A durable fyre: the poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh

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A DURABLE FYRE:
THE POETRY OF SIR WALTER RALEGH

by

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RALEGH ON POETRY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Vision Upon This Conceiption of the Faery Queene</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Lie</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To the Translator of Lucan</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE POET'S PILGRIMAGE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Farewell to the Court</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Like to a Hermite Poore</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A Farewell to False Love</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- As You Came From the Holy Land</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Both the life and the poetry of Sir Walter Ralegh hold a special fascination for twentieth-century man. In the demands of the era in which he lived there is a parallel to our time and its demands. The essence of the active life can be seen in the dashing courtier, the venturesome organizer of colonies. But in Ralegh's life there are many contradictions. Ralegh was a man capable of both massacre of the Spanish and a unique compassion for the Indians in the New World.¹ There is the paradox of Ralegh's efforts in pursuing wealth, position, and royal favor (superficial and shallow pursuits for any age) and his search for the basic ingredients in what we now call the Renaissance. He sought to trace the movement of history from the dawn of time, which for any age is an ambitious not superficial task. One student of Ralegh's History of the World² sees in this work the theme that God dooms man, and justly. Ralegh's examination of history in search of its redemptive purpose certainly could not be considered shallow. He studied and experimented in medicine, chemistry, agriculture, horticulture, mathematics, and astronomy.³ He was interested and accomplished in music and known among his peers as a poet as well as a courtier.⁴ I am convinced that Ralegh sought to fathom man's potential for both an active and a contemplative life—a goal yet viable in the twentieth century.

Whatever the paradox and diversities of Ralegh's life, his poetry successfully captures the essences of man's opportunity and potential—opportunity for increasing awareness and potential for both hope and
despair. His poetry is often pensive because both the man and the age had doubts. But in its contemplative nature, the poetry speaks from the age of Elizabeth to a modern concern for the understanding of fortune, misfortune, and man's place in a universe of change and opportunity.

The poetry of Sir Walter Raleigh is a "durable fyre," valid and alive in our time. In the collective vision of several of Raleigh's poems a continuing theme can be observed. It is a poet's pilgrimage for the "durable fyre" of his existence.

Butt true Loue is a durable fyre
In the mynde ever burnynge;
Neuer sycke, neuer ould, neuer dead,
From itt selfe neuer burnynge.

(As you came from the holy land, XXI, 41-44)5

The poetic statement of man's need for truth, for the mooring of meaning in a chaotic world, is the durable fire of Raleigh's pilgrimage. Each poem reveals a different facet or further illumines some phase of the poet's continuing quest. For Raleigh, who lived with zest the active life, who found timeless excellence in contemporary literature, and who played a brash and daring role in Elizabethan court life, it is probably inevitable that his poetry in its intense introspection becomes a chart of a real journey. His pilgrimage is a journey through the ugliness of reality and through the doubt and uncertainties of the spirit. His poetic utterances deal with real rather than idyllic worlds; the re-creation of his spiritual pilgrimage is substantially grounded in a clear-eyed disillusion. Truthless dreams and optimism are debunked in the poet's concern with man's response to a goal beyond fortune, misfortune, and despair.
Because Raleigh never set out to be a poet and rarely signed his published work, many of his verses did not survive. Controversy exists over how much of Raleigh's work has survived to the twentieth century. One critic and biographer, K. L. Rowe, believes that because Raleigh's poems were so popular, most of them did survive. Rowe's is a minority view. Donald Davie states that much has been lost. Miss M. C. Bradbrook calls what poems we have "fragments which survive."

Agnes Latham, the most recent editor to tackle the problem of the Raleigh canon, believes, too, that only a small portion of the poems Raleigh wrote survives. Latham's edition of Raleigh poems contains forty-one ascribed to Raleigh with reasonable authority, twelve which form a conjectural "Raleigh Group" in The Phoenix Nest, and one doubtfully ascribed to Raleigh, with notes on several others. More than half of the authenticated poems, Miss Latham concludes, fall into one group dated after the 1580's and before Raleigh's fall from royal favor in 1592. The chronological placement of these poems emphasizes an introspection and a sophistication which would suggest a contemplative orientation during one of the most active times of Raleigh's career. This group of poems, representing roughly half of the canon, is probably, then, the product of Raleigh's most successful, brilliant, and venturesome years, the 1582-1592 period when he reigned as Elizabeth's handsome court favorite. While only the dates of the commemorative verses and epitaphs are certain, Latham's chronological placement is based on as much evidence as is available.

Though the surviving number of poems is proportionally small, the problem of authentication is a difficult one. Editors in the early
seventeenth century often collected many variously authored anonymous poems and added them to the works of some nobleman. Miss Latham comments, "Ralegh's jealously preserved anonymity made him easy prey and the problem of authenticity is sadly complicated by the frequency with which poems that one has reason to believe are his, appear among the posthumous works of another or several other authors." 12

Another complication dates back to Warton's History of English Poetry. Raleigh's reply to Marlowe's poem, "The Passionate Sheepheard to His Love," is signed Ignoto, which Warton says is Raleigh's constant signature. Several later editors printed as Raleigh's all those poems signed Ignoto in the Englanda Helicon and Reliquiae Wottonianae collections. 13 These editions were practically worthless in the matter of authenticity.

Several modern editions based on competent authentication seem to agree on the basic Raleigh canon. The 1875 edition of poems of Raleigh and Wotton contains 29 poems collected by J. Hannah. 14 An edition edited by Gerald Bullett 15 done in 1947 lists 31 poems, and Miss Latham's 1951 edition lists 41 with reasonable authentication and 12 conjectural poems. The dispute over authorship of individual poems is not yet settled, 16 but because Latham's edition has convincingly documented the authenticity of each poem quoted in this thesis, that edition will be used as the text. Latham has retained with some regularization the original spelling of the texts judged to be Raleigh's.

Most of the poems examined in this thesis are from the 1582-1592 period. At the peak of his brilliant career, Raleigh the poet looked intensely at fortunes, misfortunes, despairs, and hopes in his life. His
poetry is both a reflective report of the present and an attempt to deal with the inconsistencies of his world.

Several of Raleigh's poems combine to exhibit his view of poetry, its objectives and its functions. Part two of this work will examine poems which suggest a consistent and unified notion of poetry.

The last section of this thesis will be an explication of the pilgrimage theme found in several poems. This theme has been previously observed only in those poems where Raleigh speaks directly of pilgrims and pilgrimages. But this theme exists in poems not previously read as pilgrimage poems. I find that the continuing threads of the poet's spiritual journey can be observed when several poems are examined collectively. The poet's pilgrimage serves as a directive for the readers both to see reality as the poet sees it and to understand the durable fire of his ultimate goal. The vitality and honesty of his statements make them relevant and valid in the present day.
Ralegh’s view of poetics must be extracted from evidence found in several of his poems since no direct statements concerning the function or value of art of any kind are attributable to him. Even though Ralegh made no effort to publish his own poetry, there is evidence that he believed poetry to be a body of important and durable statements of the ideals of love and beauty and truth. His scorn of public opinion led him to see poetry as an opportunity for intensely personal and realistic definitions of man’s spiritual struggle. His poetry, while written for specific occasions or persons, goes beyond the function of praise or mere delight.

The Vision Upon This Concept of the Faery Queene

The best example of Ralegh’s view of poetry is seen in his verse written as a tribute to his friend Spenser and in praise of The Faery Queene.

Methought I saw the grave, where Laura lay,  
Within that Temple, where the vestall flame  
Was wont to burne, and passing by that way,  
To see that buried dust of living fame,  
Whose tumbe faire love, and fairer vertue kept,  
All suddeinly I saw the Faery Queene:  
At whose approch the soule of Petrark wept,  
And from thenceforth those graces were not seen.  
For they this Queene attended, in whose steed  
Oblivial laid him downe on Lauras herse;  
Hereat the hardest stones were seene to bleed,  
And grones of buried ghostes the heavens did perse.  

(A Vision upon this concept of the Faery Queene, XIII)
When the reader participates in the vision Ralegh presents in this poem, he is engulfed in the dim and dusty recesses of the temple of Laura's tomb, where "the vestall flame/ Was wont to burne." The place, private and remote, is "kept" by "faire love and fairer virtue." Petrarch's soul, Homer's spirit, and "buried ghosts" inhabit the temple also. The poet himself has come deliberately and reverently.

. . . passing by that way,
To see that buried dust of living fame.

(XIII, 3-4)

The living fame of the beautifully virtuous, much-loved, and eloquently praised Laura is an exemplar of all poetic creation extolling love and virtue. Reverence for this ideal is the central moving force in Ralegh's vision. The importance of this reverence is, for the poet, extended from past to future. He divides his poem, as he does his admiration, with considered emphasis upon the creations of both Petrarch and Spenser.

The center of the poem rests, then, upon the ideal creation in poetry of the embodiment of love and virtue.

Ralegh gives a macabre setting for praise of the ideal he sets forth. A burial place, a candle, the dim recesses of a temple, all seem eerie props for a vision of honor and praise for Spenser's work. It is, however, just this eerie setting which accomplishes the contrasts necessary to put The Faery Queene before the reader in a light which will show its true merit—its merit as the embodiment of a living ideal.

In the vision, as the Faery Queene approaches, we are aware of the contrasts of living form and buried dust, of values that dwell outside the
temple and those which dwell within the tomb. Sunshine and darkness, regal followers and solitary burial, combine to form a contrast between the contemporary experience of Spenser's subject and the remoteness of the Laura of the sonnets.

The Faery Queene arrives; so lovely and virtuous is Spenser's creation that the graces, "faire love and fairer vertue," are compelled to leave their reverent vigil at Laura's grave—a passage from past to present—to join the entourage surrounding the Queen. The graces have suddenly recognised the beauty of the Queen and the lovely fairy world Spenser created for her to inhabit. The graces have not waited for the judgment of time to appoint them to their vigil. The independence of the graces in Ralegh's metaphor emphasizes the magnitude of the praise he intends for Spenser. Spenser's creation is contemporary and demands active homage; the metaphor suggests that everything is touched or stirred in some way by the mere presence of the ideal of love and beauty embodied in the Faery Queene. The approach of the Queen is indeed a momentous event. The graces are drawn away as if by a magnetic beauty; Petrarch's soul weeps, one surmises, both for the beauty of the Faery Queene, so like that of his Laura, and for the loss of total homage to his creation.

The macabre elements increase as Ralegh emphasises the totality of the shift in obeisance. The stones bleed and buried ghosts groan. The whole environment (literary tradition) is disrupted. Stones are disturbed and long-settled dust shaken off. Such total disruption in the dim temple is the startling effect of the presence of something gay and
and bright and lively in the midst of gloom and remembrances and deathly quiet. Spenser's work appears as the new spirit and new life for Elizabethan literature.

Ralegh is deliberately contrasting a modern work done in English with the accumulated beauty and excellence of literature cast in other languages over hundreds of years. Ralegh intends the comparison to be startling, even brash. Homer's spirit "did tremble all for grait"; England had produced a challenge to the work of Homer and all the ancients. Ralegh's vision proclaims the status of Spenser's verse in bold, assertive terms. The lovely Faery Queene is a "celestial thief" who has stolen the reverence and the devotion of Ralegh's age. No longer must "faire love and fairer vertue" wait at Laura's tomb. Ralegh's vision shows a movement from past to present, from death to life, from classical excellence to modern. Most of all Ralegh's vision shows The Faery Queene as a creation worthy of honor and as a credit to the English tongue and Elizabeth.19

The Lie

In a poem which has as its subject Elizabethan institutions as Ralegh saw them, we can see evidence of Ralegh's view of the function of poetry. No, like Sidney in his "Defense of Poetry," upholds the value of poetic utterances as embodiments of ideal truth.

"The Lie" speaks of the inconsistencies in human behavior that we all experience. The phrase "then give them all the lie" can be read as "accuse them of lying." It was the traditional way to challenge someone to a duel. This poem, better than any other, is Ralegh's challenge to
institutions, to social myths, to fortune, to life itself. It is a statement of a poet who sees poetic art as a means of defining the gap between the actual accomplishments and the supposed goodness of civilization.

Tell men of high condition,
that manage the estate,
Their purpose is ambition,
their practise onely hate.
And if they once reply,
then give them all the lie.

Tell fortune of her blindnesse,
tell nature of decay,
Tell friendship of unkindnesse,
tell justice of delay.
And if they will reply,
then give them all the lie.

(The Lie, XXVI, 19-24, 55-60)

The poem expresses the state of the court and Elizabethan life as Ralegh found it. Not only does Ralegh invite the duel, but he is certain that such a tirade invites retribution. No one must challenge established beliefs or speak truthfully of accepted inconsistencies and deceptions without expecting a duel to follow.

So when thou hast as I,
commanded thee, done babbling,
although to give the lie,
deserves no lesse then stabbing,
Stab at thee he that will,
no stab thy soule can kill.

(XXVI, 73-78)

The soul's greatness will, the poem affirms, survive the stabs of fortune just as poetic truth will survive the hostilities of the environment it
exists in, and, along with the poet's soul, will continue to challenge
the deluding myths that exist in any age. "Tell wit," he writes,

. . . how much it wrangles
in tickle points of nycenesse,
Tell wisdome she entangles
her selfe in over wisesnese.
And when they doe reply
straight give them both the lie.

Tell Arts they have no soundnesse,
but vary by esteeming.
Tell schooners they want profoundnesse
and stand too much on seeming.
If Arts and schooners reply,
give arts and schooners the lie.

(XIV, 43-48, 61-66)

Poetry's function and value here is as a challenge to men to see their
society and their cherished myths with clear eyes. This poem, like
Raleigh's view of the creation of The Faery Queene, asks for an honest
appraisal of a contemporary experience. Poetry serves as a visible
expression of the real world seen through the poet's eyes.

Raleigh viewed poetry, then, as virile movement from past to
present, from fancy to reality. Poetry functions as a directive to the
reader: weigh carefully the merits of the contemporary against the tra-
ditional in literature and society. Poetry points mankind toward ideal
truth.

In other poems Raleigh advises others and follows his own counsel to
speak clearly and honestly about the present, just as he does in "The Lie."
Even when Raleigh writes of Queen Elizabeth, deliberately intending to win
her favor, he dwells on the need for seeing the situation, though hope-
less, realistically. The following example states Raleigh's directive.
But love her prayse, speak thou of nought but wo,
Write on the tale that Sorrow byddes thee tell,
Strive to forgett, and care no more to know
Thy cares are known, by knowinge thos too well.

Describe her now as shee appeares to thee,
Not as shee did appeere in dayes fordunn.
In love thos things that weree no more may bee,
For fancy seildume ends when it begunn.

(The 11th: and last booke of the Ocean to Scinthia, xxiv, 213-220)

To the Translator of Lucan

Poetry for Ralegh symbolizes the heroic sacrificing struggle of
the spirit. This poet, who so carefully related his poems to the real
world and its sorrows, recognizes the immorality of ultimate truth.
Lucan's work and that of his translator accomplished the task of true
poetry. They wrote, Ralegh says, not to please or flatter but to reveal
a contemporary experience which embodies a poetic ideal.

Had Lucan hid the truths to please the tyme,
He had been too unworthy of thy Ponne;
Who never sought, nor euer car'd to clime
By flattery, or seeking worthless men.
For this thou hast been bruise'd: but yet those scarres
Do beautifie no lesse, then those wounds do
Receiu'd in iust, and in religious warres;
Though thou hast bled by both, and bearst them too.
Change not, to change thy fortune tis too late.
Who with a manly faith resolues to dye,
May promise to himselfe a lasting state,
Though not so great, yet free from infamy.
Such was thy Lucan, whom so to translate
Nature thy Muse (like Lucans) did create.

(To the Translator of Lucan, XXXV)

Ralegh feels that a poet must bypass flattery and mere men-
pleasing and receive the bruises and stabs of contemporary opposition.
Poetry, in Raleigh's view, must illuminate a contemporary experience, contribute to the meaning of that experience, and uphold a poetic truth. Poetry must point to an ideal that is posed as a goal, not for human attainment, but for the poet's pilgrimage in search of ultimate truth.
A synthesis of the active and the contemplative life is defined in the pilgrimage observed in the following poems. Many of Ralegh's poems when examined collectively exhibit suggestions and echoes of a pilgrimage theme, the unifying theme proposed in my reading. This poet wrote from the vantage point of the sorrow and despair created by his own response to Elizabethan court life. It is from such a vantage point (the active life) that he looks ahead to the goal of his pilgrimage (the contemplative life).

Farewell to the Court

The awakening with which Ralegh begins this poem depicts a man's growing awareness of the transitory nature of pleasure. Joys once present in the poet's experience are now slipping from his view.

Like truthles dreeam, so are my ioyes expired,  
And past returne, are all my dandled daies:  

(Farewell to the Courtt, XXI, 1-2)

Love and fancy too seem beyond reach. Each of these pleasures once occupied the "dandled daies" and each, like a truthless dream, has engaged the consciousness only briefly. The pampered days during which the poet's pleasures surrounded him were days of confinement; the poet's world of experience was narrow, perhaps shallow, and truthless. The world he speaks of in this context is the reality of Elizabeth's court, but the poem also recreates the vast seas and continents of transitory joys and universal sorrows.
The lost delights move further from the poet's view, as if he were stranded on shore, helplessly watching them slip from sight. The present recognizable, definable reality (all that is left on shore with the poet) is a throbbing sorrow, like waves crashing against the rocks.

My lost delights now cleanse from sight of land, Have left me all alone in unknowne waies:

(XII, 5-6)

The "unknowne waies" compose the continent upon which the poet is stranded with little control of life or spirit or fortune. The dull rhythm of the metaphorical sea is echoed and re-echoed by the refrain, "Of all which past, the sorrow onely stais." Thus, the dull throbbing sorrow is merely an accompaniment to the poet's growing awareness; it is a vehicle which transports him to a new perspective of his world. Pleasures slip away; sorrow remains. The awakening shapes the poet's sense of poignant loneliness as the poem continues.

The poet is in the "country" of his new awareness, "without companion." The loneliness is coupled with a sense of the inevitability of death as the poet comprehends the passage of time and life.

I onely waille the wrong of deaths delays, Whose sweete spring spent, whose somer well nie don, Of all which past, the sorrow onely stais.

(XII, 10-12)

Perhaps the awareness of inevitable death prompts the wish to hurry death's arrival. The poet is acutely aware not only of the loneliness but also of a void: expired joy and misled love on one side and possible
oblivion on the other. Again his awareness is accompanied by the persistent rhythm of sorrow. "Of all which past, the sorrow only stays."

The awakening in this poem to an intense loneliness and strange terrain places the poet on the very edge of the void between youthful pleasures and death. His situation has moved from confinement to exploration (accompanied by sorrow) into a wider world of increasing consciousness. The poet himself is emerging from the "truthless dreams" of a narrower world. The void before him must be filled with the stuff of reality and the poet contemplates a pilgrimage ahead. He chooses to recognize the pain of sorrow, to relegate the past joys to a limbo of truthless dreams, and to find in this strange country of his awareness his "fortunes foldes." The void suggested in the poem must be crossed "ere age and winter cold."

... care forewarnes, ere age and winter colds,
To haste me hence, to find my fortunes foldes.

(XII, 13-14)

The poet expresses the enlargement of his world from confined pleasures to the more painful and wider continent of experience. The sorrow which is always with him heralds the beginning of a new life, a life of awareness of his relationship to the world. His new awareness gives him the impetus for a pilgrimage upon which he must now embark.

Like to a Hermite Poore

Ralegh may have seen a clear vision of existence "in a countrey strange without companion" (Farewell to the Covrt, line 9). "Like to a Hermite poore" is the description of a spiritual withdrawal from the
pain which accompanied the poet's awakening; it is the description of a lonely wanderer who is without a goal. The suspension of activity and the retreat from the world makes the hermitage interlude a sojourn in a land of near-despair. Death is the only visible, attainable goal on the other side of the void the poet is forced to contemplate.

In the framework of this poem the poet has turned his back on any goal, even death. He has found a "place obscura."

I mean to spend my daies of endless doubt,
To wail such woe as time cannot recure,
Where none but Loue shall ever finde me out.

(like to a Hermite poore, XI, 2-4)

The poet's retreat has effectively allowed him a time of suspension, a time of abject contemplation of the pain of awareness. His meager food and drink are sorrow and tears; his staff is broken; his existence as well as his body is shrouded in gray.

And for my light in such obscured shade,
The flames shall serue, which from my hart arise.

A gowme of graie, my bodie shall attire,
My staffe of broken hope whereon Ies staie,
Of late repentance linckt with long desire,
The couch is framde whereon my limbs Ies lay.

(XI, 7-12)

The poet is waiting, even hoping, that love, not despair, will keep the gate of his loneliness. Death is the inevitable pursuer outside the gate; the poet is helpless, at the mercy of love and despair. The poem expresses a faint hope of love's triumph over despair and a hope of "late repentance." The poet may have retreated to a helpless state, an obscure
place, but his suspension in time from life is more preparatory or contemplative than permanent. The central emphasis in the poem is on retreat, the suspension of life-activity for a contemplative moment. Hope is hovering, waiting for despair to swing the gate open.

And at my gate despair shall linger still,
To let in death when love and Fortune will.

(XI, 13-14)

There is little doubt about the dominance of despair; death's coming is inevitable but not the poet's central concern. He is concerned with retreat, at least momentarily, and with the sorrow that is, once again, his companion. The poet waits, cold, sorrowful, and threatened by despair. His obscurity is successful; none but love, he says, "shall euer finde me out."

A Farewell to False Love

In the context of the poet's widening awareness of the world beyond the narrowness of his joys "like truthles dreams," he finds himself faced with the necessity of dealing with false values. He calls them "false love, the oracle of lies." The real pilgrimage cannot begin until the poet has cut himself loose from a false way, "a way of error."

Farewell false love, the oracle of lies,
A mortal foe and enemie to rest:
An envious boye, from whom all cares arise,
A bastard vile, a beast with rage posset:
A way of error, a temple ful of treason,
In all effects, contrarie vnto reason.

(V, 1-6)
The false values are "a mortal foe"; the poet is brought to an awareness of deception against which he must battle. He is fighting the falseness within himself as surely as the falseness of disloyalty or delusion found in the real world. He is fighting for his life and his salvation. The hermitage retreat which allowed a momentary suspension of all active progress toward the goal of the pilgrimage is abandoned in this poem for action. The poet's inclination for the active life cannot be subdued for long and he finds in this poem a realisation that he must rid himself of false values and false ways; his farewell is final and emphatic.

The treachery of the enemy with which he must deal is made clear. He must battle each form the enemy appears in. To recognize "a poisoned serpent covered all with flowers," and "a beast with rage possesst," is to understand both the subtle and blatant dangers of "a way of error." For a poet whose journey will lead to the divine fire of ultimate truth, a clear look at the maze, "a path that leads to peril and mishap," is essential. Raleigh moves beyond the mere recognition of falseness. The journey his spirit would take must have more purpose than:

A ranging cloude that runnes before the winder,
A substance like the shadow of the Sunne,
A goale of griefe for which the wisest runne.

(V, 16-18)

A real journey, the pilgrimage the poet sets out on, must begin by a recognition of the many faces false values may wear. The poet moves beyond the angry denunciation of the snares around and within him. Self-deception and a world which poses false values for true combine to
form, he says,

A schole of guile, a net of depe deceit,
A guilded hooke, that holds a poysoned bayte.

(V, 11-12)

The nets and the hook must be cut away in order to save the poet’s soul, for progression toward a worthy goal. The poet must also cut the roots of falseness within himself in order to be free of bondage to false love whenever he encounters it. False love is the poet’s mortal foe and the struggle to rid himself of the roots of falseness is the only action possible. The false values in the world can never be completely defeated. The only purgation possible is personal and spiritual.

False Love; Desyre; and Feuty frayll adewe
Dead is the route whence all these fancies grave.

(V, 29-30)

The poet, in freeing himself of the roots and nets of deception, has cleared the way to seek his goal, the "Durable Fyre" of true love. Both the way and the poet's vision are cleared for spiritual growth.

The Passionate Hans Pilgrimage

The poet has in his verses spoken of his awareness, of his withdrawal, and of his need to abandon false ways. He sees that a journey along a true way is a spiritual necessity; he must cross the void which separates his youthful joys from eventual death. His awareness of reality has seemingly forced him to the edge of the void. The pilgrimage upon which he must go is mapped out by another poem, "The passionate mans Pilgrimage."
Ralegh begins his pilgrimage with a recognition of the wider world he has found. His joys and pleasures have retreated and he has freed himself of the snares of false values along a false path. While leaving behind the dream-like pleasures with a negation of their reality, he embarks, paradoxically, in this poem upon a pilgrimage founded in yet another dream—a dream of eternal life. The vision Ralegh presents of the goal of his pilgrimage makes clear, however, that this dream is not "truthless." Instead, this dream is closely identified with the realities of tangible objects.

Give me my Scallop shell of quiet,
My staffes of Faith to walke vpon,
My Scrip of Ioy, Immortall diet,
My bottle of saluation;
My Gowne of Glory, hopefull true gage,
And thus Ile take my pilgrimage.

(The passionate mans Pilgrimage, XXX, 1-6)

The poet recognizes both human and spiritual necessities. The poet requires quietness (inner calmness), faith, joy, knowledge of salvation, and some identification with attainable glory in order to begin his pilgrimage. Each spiritual necessity is transformed metaphorically into the properties needed in reality for a pilgrimage: the staff, for rough terrain (faith); the gown, to shield one from cold (glory); the shell, to carry one's worldly goods in (inner quiet); and the food and drink, to refresh a parched and hungry traveller (joy and salvation).

The spiritual preparation is careful and the supplies well-planned; the poet recognizes both the difficulty of the journey and the importance
of reaching the goal.

The visionary pilgrimage of this poem is more optimistic than that implied in "Farewell to the Court." Death was what the poet seemed to think lay on the other side of the void in that poem, while he now expects to find an eternal pilgrimage on "blest paths." The pilgrimage, then, is the crossing of the void. The poet's expectation of what awaits on the other side of the void or at the end of the pilgrimage has changed. The following lines express this difference.

I onely wail the wrong of deaths delays,
Whose sweets spring spent, whose sorow well me don,
Of all which past, the sorrow onely staines.
(Farewell to the Court, XII, 10-12)

Set on my soule an everlasting head.
Then am I readie like a palmer fit,
To tread those blest paths which before I writ.
(The Passionate mans Pilgrimage, XXX, 59-60)

Kalegh contrasts a physical existence often robed in violence ("Blood must be my bodies balmer") and injustice with the purity and justice of the "land of heaven." This Celestial image is composed of "Silver mountaines," "nectar fountaines," "cleare wallaes," "christall buckets," "rubies thicke as gravell," and a hall of justice made of "Seelings of Diamonds, Saphire flooresses,/ High walles of Corall and Pearle Bowres" (lines 33-34). The magnificent wealth he envisions can only intensify the pilgrim's thirst from the weary wandering—a thirst for the Judgment and justice of Christ. It is a thirst to be "filed with immortalitie."

A loneliness surrounded the poet at the edge of the void, but, as he crosses it in this poem, he moves from being a solitary wanderer
to a position as guide and fellow traveller with other pilgrims.

And by the happy blissfull way
More peacefull Pilgrims I shall see,
That have shooke off their gownes of clay,
And goe appareld fresh like me.
Ile bring them first
To slake their thirst,
... . . . . . . . . . . .
And when our bottles and all we,
Are filld with immortalitie:
Then the holy paths weels travell

(XXX, 19-24, 29-31)

The arrival at "heavens Bribesens hall/ Where no corrupted voyces brall"
fills the pilgrim-poet with awe. Here there is no corruption, or false
accusers; Christ will defend all the pilgrims. The realization of such
benevolence, coupled with the brilliant and beautiful surroundings, fills
the pilgrims with high reverence.

For there Christ is the Kings Attourney:
Who pleades for all without degrees,
... . . . . . . . . . . .
Christ pleades his death, and then we live,

(XXX, 40-41, 46)

The poet's pilgrimage has brought him from a snare-filled and sorrowful
world, from an expectation of inevitable death to the promise and perhaps
the full realization that he might attain immortality—"and then we live."
If the poet, as suggested in other poems, supposed death lay at the end
of the journey, he was correct. But, in this poem, it becomes evident
that he believes it is Christ's death as atonement for the pilgrim's
sins and the sins of a hostile world.
The pilgrimage is complete; justice has its place here rather than in the secular world. The poet in humility recognizes the brevity of physical existence. "Seeing my flesh must die so soon." He asks to be fitted with an "everlasting head." His plea is for undeserved immortality. His soul will "tread blest paths" in a new land and a new life.  

As You Came from the Holy Land

Concurrent with Raleigh's vision of a heavenly pilgrimage is his conception of eternal verities to be sought out and valued in the present life. The object of this seeking is the "durable fyre" of true love.

As you came from the holy land  
Of Walsingham  
Hast you not with my true love  
By the way as you came?

(As you came from the holy land, XXI, 1-4)

The question is asked as two pilgrims meet on the road. The poet structures the dialog to emphasize the inconstancy of human dedication compared to ideal devotion. The direction of the poem is toward the recognition of the ideal of ultimate truth as object of the poet's quest.

The two wanderers are seekers after Truth in any guise, the goal of all pilgrims. The pilgrim who has been fully awakened from the truthless dreams of a narrow world, who has despaired and battled in preparation and in journeying, must not only seek for himself but must also question those who have trekked before him. Truth is like a loved one. Time and distance separate and the pilgrim seeks to know if his true love (his goal) is still attainable.
When questioned, the first pilgrim is quick to describe his love, "as the heavens fayre." The reassurance by the second pilgrim that he has seen such beauty, form and grace brings a lament from the first pilgrim.

She hath lefte me here all alone,  
All alone as unknowe,  
Who somtymes did me lead with her selfe,  
And me loude as her owne.

I haue loude her all my youth,  
Butt now ould, as you see,  
Loure lykae not the fallyng frute  
From the wythered tree.

(XXI, 17-20, 25-28)

Knowledge of the existence of his love is not sufficient; the pilgrim is alone, bereft, incomplete. The pilgrim like a withered tree has been rejected, laughed at by a capricious child. The goal is elusive, far away; the pilgrimage is not over.

The second pilgrim makes clear the dichotomy. One love is an unsubstantial comfort; the other constant and warm. One leaves the pilgrim cold and alone; the other promises eternal, divine comfort in a chaotic and cruel world.

Know that loue is a careless chylld  
And forgets promyse past:  
He is blynd, he is deaf when he lyste  
And in faythe never faste.

(XXI, 29-32)

This false love is beautiful and childlike. It is characterized by inconstancy. But the central force of the dialog comes from the reve-
lation of the nature of the "durable fyre" as much as from exposing the
faithless immaturity of false love, or false goals.

The effect of juxtaposing the metaphors of a faithless, immature
child as temporal love, and a durable fire as true love is the contrast
of two separate and unmixable forms of energy. The poet, the pilgrim,
and all mankind, like other faithless children, are certain to respond
to the kind of changing, elusive temporal love described. They are
vulnerable because they are mortal; they are likely to confuse temporal
love with the goal of the pilgrimage—the "durable fyre" of ultimate
truth.

The goal of the pilgrimage, then, is the central theme of this
poem. The goal is a consuming, cleansing, and everlasting fire, which
by its image embodies the essence of divine energy. The pilgrimage
moves toward the ever-burning flame; lesser goals fall away. The fire
signifies that which is humanly unattainable—ultimate truth.

Had the pilgrim never asked, he might have pursued the "careless
chylld"-love, another kind of "truthles joye" like those he had consciously
rejected to begin his quest. The "angelyke face," the regal grace, left
him forlorn and cold which suggests the situation of another lament,
"Of all which past the sorow onely staieth." Sorrow and despair accompany
him, but warmth, constancy, timelessness are the promises of the goal
the pilgrim seeks.

Butt true lorne is a durable fyre
In the mynde ever burnynge;
Neuer sycke, neuer ould, neuer dead,
From itt selfe neuer turnynge.

(XXI, 41-44)
The poet envisions the object of the quest. It is burning in his mind, timeless and eternal, an emblem of divinity and divine love. The world through which he journeys is chaotic; courts crumble, friends desert, fortunes dissolve around the poet in reality. In bitterness the pilgrim had railed against this chaos.

Tell fortune of her blindness,
Tell nature of decay,
Tell friendship of unkindness,
Tell justice of delay.
And if they will reply,
Then give them all the lie.

(The Lie, XXVI, 55-60)

The pilgrim must seek faith in a faithless world. The fire becomes a marker for anyone who follows the quest for ultimate truth. Raleigh has defined the fire's blossoming light and its undiminished promise to all.

A vestall fier that burnes, but never wasteth,
That losseth nought by giving light to all
That endless shines eachwher and endless lasteth
Blossomes of pride that cann nor vade nor fall.

(The Ocean to Scaintia, XXIV, 189-192)

Warmth, light, and beauty mark the end of the pilgrimage. The poet's awakening, his sorrow, and his despair become incorporated into the goal as well as the way toward it. The fire will draw the traveller to the end of his way and promises immortality within its eternal warmth.

Butt true Lune is a durable fyre.

There is evidence that Raleigh viewed poetry as expressions of ideal truth, love, and beauty and that he uses poetry to illuminate
contemporary experience as well as to increase man’s understanding. Several of Raleigh’s poems develop a pilgrimage theme. The poet’s pilgrimage is a journey of the spirit through the misfortunes, sorrows, expectations, and visions of life. The spiritual development of the poet is expressed in his pilgrimage poems. Raleigh’s poetry captures the “durable fyre” of the goals he sought. These poems form a developing expression of a poet who was cognizant of man’s potential for sorrow, despair, and eventual immortality. His poetry is a “durable fyre” valid in our time.
NOTES


4 Raleigh as a skilled musician received praise from several contemporaries. A musical publication, John Case's Praise of Music, 1596, was dedicated to Raleigh. (See Wallace, p. 83) Raleigh as a poet is praised by a number of contemporaries; among them are Puttenham, Gabriel Harvey, Edmund Spenser. See Agnes H. C. Latham, The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. lix-lxiii for the texts of several critical comments.

5 All quotations from Raleigh's poems are from Agnes Latham's edition of The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh. The title of the poem will follow the first quotation, followed by the Roman numeral assigned by Latham and the line numbers.
6 See Rowse, p. 148; Latham, p. xxiv.

7 Rowse, p. 150.


9 Bradbrook, p. 77.

10 Miss Latham suggests that possibly all *The Phoenix Nest* poems and four others were composed before the mid-1580's. This would be less than half of the poems. Of the remaining poems, only eight are dated tentatively after Raleigh's fall from royal favor in 1592. (See Latham, pp. 89-90).


13 Latham, p. 91.


17 See Rowse, p. 148; Wallace, p. 69.
18 Bradbrook, pp. 45-46.

19 Peter Ure, in his essay, "The Poetry of Sir Walter Ralegh," REL, I, iii (1960), p. 23, says Ralegh "seems more moved to pity by the fate of the displaced poets than pleased because a new one has out-distanced them." Ure's discussion does not show evidence in the poem which displays Ralegh's pity or the note of fear and betrayal he suggests is here. My reading of the poem disagrees fundamentally with Ure's observations.

The poem which has been pointed to as most uncharacteristic of Ralegh is "The passionate man's Pilgrimage" (Ure, p. 27). I find, however, that it fits easily into a grouping of other poems about pilgrims and pilgrimages. It is said in various manuscript versions to have been composed the night before Ralegh's execution (Latham, p. 141).

21 See Melvin Askew, "Ralegh's The Pilgrimage," Explicator, XIII (1959), Item 9, for a discussion of Christian symbols and Christian doctrine found in this poem.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Sprott, S. E. "Ralegh's 'Sceptio' and the Elizabethan Translation of Sextus Empiricus," Ps, XLII (1963), 166-170.


Goe soule the bodyes guest
vpon a thanklesse arrant,
Feare not to touch the best
the truth shall be thy warrant:
Goe since I needs must die,
and giue the world the lie.

Say to the Court it glowes,
and shines like rotten wood,
Say to the Church it showes
whats good, and doth no good.
If Church and Court reply,	hen giue them both the lie.

Tell Potentates they line
acting by others action,
Not loued vnlesse they giue,
not strong but by affection.
If Potentates reply,
giue Potentates the lie.

Tell men of high condition,
that manmage the estate,
Their purpose is ambition,
their practise onely hate:
And if they once reply,
then giue them all the lie.

Tell them that braue it most,
they beg for more by spending,
Who in their greatest cost
seek nothing but commending.
And if they make replie,
then giue them all the lie.

Tell zeale it wants deuotion
tell loue it is but lust
Tell time it meets but motion,
tell flesh it is but dust.
And wish them not replie
for thou must giue the lie.

Tell age it daily wasteth,
tell honour how it alters.
Tell beauty how she blasteth
tell fouour how it falters
And as they shall reply,
giue every one the lie.

Tell wit how much it wrangles
in tickle points of nycomesse,
Tell wisedome she entangles
her selfe in ouer wisenesse.
And when they doe reply
straight giue them both the lie.

Tell Phisicke of her boldnes,
tell skill it is preuention:
Tell charity of coldnes,
tell law it is contention,
And as they doe reply
so giue them still the lie.

Tell fortune of her blindnesse,
tell nature of decay.
Tell friendship of vnkindnesse,
tell justice of delay.
And if they will reply,
then giue them all the lie.

Tell Arts they have no soundnesse,
but vary by esteeming,
Tell schooles they want profoundnes
and stand too much on seeming.
If Arts and schooles reply,
giue arts and schooles the lie.

Tell faith its fled the Citie,
tell how the country erreth,
Tell manhood shakes off pittie,
tell vertue least preferreth
And if they doe reply,
spare not to giue the lie.

So when thou hast as I,
commanded thee, done blabbing,
although to giue the lie,
deserves no lesse then stabbing.
Stab at thee he that will,
no stab thy soule can kill.
FAREWELL TO THE COVRT
XII

Like truthles dreames, so are my ioyes expired,
And past return, are all my dandled daies:
My loue misled, and fancie quite retired,
Of all which past, the sorow onely staiies.

My lost delights now cleane from sight of land,
Haue left me all alone in vnknowne waies:
My minde to woe, my life in fortunes hand,
Of all which past, the sorow onely staiies.

As in a countrey strange without companion,
I onely waile the wrong of deaths delaies,
Whose sweete spring spent, whose sommer well nie don,
Of all which past, the sorow onely staiies.

Whom care forewarnes, are age and winter colde,
To haste me hence, to find my fortunes folde.
LIKE TO A HERMITE POORE

XI

Like to a Hermite poore in place obscure,
I meane to spend my daies of endles doubt,
To waile such woes as time cannot recure,
Where none but Loue shall euer finde me out.

My foode shall be of care and sorow made,
My drink nought else but teares falne from mine eies,
And for my light in such obscured shade,
The flames shall serue, which from my hart arise.

A gowne of graie, my bodie shall attire,
My staffe of broken hope whereon I lie staie;
Of late repentance linckt with long desire,
The couch is framde whereon my limbs I lie lay,
And at my gate dispaire shall linger still,
To let in death when Loue and Fortune will.

A FAREWELL TO FALSE LOVE

Well false loue, the oracle of lies,
A quenchlesse fire, a nurse of trembling feare,
A path that leads to perill and mishap,
A true retreat of sorrow and dispayre,
Syth then thy traynes my yonger yees betrayd
And for my fayth ingratitude I fynde.

V

Vicious boye, from whom all cares arise,
A quenchlesse fire, a nurse of trembling feare,
A path that leads to perill and mishap,
A true retreat of sorrow and dispayre,
A deeps mistrust of that which eertaine seemes,
Sythe repentaunce hathe my wrongs bewrayde.

Stast of sorows from whence are drawen such
Whose course was euer contrarye to kynde.
showers,
False Loue; Desyre; and Bewty frayl adewe
Styst of sighes, and murtherer of repose,
Dead is the roote whence all these fancyes
A of error, a temple ful of treason,
grew.
All effects, contrarie vnto reason.
A deepe mistrust of that which eertaine seemes,
A hope of that which reason doubtfull deemes.

Poysture lend to euerie griefe that growes,
Sythe repentaunce hathe my wrongs bewrayde.
Hole of guile, a net of deepe deceit,
Dead is the roote whence all these fancyes
gilded hooke, that holds a poysioned bayte.
grew.

Affection finds no ende,

Gling cloude that runnes before the winde,

Vestance like the shadow of the Sunne,

A of griefe for which the wisest runne.
THE PASSIONATE MANS PILGRIMAGE
XXX

Give me my Scallop shell of quiet,
My staffe of Faith to walke vpon,
My Scrip of Joy, Immortall diet,
My bottle of salvation:
My Gowne of Glory, hopes true gage,
And thus Ile take my pilgrimage.

Blood must be my bodies balmer,
No other balme will there be giuen
Wilst my soule like a white Palmer
Travels to the land of heauer,
Er the siluer mountaine,
Where spring the Nectar fountaines:
And there Ile kiss
The Bowle of blisse,
And drink my eternall fill
In every milken hill.
My soule will be a drie before,
But after it, will nere thirst more.

And by the happie blisfull way
Are peacefull pilgrims I shall see,
That haue shooke off their gownes of clay,
And goe appareld fresh like mee.
Ile bring them first
To slake their thirst,
And then to tast those Nectar suckets
At the cleare wells
Where sweetnes dwells,
Drawne vp by Saints in Christall buckets.

And when our bottles and all we,
Are fild with immortalitie:
Then the holy paths weele trauell
Strewde with Rubles thicke as grauell,
Seelings of Diamonds, Saphire floores,
High wallses of Corall and Pearle Bowres.

From thence to heauens Bribeles hall
Where no corrupted voyces brall,
No Conscience molten into gold,
Nor forg'd accusers bought and sold,
No cause deferd, nor vaine spent Iorney,
For there Christ is the Kings Atturney:
Who pleades for all without degrees,
And he hath Angells, but no fees.

When the grand twelve million Iury,
Of our sinnes and simfull fury,
Gainst our soules blacke verdicts giue,
Christ pleades his death, and then we liue,
Be thou my speaker taintles pleader,
Vnblotted Lawer, true proceeder,
Thou mouest saluation euen for almes:
Not with a bribed Lawyers palmes.

And this is my eternall plea,
To him that made Heauen, Earth and Sea,
Seeing my flesh must die so soone,
And want a head to dine next noone,
Iust at the stroke when my vaines start and
Sprad
Set on my soule an.euerlasting head.
Then am I readie like a palmer fit,
To tread those blest paths which before I writ.
As you came from the holy land
  Of Walsingham
Hast you not with my true love
  By the way as you came?

How shall I know your true love
  That have meet many one
As I went to the holy land
  That have come, that have gone?

She is neither wuite nor browne
  But as the heavens faire
There is none hath a forme so divine
  In the earth or the ayre.

Such an one did I meet, good sir,
  Such an Angelyke face,
Who like a queene, like a nymph, did appere
  By her gate, by her grace.

She hath left me here all alone,
  All alone as unknowne,
Who sometymes did me lead with her selfe,
  And me loude as her owne.

What is the cause that she leaues you alone
  And a new waye doth take;
Who loued you once as her owne
  And her ioye did you make?

I haue loude her all my youth,
  But now ould, as you see,
Loue lykes not the fallying frute
  From the wythered tree.

Know that loue is a careless chylld
  And forgets promyse paste,
He is blynd, he is deaff when he lyste
  And in faythe never faster.

His desyre is a dureless contente
  And a trustless ioye
He is wonn with a world of despayre
  And is lost with a toye.

Of women kynde such indeed is the loue
  Or the word Loue abused
Vnder which many chyldysh desyres
  And conceytes are excusde.

But true Loue is a durable fyre
  In the mynde ever burnynge;
Neuer sycke, neuer ould, neuer dead,
  From itt selfe ever turnynge.