volume.

The second question concerning the apparent mockheroic opening of the "Gnat" still needs to be discussed. It goes without saying that Spenser's willingness to translate the Culex accurately made him include the heroic tone and style of Virgil's preamble, but why did Virgil begin his little trifle in such a grand manner? Part of the reason for the opening lines' incongruity may spring from the poem's dedication to the young Octavius, who, as the next emperor, deserved to be honoured with heroic verses, but who, as a young boy, still preferred the lightness of frivolous songs. Yet more importantly for the work as a whole, Virgil's references to heroic tales in the preamble later parallel his long account of ancient heroes in the Gnat's monologue, which intensifies the Gnat's valour from the very beginning of the poem. Simply by association, the Gnat's sacrifice to protect the shepherd is received with the same magnitude as Hector's sacrifice for Troy or Penelope's for Odysseus.

Spenser's decision to include the preamble in his translation may have been caused by situations and intentions similar to those
of Virgil. Spenser dedicated his "Gnat" to his former patron, the Earl of Leicester. In the preamble Spenser honours Leicester by intimating, through the subtilties of his text, that Leicester is Spenser's "Octavius." He carefully removes all suggestions that Octavius is a child, such as by adding the epithet "most dread (Octavius)" (34) to the fifth stanza and making the reference to the parenthetical "(thou sacred child)" (36) ambiguous. As well, through the incongruous tone of the preamble, Spenser is able to appear bold in his chastisement of his patron's injustice, while still protecting himself by reminding Leicester that "this Gnat's small Pome ... / Is but a jest" (5-6). Jest of not, Spenser, like Virgil, wanted his Gnat's actions to be viewed as heroic. When Spenser wrote his "Muoopmos," which is in part an imitation of the "Gnat," he remembers this opening sequence and introduces his small hero in epic proportions.

Spenser's translations of the "Gnat," "The Ruines of Rome," and the "Visions" of Du Bellay and Petrarch show his agreement with the teachings of Du Bellay that translation is a valuable preparation for writing the "new poetry." While remaining true to the original texts, he brings these diverse poems within the same spirit as his original works, by using common phrasing, highlighting common themes, and creating a tone which is serious and
thoughtful, but at the same time never falls victim to despair. The last three poems to be discussed, "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," "The Ruines of Time," and "Maiopolmos," are all indebted to the translations. Nevertheless, these works are more than just imitations; they show Spenser's willingness to experiment and to present himself as an advocate of the "new poetry."

It is interesting to note that, when Spenser composed his own works, he experimented with a new "mixed form" of the complaint. He seems to have selected from the various types of de contemptu mundi and de casibus poems those elements which emphasize the central themes of worldly transience and vanity that appear throughout the volume. At the same time, he also added some unique features; such as a more forceful image of the poet-narrator as the controlling figure in the poem and the inclusion of Ovidian tales to advance his narrative, which help to enliven some of the tired conventions of the medieval complaint. In the "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," he combines the form of the emblematic, contemptus mundi sonnet with the philosophy of de casibus works. "The Ruines of Time" opens with a traditional de casibus lament, but concludes with a complete reiteration of the poem's themes in contemptus mundi sonnets like those of the Visions. Finally, "Maiopolmos," like the intricate threads of the spider's web or the artful weaving

9Spenser's investigation of the sin of despair throughout his poetry, but particularly in The Faerie Queene, the Complaints, and Daphniada is a fascinating topic which lies outside the exact parameters of this study. It is the presence of despair that most significantly distinguishes Daphniada from the Complaints, for in that poem, both the subject and the speaker are deeply engulfed in despair.
of a tapestry, intermingles the forms and themes of both de contemptu mundi and de casibus traditions into a totally new form of Renaissance complaint. Looked upon in conjunction with each other, these three experimental poems show the amount of success Spenser achieved in his attempt to revitalize the tired traditions of the complaint. The measurement of success is based upon the poet's ability to integrate fully the two forms of complaint—de contemptu mundi and de casibus—into a single, unified poem. Spenser's experiments with the form of the complaint show his belief that this medieval genre could be updated, thereby making it responsive to the needs of his contemporary readers.

In "The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," Spenser's invention is more limited than in the other two poems of this final group. The poet restricted his Muse by closely following the emblematic form of Du Bellay's and Petrarch's Visions and by limiting the sequence's purpose to a study of the "low degree" (164). Nevertheless, within these restrictions Spenser did find room for experimentation. As has been widely recognized, "The Worlds Vanitie" is the first sequence of sonnets written in the form of the Amoretti. The linked rhyme scheme of the three quatrains in the Spenserian sonnet allows for a greater unity of thought and form than is found in the Visions of either Du Bellay or Petrarch. And the closing rhymed couplet of this sonnet form also gives the poems their proverbial tone, a tone which is also evident in the Amoretti.

Nevertheless, for this study, Spenser's most interesting experiment is the mixing of the form of the de contemptu mundi vision with the philosophy of de casibus complaints. Several
features suggest initially to the reader that "The Worlds, Vanitie" is a sequence of <i>contemptus mundi</i> poems. The first is the work's title since worldly vanity has been the central theme of <i>contemptus mundi</i> literature throughout literary history. Secondly, Spenser's close imitation of the visionary and emblematic sonnet form of the "Visions of Bekyll" and the "Visions of Petrarch," and the placement of the three sequences together as a group at the end of the volume, have highlighted the similarities between the poems. Thirdly, the sequence's opening sonnet introduces the common meditative tone of <i>contemptus mundi</i>:

One day, whiles that my daylie cares did sleepe,
My spirit, shakynge off her earthly prison,
Began to enter into meditation deepe
Of things exceeding reach of common reason;
Such as this age, which all good is season,
And all that humble is and meane debace,
Hath brought forth in her last declining season,
Griefe of good minde, to see goodness disgraced.
On which when as my thought was throrghly placed,
Unto my eyes strange shewes presented were,
Picturing that, which I in minde embraced,
That yet those sights empassion me full here.
Such as they were (faire Ladie) take in worth,
That when time serves, may bring things better forth. (1-14)

Without any of the religious imagery noted by Louis Martz as the main ingredient of the late sixteenth and seventeenth-century divine meditations (The Poetry of Meditation), this poem suggests a distinctive process of meditation. The speaker informs us that he has removed himself from his daily cares, and that his spirit has forsaken its "earthly prison." He focuses on the purpose of his distress (lines 5-8) until his thought is "throrghly placed." It is at this precise point that his visions appear and emblazon themselves upon his minde and heart (10-12). Martz's summary of
the "composition" of a meditation shows how close Spenser is to this devotional activity in the writing of his "Visions."

There are three different ways of performing this imaginary "composition." The first is to imagine oneself present in the very spot where the event occurred. . . . The second is, to imagine the events as occurring before your eyes. . . . And the third is performed when persons "imagin that everie one of these things whereupon they meditate passeth within their owne harte." (30)

The focus of Spenser's meditation, presented in lines 5-8, is the common concerns of contemptus mundi—that goodness is forgotten, that the humble and the poor are mistreated, and that the world is declining to its end. His emblems, which portray tiny flies, birds, and fish disturbing or destroying much larger and more powerful creatures, seem to agree with the idea of contemptus mundi that true safety lies in lowly positions and in scorn of ambitious action. Nevertheless, this concept is not the exact theme of "The World is Vanity."

In their philosophy, Spenser's "Visions" show a greater influence of de casibus thinking than the similarly designed Visions of Du Bellay or Petrarch. None of the small creatures, even though they appear inconsequential, lies down and accepts its humble position. The "Brize," with his "angrie sting" threatens and brings to vexation the mighty Bull (2.24,25); the "Tedula," as planned by Nature, does not hesitate to clean the teeth of the savage Crocodile (3.35); the "simple Scarabee" destroys the home of the Eagle, "the kingly Bird" (4.44,45); the small sword-fish kills the "huge Leviathan" (5.62); a spider poisons "an hideous Dragon" (6.71); an ant drives an Elephant to madness (8); and the little
fish "men call Remora" sinks a magnificently built ship (9.122). As has suggested, the falling of the great creatures by the attacks of the small shows "the limitations of power" (Complaints: 255), but power and ambition are not in themselves scorned. What is scorned is the supposed discrepancy of power, between the great and the small (12.160). This idea is less representative of contemptus mundi than it is of de casibus thinking. Spenser's closing sonnet emphasizes the de casibus philosophy of the sequence:

When these sad sights were overpast and gone,
My spright was greatly moved in her rest,
With inward ruth and dear affection,
To see so great things by so small distress:
Thenceforth I gan in my engrieved brest
To scorne all difference of great and small,
Sith that the greatest often are oppress,
And vnawares doe into daunger fall.
And ye, that read these ruines tragical
Learne by their losse to loue the low degree,
And if that fortune chaunce you vp to call
To honours seat, forget not what you be:
For he that of himselfe is most secure,
Shall finde his state most fickle and vnseure.

"The Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" opens with a statement of contemptus mundi thinking and closes with de casibus. Perhaps the subtle distinctions and similarities between these two forms of complaint are less skillfully handled here than in "The Ruines of Time" or "Mudopotmoes," but even in its rougher state, Spenser has shown how mixing of the forms can add a greater richness and complexity to the traditional designs of complaint.

Like the "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," "The Ruines of Time" is a poem of mixed kinds. As the various commentaries presented in Chapter Two have shown, it is at once an elegy for Philip Sidney and a panegyric to the Dudley family; it is, at the same time,
a complaint which follows in form and in philosophy both de casibus and de contemptu mundi traditions. The apparently divergent purposes of the poem as elegy, panegyric, and complaint have led critics, such as Stein, to argue that "The Ruines" is not unified, but "that it consists of four loosely articulated sections" (35).

Nevertheless, more recent critics, such as William Nelson and A. Leigh DeNeef, have presented more favourable views of the poem. Nelson shows how the numerical stanzaic scheme synthesizes the poem's apparently disparate parts, and DeNeef argues that "The Ruins" is indeed unified by Spenser's focus on the function of poetry" (30). DeNeef suggests that Spenser unifies the poem by forcing the reader "to accept an analogous and metaphorlic relationship between man and society by making Verlaine's lament that no poets have praised her. identical to her lament that no one has eulogized the Dudleys" (31).10 Nevertheless, another element brings together the apparently diverse aims of the poem—Spenser's thorough application of the various forms of complaint. For example, the analogy between Verlaine's lament for her fallen city and the later laments for the fallen figures of Leicester and Sidney are derived not only from a "metaphorlic relationship" but from a generic relationship between two classical forms of complaint—the historical lament

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10 I fully agree with DeNeef's observations on the importance of the "function of poetry" as a unifying force in "The Ruines" and particularly with his argument that Spenser honours Sidney by placing the poem "in a carefully defined Sidnejan context" (30). DeNeef's attention to the poem has significantly raised its value in the eyes of many critics. My discussion of "The Ruines" is indebted to DeNeef's thoughtful analysis.
for fallen cities and the ritual lament for dead or fallen heroes.

As we discussed in Chapter Three, these two distinct forms of ancient lament became conflated in later forms of classical literature, such as in Euripides' 'Trojan Women', where the mournful laments of Hecuba and the other women over the death of Hector are transferred to laments for the fate of the city of Troy. "The Ruines of Time" participates in this classical complaint tradition. Verlaine's lament over the ruin of Verulamium is analogous to the later laments over the death of Sidney and the members of the Dudley family.

The forgotten city and the forgotten heroes both represent the ravages of Time and the inability of society to defend itself against them. The ruin of the ancient city, which as DeNeef suggests "by implication" represents the ruin of London (34) or more generally, contemporary society, parallels the ruin of the Dudley family, through the deaths of Leicester (the patron of poetry) and Sidney (the poet), which "by implication" represents the ruin of poetry. Spenser's parallel analogy between actual loss (Verulamium and the Dudleys) and representative loss (London and poetry) unites the three apparently divergent subjects of the poem—the lament for the fallen city, the lament for the fallen Dudley family, and the lament for the fallen state of poetry.

Spenser's adaptations of the classical forms of complaint help to establish the interrelationship of various subjects of "The Ruines," but the greatest use of complaint traditions comes in the mixing of de casibus and de contemptu mundi features in the poem. The overall structure of "The Ruines" is indebted to both forms. The opening dream vision and the "Genius" of Verlaine's
lament, as was discussed in Chapter One, follow the pattern of the de casibus complaint; and the twelve "tragick Pageants" (490) which close the poem imitate Du Bellay's style of emblematic, contemptus mundi sonnets.

Yet the structural features of complaint are not the only indication of the poem's participation in the genre. Throughout the poem Spenser emphasizes the major themes of complaint, and the repetition of these themes helps to bind the poem together. When we are first shown the site of the ancient city of Verlaine, we are given a view of total desolation:

It chanceoned me on day beside the shore
Of silvery streaming Thamesis to bee,
Nigh where the goodly Verlaine stood of yore,
Of which there now remaines no memorie,
Nor any little monument to see,
By which the travailler, that fares that way,
This once was she, may warned be to say. (1-7)

Nevertheless, when one compares this vision of the city with an historical account, such as that given by William Camden in the Britannia, there are some minor, yet noticeable, differences:

From Hertford twelve miles Westward, stood Verulamium, a City in times past very much renowned, and as greatly frequented: . . . although there remaineth nothing of it to bee seene, beside the few remaines of ruined wallis, the chekered pavements, and peeces of Roman Coine other whiles digged up there. (408)

Camden provides evidence for the city's ruined state; yet he notes that there are a few artifacts left to remind us of Verulamium's former greatness. For Spenser, however, even these slight reminders of the city's past would detract from his vision of its complete annihilation. Because of Spenser's picture of Verlaine's total
desolation, even though his description is not historically accurate.
the reader, in the first image of the poem, is graphically shown
Time's destructive powers over all earthly creations.

Verlaine's lament over the fallen and forgotten state of her
city is voiced by means of several common themes of complaint:

O vaine worlds glorie, and vnstedfast state
Of all that lives, on face of sinfull earth,
Which from their first vntill their utmost date
Tast no one hower of happines of merth,
They crying creep out of their mothers wombs,
So wailing backe go to their wofull toomb.

Why then dooth flesh, a bubble glas of breath,
Hunt after honour and advauncement vaine,
And rear a trophhee for devouring death,
With so great labour and long lasting paine,
As if his daies for ever should remaine?
Sith all that in this world is great or gaine,
Doth as a vapour vanish, and decaye. (42-56)

Verlaine, in her near hysterical condition, speaks with the voice
of doom: all man's life is woe; his attempts at glory and fame
are futile in the light of imminent death; and the world is changeable
and untrustworthy. Yet these melancholic pronouncements are not
restricted to Verlaine's lament for her fallen city. When she
begins her eulogy for the Dudley family, again she speaks in the
language of complaint:

O trustlesse state of miserable men,
That builde your bliss on hope of earthly thing,
And vainly thinke your selues halfe happie then,
When painted faces with smooth flattering
Doo fawne on you, and your wide praises sing,
And when the courting masker louteth lowe,
Him true in heart and trustie to you traw.

All is but fained, and with oaker dice,
That euerie shower will wash and wipe away,
All things doo change that vnder heauen abide,
And after death all friendship doth deaie.
Therefore what ever man bearest worldlie swaye,
Living, on God, and on the selfe relie;
For when thou diest, all shall with thee die.
(197-210)

These lines, with their complaints against flatterers and the
vanity of court life and their evident lack of trust in the eternity
of friendship, remind the reader of the poems in the Paradise
of Daintie Devices. They also are reminiscent of the satire
against the court found in "Mother Hubbards Tale."

The associations between the Dudleys and the many
sixteenth-century poets who were supported by them brings the
speaker in mind of the present state of poetry. With the deaths
of so many members of the noble Dudley family, the patronage system
could be seriously weakened, particularly since it appears that
the current leaders at court are not as concerned with advancing
the poetic arts. And so the poem's speaker turns to the common
images of complaint to warn mortal men of their fate:

What bothebuth it to have beene rich alioe?
What to be great? what to be gracious;
When after death no token doth suruie,
Of former being in this mortall hous,
But sleepe in dust dead and inglorious,
Like beast, whose breath but in his nostrils is,
And hath no hope of happiness or bliss. (351-7)

This reminder of man's mortality is immediately followed by a
carefully placed suggestion that poetry is the only safeguard
against total oblivion:

Provide therefore (ye Princes) whilst ye live,
That of the Muses ye may friended bee,
Which unto men eternitie do glue;
For they be daughters of Dames memorie,
And love the father of eternitie,
And do those men in golden thrones repose,
Whose merits they to glorifie do chose. (365-78)

These examples show how the three subjects of "The Ruines" are drawn together by the common theme of complaint. Nevertheless, this constant repetition of woe and distress would have overpowered the poem if Spenser had not woven a second thread throughout it: Hope that the world and mankind need not fall victim to "black oblivions rust" (98) is given by several references to the immortalizing powers of poetry. The Genius of Verlaine realizes that her great city is gone forever; yet she still hopes for the compassionate and life-giving powers of poetry that will allow her to rest in peace:

Yet it is comfort in great languishment,
To be bemoaned with compassion kind.
And mitigates the anguish of the mind. (159-61)

So many members of the Dudley family, and Sidney in particular, are dead, but because of poetry they shall be immortal:

So there thou liuest, singing euermore,
And here thou liuest, being ever song.
Of vs, which liuing loved thee afore,
And now thee worship,mongst that blessed throng
Of heauenlie Poets and Heroes strong.
So thou both here and there immortal art,
And euerie where through excellent desart. (337-43)

All men, if they live virtuously and if they honour poetry, shall live for eternity. Stone monuments will be destroyed by the passage of Time, but poetic monuments last forever:

All such vaine monuments of earthlie masse,
Deeour'd of Time, in time to nought doe passe.
But fame with golden wings aloft doth flie,
Above the reach of ruinous decay,
Then who so will with vertuous deeds as gay
To mount to heaven, on Pegasus must ride,
And with sweete Poets verse be glorifie. (419-27)

This same two-fold concentration upon the themes of complaint
and the function of poetry is a part of "The Ruines of Rome,"
the poem which influenced this work. Yet whereas Du Bellay seemed
doubtful that poetry could offer immortality to mortal men, Spenser,
with Sidney as his model, is confident about poetry's immortalizing
powers.

The same concerns for worldly transience and vanity and the
function of poetry are repeated in the visions which close the
poem. After Verlame has finished her long and complicated lament,
the narrator lies stunned on the ground. He is greatly moved
by what he has heard, but he is not sure that he fully understands
the Genius of Verlame's message. In order to simplify the moral
of "The Ruines of Time," Spenser closes the poem with twelve "tragick
Pageants" (490), using the form of the emblem which was most popular
in sixteenth-century England and which he had already mastered
in his "Visions."

The pageants are divided into two sets of six double rhyme
royal stanzas. The first set presents emblems of earthly mortality;
the second series presents images of poetic immortality, and partic-
ularly the immortality of Sidney and his verses. The unity of
each of these pageants is achieved by making the last rhyme of
the first stanza the first rhyme of the second.11 Spenser's experimental use of rhyme royal stanzas, although similar in purpose to the emblematic sonnets of the "Visions" and "The Ruines of Rome," is ultimately less successful because, whereas the single emblem of the "Visions" often show the beauty of a structure and its destruction almost simultaneously, the pageants divide into two separate emblems. The first, in the opening stanza, presents the "Idoll," the "Towre," the "Paradize,"12 or the "Bridge" as beautiful, nearly perfect structures. Usually the image is shown without the slightest hint that the object will soon be in ruins.13 The second stanza then presents the destruction of these earthly objects. This bifurcation of the emblems effects the pageants' dramatic intensity. Rather than transfixing "in one instant events which take place in time," as Freeman suggests the emblematist should do (21), the emblems of "The Ruines" present two separate, static pictures. They are still emblems, but they have lost the dramatic effect of graphically presenting the earth's vanity and frailty within a single startling image.

The two closing rhyme royal stanzas of the first series act as a bridge between the visions of earthly mortality and those

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11The rhyme scheme of these pageants follow this pattern: ababbc cdcdde.

12It is interesting to notice that sonnet 3, "Then did I see a pleasant Paradize," is a short emblematic portrayal of P. Q. 3.6.29–54.

13Only sonnet 2, "Next unto this a statefull Towre appeared," suggests anything less than perfection in its opening stanza, for here the tower is seen to have been built on sand.
of poetic immortality, and show how closely these poems are involved
in the ideas of contemptus mundi. The narrator is greatly disturbed
by these visions, so much so that he finds himself "Distracted
twixt fear and pity" (579). An anonymous voice is heard, but
rather than offering comforting words of consolation, it pronounces
a strict contemptus mundi moral:

Behold (said it) and by enexample see,
That all is vanity and griefe of minde,
No other comfort in this world can be,
But hope of heauen, and heart to God inclinde;
For all the rest must needs be left behinde.
(582-6)

Nevertheless, the six emblems which follow do offer a form of
consolation, but not in any doctrinal manner. Following the
model of Les Antiquitez and supporting his own desire to honour
Sidney, Spenser's final visions offer the consolation of poetic
immortality. The emblems vary between images representative of
Sidney and his poetry—the swan, the harp, the Virgin in her golden
bed (which possibly represents Stella), who now may join her
"Bridegrome" (640), and the knight— and images of death—the
"Coffer made of Heben wood" (618) and the ark containing Sidney's
ashes. This last emblem, of the ark, responds to the question
which Spenser had raised earlier in the poem, "For how can mortall
immortality" glim?" (413). Through poetry, like that which Sidney
wrote, a man may become immortal. In this emblem the powers of
earth and those of heaven struggle over who shall possess the
ashes of Sidney. If earth were to win, the ashes would become
part of the earth, and Sidney would be forgotten. If the heavens
were to win, the spirit of Sidney would live for eternity. Sidney's
ashes are, of course, taken up into heaven, where he is given
"a second life" (669). Time can destroy and can devour the things
of this earth, and once they are gone, Time can obliterate our
memories of them. However, in this poem, Spenser seems to believe
that poetry is the only man-made object which can enact the Ruin
of Time.

So far Spenser's experimentations with the mixed form of
complaint has been only partially successful. In the "Visions"
the form of contemptus mundi almost overpowers the subtle uses
of de casibus thinking in the sequence. In "The Ruines of Time,"
Spenser was unable to intermingle the two forms of de casibus
and de contemptu mundi, so that for many readers the poem has
appeared disjointed and haphazard in its construction. Nevertheless,
in "Muliopotmos" Spenser successfully combines the two dominant
forms of complaint. The outcome is a totally original Renaissance
complaint.

As the critical survey in Chapter Two has shown, "Muliopotmos"
has received the most extensive and varied scholarly attention
of any of the Complaints. Earlier criticism focused almost exclusively
upon the poem's apparent political allegory as readers tried to
identify the characters of Clarion and Aragnoll with numerous
Elizabethan courtiers. Nevertheless, in 1956, with the publication
of Don Cameron Allen's article on the poem, a move toward a more
universal allegorical interpretation of "Muliopotmos" was started.
In recent years articles by Judith Dundas, Franklin Court, Judith
Anderson, and Ronald Bond have provided new insights into the
poem and have shown a more serious consideration of its particular
qualities. Bond's article, which interprets "Muriopotmos" as "an allegorical story about the workings of envy" (145), is most helpful for my consideration of the poem as a Renaissance complaint.

We have already discussed, in Chapter One, some of the structural features which distinguish "Muriopotmos" as a Renaissance complaint, and particularly Clarion's appearance as a type of de casibus tragic hero. Unlike his medieval counterparts, however, Clarion is neither a tyrant nor an over-ambitious prince. He is perhaps a bit free-spirited and somewhat proud of his physical appearance, but these are not serious offenses. Nevertheless, as our readings of Boccaccio and Petrarch have shown, such apparently minor weaknesses could prove hazardous. To oppose slothfulness is a virtue, and this attribute is defended by Boccaccio in his story of Alcibiades' noble spirit:

> When the soul is a great one, not weakened by bodily sloth, it cannot be restrained in the little prison of the breast. It goes out, and its magnitude fills the entire world. Easily it transcends the stars, and, driven by fire, it burns with this sublime fire. Spurred by hope for the great things, the soul regards laziness with horror. (102)

Spenser's picture of Clarion is much like this; he too cannot bear to be idle:

> The fierce young fire, in whom the kindly fire Of lustfull youth began to kindle fast, Did much disdain to subject his desire To loathsome sloth, or houre in ease to wast. (33-6)

However, when this desire not to be idle causes one to become overly ambitious or discontented with one's lot in life (as were the Fox and the Ape in "Mother Hubberds Tale"), then a virtue
The woods, the rivers, and the meadowes green,
With his aire-cutting wings he measured wide,
Nor did he leave the mountaines bare unseen,
Nor the ranke grassie fences delights entwined.
But none of these, how ever sweete they beene,
Note please his fancies, nor him cause t’abide;
His choice full sense with euery change doth fill.
No common things may please a wavering wit. (152-60)

Although Spenser seems to forgive, or at least to ignore, Clarion’s ambitiousness here, as Boccaccio forgave Alcibiades his, the suggestion has been made that Clarion possesses one of the common faults of de casibus heroes. He is ambitious, and his ambition has led him to discontentment.

As well as showing a Renaissance unwillingness to be content or idle, Clarion’s ambitions take him, like Petrarch in his Secretum, along the "many crooked ways" and dangerous "bypaths" of the active life (192):

For he so swift and nimble was of flight,
That from this lower tract he dar’d to stir
Up to the cloudes, and thence with pines light,
To mount aloft unto the Christall ski,
To view the workmanship of heavens height,
Whence downe descending he along would flye
Upon the streaming rivers, sport to finde;
And oft would dare to tempt the troublous windes.
(41-8)

Petrarch recognizes that to choose such a life is hazardous and that it would be much safer to "follow the straight path of the way of salvation" (192). Like Clarion’s desire not to be idle, the choice of the active life was not a sin, particularly for the Renaissance man, but precautions had to be taken. In the Secretum St. Augustine warns Petrarch that pride can easily consume
the man who searches for fame and glory in the active world. Clarion, however, receives no such warning, or if he does, he ignores it.

Evidence of Clarion's pride is shown in his concern for his "furnitures" (56). His costume might be considered ostentatious, even by the standards of Queen Elizabeth's court, and it causes a great amount of envy among the court Ladies. Nevertheless, a more damning example of Clarion's pride is his belief that he is "Lord of all the works of Nature":

What more felicitie can fall to creature,  
Than to enjoy delight with libertie,  
And to be Lord of all the works of Nature,  
To rain in th'aire from earth to highest skie,  
To feed on flowers, and weeds of glorious feature,  
To take what ever thing doth please the eye  
Who rest not pleased with such happiness,  
Well worthie he to taste of wretchednes. (209-16)

The final proverb which closes this stanza reminds us of our earlier observation that Clarion is not content even though he possesses such freedom. The narrator's warning, then, should be clear to us, even if it is not to Clarion. Immediately following this warning comes the long contemptus mundi passage which suggests to the reader that indeed Clarion's "cruell fate is woven even now" (235):

But what on earth can long abide in state?  
Or who can him assure of happy day;  
Sith morning faire may bring fowle evening late,  
And least mishap the most blisse alter may;  
For thousand perills lie in close await  
About vs daylie, to worke our decay;  
That none, except a God, or God him guide,  
May them auoyde, or remedie procure.

And whatso heavens in their secret doome  
Ordained haue, how can raize fleshly-wight  
Forecast, but it must needs to issue come?
The sea, the aire, the fire, the day, the night,
And th'armes of their creatures all and some
Do serve to them, and with importune might
Warre against vs the vassals of their will.
Who than can save, what they dispose to spill?
(217-32)

As Bond suggests, Clarion's pride may be the cause of "heauens avengement" (240); which is foreshadowed in these contemptus mundi moralizings and is embodied in the figure of Aragonill.

Is "Muipotmo", then, an example of Renaissance "tragic retribution," which Farnham believed dominated the *Mirror for Magistrates?* Clarion, although he is not a wicked or even sinful individual, does embody the common weaknesses of the Renaissance man who is only concerned with worldly advancement and pleasures. If, as Allen suggests, Clarion is an allegorical presentation of the soul, then he is like the soul described by Boccaccio which is "sometimes deceavd" and "though itself right, . . . is dragged downwards by the weight of the body" (102). The narrator at first suggests that Clarion may be the cause of his own destruction:

Suspition of friend, nor feare of foe,
That hazarded his health, had he at all,
But walkt at will, and wander'd too and fro,
In the pride of his freedome principall:
Little wist he his fatall future woe,
But was secure, the liker he to fall.
He likest is to fall into mischaunce,
That is regards his governaunce. (377-84)

This moral pronouncement, placed in the familiar terms of de casibus complaint, as Bond has also recognized, lies very close to the moral which concludes the "Visions of the Worlds Vanitiie" the next poem in the volume: "For he that of himselfe is most secure,
/ Shall finde his state most fickle and unsure" (167-8). Yet
Spenser does not end the poem with this moral indictment of the tiny fly. As Peck has discovered in his study of the Mirror for Magistrates, the Renaissance was not willing to ignore the constant power of Fortune and Fate in men's lives. Spenser, as well, ultimately decides that Clarion's life rests in other hands than his own:

The luckles Clarion, whether cruell Fate,
Or wicked Fortune faultles him misled,
Or some vngracious blast out of the gate
Of Aegles raine perforce him drose on bed,
Was (O sad hap and howre unfortunat e)
With violent swift flight forth caried
Into the cursed cobweb, which his for
Had framed for his finall overthrow. (417-24)

This other-worldly resolution to the poem's tragedy draws "Mulopotmos" more closely to the rest of the Complaints volume. In "Mulopotmos" Spenser achieved a complete integration of the forms and philosophy of de casibus and de contemptus mundi complaint which he had not successfully done in the other "mixed" poems. Here the reader cannot divide the poem into sections which follow one form and others which follow the second. The two styles of complaint are woven together, like Pallas's tapestry, in order to present one complete investigation into the problems of worldly vanity and mutability. The most striking difference between "Mulopotmos" and the other poems in the Complaints volume is the poem's tone.

Although it contains grave moralizing on the themes of contemptus mundi, it avoids the melancholy of the "Visions." And while maintaining the patterns and characteristics of a de casibus tragedy, it has none of the form's morbidity or goriness. It can be seen that Spenser is playing with the serious conventions of complaint while still maintaining many of those conventions. His hero falls
to a tragic death, like the heroes of *The Mirror for Magistrates*, but we should remember that the poem's hero is a butterfly, and that his death occurs when he is captured in a spider's web. To many readers "Mupoporia" is still a "droll jejune d'esprit"; yet it is a complaint, and its themes are as serious as those of the "Visions," "The Ruines of Time," or "The Teares of the Muses."

The generic unity of Spenser's *Complaints* can no longer be denied. Each of the nine poems participates in a significant way in the major traditions of complaint literature which were formalized in the Middle Ages and adapted and transformed in the early Renaissance. As well as following the native tradition of *de casibus* complaint established by the *Fall of Princes* and the *Mirror for Magistrates*, Spenser was greatly influenced by the French style of *contemptus mundi* complaint used by Marot and Du Bellay. The variety of works in the *Complaints* allows the reader to understand the extent of Spenser's knowledge of and appreciation for the genre. As well, the length of time in which these works were composed—some having been written (or translated) when Spenser was still a schoolboy, others possibly being composed at about the time of *The Shepheardes Calender*, and others being written concurrently with *The Faerie Queene*—shows Spenser's life-long interest in the complaint. The final chapter of this study considers the appearance of complaint in other works of Spenser's canon and investigates the particular importance of the theme of mutability for his poetic philosophy. As has been suggested here, mutability is a central issue to the *Complaints*, but Spenser's continued
pursuit of a way to accept the world's inevitable mutability and decay is a major element of his poetry which we need to understand. To attempt to do so without considering the Complaints seems senseless. Yet before we move to this discussion of the theme of mutability, I would like to propose a second way of seeing the unity of the Complaints volume.

Returning the poems to their original sequence, we are now able briefly to consider a structural unity to the Complaints, which highlights the three major subjects of lamentation in the collection—the degeneration of poetry, the degeneration of society, and the vanity of worldly endeavors. The nine complaints can be divided into three groups of three. "The Ruines of Time," "The Teares of the Muses," and "Virgils Gnat" form the first group whose central subject is the degeneration of poetry. The second group includes the middle poems, "Mother Hubbards Tale," "The Ruines of Rome," and "Methopotmos," which contain a reflection upon the subject of the degeneracy of society. The final group is made up of the Vision poems, "The Visions of the World Vanity," "The Visions of Bellox," and "The Visions of Petrarch," whose obvious focus is found in the title of the first poem, worldly vanity.

The first group is clearly concerned with the subject of poetry (and the related financial system of patronage). "The Ruines of Time," although it also considers the universal problem of the "worlds ruine," with its overt references to Sidney and Leicester, strikes the predominant chord for the group. "The Teares of the Muses" follows with its nine laments on the fallen
condition of man and poetry. "Virgil's Gnat," although it contains no overt references to the degeneration of poetry, is associated with the other poems in this group by its dedication to Leicester and its conclusion. When the shepherd builds his memorial to the gnat, he uses three forms of immortalization—an earthly memorial (the stone tomb), a living memorial (the flowers), and a divine memorial (the epitaph). This symbolic act of immortalizing the gnat's heroism is representative of the powers of poetry as they have been discussed in the other poems of this group.

The social satire of "Mother Hubbard's Tale" opens the second group again with a strong statement of purpose—the anti-social behaviour of the Fox and the Ape disrupts the structure of all time, status and shows the fragility of all social systems. "The Burials of Rome" shifts the focus from the citizens of a society to the city itself. Rome as the birthplace of Western society (more than the cities of Greece for the Elizabethans who had closer ties to Latin than to Hellenic culture), was the model for modern cities. The degeneration of Rome symbolized the inevitable degeneration of all contemporary cities and cultures. Finally, "Milesiatus," with its concern for the "workings of envy" (Bond, 145) shows how a lack of contentment and a jealousy of other's prosperity can destroy the harmonious nature of society.

The final group of three vision sequences can easily be seen as a unit. Not only are the poems similar in their investigation of the theme of worldly vanity, but they are also similar in form (the sonnet) and design (the emblem).

As well as this tripartite grouping of the nine Complaints,
there is some linking between the poems of each group which helps
to bind the entire volume together. Some poems are linked because
they are imitations of other poems in the volume—"The Ruines
of Lime" with the "Ruines of Rome," "Virgil's Gnat" with "Hippopotamuses".
(This condition is also true of "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie"
and the other visions, but since these works are in the same group,
they are already "linked." "Virgil's Gnat," "Hippopotamuses," "Mother
Hubbard's Tale," and "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" are linked
by their concern with animals. And finally, the form of the
and all the "Visions."

A possible stumbling-block to this proposed structural unity
of the Complaints is the question of the separate title-pages
which were printed with the original 1591 edition of the volume.
The title pages appear before "The Tears of the Muses," "Mother
Hubbard's Tale," and "Hippopotamuses" (in other words, one poem from
my proposed first group, and two from the second). It has generally
been accepted that these separate title pages were prepared so
that these three poems could be published and presented privately
to the three "Spenser" cousins, whether or not a separate publication
of the poems proved feasible. As not known. Nevertheless, the
existence of the title pages should not interfere with any proposal
of the volume's unity, either generic or structural, since the
poems were published as we see them now in 1591.

Stein's earlier observation that the Complaints contains
a number of diverse and unrelated poems, which require "separate
consideration" (3) can no longer be accepted. The poems in the
volume are diverse in form, in rhyme scheme, in date of composition, 
in tone, and in style; but they are related. These nine poems 
share a similar genre, a similar philosophy; a similar purpose, 
and many similar themes. One of these themes, the world's mutability, 
fascinated Spenser for his entire poetic career. An investigation 
into this theme's development in the Complaints and in Spenser's 
canon is the subject of the final chapter.
Chapter Six

Time, Mutability, and the Thematic Unity of the Complaints

Spenser's attitude toward the world's mutability is like
that of his contemporaries. His serious nature saw behind the
passing of the seasons, the overthrow of governments, and the
ravages of war, disease, and "devouring Time" the weakness and
impermanence of all worldly creations. A great part of his literary
career was devoted to an investigation into the nature of mutability,
and its power over mankind. We can see his concern for this idea
in his earliest publications. In the emblems of transitoriness
found in the poems he translated for the Theatre for Worldlings
and in the seasonal structure of The Shepheardes Calender, Spenser
first began to consider mutability as a major force in the world's
existence. Later, as he composed many of the Complaints and began
to write The Faerie Queene, he expanded his investigation so that
he considered the physical, emotional and psychological effects
of mutability upon man and his world. More so than in The Faerie
Queene, the shorter and more varied poems of the Complaints volume
allowed him to consider mutability's powers from diverse angles,
an opportunity that was not always available to him in the writing
of his epic because the structure of that work was more restrictive.
Yet even in The Faerie Queene, such as in the description of the
Garden of Adonis (3.6.29-48) and the Pream to Book Five, Spenser
reflected upon his concern for mutability's apparent control over
all earthly things. Finally, The Mutabilitie Cantos present us
with a resolution to Spenser's life-long concern over the world's
transience by considering mutability not as a part of the world's
failure and degeneration, but rather as a symbol of the world's progress and regenerative powers.

Earlier, in his Complaints, spurred on by his reading of the Pindaric poets, Spenser had considered the immortalizing powers of poetry as a force strong enough to control Mutability's powers over the world. Nevertheless, when we reach the Cantos, although poetry is not rejected as a possible force against mutability, we realize that the poet's role is subdued and a higher power is called upon to halt Mutability's rebellion. Spenser's works do not show a clear, chronological development of his attitudes toward mutability. He is closest to his vision of "etern in mutabilitie" (F. Q. 3.6.47) in the cyclical structure of The Shepheardes Calender, and over ten years later, in the woeful laments of the Genius of Verlaine, he is farthest from it. Yet by considering his various perceptions of mutability's powers in the Complaints, Spenser not only unites the apparently diverse aims of the poems, but he also begins to gain a clearer understanding of the world's apparent impermanence and its "owne perfeccion" (Cantos 7.58).

As much as any previous age, the sixteenth century was conscious of the powers of mutability. Along with the traditional signs—the changing of the seasons, the rise and fall of princes and magistrates, the passing of day into night and night into day—there were new and strange appearances of mutability in the systems and institutions which had always seemed immutable. The Nova of 1572 and the comets which appeared in the skies above England in the 1570's raised doubts in the minds of the Elizabethans that the upper sphere.
of stars was as fixed and unvariable as Aristotle had taught. 1

And the years of debate among Church leaders (both between Protestant and Catholic and between the various sects of Protestantism) put into question the most universal and supposedly unchangeable tenets of Christianity. These various signs of mutability, both below and above the lunar sphere, heightened the Renaissance man's interest in the nature of mutability. The draft of an essay which appears in Harvey's Letter-Book, which may have been inspired by his reading of early versions of some of the Complaints, offers some indication of how even the most learned Elizabethans were conscious of Mutability's great powers:

There is a variable course and revolution of all things. Summer gettith an upperhande of wynter, and wynter agayn of summer. Nature herselfe is changeable, and most of all delighted with vanitie; and arte, after a sort her ape, conformith herselfe to the like mutabilitie. The moone waxith and wanieth; the sea ebbith and flowith; and as flowers so ceremonyes, lawes, fasshions, customs, trades of livinge, sciences, devises, and all things else in a manner floorishe there tympe and then fade to nothinge. (87)

As Nelson remarked in his essay on the Complaints:

the Renaissance was awed by the spectacle of power, fame,

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1Scholars disagree as to the effect these new astronomical discoveries caused in Elizabethan culture. Don Cameron Allen concludes that there were not many references to the new astronomy in Elizabethan letters and that the standard handbooks published after 1572 still repeat the Aristotelian definition of the universe ("The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism" 212). Nevertheless, Victor Harris argues that in the 1570's and 1580's there was a general belief that the earth's corruption and mutability extended to the heavens, and that by 1600 the idea was taking hold of the popular imagination (All Coherence Gone 3-4).
and beauty doomed to destruction, death becoming a comment on greatness rather than greatness a comment on death. The literary consequence was a fascination with the strength which is frail, the fame which is fleeting, the beauty which is dust. (65)

Nelson's perceptions of the importance of the theme of mutability to sixteenth-century literature is quite accurate. A common feature of the Petrarchan love sonnets, adapted into English by Wyatt and Surrey in early Tudor England, was Mutability's apparent control over every facet of the lover's life. Not only would life's normal changes and sufferings bring an end to the woman's beauty, but the vagaries of her variable affections could shift from fiery passion one day to icy disdain the next. Mutability and her equally changeable partner, Dame Fortune, were the forces behind the tragic downfalls described in the Mirror for Magistrates, a point which is accentuated by Anthony Munday's imitation of the work, entitled the Mirror of Mutabilitie (1579).

In the later age of Elizabeth, mutability continued to appear as a central force in men's lives. Some poets, such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Robert Greene, used the theme quite extensively and conventionally. Greene, in "The Fickle Seat Whereon Proud Fortune Sits" (1587) and "In Time We See that Silver Drops" (1584), uses many commonplace expressions to represent the powers of Time and Fortune, and throughout The Ocean's Love to Cynthia, Raleigh constantly repeats images of mutability. The fact that his poem is written in honour of Cynthia, one of the familiar names for the goddess of the moon, emphasizes the dominance of change as a power in the world and his poem. An example of Raleigh's attention to mutability's power can be seen in the following excerpt:
So far as a thought, fruit, or form of flower
Stays for a witness what such branches bare,
But as time gave, time did again devour,
And changed our rising joy to falling care:

So of affection which our youth presented,
When she that from the sun receaves power and light
Did but decline her beams as discontented,
Converting sweetest days to saddest night,

All droops, all dies, all trodden under dust,
The person, place, and passages forgotten;
The hardest steel eaten with softest rust,
The firm and solid tree both rent and rotten.
(no line nos., page 386)

The dramatists of the age were also deeply concerned with
the powers of mutability. The histories and tragedies of Shakespeare
and Marlowe follow many of the traditions of the Mirror for
Magistrates, and particularly its concern with the fickle and
unsteadfast condition of the world.2 As well, many Elizabethan
comedies pay great attention to the degree of changeableness in
an individual or society.3 Shakespeare's Sonnets present a constant
emphasis upon earthly transience, a trait which A. K. Heide has
shown may have been caused by Shakespeare's familiarity with Spenser's
"Ruines of Rome."

Nevertheless, not all Elizabethan poets found mutability
to be a constant force in their lives, or at least a conventional
image in their poetry. Sidney, although he perfected the form
of the Petrarchan sonnet for the age, did not follow the earlier

2 The most obvious examples of this in Shakespeare's
 canon can be seen in King Lear, Hamlet, and Othello,
as well as in the histories. And in Marlowe's Doctor
 Faustus and Edward the Second.

3 For example, The Taming of the Shrew, A Midsummer
 Night's Dream, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night.
Yet one poem, "Draw me, O Love which reachest but to dust," shows that he, too, was aware of the transience of man's life on earth:

Leave me, O love which reachest but to dust,
And thou, my mind, aspire to highest things.
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
Whate'er fades but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;
Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light
That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide
In this small course which birth draws out to death,
And think how evil becometh him to slide
Who seeketh heaven and comes of heavenly breath.
Then farewell, world! thy uttermost I see:
Eternal Love, maintain they life in me. (pp. 161-2)

This final expression of disdain for earthly pleasures and contempt of mundi aspirations for heaven's enduring Love have been seen by many to be a recantation of Sidney's personal feelings of human love and pleasure as they are found in Astrolabe and Stella.

Nevertheless, Sidney's voicing of the common concerns for the transience of earthly things should not be seen as a rejection of his earlier attitudes any more than Spenser's similar statements in The Mutabilitie Cantos can be seen as a rejection of the worldliness of The Faerie Queene, for as Sheldon Zitner says of the Cantos, "they complete the action of the epic by presenting a transcendency implied in the orthodox insistence on the value of both mutable nature and divine Grace" (9-10). Similarly, Sidney's desire for "Eternal Love" should not be seen as a rejection of the earthly love depicted in his sonnets. Rather, his desire for God's love is the completion of his honourable and virtuous love for Stella.

Sidney's show of concern for the powers of mutability parallels
Spenser's in The Mutabilitie Cantos; however, before we discuss Spenser's final vision of mutability, we should consider the development of his attitudes as they are presented in the Complaints.

The diverse subjects of the poems in the Complaints volume offer Spenser the opportunity to investigate the wide range of mutability's power in the world. The emblematic "Visions" give a general overview of the earth's transience, while the other poems consider the effects of mutability upon specific cities—such as Rome and Verulamium; specific men, such as Leicester and Sidney; the structure of society; and the realm of art and learning. As well, these various representations of mutability's control over the world thematically unify the poems and strengthen the coherence of the Complaints volume.

The Genius of Verlaine's lament in "The Ruines of Time" emphasizes the transitoriness of the world's existence. The opening vision of the ruined and forgotten city of Verulamium is repeated in parallel visions of the Dudley family and the fallen state of poetry. Verlaine, as the poem's narrator, is depicted as a victim of mutability's control over the earth. In her despair, she presents an ubi sunt catalogue which exemplifies the changeableness of the world.

Where my high steeples whilom vste to stand,  
On which the lordly Faulcon wont to towre,  
There now is but an heap of lyme and sand,  
For the Shriche-owle to build her balefull bowre:  
And where the Nightingale wont forth to powre  
Her restless plaints, to comfort wakefull Lovers,  
There now haunt yelling Mewes and whining Flowers.

And where the christall Themis wont to slide  
In siluer channell, downe along the Lee,  
About whose flowrie bankes on either side
A thousand Nymphes, with mirthfull jollitie
Were wont to play, from all annoyance free;
There now no rivers course is to be seen,
But moorish fennes, and marshes ever green.
(127-30)

Nevertheless, this passage differs significantly from traditional ubi sunt verses in a way that emphasizes Spenser's concentration upon the theme of mutability in the poem. The traditional ubi sunt verse is built upon a series of rhetorical questions beginning "Where is . . .?" François Villon had used this design to great effect in the famous ubi sunt passage from The Testament by introducing the haunting refrain "Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan?" (329-56). But in "The Ruines" the Genius of Verlaine uses statements rather than rhetorical questions. She repeatedly tells the reader that whereas in the past there once stood something beautiful, "there now" can be seen only ruins and ugliness. Spenser's revision of the ubi sunt design places Verlaine's experience of loss within the temporal settings of past and present, rather than in the vague nostalgic past of the traditional ubi sunt verse. An image of former beauty is immediately followed by an image of present ruin and decay. This variable image heightens the reader's awareness of mutability's dominance over the world. As was noted in Chapter Five, this same contrast between past and present is emphasized in the first set of "tragiick Pageants" which ends the poem.

In each of these visions, the first stanza presents an object of great beauty, while the closing stanza shows the decay or destruction of that object. Throughout the poem, Spenser constructs these opposing images of former beauty and present decay. These images not only unite the various parts of the "Ruines," but also
emphasize the dominance of mutability in the poem and the world.

As Palgrave has said, this poem strikes "at once the note audible throughout" the volume (4.1x). In this one poem we are shown the impermanence of cities, societies, families, powerful leaders, heroes, and poetry. These same examples of mutability's powers appear throughout the other poems of the Complaints volume.

The same concern for the debased condition of poetry which is voiced by the narrator in the later sections of "The Ruines of Time" is made the single object of attention in "The Teares of the Muses." The Muses lament that the world's degeneracy has gone so far that men no longer honour learning and poetry. They recognize that these are the only arts that can raise man above the level of "brute beasts" (531) so that they are "nighest" to God (90). Nevertheless, as Clio explains, the true ruin of the world will come if the Muses are forced to forsake it (which Urania is prepared to do), because then the immortalizing powers of poetry would be lost forever:

So shall succeeding ages have no light
Of things forepast, nor monuments of time,
And all that in this world is wondrous hight
Shall die in darkness, and lie hid in slime. (103-6)

Apparently influenced by the teachings of the Pléiade poets, Spenser believed that poetry alone could control the ravages of Time. For Spenser, poems are "monuments of time," constructed in time and lasting through eternity. His fear was that humanity's changeable nature would turn against learning and poetry so that all the world would soon be covered with "blacke obliuions rust" ("RT" 98). The ruin of poetry, as it is presented in "The Teares of
of the Muses," is more than just another example of worldly change and impermanence; it is also a sign of the total collapse of civilization. Sidney and the ancients had taught that poetry brought about the birth of civilization; Spenser takes this axiom to its logical conclusion—the death of poetry will herald the end of civilization.

"Virgil's Gnat," since it is in many ways a poem about the vagaries of fortune, is also a poem concerned with mutability. We are first introduced to the shepherd in an idyllic pastoral setting. All life around him is peaceful and plentiful, and we are told that the shepherd's life is most fortunate because he is "free from sad cares, that rich mens hearts deuoure" (137). Nevertheless, when the shepherd goes to take a nap in the quiet glade, the mood changes, and the narrator tells us that "inconstandy fortune" has become mischievous and has devised a plan to spoil his "quietnes" (247-8). When the gnat tries to protect the shepherd from the snake, the insect's fortune changes as well. Rather than being treated like a hero, he is killed as if he were the shepherd's enemy. The shepherd's dream-vision also emphasizes the variability of fortune. The ghost of the gnat presents a catalogue of all the denizens of hell who, like himself, have been treated unjustly, and he summarizes his moral in the following manner:

Well may appeare by proffe of their mischaunce,
The chaungfull turning of mens slipperie state,
That none, whom fortune freely dooth aduaunce,
Himselfe therefore to heauen should eluate:
For loftie type of honour through the graunce
Of enuiies dart, is downe in dust prostrate;
And all that vaunts in worldly vauntie,
Shall fall through fortunes mutabilitie. (553-60)

The transitoriness of fortune was one of the common signs of the world's mutability. And the pervasiveness of mutability's control over the world could be exemplified by the fact that even a simple insect, such as the gnat, is subject to "fortunes mutabilitie."

Spenser followed a similar plan when he wrote his poem concerning the "Fate of the Butterflie." "Morgomtmos," like the "Gnat," shows the all-encompassing impermanence of the world by having an insect as its hero. However, in his original poem, Spenser increases the reader's awareness of the role of mutability by using a butterfly, the traditional symbol of change, rather than just a simple fly or insect. We discussed in Chapter One the iconographic representations of the butterfly as an emblem of mutability and fortune's control over the world. As well, Spenser heightens our attention to mutability's control in the poem by placing the entire action of the poem in Fortune's hands. The poem's subtitle, "The Fate of the Butterflie" (my emphasis), introduces Fortune as a force in the poem at the very start. The first half of the poem presents Clarion's good fortune. He has the stature and appearance of a brave warrior; he is the heir to his father's throne; he is able to produce envy in other creatures, and he believes himself to be "Lord of all the workes of Nature" (212). However, at the mid-point of the poem, the mood changes. We are presented with a contemptus mundi passage which reminds us of the transitoriness of earthly pleasures (217-32). After this, Clarion's good fortune changes to bad. The spider, who "it fortuned"
As we have already suggested, to clarify the role of Fortune in the world of Reni and the...
1134 and mental life. It is the same contrast which
Selon recognized as a central ingredient of the Renaissance mind. It
is also the same contrast which is evident as a central feature
of the Complaint's volume.

In "Mother Hubberd's Tale," disguise, rather than metamorphosis,
is used to point out the workings of mutability in the poem.

The Fox and the Ape, who are discontented with their lot in life,
pretend to be members of each of the three estates. They change
from shepherds, to priests, to courtiers, and finally to rulers.

Yet with all these mutations in their outward appearance, some
things never change. They are still both "craftie and unhappie
witted" (49), and they are still both discontented with their
lives.

The demands of the poem's satirical form restricts Spenser's
expression of his larger concerns for mutability, such as are
found in "Mulopotmos"; yet when Spenser turns his satiric eye
to the court, it seems that he finds an appropriate focus for
his feelings toward mutability. When the Fox and the Ape meet
the courtier-Mule, they are given fair warning of the inconstancies
of the court, "But, tidings there is none I you assure, / Save
that which common is, and knowne to all, / That Courtiers as the
tide doo rise and fall" (612-4). Of course, they do not heed
this warning, and they blissfully go to court "In hope to finde
there happier successse" (658). Once they arrive there the Fox
and the Ape become great successes, but only by means of their
constant deceit and guile. They see themselves as being very
powerful and beyond the reach of fortune's dangers. Nevertheless,
as is seen in the contrasting portrayal of the "braun courier." 

("3") we must always be conscious of the court's transitoriness:

No will be carried with the common wind
Of Court's inconstant mutabilitie,
No after age or tattling fable file,
But heards, and sees the follies of the rest,
And thereof gathers for himselfe the best. (722-6)

After this second warning concerning the hazards of the court,
it comes as no surprise to the readers of "Mother Hubberds Tale" 
that the Fox and the Ape fall victim to the "Courts inconstant 
mutabilitie." For the Elizabethan the changeableness of court-life 
was a common example of the larger mutability of the world. As 
the centre of government, the court should be ideally the most 
stable element in society, but the Elizabethans understood that 
all earthly structures and institutions are subject to mutability. 
The fact that the court was more changeable than any other part 
of society was an indication of mutability's great power in the 
world.

The emblems of the three Vision sequences, "The Visions of 
the Worlds Vaniutie," "The Visions of Belley," and "The Visions 
of Petarch," present universal images of the world's instability 
and frailty. Meanwhile, the similar emblems of "The Ruines of 
Rome" show the specific transitory condition of the Eternal City. 
Together, these works express how all earthly things--man-made 
objects, wild creatures, powerful societies, and man himself--are 
subject to decay and death. These are the same concerns which 
amare presented in the other poems of the volume, and it is in this 
way that we can perceive that the Complains work as a unified
expression of Spenser's thoughts on the theme of mutability.

The appearance of mutability in the Complaints, as it has been discussed thus far, is easily compatible with the first view of Mutability presented in the Cantos:

What man that sees the ever-whirling wheel Of Change, the which all mortall things doth sway, But that thereby doth find, & plainly tell, How MUTABILITY in them doth play Her cruell sportes, to many mens decay?

For, she the face of earthly things so changed, That all which Nature had established first In good estate, and in meet order ranged, She did pervert, and all their statutes burst: And all the worlds faire frame (which none yet durst Of Gods or men to alter or misguide) She alter'd quite, and made them all accurst That God had blest; and did at first provide In that still happy state for ever to abide.

Ne shee the lawes of Nature oneley brake, But eke of justice, and of Policie; And wrong of fight, and had of good did make, And death for life exchanged foolishlie: Since which, all living wights haue learn'd to die, And all this world is waxen daily worse. O pittious worke of MUTABILITIE! By which, we all are subject to that curse, And death in stead of life haue sucked from our Nurse.

(7.6.1; 7.6.5-6)

The Mutability of Canto six is the same "Titanesse" of the "Visions," "The Ruines of Rome," "The Ruines of Time," "Mulopotmos," and the rest of the Complaints. She is a cruel agent of destruction who turns the world upside down by her whims and fancy, and her cruelty provokes mankind to dream of a time when we will be able to escape her treachery. This contemptus mundi aspiration is found in the last sonnet of "The Visions of Petrarch," the poem which closes the vision sequences and the entire Complaints Volume.


C. Secondary Sources: Spenser


the same time as many of the Complaints, and that this closing
prayer of the Cantos was rejected by Spenser and recast into the
closing section of "The Visions of Petrarch." Albright's theory
can only be accepted if we can believe that Spenser, at a very
young age, recognized the positive nature of Mutability's apparent
destructiveness in the world and then rejected this enlightened
attitude for the more conventional and medieval perception of
a contemptus mundi rejection of the world. Rather, it seems more
logical to suggest that, when Spenser was composing his Book of
Mutability, he turned to his Complaints, with their concern for
the world's transience, and found there an expression of his earlier
feelings on the subject. There he would have found a darker vision
of the world's vanity, of its transience, and frailty. Yet he
also would have recognized, as we should, that the world's mutability
cannot be seen as an inevitable symbol of the world's degeneracy.
Spenser's humour in "Mother Hubberds Tale" and his light playfulness
with the serious concerns of complaint in "Maiopolos" raise the
Complaints above the gloom of most medieval contemptus mundi works.
This same lightness of touch and joie de vivre, as Zitner points
out, "insinuates itself into the philosophic matter" of the Cantos
(11). Although Spenser was at times melancholic and felt that
his spirit was weighed down "with thought of earthly things; / And
clogd with burden of mortality" (Amoretti, LXXII, 3-4), as is
evident from much of the Complaints, he could also rise above
these burdens and let his spirit fly as freely as Clarion. The
name "Clarion" connects Spenser's concern for mutability with
the other overriding idea of the Complaints volume—the question
of poetic immortality. As an advocate of the "new poetry," Spenser believed that poetry was the only earthly creation that could
run with time and conquer Mutability, and nowhere in his canon is
this belief more visible than in the Complaints. His envoy at
the end of "The Ruines of Rome" honours Du Bellay by proclaiming,
"Necess must bee ill eternal pursuite, / That can to other give
eternall dayes" (454-5). Spenser's own participation in this
gift of eternity, as it is reflected in the Complaints poems,
did not escape him. Nevertheless, by the time we reach the Cantos,
we notice that the eternizing role of the poet has been diminished.
The poet-narrator of Canto six tells us that he "will rehearse
that whylem be heard say" (7.6.1: my emphasis). And later he
explains that he has learned of Mutability's "linage ancient"
from "records permanent," "registred of old / In Faery Land" (7.6.2).
Poetry has become reports and records, and the poet has returned
to his earlier role as a scribe as it was portrayed in the Visions,
"Mother Hubberds Tale," and the first part of "The Ruines of Time."
Perhaps nearing the end of his life, and with what little fame
he had achieved by means of his poetry already behind him, Spenser
thought less of the eternizing powers of poetry and more of the
One who is truly eternal, "that great Sabbaoth God" (7.8.2).
He did not reject poetry's powers, but he may have realized that
to attempt to conquer mutability is not ultimately possible, since
it is through mutability that the world gains eternity.
This point connects the Complaints with another work by Spenser,
the Epithalamion, as has been recognized by A. K. Weiratt in his
important study of the poem, Short Time's Endless Monument.
We have already seen in Chapter Five how the genre of complaint unites the nine apparently diverse poems of the Complaints volume. Spenser's thematic investigation of the problem of the world's mutability throughout these poems not only provides further evidence for the volume's unity, but it also connects these poems with the better known works of the poet's canon. Our full understanding of a poet's achievements cannot be gathered from a partial knowledge of his works. Spenser's Complaints volume represents in small much of the artistry and many of the concerns which appear in his more famous works, and because of this they form an important part of our full understanding of Edmund Spenser. What Renwick said of the "Ruines of Time" may be applied to the entire volume of Complaints: "we would not wish them away" (190).
APPENDIX I

For the list of medieval complaints given below I have found the following works most helpful:

Robbins, ed., Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (SEC. LYR.).

-------------, Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (HIST. LYR.).

Brown, ed., English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century (Brown XIII).

-------------, Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century (Brown XIV).

-------------, Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century (Brown XV).


Dunn and Byrnes, eds., Middle English Literature (MEL).


MacCracken, "An English Friend of Charles d'Orleans" (MAC).

Other sources not listed here will be cited individually.

De contemptu mundi: verses and poems against worldly vanity.

"The Vanity of This World" (MLT, p. 919)
"Our mundus militat" (Brown XIV, #134)
"The Sayings of St. Bernard" (EETS, pp. 511-22, 757-63)
The Parliament of the Three Ages (MEL, p. 239-63)
A Love Rune by Thomas of Hailes (MEL, p. 156-62)
"This World's Bliss Will not Last" (Brown XIII, #46)
"The Evils of the Time" (Brown XIV, #39)
"The Vanity of Life" (Brown XIV, #53)
"Vanitas Vanitatvm", by Dunbar (Brown XV, #151)
"Good Rule is Out of Remembrance". (Brown XV, #172)
"The Rancour of this Wicked World" (Brown XV, #173)
"Lament for the Makaris" Dunbar (Kinsley, ed., The Poems of William Dunbar)

Poems on the themes of Mutability, Decay, and Death:

"The Ruined City" (MLT, p. 161)
Plaint by Alain Chartier (MLT, 688)
"A Song of Mortality" (Brown XIV, #81)
"This World fares as a Fantasy"—(Brown XIV, #106)
"Farewell, this World is but a Cherry Fair" (Brown XV, #149)
"Of the Mirror of Mortality" (Brown XV, #154)
"The Lament of the Soul of Edward IV" (Brown XV, #159)
"Worldly Joy is only Fantasy" (Brown XV, #167)
"The Death of Edward III" (HIST. Lyr., p. 39)
"This World is Variable" (HIST. Lyr., p. 61)
"What shall I say, to whom shall I complayn:" (MAC)
"Not far fro marches, in the ende of few yeeres" (MAC)
"Examples of Mutability" (HIST. Lyr., p. 74)

Fifteenth century songs against Fortune:

"Fortune Will Have Her Way", (Brown XV, #165).
"Fortune Rules Both High and Low" (Brown XV, #166).
"Fortune Has Cast Me from Weal to Woe" (Brown XV, #169).
"Summer Sunday: A Lament for Edward II" (HIST. Lyr., p. 38).
"O thou Fortune, whych hast the goveynnaunce" (MAC).

Lover's Complaints:

"A Foresaken Maiden's Lament" (SEC. Lyr., p. 23).
"A Betrayed Maiden's Lament" (SEC. Lyr., p. 25).
"Complaint to Fortune" (SEC. Lyr., p. 158).
"A Lover's Plaint I & II" (SEC. Lyr., p. 167, 168).
"The Lover's Lament" (SEC. Lyr., p. 173).
"A Lover's Plaint against Fortune" (SEC. Lyr., 187).
"Knelyng allon, ryght thus I may make my wylle" (MAC).
"O woeful heert profound in gret duressse" (MAC).
"O cruel daunger all mym adversarye" (MAC).
"Now must I sede part out of your presence" (MAC).
"Walking allon, of wyt full desolat" (MAC).

This list does not in any way attempt to be a comprehensive list of medieval complaints, but it should offer some idea of the popularity of the form throughout the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.
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293


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As an advocate of the "new poetry," Spenser believed that poetry was the only earthly treasure that could
claim time and conquer mutability, and nowhere in his canon is
this belief more visible than in the Complaints. His avowal at
the end of "The Ruines of Rome" honours this belief by proclaiming,
"Nobles must be all eternall, / that can to other gius
eternall days." (454-5). Spenser's own participation in this
gift of eternity, as it is reflected in the Complaints poems,
did not escape him. Nevertheless, by the time we reach the Cantos,
we notice that the eternizing role of the poet has been diminished.
The poet-narrator of Canto six tells us that he "will rehearse
that whyleome [he] heard say" (7.6.1; my emphasis). And later he
explains that he has learned of mutability's "linage ancient"
from "records permanent," "registred of old / in Fairy Land" (7.6.2).

Poetry has become reports and records, and the poet has returned
to his earlier role as a scribe as it was portrayed in the Visions,
"Mother Hubberds Tale," and the first part of "The Ruines of Time."

Perhaps nearing the end of his life, and with what little fame
he had achieved by means of his poetry already behind him, Spenser
thought less of the eternizing powers of poetry and more of the
"One who is truly eternall, "that great Sabbath God" (7.8.2).
He did not reject poetry's powers, but he may have realized that
to attempt to conquer mutability is not ultimately possible, since
it is through mutability that the world gains eternity.

This point connects the Complaints with another work by Spenser,
the Epithalamion, as has been recognized by A. K. Wheat in his
important study of the poem, Short Time's Endless Monument.