

Spenser, the "Antiquitez de Rome", and the Development of the English Sonnet Form

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# Spenser, the *Antiquitez de Rome*, and the Development of the English Sonnet Form

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Celuy doncques qui voudra faire oeuvre digne de pris en son vulgaire, laisse ce labeur de traduire, principalement les poètes, à ceux qui de chose labourieuse et peu profitable, j'ose dire encore inutile, voire pernicieuse, à l'accroissement de leur langue, emportent à bon droit plus de molestie que de gloire.

—*La Défense et Illustration  
de la Langue Française*, II.vi.<sup>1</sup>

Some might apply Du Bellay's negative opinion of translation to the only significant English rendering of his *Antiquitez de Rome* (1558), Spenser's *Ruines of Rome: by Bellay* (1591).<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, where Du Bellay does approve of this controversial literary activity, Spenser follows his model's advice: he chooses an author conducive to his own natural powers,<sup>3</sup> and challenges his abilities with the *Antiquitez/Songe* sequence.<sup>4</sup> Surely, then, the *Ruines of Rome* does not partake of the *inutile* or the *pernicieuse*. Spenser does more than translate Du Bellay; he makes the material of the *Antiquitez* his own.

A. Kent Hieatt observes that *Ruines* has attracted relatively minor critical attention since the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> This paucity of commentary seems curious. As several distinguished scholars have suggested,<sup>6</sup> the Pléiade aided in the development of Elizabethan poetry, and *Ruines*

reflects a clear interest in French models by a great English poet.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the older poet informs the younger, and Du Bellay and Spenser find inspiration in remarkably similar ideas. They share a fondness for allegory, an interest in the Apocalypse and Biblical typology,<sup>8</sup> and a fascination with the theme of mutability, among other things. “Anterotic”<sup>9</sup> and “nonamatory”<sup>10</sup> serve as key words that one ought to use to describe them.

Spenser had rendered Du Bellay into English as early as 1569, when he was seventeen, possibly at the request of his headmaster at the Merchant Taylors’ School, Richard Mulcaster.<sup>11</sup> He translated eleven of the fourteen sonnets of the *Songe*, the epilogue to the *Antiquitez*, as part of Jan van der Noot’s polemically Protestant *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*, whose expressed purpose was “to shewe how vaine, transitorie, deceitfull, vnprofitable, and vncertaine worldly things be.”<sup>12</sup> These blank verse poems, labelled *Sonets*,<sup>13</sup> were Spenser’s first published work. They seem much less distinguished than the fine woodcuts that accompany them, perhaps by Lucas de Heere.<sup>14</sup> In *Complaints* (1591), Spenser retranslated Du Bellay’s *Songe* as *The Visions of Bellay*, and completed his translation of the *Antiquitez*, which he titled *Ruines of Rome*. Apparently disdaining his youthful blank verse, and not content to follow Du Bellay’s Italian sonnet form, Spenser uses the English sonnet form for both sequences.

To explain this departure from Du Bellay, Alfred Satterthwaite makes a comment that seems sensible: “It can readily be seen why Spenser, in translating, made no effort to reproduce the rhyme scheme of the original.”<sup>15</sup> He means that Spenser found Du Bellay’s five rhyme form (abba abba ccd eed) too difficult to make his own. However, Spenser’s *Amoretti* (1595) uses a similarly intricate and complicated five-rhyme scheme (abab bcbc cdc d ee). Clearly, his choice of form was not based upon a lack of confidence in his ability to work with fewer rhymes. He simply entertained different ideas about the possibilities of form. Like Satterthwaite, Anne Lake Prescott thinks *Ruines* an inadequate translation, although for different reasons. To her, it fails to render the “strange tone” of the original, one of “pain, quiet, and decorum.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Spenser does not maintain Du Bellay’s tone (any more than his rhyme scheme), but I would add that Spenser had no interest whatsoever in maintaining it. In order to internalize the material, he *changes* the tone, accomplishing this by altering the form.

This poetic metamorphosis remains an interesting, yet unexplored,

subject. Perhaps Spenser's revamping of Du Bellay's French-Italian structure can be explained as a literal Anglicizing of the poems, or even as a way of making them "Protestant," but such speculation seems rather fleeting. The few scholars who have compared *Ruines* and the *Antiquitez* have profitably discussed the value of translation, or visionary material, or the interpenetration of Reformation and Catholic theology. No one has written about *Ruines* as an experiment in form, which it is. For Spenser uses the seven-rhyme English sonnet that Surrey invented<sup>17</sup> and that Shakespeare would bring to its apex. Thus, *Ruines* stands as an important text in the history of the English sonnet, from the form's first appearance in *Songes and Sonets* (1557)—that landmark collection better known as *Tottel's Miscellany*—to its finest hour in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (1609). In translating Du Bellay, Spenser uses the English sonnet with distinction, and realizes, as Shakespeare would later, its possibilities for *tour de force*.

Spenser and other masters show us that a well-crafted English sonnet, like an epigram, dedicates itself to moving its matter forward with all possible speed. For purposes of later analysis, Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 may serve as both paradigm and ideal. (I will refer somewhat cursorily to this extremely well-known poem here, but will cite it in full in the notes.)<sup>18</sup> The sonnet's fourteen lines can be divided simultaneously into three quatrains and a couplet or an octet and a sestet. Each quatrain advances the matter of the sonnet so that we progress by *catacosmesis*<sup>19</sup> through the speaker's mind, from autumn to sunset to a dying fire to a spirited admonition to the young man to love him, the imagery and the rhetoric becoming as intense as the angry orange of the embers that glower in the dying twilight: "hang" and "sang" lead to "west" and "rest," and "lie" and "by." Eventually, all of the force of the preceding lines falls upon the final couplet ("long"/"strong"), which must be dense yet elastic to bear the weight of the poem and to satisfy the reader's sense of closure. In the "deep structure" of an English sonnet, the diversity of the rhymes propels the reader forward to create a distinctively rapid poetic pace, the ear anticipating agreement or change.

The Italian model that Petrarch developed with such supple virtuosity ambles at a more stately gait, and thus does not depend upon such a dynamic. For purposes of contrast with the English sonnet, we can examine the structure of one of Du Bellay's *Antiquitez* lyrics:

Astres cruelz, et vous Dieux inhumains,  
 Ciel envieux, et marastre Nature,  
 Soit que par ordre ou soit qu'à l'aventure  
 Voyse le cours des affaires humains,

Pourquoy jadis ont travaillé voz mains  
 A façonner ce monde qui tant dure?  
 Ou que ne fut de matière aussi dure  
 Le brave front de ces palais Romains?

Je ne dy plus la sentence commune,  
 Que toute chose au dessous de la Lune  
 Est corrompable et sugette à mourir:

Mais bien je dy (et n'en veuille desplaire  
 A qui s'efforce enseigner le contraire)  
 Que ce grand Tout doit quelquefois perir.  
 (AR IX)<sup>20</sup>

This Italianate form (abba abba ccd eed) represents the antithesis of *tour de force* because it is not progressively dynamic, but static and deliberately repetitive. Thus, the form creates a different tone and type of argument than we find in the English model. The predominance of a- and b-rhymes in the octet reinforces one particular point (not two or three related ideas): the arbitrary nature of the gods as they relate to man. Obviously, the "palais Romains" built by human hands were affected by "voz mains" (i.e., those of the gods) as surely as "affaires humains" were influenced by "Dieux inhumains"—Du Bellay strongly relates all four increments to one another. Yet the b-rhymes do not make this sort of reticulative sense, and the poet's pace becomes even more leisurely. The repetitious nature of the rhymes constantly brings the reader back to the material that precedes it, and in his end is his beginning. To widen the arc of his circular structure, the tercets in Du Bellay's sestet make against quick resolution. The proposition that he advances in the first half ("Je ne dy") concludes almost gently in the second ("Mais bien je dy"). He further unifies the sestet with the d-rhyme, "mourir"/"perir." As more evidence of Du Bellay's craftsmanship, the slight difference in sound between the two words seems mimetic of the minor discrepancy in meaning. We might also note that he makes a

majority of the lines (eight) into couplets, contributing to the measured, even epigrammatic feel of the sonnet. The speaker takes his time.

In contrast, Spenser's translation attempts to expedite the material of the poem by means of the seven-rhyme English form:

Ye cruell starres, and eke ye Gods unkinde,  
 Heaven envious, and bitter stepdame Nature,  
 Be it by fortune, or by course of kinde  
 That ye doo weld th'affaires of earthlie creature;  
     Why have your hands long sithence traueiled  
 To frame this world, that doth endure so long?  
 Or why were not these Romane palaces  
 Made of some matter no lesse firme and strong?  
 I say not, as the common voyce doth say,  
 That all things which beneath the Moone have being  
 Are temporall, and subject to decay:  
 But I say rather, though not all agreeing  
     With some, that weene the contrarie in thought;  
 That all this whole shall one day come to nought.  
(RR 9)

With some scrutiny, the differences between Spenser's translation and Du Bellay's poem become clear. More rhymes create the illusion of greater "speed," and Spenser constantly urges the reader forward. We have balance ("Nature"/"creature") and antithesis ("unkinde"/"kinde"). Spenser aborts the *c*-rhyme in the second quatrain, perhaps a graphic emphasis upon discord rather than an indication of incompetence or a printer's error. Each quatrain and tercet advances a separate, if related, idea, aided in part by the rhymes themselves: the arbitrary nature of the heavens, a questioning of such arbitrariness, a proposition to be controverted, and, finally, a declaration that controverts it.

Yet Spenser creates an English sonnet by default. We have seven rhymes, but Du Bellay's Italianate structure. In spite of the *efefgg* pattern in the sestet, Spenser maintains the Pléiade poet's tercets, with the strong break between the eleventh and twelfth lines to recreate the effect of statement and counterstatement ("I say not"/"But I say rather"). Most telling, the "long"/"strong" rhyme is not a true sonnet couplet in the

English style because it does not simultaneously summarize and expand, as the same rhyme does in Shakespeare's Sonnet 73. The third quatrain and concluding distich become fused; thus it does not bear the weight of the sonnet, which may detract from the force of the poem. In this way, some of the lyrics in *Ruines* reflect a greater concern for accurate translation than for exploring new directions in form. At times, Spenser seems impacted between the author that he attempts to translate and those writers who would put the form to a better use than his own.

Yet many of these poems presage the Shakespearean pinnacle of the English form, and it seems useful to me to concentrate upon six or seven which fulfill this characterization. One of the very best, *Ruines 23*, illustrates what I think Spenser was attempting to accomplish in translating Du Bellay. He remains faithful to the original while impressing his own stamp upon it, changing the tone of his predecessor's poem from an elegant and world-weary melancholy<sup>21</sup> to one of urgency and even anger. It has the air of a fiery Reformation sermon:

O warie wisdom of the man, that would  
 That *Carthage* towres from spoile should be forborne,  
 To th'end that his victorious people should  
 With cancring laisure not be overworne;  
 He well forsaue, how that the Romane courage,  
 Impatient of pleasures faint desires,  
 Though idlenes would turne to civill rage,  
 And be her selfe the matter of her fires.  
 For in a people given all to ease,  
 Ambition is engendred easily;  
 As in a vicious bodie, grose disease  
 Soone growes through humours superfluitie.  
 That came to passe, when swolne with plenties pride  
 Nor prince, nor peere, nor kin they would abide.

Spenser devotes everything in this sonnet to moving his matter forward. Each quatrain sketches out a separate yet related topic (the curse of plenty, civil war, the analogy of the diseased body politic), the scope of the poem growing broader and broader as it hastens to its conclusion. Typically for Spenser, the intricacy of the rhyme amplifies meaning. Certain forms of behavior or states of existence, immoderately enjoyed,

become corrupt: “courage”/“rage”; “desire”/“fire”; “ease”/“disease.” Such rhyming equations create a brand of morality most congenial to Spenser, embodied in the aphorism: “in a people given all to ease, / Ambition is engendered easily” (a good translation of Du Bellay’s “en un peuple ocieux . . . L’ambition facilement s’engendre”). Spenser’s intensity seems almost Calvinistic, especially in the sestet, which functions simultaneously as a single unit and as the penultimate quatrain and concluding couplet—more compressed and focused than Du Bellay’s original tercets that move ahead in their quasi-contrapuntal fashion:

Aussi void-on qu’en un peuple ocieux,  
Comme l’humeur en un corps vicieux,  
L’ambition facilement s’engendre.

Ce qu’ advint, quand l’envieux orgueil  
De ne vouloir ny plus grand ny pareil  
Rompit l’accord du beaupère et du gendre.  
(AR XXIII.9–14)

Spenser has expanded Du Bellay’s first tercet and compressed the second for maximum effectiveness, the latter material seeming more conducive, perhaps, to the expansive summary so necessary for a successful English sonnet couplet. As in the Shakespearean paradigm, this couplet functions as a microcosm of the preceding twelve lines and forms a bridge from the previous quatrain. Contrary to what some might say, Spenser well understood the importance of tension in poetry.

Spenser makes *Ruines 2* another successful English sonnet. Its excellence, I think, lies in the multiplicity (and thus the solidity) of its construction: octet and sestet, three accelerating quatrains and a couplet, and, most evident here, a twelve-line preamble and a two-line turn. This last type of deep structure seems most appropriate for the matter therein, because Spenser piles up a mass of material for a particular statement and then cautiously undercuts it with measured counterstatement:

Great *Babylon* her haughtie walls will praise,  
And sharped steeples high shot up in ayre;  
*Greece* will the olde *Ephesian* buildings blaze;  
And *Nylus* nurslings their Pyramides faire;



The same yet vaunting *Greece* will tell the storie  
 Of *Joves* great Image in *Olympus* placed,  
*Mausolus* worke will be the *Carians* glorie,  
 And *Crete* will boast the Labyrinth, now raced;  
 The antique *Rhodian* will likewise set forth  
 The great Colosse, erect to *Memorie*;  
 And what els in the world is of like worth,  
 Some greater learned wit will magnifie.  
 But I will sing aboue all monuments  
 Seven *Roman* Hiles, the worlds seven wonderments.  
 (RR 2)

Again, rhyme propels the reader forward and reinforces equivalent meaning through similar sounding words ("praise"/"blaze"), as well as creating balance ("storie"/"glorie") and antithesis ("placed"/"raced"). Like his translation of *Antiquitez* XXIII, Spenser recasts Du Bellay's tercets into four and two-line units, and the couplet makes for strong closure. Such modulation serves as the ideal structure for the veiled hubristic convention that the author employs. At the end of the twelfth line, the three quatrains balance on the supposedly anonymous "greater learned wit" who will say "what els in the world is of like worth" besides the seven wonders previously mentioned. Yet the couplet clearly implies that this "wit" is Spenser himself, who praises Rome's seven hills "above all monuments," thus fulfilling his own prophecy. His assurance in this use of the English sonnet form indicates the congeniality of the subject matter to his poetics. More than most English Renaissance authors, Spenser possesses a certain fondness for catalogues and moralizing.<sup>22</sup>

*Ruines* 29 provides Spenser with a similar opportunity for experimentation, another catalogue counterbalanced with a stiff couplet. Again, Spenser has the opportunity to work some sort of variation upon the data that Du Bellay has amassed:

All that which *Aegypt* whilome did devise,  
 All that which *Greece* their temples to embrace,  
 After th'*Ionicke*, *Atticke*, *Doricke* guise,  
 Or *Corinth* skil'd in curious workes to grave;  
 All that *Lysippus* practike arte could forme,  
*Apelles* wit, or *Phidias* his skill,

Was wont this auncient Citie to adorne,  
 And the heaven it selfe with her wide wonders fill;  
     All that which *Athens* ever brought forth wise,  
 All that which *Afrike* ever brought forth strange,  
 All that which *Asie* ever had of prise,  
 Was here to see. O mervelous great change:  
     *Rome* living, was the worlds sole ornament,  
 And dead, is now the worlds sole monument.

In order to link and synthesize the matter in the quatrains, Spenser deploys *anaphora* as a connecting device (i.e., “All that which,” a very literal translation of Du Bellay’s “Tout ce que”). We progress from the praise of Greek and near-Eastern architecture found in Rome to a list of artists to a description of what was presumably brought back by the Imperial Legions to the ironic reversal reinforced by rhyme: what was once an ornament is now a “moniment,” a type of riddle. The poet can compare and contrast Rome’s end and beginning, eventually combining the two. Spenser manages to accomplish this fusion by translating the last two lines of *Antiquitez* XXIX very literally, and rhyming them:

Rome vivant fut l’ornement du monde,  
 Et morte elle est du monde le tumbeau,  
(13–14)

Rome living, was the worlds sole ornament  
 And dead, is now the worlds sole monument.  
(RR 29.13–14)

He therefore demonstrates how an ornament can be a monument, an emblem of *memento mori*.<sup>23</sup> As a result, Spenser gives his argument an end, heading off Du Bellay’s somewhat diffuse and discursive subject matter.

To strengthen his form, Spenser the translator recreates Du Bellay’s rhetorical devices while adding his own. In *Ruines* 3, for instance, he expands the scope of assonance and internal rhyme to complement Du Bellay’s tropes. Yet such detailed craftsmanship transcends the merely technical; its purpose, as always, is thematic:

Thou stranger, which for *Rome* in *Rome* her seekest,  
 And nought of *Rome* in *Rome* perceiv'st at all,  
 These same olde walls, olde arches, which thou seest,  
 Olde Palaces, is that which *Rome* men call.

Behold what wreake, what ruine, and what wast,  
 And how that she, which with her mightie powre  
 Tam'd all the world, hath tam'd herselfe at last,  
 The pray of time, which all things doth devowre.

*Rome* now of *Rome* is th'onely funerall,  
 And onely *Rome* of *Rome* hath victorie;  
 Ne ought save *Tyber* hastning to his fall  
 Remaines of all: O worlds inconstancie.

That which is firme doth flit and fall away,  
 And that which is flitting, doth abide and stay.

Spenser maintains Du Bellay's *epizeuxis* ("Rome en Rome"), the blunt and *Ecclesiasticus*-like vocative ("O mondaine inconstance"), and his purposely bland adjectival repetition ("vieux"). Yet Spenser's internal rhyme has a more complicated function, and signifies the most important departure from his source. Although the distinct quatrains push the reader through the sonnet, the extraordinary recurrence of "all" and "fall" forces him back through it (i.e., 11. 2, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13). That "all" eventually "fall" remains a subtheme of the entire sequence, in keeping with the generally pessimistic tone. Moreover, this trope is a unique product of the English language, impossible to reproduce in French. By repeating the b-rhyme, Spenser reinforces his point. (He would, in fact, use the same device in *Ruines* 12, "Like as whilome the children of the earth.") He translates the sestet line-for-line, but changes the scheme to efefgg. The repetition of rhyme amplifies the paradoxical meaning that Du Bellay had already set up. Although everything passes away, "that which is flitting" has more endurance than "That which is firme." *Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas*, indeed.<sup>24</sup>

Still, in spite of such good work, one might question Spenser's ability to build an English sonnet without a head start—a great text to translate from that provides the raw material for experimentation. The last sonnet in *Ruines*, "L'Envoy," provides us with this rare opportunity. Entirely Spenser's own, this *encomium* for Du Bellay answers the French poet's conventional and stylized self-doubt,<sup>25</sup> expressed here at the end of the *Antiquitez*:

Esperez vous que la posterité  
 Doive (mes vers) pour tout jamais vous lire?  
 (AR XXXII.1–2)

Hope ye my verses that posteritie  
 Of age ensuing shall you ever read?  
 (RR 32.1–2)

As Richard Katz says, Du Bellay uses the *exegi monumentum* convention to question the immortality of poetry.<sup>26</sup> Yet he works variations upon it, repudiating Horace's jauntily declarative tone, questioning his own poetry and its ability to survive into posterity. But Spenser's aesthetics will not permit him to leave it at that. His *addendum* stresses the immutability of art:

Bellay, first garland of free Poësie  
 That *France* brought forth, though fruitful of brave wits,  
 Well worthie thou of immortalitie,  
 That long hast traveld by thy learned writs,  
 Olde *Rome* out of her ashes to reviuë,  
 And give a second life to dead decayes:  
 Needes must he all eternitie survive,  
 That can to other give eternall dayes.  
 Thy dayes therefore are endles, and thy prayse  
 Excelling all, that ever went before;  
 And after thee, gins *Bartas* hie to rayse  
 His heavenly Muse, th'Almightie to adore.  
 Live happie spirits, th'honour of your name,  
 And fill the world with never dying fame.

At last we can see how he exploits the form using his own material. The structure is very solid. One can divide the argument at least three ways: octet and sestet, three related quatrains and a couplet, a twelve-line argument and a two-line conclusion. Thematically speaking, Spenser answers Du Bellay's anguished query with rhyme: "Poësie"/"immortalitie," "revive"/"survive," "prayse"/"rayse," and "name"/"fame." These pairs, hypnotic and incantatory and visceral, reinforce the proposition that art transcends time. One might even say that the concluding couplet states the theme of *Ruines*:

the physical death of Rome is counterbalanced by the city's survival into eternity through Latin writings, particularly poetry, inspired by Roman virtue and . . . through Du Bellay's sonnet sequence.<sup>27</sup>

Hieatt's point is obviously well taken. We might also note how Spenser answers Du Bellay's intricacy with some of his own. In Spenser's poem, Du Bellay (along with the Huguenot poet Du Bartas) becomes a part of the process of time passing, a "garland" worthy of eternal aesthetic life. Yet Spenser cleverly includes himself in this same process because he too manages to revive "olde Rome out of her ashes" in the very act of translating these poems which take the Eternal City for their subject. He praises his predecessor for what he has accomplished himself, and states definitively, with Horace, *exegi monumentum*.

Spenser's fairly accurate translation does not inhibit him from moving in his own direction. Yet this direction does not really entail a change of vision because Du Bellay seems so congenial to him. Spenser's rendition of *Antiquitez* I.8 ("Tant que d'abas vous me puissiez entendre") is particularly illustrative: "That ye may understand my shreiking yell" (RR 1.8). The latter two words are nowhere to be found in Du Bellay, and may even seem a bit "shrill," but they elicit the basic mood with Spenser's peculiar twist, an intensity or (Protestant?) fury which he compresses into sonnet after sonnet. Like Du Bellay, sequences and order appeal to Spenser's poetics, and the interlinkage in *Ruines* causes him to resemble his honeybee in *The Shepheardes Calender*, "Working her formall rowmes in wexen frame" ("December" 68).<sup>28</sup> Yet here, Spenser's "new" form is the key: not only does he demonstrate yet another stanzaic competency, but his seven well-wrought rhymes serve, if Shakespeare is evidence, as a worthy bridge to the future.

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#### NOTES

1. Ed. Léon Séché (Paris: Revue de la Renaissance, 1901) 12–13.
2. Margaret Wells notes Du Bellay's actual *dislike* of translation, and discusses his distinction between *traduction*, a pedantic and academic rendering of a great author, and *translation*, a more aesthetically satisfying if less literal version. Into which category would

Du Bellay have placed *Ruines*? See "What Did Du Bellay Understand by 'Translation'?" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 16 (1980): 175–77. Critical thought remains divided about the relative worth of *Ruines*. C. S. Lewis discounts it as "poor" (*English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* [London: Oxford, 1973] 368), and Anne Lake Prescott characterizes the sequence as sometimes "awkward and shrill" (*French Poets and the English Renaissance* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1978] 49). However, in the most sympathetic recent study of Spenser's recasting of the *Antiquitez*, A. Kent Heatt thinks *Ruines* "a close translation," and thus neither poor nor awkward. See "The Genesis of Shakespeare's Sonnets: Spenser's *Ruines of Rome: by Bellay*," *PMLA* 98 (1983): 800.

3. I have taken this aspect of Du Bellay's critical thinking from Grahame Castor, *Pléiade Poetics. A Study in Sixteenth Century Thought and Terminology* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964) 68, and Robert J. Clements, *Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1942) 195.

4. Here, the critics are in agreement. In *Spenser, Ronsard, and Du Bellay: A Renaissance Comparison* (London: Kennikat, 1972), Alfred Satterthwaite notes "an intimate spiritual affinity" (11) between the two poets. Prescott argues: "English poets found in Du Bellay what they wanted to find: conceits, mental pictures of the mutable or erotic world, and fine inventions to describe love, grief, and longing" (41), and that what Spenser "saw in Du Bellay was . . . central to his sensibility" (43). Clearly, both poets share the same poetic "pace," a seemingly arbitrary and meandering progress that is quite intricate, a type of Renaissance Gothic. Both are obsessed with number symbolism (which Prescott discusses at length, 47 ff). The two also gear their work against hyperbole. In *The Ordered Text: The Sonnet Sequences of Du Bellay* (New York: Lang, 1985), Richard Katz makes this pronouncement about Du Bellay (20), but it seems to me that it applies to Spenser, also. Although both poets have been criticized in their own age and ours for a certain vacuous melliflousness, neither is a stranger to the short, blunt statement. Consider Du Bellay's "Rome n'est plus" (AR V) and Spenser's "Rome is no more" (RR 5) as examples of this tendency. Nonetheless, a curious delight in anaphora, cataloguing, and a certain adjectival blandness and redundancy are not difficult to discern. See RR 3/AR III and the prevalence of "old"/"vieux." C. A. Patrides' comment obtains here: "Spenser's language is essentially distinguished by a polyvalency promoted by a rhythm at once ceremonious and ritualistic. Tension should not be sought because it will not be found, all frequent claims to the contrary notwithstanding." See "The Achievement of Edmund Spenser," *The Yale Review* (1980): 437. Also present in the two poets is what the Pléiade calls *utiledoux*, a rhetorical term that Du Bellay applies to Rabelais, but that would seem to fit himself and Spenser better. Clements discusses *utiledoux* at length, touching upon the discrepancy between the components in Pléiade thought and their eventual (uneasy) alignment, and finding the roots of *doux* in the *Ars Poetica*:

non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunt,  
et quocumque volent animum auditoris agunto.  
(99–100)

Ben Jonson's very loose translation:

'Tis not enough, th'elaborate Muse affords  
Her Poem's beautie, but a sweet delight  
To worke the hearers minds, still, to their plight.  
—Horace, *of the Art of Poetrie*, 140–42.

See also *Ars Poetica* 333–34, 343–44.

5. "The Genesis of Shakespeare's Sonnets," 800. Examples of earlier pertinent studies are W. L. Renwick, *Edmund Spenser: An Essay on Renaissance Poetry* (London: E. Arnold and Co., 1925), and Harold Stein, *Studies in Spenser's Complaints* (New York: Oxford UP, 1934).

6. Cf. Satterthwaite 37–65, and Prescott 42–46.

7. Prescott (42) cites what she considers to be the earliest evidence of English translation or borrowing from Du Bellay, an epigram by Grimald in *Tottel's Miscellany*.

8. See Deborah Cartmell, "'Beside the shore of siluer streaming Thamesis': Spenser's *Ruines of Time*," *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* VI (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1985) 77–82.

9. This is Satterthwaite's term (116). He notes that Du Bellay was proud that his *Antiquitez* were not "Petrarchan," citing especially XXXII.12–14. However, many assert that both the *Antiquitez* and the *Songe* are thoroughly Petrarchan. Wayne Rebhorn makes an impressive case for this, noting many similarities between Du Bellay's conception of Rome as a woman and Petrarch's treatment of Laura, and even locating some definite allusions:

Qui voudra voir tout ce qu'ont peu nature,  
L'art et le ciel (Rome) te vienne voir.  
(AR V.1–2)

Chi vuol veder quantunque po natura  
e 'l ciel tra noi, venga a mirar costei.  
(Rime CCCLVIII.1–2)

See "Du Bellay's Imperial Mistress: *Les Antiquitez de Rome* as Petrarchist Sonnet Sequence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980): 609–22. Andrew Fichter argues that the *Antiquitez* have their root in Rime CCCXXIII.70–72. See "'And Nought of Rome in Rome Percei'st at all': Spenser's *Ruines of Rome*," *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual* 2 (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1981) 183–92.

10. Heatt 800.

11. See Richard Schell's introduction to the *Theatre for Worldlings* in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, eds. William A. Oram, et al. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989) 461–63. All references to *Ruines* follow this edition.

12. Cited in Lawrence Manley, "Spenser and the City: The Minor Poems," *Modern Language Quarterly* 43 (1982): 209.

13. There is some controversy over the authorship of the fifteen *Sonets*. Some scholars attribute the last four, paraphrases from the book of Revelation, to van der Noot. For a lively discussion of this issue, see Manley 210. For the record, "sonnet" was a term that the English applied indiscriminately to several short lyrical forms (much as we use the term "lyric" today) before the agreed-upon definition—fourteen lines with a rhyme scheme—became standard fare.

14. The Yale edition reproduces these woodcuts (464–84).

15. Spenser, *Ronsard, and Du Bellay* 28.

16. *French Poets and the English Renaissance* 49.

17. Like many inventors of remarkable creations such as the English sonnet, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517?–1547) left it to posterity to realize the possibilities of his experimental form. His sonnets demonstrate a lack of unity, a *post hoc* construction (what a former professor once termed "the unity of what comes next"), feminine rhymes with

unintended risible effects, listing and cataloguing to fill space, strained rhymes, *hysterion proteron* (distorted syntax to fit the meter), and, finally, a type of antique *naïveté* that Spenser would deliberately cultivate. All of these are marks of the poetaster, not the poet. See lyrics like "The soote season," and "Dyvers thy death."

18. Shakespeare's Sonnet 73:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Against those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.  
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

19. *Catacosmesis* is a structural figure which orders elements in a deductive fashion, the opposite of *auxesis*, which is in comparison a climactic, inductive, and conventional method of ordering.

20. *Les Antiquités de Rome/Les Regrets*, ed. F. Joukovsky (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971). All references to Du Bellay follow this edition.

21. See Paul Martin, "Le Rome de Joachim Du Bellay, à Travers les *Antiquitez de Rome* et les *Regrets*," *Études Classiques* 51 (1983): "Esprit morose et corps malade, [Du Bellay] était ce qu'on aurait appelé jadis un hypercondriaque" (133).

22. Spenser also enjoys demonstrating odd paradoxes through a poetic version of Renaissance artistic practice. Raymond La Page discusses the influence of this Renaissance *topos* upon Du Bellay in "Pictorial Technique in Du Bellay's *Antiquitez*," *Romance Notes* 22 (1981): 82–87. Many of his arguments, I think, apply to Spenser. Another useful article on this subject is Daniel Russell's "Du Bellay's Emblematic Vision of Rome," *Yale French Studies* 47 (1972): 98–109.

23. This is not to say that Du Bellay fails to make the same connection. Spenser simply uses rhyme to emphasize his French master's trope. In "The Roman Tomb or the Image of the Tomb in Du Bellay's *Antiquitez*," Eric MacPhail remarks upon Du Bellay's "obsession" with this symbol of mortality. He also discusses the relationship of the *Antiquitez* to that type of sixteenth-century occasional poetry known as *tombeau*, an "ambivalent" genre in which a poet cleverly immortalizes himself while seeking "to protect [his] subject from oblivion and confer on him immortal fame." See *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 48 (1986): 359–72, especially 359, 363–64, and 367.

24. *Ruines* 3 and *Antiquitez* III bear a strong resemblance to one of the most famous neo-Latin poems of the Renaissance, Janus Vitalis's *De Roma* (c. 1552):

Qui Romam in media quaeris novus advena Roma,  
Et Romae in Roma nil reperis media,  
Aspice murorum moles, praeurpta saxa,  
Obrutaque horrenti vasta theatre situ:



Haec sunt Roma. Viden velut ipsa cadavera, tantae  
 Urbis adhuc spirent imperiosa minas.  
 Vicit ut haec mundum, nixa est se vincere; vicit,  
 A se non victum ne quid in orbe foret.  
 Nunc victa in Roma Roma illa invicta sepulta est,  
 Atque eadem victrix victaque Roma fuit  
 Albula Romani restat nunc nominis index,  
 Quinetiam rapidis fertur in aequor aquis.  
 Disce hinc, quid possit fortuna; immota labascunt,  
 Et quae perpetuo sunt agitata manent.

There are several variants of this epigram (especially 1.9). This version is taken from *Renaissance Latin Poetry*, ed. I. D. McFarlane (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1980) 24–26. For a remarkably compact compendium of analogues, variants, and translations, see Malcom Smith, “Looking for Rome in Rome: Janus Vitalis and His Disciples,” *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 51 (1977): 510–27.

25. Prescott 50.

26. *The Ordered Text* 14.

27. “The Genesis of Shakespeare’s Sonnets” 801.

28. Northrop Frye finds this line to be mimetic of Spenser in *Fables of Identity. Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963) 68.