

TRACE, PRESENCE, AND FUTURE AUTHORITIES  
IN EDMUND SPENSER'S EPISTLES

by

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## **DEDICATION**

To my especyll good freend, E.Y.

I was struck by the fang of an ouroboros: iterating traces of the past, presencing the present, and multiplying mutability. Now you know that I am not who I sometimes say I am. No matter what, all is for you.

My greatest looue & affectyn,

S.C.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
<i>BL</i>	<i>British Library</i>
FQ	<i>The Faerie Queene</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Manuscript</i>
PC	<i>The Postcard</i>
TNA	The National Archives
SC	<i>The Shepheardes Calendar</i>
SP	State Papers

For ease of reading, I have used the abbreviated manuscript reference numbers throughout this thesis. The selected texts written in Arthur Grey's hands are from the following manuscript sources: The Cecil Papers 11/91, TNA SP 63/83/43, 63/82/48, 63/91/53, 63/82/6, 63/86/53, 63/81/4, 63/88/9, 63/88/15, 63/82/16, 63/83/60, 63/84/3, 63/91/17, 63/92/26, 63/93/34, and 63/92/52.

The selected texts written in Edmund Spenser's hands are from the following manuscript sources: BL MS 33924, ff. 6-7, TNA SP 64/78/29, 63/92/9, 63/86/50, 63/85/5, 63/78/68, 63/88/12, 63/83/47, 63/84/28, 63/87/64, 63/91/11, 63/92/46, 63/94/28, 63/94/47, 63/90/1, 63/93/64, 63/94/46, 63/91/53, 63/84/14, 63/92/100, and 63/82/54. All of these references have been sourced from Christopher Burlinson and Andrew Zurcher's *Haphazard Online* and *Edmund Spenser: Selected Letters and Other Documents*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Jacques Derrida signs the *Envois*, the “false preface” to his epistolary narrative *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, with this postscript:

I am signing here in my proper name,

Jacques Derrida

7 September 1979

P.S. I regret that you [*tu*] do not very much trust my signature, on the pretext that we may be several. ... You are right, doubtless we are several and I am not as alone as I sometimes say I am. (Derrida, *The Post Card* 6)

Derrida’s words describe the overall theme of his work: the shift from postal to telecommunications, a prediction of the loss of print culture to digital texts, and play of temporal relays to enlighten (or otherwise possibly derail) the reader’s previous understanding of the concept of *différance*. Famously, *différance* is a term coined by Derrida that combines the senses of difference and deferral in the same word, thus establishing temporality (i.e., to defer to a later time) within the notion of difference. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition, *différance* refers to “the impossibility of any sign within a system of signs having a fixed meaning; the process by which meaning is endlessly deferred from one sign to another within such a system” (“différance”, n1). This definition indicates that no word can truly be summoned without the reference to and endless sequence of all other signs that come before and after. In indicating a “mistrust” in Derrida’s signature, Derrida uses his concept of *différance* to show that human presence, as a substitute for a “sign,” cannot be summoned by only their signature without tracing the multiple influences that construct his being at that point the

signature is signed. Derrida also invites us to play between the absence, when the addressee reads the letter, and presence, when the author writes it, of epistolary writing (Derrida, *Grammatology* 294). In this way, the letter is a connector between the absent and the present and the signature *presences* (i.e., serves as a proxy for) the person writing, as well as all other authorities can be traced in the person's presence. Curkpatrick expands on how Derrida can admit that he is "not alone" by explaining that the mistrust of a person's signature in a letter is a "consequence of the iterable, multiple voice, the traces of absence that remain in the sign through which *différance* is inscribed within" (Curkpatrick 184).

Of course, Derrida and the theories of poststructuralism—and specifically *différance*—not only position the author in conversation with other authorities or texts but could also work to destabilize or to subvert the identity of the author entirely. However, the intent of this thesis is not to entirely deconstruct the notion of authority in a text but rather to see the remarkable similarities in the theories of a deconstructed signature as it relates to the past, present, and future iterations of a single early-modern author. Specifically relevant to these concepts is an author who, like Derrida, is fascinated with dual and multiplicitous identities in his own work as an early-modern poet and a secretary: Edmund Spenser. Spenser served as a secretary to Arthur Grey, Lord Governor of Ireland, from 1580-1582 before publishing *The Faerie Queene* in 1590. Tracing authority in a single signature calls to mind the field of secretarial studies, where one person writes and signs letters in the name of another. Within early-modern secretary studies, scholars' descriptions of the master-secretary relationship is rather straightforward: the master "dictates what is to be written" and then the secretary "signs

his master's name to it" (Rambuss 45). Richard Rambuss refers to this relationship by citing a drawing by Matthew Paris that depicts Socrates and Plato chronologically out of order: Plato seems to be instructing Socrates to write—the student instructing the teacher—when we had thought the reverse all this time. This image, here in figure 1, is also used on the cover of Derrida's *The Post Card*.

Rambuss suggests that Derrida “raises the question of control between master and secretary” by drawing attention to the reversal of power in the master-secretary



Figure 1. Plato instructing Socrates from: Paris, Matthew, 1200-1259 [illustrator]. *Texts on prognostication*. MS Ashmole 304, 31v. Bodleian Library. Oxford, UK.

relationship (46). Rambuss explains that the reversal of power is direct and that the master and secretary simply reversed roles. Derrida, in contrast, explains the

displacement of the Plato-Socrates chronology is not so simple: the roles are not only reversed, but the dual authorities are embedded collectively within the master's signature. Derrida's reading of the Plato-and-Socrates image invites us to understand that the secretary and master both share guardianship of the signature, a sign which holds both past and future iterations of an authority's presence.

The concepts that Derrida raises in *The Post Card* use a host of terms that have been previously mentioned but deserve further definition. Derrida's concept of *presence* is founded in ontology, which is the study of being. The structure and nature of being present, of being interpreted in the "now," is "compromised by a trace, or a residue of a previous experience, that precludes us ever being in a self-contained 'now' moment" ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 68). Presence appears not only the current time but at all the times that precede and succeed the present moment. Derrida also uses this notion of absence and presence throughout *The Post Card*. He writes:

I write to you again, when I leave a note under your pillow or in the letter box upon leaving, the essential not being that you are absent or present at the moment when I write to you but that I am not there myself, when you are reading, that is, still there, myself. (*The Post Card* 79)

By explaining that the reader is absent when he writes, and that he is absent when it is read, Derrida explains that the present tense of a letter is always in the past when the letter is read. Presence, therefore, is always deferred from the past and to the future. In other words, Derrida reveals that presence is not entirely possible because it is unstable and shifts from past to present, from present to future. Derrida explains that the present is only appreciated in the future, a future that makes presence both possible and impossible.

In this way, the presencing of meaning (or, in the case of the letter, the presencing of authority in a signature) cannot be limited to only one interpretation. Instead, it is the presence of all past and future iterations of authority should be considered.

*Absence* and *presence* are also key concepts in early-modern epistolary secretarial theory. Nicholas Faunt's *Touching the Office of Principal Secretary of Estate* (1592) emphasizes the temporal distance between the secretary and master, explaining that the secretary "may alsoe bee a rememberancer of all such matters as are of most necessarie dispatch, and moued to him in the absence ... of his Master" (qtd. in Hughes 502). From Faunt, we understand that the secretary acts when not in the presence of the master, and from Angel Day we learn that the letter itself acts as the "messenger" of the "absent" (Day 1). Angel Day's definition, transcribed here from his 1586 letter-writing manual *The English Secreterie*, shows a recognition of the absence between writer and addressee, but also in the temporal verbal constructions wherein the absent writer becomes present. Therefore, we can consider the letter, letter-writer (both the master and the secretary), and the addressee as mediators of these spatial and temporal distances. As readers who come to these letters far in the future with respect to their first writing, we are attuned to the temporal meditations where absent becomes present. Navigating presence, or locating all possible authorities in a signature, depends on the past, present, and future traces of authorship that manifest in the text. Derrida's concept of *trace* helps explain how the voice of the absent writer can be *presenced*. Linda Kauffman explains the concept of trace to be "a compendium of all one has read," thought, or experienced (Kauffman 93). Very near to the notion of trace is the more commonly used strategy of *intertextuality* which seeks to find meaning within a text by addressing the multiple authorities, and



outside voices, in the text. Within readings for intertextuality the presence of an original writer is *presenced* through the page, bringing forth the multitude of voices that can construct a single voice. Yet, in Derrida, the *trace* speaks more to the reflexive nature of the past, present, and future orientations of authority. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains in her extensive translator's introduction to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, "trace is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present" and thus "the authority of the text is provisional" (Spivak xvii). Trace of an author, therefore, does not necessarily point to one authority, but rather to all authorities, in the past, present, and future.

The future-oriented traces are *iterations*. Iteration, in this sense, is a form that can be "recognized and repeated" (Kauffman 93). As a future-oriented concept, an iteration is reflexive to the time a letter is both written and then interpreted. Iteration, therefore, can be conceived as a term that describes all that comes before, and all that comes after, a trace of the past and presenced in the future. In this way, the Paris image reveals that Socrates and Plato share authorial guardianship of past, present, and future in their written messages, their iterable presence signing and co-signing epistolary documents. Derrida invites us to become readers of the trace to all the origins of authority which may be referenced in the past, the present, or future. In a letter, there is not any single signatory; the writer is "not alone" in his thoughts or in constructing the written word (*The Post Card* 6).

Throughout this thesis, these concepts will be referred to as *authority* (any single or multiple entity that has the power to influence form or identity), *traces* (the "former presence, existence, or action(s)" that comprise authority), *presence* (the manifestation of

authority in past, present, and future orientations), and *iterations* (authority that can be reproduced, repeated, or changed) respectively. These concepts raise the question: Is it possible to trace the presence and iterations of multiple authorities that are inscribed in a single writer's signature?

Within the context of these concepts of modern epistolary theory, Spenser's work can be read to find the multiple authorities that comprise his compositions of fictive, manuscript, and printed letters. The past, present, and future iterations of Spenser's training and career as a secretary and imitator of character brings forward the themes of secrecy and duality in the identity of his literary characters. Several examples in Spenser's epistolary works highlight his own interest in dual identity: the (still) unauthorized (but widely speculated about) authorship of E. K.'s Epistle in the preface to *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), Spenser writing as Immerito in his correspondence with Gabriel Harvey (1580), Spenser writing as the secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton from 1580–1582, Duessa's letter, signed by the dual persona *Fidessa*, to King Eden's court in Book 1, Canto 12 of *The Faerie Queene* (1590), and of course, the signatures printed in editions of *The Faerie Queene* from 1590 to the present. As we know from Derrida, it is "absolutely crucial" that "the past, the future" were not "flattened out, synthesised away, and reduced to one" (*The Post Card* 8). Therefore, all aspects of Spenser's epistolary past, present, and the future must be considered in identifying the multiple authorities that iterate presence through Spenser's epistolary work.

Chapter II provides discussion on the traces of past authorities that presence in Spenser's secretarial epistles. To understand these traces, the chapter reviews the historical letter writing trends and discusses the English letter-writing manuals available

during the Tudor and Stuart periods, as well as their origins and the current literature regarding epistolary theory in the sixteenth century. Secretarial training is also discussed to help discover the ways in which authority can be traced in early-modern epistolary writing and cultures of letter exchange. One of Edmund Spenser's extant secretarial epistles is examined in search for ways in which early-modern manuscripts *trace* to the letter-writing trends and secretarial practices of the period.

In Chapter III, I discuss the ways in which Spenser presences Arthur Grey in composing secretarial epistles. The corpus of extant secretarial epistles, from the editions of Andrew Zurcher and Christopher Burlinson, are visualized and analyzed by methods of both close and distant readings. This chapter uses a reading strategy which Digital Humanists call "Top-Down and Bottom-Up" which allows for "switching between close and distant reading" (Jänicke 10). In this approach, Spenser and Grey's letters are given a distant reading by discussing the visualizations created by Voyant Tools and a close reading by analyzing these visualizations and the text of the letters with the theories of Janet Altman. As Derrida explains, the present or "now moment" of being is often compromised by the past and future, so a discussion of the present-tense of moments written in the letters is provided. The theories of Altman, who is greatly influenced by Derrida's *The Post Card*, in her book *Epistolarity: Approaches on a Form*, provide further ways to read the "epistolary discourse" of Spenser's letters written while in service to Grey. This analysis seeks to determine ways in which Grey's authority surfaces in both his letters and the letters composed by Spenser.

Chapter IV, the brief conclusion to this thesis, presents a discussion on how Spenser's career as a secretary affects his literary career. This chapter considers the

fictive letters in Spenser's poetry: particularly, the letters exchanged with Gabriel Harvey in *Two Wittie, Proper, and Familiar Letters*, E.K.'s epistle in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and Fidessa/Duessa's letter in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*. This chapter also considers future research on the letters contained in Spenser's printed editions of *The Faerie Queene* (from 1590 through mid-eighteenth century) and hypothesizes future iterations of early-modern secretarial training through subsequent editions of the text.

## II. “FATHER AND SON:” TRACES OF AUTHORITY IN SPENSER’S SECRETARIAL EPISTLES

In *The Post Card*, Derrida is continually drawn to Matthew Paris’s Plato and Socrates image as it raises the concept of trace, presence, and iterations of authority in the master-secretary relationship. The notion of iteration in postal relay—the back and forth sending and receiving, and the re-reading of words scripted on the page—gives further insight into a guardianship of words, concepts, and ideas between the past/present, sender/receiver, and master/secretary. Trace and iteration in the Plato-Socrates reversal are therefore unlimited in both the future and past possibilities of authority. As he explains: “S. is P. Socrates is Plato, his father and his son, therefore the father of his father, his own grandfather and his own grandson” (Derrida, *The Post Card* 42). The use of the familial lineage from grandfather, to father, to son shows that the voice of past generations is carried through a single word or event. In addition, authority can be traced into the future, the author being both the originator and the recipient of an expression or moment. Bringing forward the past voices in a single moment is to search for the multiple ways in which origin can be *traced*. The authority or “father” that shapes the early modern secretarial epistle can most directly link to the secretary’s master.

However, as Derrida helps us understand, there are more authorities than just the master to consider in the production of early-modern secretarial writing. To truly get a sense of the multiple authorities that surface in Spenser’s secretarial epistles, the letter-writing practices, trends, and traditions of the early modern period must be analyzed against letters from the period, like the extant copies that remain from Spenser’s secretarial service to Lord Grey of Winton in 1580-1582. Webster Newbold explains that

“it is not immediately apparent how (Day’s) combination of dictaminal and humanistic elements would have provided guidance in composing (letters)” (Newbold 130).

Elizabeth Tebeaux asserts that letter-writing manuals did indeed influence familiar letter-writing techniques (Tebeaux 190). Other authorities that may also surface in his secretarial epistles are Spenser’s secretarial education as well as the people who are known to shape his career. With all of the iterations of letter-writing advice that was available at the time, it may be impossible to determine how any one of these manuals influenced the writing of a secretary. Yet, by examining the career and the letters of a person employed in a secretarial career, such as Spenser, we can begin to gain knowledge of how we can trace the influence of epistolary training manuals and secretarial practices in epistolary documents.

### **Traces of Authority: Edmund Spenser’s Training as a Secretary**

To begin understanding the extent to which traces of authority are found in Spenser’s secretarial epistles, we must first understand how Spenser would have been trained. The development of secretarial training in the early modern period originates during the medieval period where letter-writing was a trained skill. H. G. Richardson explains that in the mid-fifteenth century, Oxford University provided training for those who engaged in “the management of an estate” like notaries, chancellors, and secretaries (Richardson 269). It is believed that the students at this school may have started on arts degrees but were promoted into jobs in public service before finishing and were required to take the business program in this transition from academic to career preparation. The curriculum included reading and copying the model letters of Cicero and Quintilian in both Latin and French (Richardson 272). The students in this program were given writing

and rhetoric instruction based from the *cartuaria*, which were “an extended treatment of hypozeuxis, zeugma, and hyperbaton, the rhetorical figures (schemata)” (Camargo 72). At the basis of this formal secretarial training was reading sample letters, copying letters, and rhetorical skills to write letters.

The traces of authority in Spenser’s secretarial epistles are not only bound to the curriculum studied, but the location where his curriculum was taught and the people who influenced him while studying. Spenser arrived at Cambridge around 1552. At this time secretarial service was one of the governmental professions one could attain as a graduate of the Cambridge arts curriculum. In the early sixteenth century, letter-writing was integrated into school curricula. Letter-writing was considered an extension of oral eloquence and grounded in Cicero’s classical rhetorical theory. Before attending Cambridge, Spenser had already been educated in literary classics, rhetoric, history, and could read and write in Latin and Greek (Hadfield 29). At Cambridge, he studied the trivium and quadrivium. Spenser studied philosophy and was influenced by the rhetoric of Cicero, Quintilian, Hermogenes, Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. It is believed that Spenser greatly valued these writers, as many of the themes of the great philosophers are later traced in his literary works (Hadfield 57).

While at Cambridge, Spenser met his greatest friend and most traceable influence, Gabriel Harvey. Harvey was a scholar who had many literary and political connections. The pair shared mutual admiration: Spenser for Harvey’s scholarly skills and Harvey for Spenser’s poetic and rhetorical abilities. Harvey introduced Spenser to Sir Philip Sidney’s uncle, the earl of Leicester, which indefinitely shaped Spenser’s future secretarial prospects and literary endeavors (Ashley 20). While it is not exactly known how Spenser

became employed as a secretary, some suggest that the letters that Spenser and Harvey published in 1579 were written to show off Spenser's rhetorical skills so that he could be positioned in a state secretary position (Hamilton 287, Rambuss 45). The published letters show a playful exchange between a master and his secretary and use names to perhaps gain the attention of those in the Queen's circle, like Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney is central in positioning Spenser in service to Lord Grey. Evidence to this trace, Spenser dedicated *The Shepherd's Calendar* to Sidney in 1579 either to position himself in employment or to launch him into Sidney's literary circle. Hadfield explains that Spenser had joined Sidney's literary circle by 1595 when William Jones's English translation of Giovanni Balista Nenna's *Nennio* or *A Treatise of Nobility* appeared in England (Hadfield 16). This text includes dedicatory sonnets written by those in Sidney's circle at that time: Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, George Chapman, and Angel Day.

Spenser's inclusion in *A Treatise of Nobility* not only shows that he had landed in Sidney's circle, but also reveals traceable authority with a famed writer of the time who specialized in secretarial training, Angel Day, who published *The English Secreterie: or, plaine and direct methode, for the editing of all manner of epistles or letters, as well familliar, as others: distinguished by their diversities vnder their seuerall titles* (1586). Letter-writing manuals, like *The English Secreterie*, published model letters and taught rhetoric and mirrored formal secretarial education one could attain at Cambridge or Oxford. Since Day's *Secreterie* was published after Spenser was in service to Grey in the early 1580's, it is not likely that Spenser was influenced by this letter book. However, letter-books trace back to the 12th century. These letter books are the most concrete



insight to the types of advice Spenser would have known, advice which can be traced in his secretarial epistles.

### **Traces of Authority: A History of Secretarial Training Manuals**

Although Spenser likely relied on his secretarial training and personal influences to gain employment and compose his secretarial epistles, his education and influences can be traced to publications that advise readers on letter-writing trends. To understand how traces of these trends surface in secretarial epistles, we must first take a look at the history of letter-writing manuals to understand the scope of works and the advice they gave.

This history traces to the medieval method of rhetorical composition, *ars dictaminis*, which was used in the first letter-writing manuals from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. At this time, letter-writing was considered an extension of oration and letter-writers followed the same order in writing as they were in speech: invention, disposition, and elocution. One of the first Latin epistolary manuals in the late fifteenth century that followed the *ars dictaminis* tradition was Aegidius Suchtelensis and Johann Schönsperger's *Elegantiarum viginti precepta ad perpulchras conficiendas epistolas* (1498). Lawrence Green explains this text provides a "short treatise [that] distinguishes between grammatical correctness and elegance, and the elegancies are extended to forms of dictiminal address" (Green 105). Other epistolary instruction manuals that appeared near this time that followed tradition of *ars dictaminis* were Giovanni Sulpizio's *De componendis et ornandis epistolis* (1491) and Nicolaus Perottus's *De componendis & ordandis epistolis* (1502). While these texts were useful in their contributions to

composition and style, the texts did not vary much from the Latin formulaic notions of writing.

Traced to the early sixteenth century, the formula of *ars dictaminis* was extended to include more humanistic ideals which reinvigorated the Latin epistolary practice. In 1521, Erasmus's *De conscribendi epistolis* changed the medieval notions of rhetoric by introducing parts of the letter not previously discussed in *ars dictaminis*: the salutation and conclusion. Following the northern European formulaic principles of letter-writing advanced by Boccaccio and Petrarch, Erasmus defined the letter as a “mutual conversation between absent friends, neither a book nor an oration nor a formula, but instead a messenger changing shape to make the recipient feel the living presence of the writer” (Green 106). This tradition, the *ars epistolandi*, urges letter-writers to become more conversational writers and to write on “familiar” topics like the household, estates, and family.

In a letter on familiar topics, the letter not only presences the traditions of letter-writing, but the letter writer himself. Judith Henderson notes that “by about 1500, not only medieval writers but even humanist pioneers of an earlier generation and contemporary professionals who dared to defend established epistolary etiquette were under attack. By 1522, when Erasmus published his *De conscribendis epistolis*, medieval formulas had become merely comic” (Henderson 249). Lawrence Green agrees that Erasmus’s work “excoriates both the mindless followers of medieval formularies and the mindless imitators of Ciceronian letters” (Green 105). Tebeaux adds that “the style of the (humanist) letter should be conversational, avoid jargon, and that style can be achieved by practice, revision and the study of examples by successful writers” (Tebeaux,

“Pillaging the Tombs” 170). Further, “the writer should strive for acumen, appropriate diction, wit, humor, charm, and brevity” (Tebeaux 175). Where in the medieval tradition there was consistent application of rules, Erasmus brought new vitality to the epistolary genre by offering appealing example letters in his letter-book. These sample letters gave insight to others’ lives, which helped increase the popularity and readership of his text while also advancing letter-writing conventions. The familiar letter that emerged in the humanist revolution shows letters written for enjoyment and communication between friends rather than simply exchanging matters for an exchange of state in a rigid formula.

Tracing to the late medieval and early modern periods, the familiar letter transitioned from the traditional Latin and Greek and vernacular English letters began to appear as more English letter-writing manuals were published. The first English manuals were translated from Latin and therefore held to the medieval rhetorical traditions. Some of the first English letter-writing manuals were translated from Latin and held to the *ars dictaminis* traditions in its rhetorical writing advice, like Sir Thomas Wilson’s *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553). However, Wilson’s texts included translated letters from Erasmus’s text which pushed for familiar English letters. Another Latin to English translation was Thomas Phayer’s *A newe booke of presidents, in maner of a register: wherein is comprehended the very trade of making of all maner evidences and instruments of practice, right comodyous and necessary for every man to knowe* (1546). Leaning more to the Erasmusian notions of letter-writing, Phayer’s text also includes the ways in which the letter-writer should be presented through the page, or as Green explains it, the familiar letter had the ability to bring forward the “living presence of the writer” (Green

105). As more manuals were produced in English, the medieval formulas shifted to a focus on familiar communication.

Spenser's secretarial writing style would be more directly traced to the English vernacular writing guides. In 1568, William Fulwood wrote the first letter-writing manual in English: *The enimie of idlenesse: teaching the maner and stile how to endite, compose and write all sorts of epistles and letters* (1568). Although Fulwood's influence can be traced to the medieval traditions, the advice given in this manual is aimed at the early modern English reading audience. *Enemie of Idleness* is divided into four books: Book I covers general letter-writing theory, under the headings "demonstrative," "deliberative," "judicial," and "personal;" Book II offers Ciceronian style example letters; Books III and IV focus on familiar letters; and Book IV offers sample love letters in prose and verse (Newbold 128). The focus on the familiar letters in *Enemie of Idleness* trace directly to Erasmus's *De conscribendis epistolis* humanist trends. Many English manuals iterated Fulwood's content, including Angel Day's *The English Secreterie: or, plaine and direct methode, for the editing of all manner of epistles or letters, as well familliar, as others: distinguished by their diversities vnder their seuerall titles* (1586). *The English Secreterie* departs from the Ciceronian writing advice, and instead explains that letters need to "observe aptness, brevity, and comeliness in language" especially in relationship with the social levels of the recipients (Day 6). Social gradations, and how a letter-writer may address a person based on status, is "an especially strong theme of the book" (Newbold 137). Day's work is divided by the types of letters under the classifications of *descriptory, laudatory, deliberative, and amatorie*. Day's work also focuses on the

*judicial* letter and specifically addresses the early modern secretary, providing letter-writing guidance to those in the secretarial profession.

*Enemie of Idleness* and *The English Secreterie* not only contributed to humanistic epistolary trends in England, but also form what is believed to be a strong authority that is traced in writing from the period. Readership of these texts can be traced to the entertaining sample letters which satisfied inquiry into the personal lives of others, giving a way to peer into someone's life. As a result, *Enemie* and *Secreterie* are thought to be a reason that familiar letter exchanges between friends became popular during the period. As formulaic rules from the medieval *ars dictimani* began to decline, new letter forms and formulas were constructed at the hands of untrained learners, those who were readers of epistolary fiction and letter-writing manuals. The upsurge in personal communication is considered to have had a direct impact on the rise of literacy during the period; and, as a result, letter production increased along with the number of letter-books that were available to the reading public. Wider readership in England was also made possible as more epistolary manuals became available in English. *The English Secreterie* was widely read and there were ten editions published through the middle of the seventeenth century.

#### **Traces of Authority: Grey's letter to the Queen, 12 November 158**

The manuscript evidence of Spenser's secretarial epistles does reveal traces of early modern letter-writing trends from the letter-writing manuals. For example, in a letter written the day after the English victory at Smerwick Spenser writes Queen Elizabeth as Lord Grey, Spenser's employer, to provide a detailed account of the events and both led and followed the siege. Christopher Burlinson and Andrew Zurcher, the editors of Spenser's letters, explain that the "text and address of the letter are in Spenser's formal

italic hand” whereas “Grey added his own subscription and signature” (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 14-15). The account explains the slaughter of many Spanish soldiers as they invaded Ireland. The letter suffered substantial damage, and editors have inserted text to account for damaged portions and the omitted words or letters are indicated in text braces below. In the first several lines of the letter, the event is described in great detail, conveying many of the details of the siege at Smerwick (15-22). Spenser’s letter to the Queen appears to be influenced by several epistolary titles and styles prescribed in *The English Secreterie*, especially in the manner of how to write for circumstance or occasion. Grey’s letter begins:

It may please your Maiesty the vijth of this date I planted Campe before the forte at Smerwick: three causes hindered greatly my marche: provision of victaile, rysing of waters, which very hardly & with no smal{1} daunger we passed, and lastly staying for the fleete, of which for many d{ayes} space wee could haue no voyce of, & without which the entreprize had bene {in} vayne, no possibilitie being to drawe any ordinaunce with vs, nether hau{ing} any shipping for such conveyance by sea; at the last worde came, that Captein Bingham in the Swiftesure was arriued, and had anchored besi{de} the Forte, I then moved campe and beeing come within viij mile of the forte, {I} tooke my Horssmen & rode to the Hauen to haue talke with the said Cap{tein} and learne what was become of the Admirall and the rest: I fownd{e} by him that storme had parted them, and that after he had neuer heard of them, but had well hoped to haue mett them there: entring then into advice for the environing of the place. (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 15)

Considering this letter describes and explains the order of events of the siege at Smerwick, the letter could be characterized as *Descriptive* which is a letter with “narration throughout, in which is contained (by laying out the several partes thereof) a perfect and playn demonstration or description of anything” (Day 44). And, since this letter is addressed to the Queen, Spenser’s letter could also be categorized as *Deliberative* which that describes circumstances which may be written about with delicacy and must give praise to its recipient. In addition, since Spenser praises the Queene throughout, the letter could also be considered *Laudatory*.

The arrangement and length of Spenser’s letter trace to Fulwood’s *Enemie of Idleness* which explains that “euerie Epistle containeth three partes, euen as an Argument doeth, which consisteth of the *Maior*, the *Minor*, and Conclusion” (Fulwood 3). Fulwood continues that “letters be nedefull to make partes and diuisions, let it be don with breuitie” (Fulwood 17). Spenser’s letter is arranged with these considerations in mind, first demonstrated at the beginning of the letter with his stated purpose: “I planted Campe before the forte at Smerwick: three causes hindered greatly my marche” (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 15). The following pages (15-22) show Grey addressing the major issue, which is to justify the events at Smerwick and show how the English soldiers were dutiful to God and the Queen. Grey’s conclusion ends in summary:

I most humbly therefore beseech your Maiesty in consideration of your owne service & compassion of the poore, ragged, & naked creatures to affoord them a thorough pay; otherwise sure great lacke to your seruice yt will bring & as little gayne to your threasure by the delay. (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 22)

In this case, Spenser summarizes and concludes the major parts of the letter, just as advised in the letter-books of both Fulwood and Day.

Day also asks the writer to observe brevity, as the section “Of Breuitie” in *The English Secreterie* explains:

The next obseruation in an epistle is, y<sup>e</sup> we doe accustome our selues vnto breuitie of speach. This kind of breuitie is not as some vndiscreetly haue imagined, that which consisteth in fewnesse of lines, and shortnesse of roome in shewe of a side of paper, but breuitie of matter, wherein scope sufficient remayning for the necessarie demonstration and deliuerie of any needfull occasion, men are barred from friuolous circumstances, and especially enioyned therein to abhorre all maner of tediousness. (Day 7-8)

Although Spenser’s letter is filled in a “maner of tediousness,” it appears that Spenser adheres to the epistolary trends of brevity because of his self-conscious apology to the Queen. Near page two of the letter he writes, “Pardon me I beseeche your Highness in case my Digression bee tædioius” (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 17). He makes a similar reference toward the end of the letter: “Thus too tædiously perchaunce haue I helde your Maiesty with this discourse” (22). Yet, within the epistolary trends, the letter may be considered to be “sufficient” for the occasion.

Both Fulwood and Day advise that the address, subscription and signature should be in keeping with the addressee’s title and position. In addressing a letter, Fulwood explains:

Yf we speake or write of or to our superiors, we must do it with all honour, humilitie & reuerence, vsing to their personages superlatiue and comparatiue



termes: as most high most mighty, right honorable, most redowted, most loyall,  
most worthy, most renowned, altogether according to the qualitie of their  
personages. (Fulwood 6)

In Grey's letter to the Queen there is no elevated address per se, except that he writes "to  
hir Maiestie" and hopes to "please" her by receiving the news contained in the letter. The  
details of the letter show the horrific events that occurred at Smerwik, but all in praise to  
the Queen to whom the letter is addressed. Figure 2 shows the manuscript address  
evidence from *The National Archives*, with its transcription below:

To hir Maiesty from the Lord

Grey.

Entered.

12 Nou 80.



Figure 2: Grey to the Queen in Spenser's formal italic hand. Image purchased from *The National Archives* December 12, 2014 (TNA SP 63/78/29).

In this sample from Spenser's hand, we see that his address is in keeping with the advice  
of Fulwood and Day, which is to honor the addressee in their titles and quality of the

person. As Day states, the “circumstances wherby to incite those we write vnto, to the acceptaunce or allowaunce of the argument we haue in handling, as praise that maye ensue thereof, Hope, feare, or hate of some one thing” (Day 84). This advice presences Spenser’s subscription:

And so submitting all to Your Maiesties iudgment I take m{y} humble leave,  
beseeching the Almighty god to prolong your lyfe with contynuall health, & to  
governe you with his spright for your owne avayle & his glory, and mee euer to  
serve your Maiesty as I desyre. / In campe at Smer{wic}k the xij of November  
1580.

Yowr Hyghnes most & faythefull

subiect & seruaunt,

Arthur Grey

(Spenser, *Selected Letters* 22)

Writing with respectful wishes to the Queen, Spenser hopes for her good health and a long life. Burlinson and Zurcher’s edition of this letter shows the subscription and signature in the middle of the page, though the extant manuscript copy shows the placement of this subscription to be at the bottom left. This is very important in looking at epistolary trends, as Fulwood explains:

The second is the Subscription, which must be don according to the estate of the writer, and the qualitie of the person to whome we write: For to our superiors we must write at the right syde in the nether ende of the paper, say|ing: By your most humble and obedient sonne, or seruant, &c. And to our equalles we may write to|wards the midst of the paper say|ing: By your faithfull frende for euer. &c. To

our inferiors we may write on high at the left hand sayling: By yours &c.

(Fulwood 13)

Angel Day gives similar advice:

And if the state of honour of him to whome the Let|ter shall be directed doe require so much, the verye lowest margent of paper shall doe no more but beare it, so be it the space be seemelye for the name, and the roome fayre enough to comprehende it, which Subscriptions in all sorts to be handled shall passe in this order or substaunce to be framed. (Day 28)

In the manuscript evidence shown in figure 3, Spenser uses these same conventions and trends for the early modern epistolary subscription. Where the edited version of the letter does not show the placement of the subscription to be in the furthest right side of the document, the extant evidence shows otherwise. The subscription and signature are exactly where Fulwood and Day advise, evidenced in his writing “superior” and signing as a “humble” servant and signing in the lowest portion of the page.



Figure 3. Grey's subscription and signature. Image purchased from the National Archives December 12, 2014. (TNA SP 63/78/29).

The good writing and rhetoric in Spenser's letter can be traced to the advice given by Day in the last section of *Secretorie*, where Day defines and gives examples of the tropes, figures and schemes to be used in constructing a letter. Day advises: "the learner may aswell in his natiue tongue, know the right vse of figures & tropes heeretofore neuer by him vnderstood, as also discerne and ve them, out of others and in his owne writinge" (Day 20). Day here promotes the use of the English vernacular, especially the poetic and rhetorical devices that the English language holds, and he indicates that it is through imitation of these rhetorical tropes, figures, and schemes that one can learn excellent epistolary construction. In terms of rhetorical or poetic analysis, the events that led Grey into battle are described with a somber tone. The letter describes the stormy weather in the days preceding the massacre as a way to establish a tone for the events that led to the

surrender and execution of over 600 Spanish forces. Spenser writes that Grey was first prevented by “rysing waters” in his march to Smerwick; that Captain Bingham was separated “by storm;” that “such stormy & ragin wether continually for this space had fllen with contrariety of windes;” and that “the next day therefore I roade thether, where I fouwnd him newly entered, & fow{nd} the cuase his (Sir William Winter) stay to haue bene weather vncerteyne intelligence of my beeing & the Enemies estate” (15, 16). By speaking in this way, the letter connects the stormy weather with the horrible events that occurred at Smerwick. Spenser suggests to the Queen through this detailed account that the events were natural and could not be stopped by nature and showcases his rhetorical ability which may show the traces of influence in Spenser’s secretarial training, which is similar to the advice that we can trace to Fulwood and Day.

Spenser’s letter to the Queen can be traced to many of the early modern epistolary trends and traditions promoted by the English letter-writing manuals. Though, to add depth to this study, it would be useful to extract more evidence across a broader selection of letters written from Spenser’s letter-writing community to make full determination of the extent to which letter-writing trends arise in the extant evidence. In cases where trends were not observed, it may be that Spenser’s governmental epistles were often written for necessity, many of the letters carrying urgent news from New English colonization in Ireland to the English government. It would be interesting to determine whether this urgency and necessity led to any slips in the growing English epistolary trends, or even a reversion to the Latin traditions. However, in most cases, the letters were written within the epistolary trends for the early-modern period and we can see the traces of the authority in Spenser’s secretarial letters.

### **III. “I WOULD LIKE TO BE YOUR SECRETARY:” PRESENTING AUTHORITY IN EDMUND SPENSER AND ARTHUR GREY’S EPISTLES**

In addition to the secretarial training methods and early modern letter-writing manuals, an undeniable authority over Spenser’s secretarial epistles was his master, Arthur Grey, Lord Governor of Ireland in the early 1580s. As a respected and powerful position in the English and Irish court, the name “secretary” is etymologically synonymous with secret keeping, mystery, deception, intrigue, and disguise. Angel Day explains that the secretary is the cabinet where all the master’s secrets are stored, the secretary should be that of a “servant” and “friend” (Day 12). The secretary was considered a trusted servant and would know all the secrets of family and estate. Richard Rambuss argues that “management of secrets” is the most important duty of the secretary, and one of the biggest secrets kept by the secretary is the master’s identity (Rambuss 320). The secretary would handle all the matters of estate including the composition and dispatching of the master’s legal and familiar letters. The master would entrust all of these secrets to the secretary, even trusting him with signing his name to the documents. In other words, the secretary would be entrusted with the bearing the identity of the master. This servitude and friendship that ties the secretary to the master brings various ways of conceptualizing the authority shared between Edmund Spenser and Arthur Grey.

On one hand, Day says that secretary is simply the “the disposer of the master’s thoughts,” a presumption which Richard Rambuss continues by noting “the thoughts of the secretary are controlled by the master” (Day 102, Rambuss 44). We know that Arthur Grey may have had a great deal of oversight on Spenser’s composition, signing, dispatching, and sealing of letters. Burlinson and Zurcher suggest that Spenser did not

have an “intimate” friendship with Grey and that he was considered no more than a “middle-ranking civil servant” who “merely copied and did not compose originals of any of the surviving secretarial papers in his hand ... Spenser’s contact with a diplomatic letter was, at most, to check, seal, address, and dispatch it” (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 31, 36). The primary reason for this assertion is that the majority of letters that are written by Grey’s hands use an “intimate tone (that) often surfaces plainly” (44). The letters written by Spenser are shorter in length and deliver a more “formal and distinct” tone (44). This assertion leaves the impression that Spenser did not presence the same writing style as Grey, and perhaps simply composed letters and sign Grey’s name to them.

Yet, and on the other hand, Burlinson and Zurcher do mention that Spenser did perhaps write in a tone similar to compositions written by Grey, at least in one letter to the Earl of Leicester. In this letter written by Spenser, it “concludes with an intimate relation of surpassing poignancy for its brevity” (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 45). The letter reads: “It hath pleased God this mornynge too make mee powrar by one boye then beefore I was, Hys wyll bee doonne in all thynges, Whowm I praye euer too bee yowr Lordships defence” (SP 63/81/42). Burlinson and Zurcher mention that the “familiar terms to support an application to the Queen” in the text of the letter “springs” to focus the close “personal bond” of Grey and Leicester (45). Therefore, it appears that at times that Spenser does presence Grey’s authority by imitating his writing style, manner, and register in the language of his letters.

Derrida reminds us that, yes, a secretary’s and master’s authority are potentially indistinguishable from one another except in cases where there are clues that the reader would recognize and understand that show particularity to one writer or the other. He

explains: “One has to be right in the room (along with the other) in order to know how to decipher (one voice from the other). But I would like to be your secretary ... I would make several discreet interventions that you alone would recognize” (Derrida, *The Post Card* 70). These “discreet interventions” are later coined under the term “epistolary discourse” by Janet Altman. Altman defines epistolary discourse as “language of the letter specific to the letter form” (Altman 7). According to Altman, there are three distinct ways that epistolary discourse can be identified: the “*Particularity of the I-you*,” “*A Present Tense*,” and “*Temporal Polyvalence*” (Altman 117-21). Defined more fully throughout this chapter, epistolary discourse is a close reading method that helps us analyze linguistic style and authority of a letter. By locating the epistolary discourse employed in Grey’s letters we can compare and contrast to the letters written by Spenser to separate, distinguish, and presence the authority of either the secretary or master in the language of the letter.

Yet, the epistolary discourse over a large body of text, like that found in the Spenser and Grey letter corpus, can be read at a broader scale. Therefore, Spenser and Grey’s letters are given a distant reading by discussing the data visualizations of the epistolary discourse which I created by using Voyant Tools. The distant reading strategy which I will use in this chapter is a term Digital Humanists use called “Top-Down and Bottom-Up” (Jänicke 10). This approach allows for “switching between close and distant reading while taking into account manipulations of the preceding view” by analyzing these visualizations and the text of the letter with the theories of Janet Altman (10). These methods help us understand the ways in which authority presences in either the master or secretary’s letters, and how authority can be passed from the master to the secretary.



## Presencing Voice: Methods for Distant Reading

The wave of Digital Humanities researchers has developed new ways of “reading” texts with projects ranging from the digitization of texts, open-source text files, and digitized images of texts and archives. As these resources have become available, it has become clear that there are new ways of reading texts that break from the traditional forms of literary analysis. One such method is called Distant Reading which a method and term coined by Franco Moretti. Moretti explains that distant readings can allow “focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems” and that this method is helpful “if we want to understand the system in its entirety” (Moretti 57). Stephen Jänicke gives a practical application of Distant Reading by explaining that the intent is to “generate an abstract view (of a text) by shifting from observing textual content to visualizing global features of a single or multiple text” (Jänicke 2). Distant reading projects can help visualize the text’s content by upending its structure and digitally mining for patterns and frequency of words and phrases.

I have come to this method of distant reading for the Spenser and Grey epistles because of the nature of this project, which is to search for patterns in Grey’s text to understand, firstly, the distinct epistolary discourse that is created in Grey’s letters, secondly, the distinct epistolary discourse that is created in Spenser’s letters, and finally, ways in which Grey’s epistolary discourse is *presenced* in Spenser’s hands. In searching for a software to help with the Spencer-Grey letter corpus, I needed a tool that would have a text-mining algorithm that could help search for word and phrase frequency. I came across Voyant Tools, a free web-based software that is designed for literary

analysis. (For example, the sample texts on the site are from Jane Austen and William Shakespeare.) The software requires the user to either copy and paste text or upload PDF or EXL files directly to their platform.

In determining the letters to use for this analysis, I needed to make sure that I selected those that would presence the voice of Grey or show ways in which Grey's voice could be traced through Spenser's hand. *HapHazard Online* and *Selected Letters and Other Papers* include all the letters that Burlinson and Zurcher pulled from archives and transcribed. The primary archives they used were The National Archives State Papers (abbreviated in their text and in mine as TNA SP), The British Library (BL), and The Cecil Papers. All of these can be viewed at *HapHazard Online* and *Selected Letters and Other Papers*. These letters in this sample are written to Francis Walsingham, Lord Burghley, and Queen Elizabeth. The letters transcribed by Burlinson and Zurcher include a variety of letters related to Grey during Spenser's time as a secretary, which can be placed in four categories: letters written by Grey in Grey's italic hand, letters written by Spenser in italic or secretary hand, letters copied by Spenser in either italic or secretary hand, and letters from Grey and written by other Secretaries employed by Grey.

The letters Spenser copied for Grey from a variety of other addressees were omitted because the letter's first iteration was written by someone other than Spenser, and often letters written *to* Grey. While the letters from other secretaries would help understand how secretaries in general potentially presence Grey's voice, it would not be particular to Spenser so they have been omitted in the distant readings. However, as a point of comparison, some of the letters written by other secretaries are included in the

close reading analysis of this chapter. Therefore, in creating this data, I have mostly included the letters written in either Grey or Spenser's hands.

In my first attempt at using Voyant Tools I uploaded a PDF of a letter from the Spenser-Grey letters, which are available for free download on *HapHazard Online*. I quickly realized that this method would not be sufficient for uploading multiple documents to create one textual corpus, so I worked on extracting the text from each of the files I selected for use. Extracting the text required two methods, depending on the source of the letter. For the letters that I pulled from *HapHazard*, I copied and pasted the text into a word file to 'clean' all of the editorial irregularities and additions (such as line numbers and indicators for missing text and ciphers such as {...} and \*\*\*). I also realized that the HTML encoding on the text may produce some issues in searching for word phrases. For example, the Voyant Tools may not recognize words that belong together as phrases if they were encoded to be on separate lines, so I ran the text through a free online program that stripped all text of HTML encoding. As for the method for pulling text from Burlinson and Zurcher's printed text *Selected Letters and Other Papers*, I first considered typing out each of the letters but realized that I needed a quicker method to extract the text. Instead of typing it all, I downloaded an application from the iTunes store called *Scan & Translate*. With this free app, I took photos of the pages and the app encoded the image into text files which I then sent to my computer and stripped the text of any HTML encoding. After compiling all of the letters, I embedded the text into a Google Sheets file

which I later saved as an EXL file and uploaded to Voyant, shown in figure 4.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Date	ADDRESSEE	ARCHIVE	HANDS	TEXT
2	3-2-80	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/81/4	Grey	Sir, I send heerwith an oother examination which toochethe neere: It seem ethe that by degreese, Gods pleazu
3	1-27-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/88/40	Grey	Sir, the xxth of this moonethe I receaued yowr letters with a Copie of her Maiesties for reducyng of the v
4	4-6-1581	Burghley	Cecil Papers 11/91	Grey	I render yowr good Lordship many humble thanckes for yowr letter by Mr Fenton; it gladding mee very mootche
5	4-6-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/82/6	Grey	Sir, vppon aduyce taken with the choyce of my companions in counsell heere & adding vntoo them certayne of I
6	4-7-81	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/82/16	Grey	My lettre too I haue sent heere enclosed not knowyng whow shallbee called too the consultation, in deliury the
7	4-24-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/82/48	Grey	Sir, the xviijth of this moonethe I receaued from yow twoo Packetts the one by Moumperson, a seruaut of myne
8	5-12-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/83/6	Grey	Sir, the lettres heerenclozed from the Lord generall & counsell of Munster with a petition of the Countess of Des
9	5-12-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/84/3	Grey	Sir, I thought good vppon retourne now too guyue my Lords there accounte of the rest of my loomey the beegin
10	6-9-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/83/43	Grey	Sir, the xxviijth of the last I receaued a packett from yow beeyng in Camp then in the Birnes countrie, which caus
11	7-18-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/84/26	Grey	Sir this beear Captayne Howrde myght no my salutyn of yow: I haue now aduertysed my Lord accidents that
12	11-6-1581	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/86/53	Grey	Sir, God bee thancked for yowr saffe retume, truly it was now more dowgited & sorrowed by yowr freendes he
13	1-7-1582	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/88/9	Grey	Sir, I receaued yeesternmyght yowr packett of the xxviijth of the last, wherin iij letters from yowr self vntoo mee I
14	1-13-1582	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/88/15	Grey	I beeseethe yow Sir cause the letter too my Lords heerwith empacketed too bee considered & awnsswered wil
15	4-8-82	Walsingham	TNA SP 63/91/17	Grey	Sir, yowr letters of the 24th of the last I receaued the second of this date, the which heetherto I forbare too say

Figure 4. Sample of Spenser and Grey's letters in Google Sheets which compiled all text from the Spenser-Grey epistles, which was later uploaded to *Voyant Tools*.

Grey's letters produced 13,496 total words and Spenser's letters produced 13,406 total words which made this sampling numerically compatible and opened potential for a distant reading of the words and phrases that comprise the epistolary discourse.

### Presencing Voice: Methods for Close Reading

In contrast to Distant Readings, close readings can apply the text against a given theory or locate literary devices and rhetorical schemes to understand the extent to which those devices convey meaning to the reader. This chapter relies on close reading of the epistolary discourse in the letter form. This term, coined by Janet Altman, is defined as language unlike language that is found in any other text, and she explains that it is "language in a letter, specific to the letter form" (7). Altman explains how readers can isolate epistolary discourse in the text of the letter, and how epistolary discourse can help presence the writer. The three distinct features of epistolary discourse are the "*Particularity of the I-you*," "*A Present Tense*," and "*Temporal Polyvalence*."

Altman explains that “*Particularity of the I-you*” is a distinct way to analyze the epistolary discourse. In an “I-you” exchange, a character is created by the epistolary authors’ exchange of first-person pronouns, which defines the relationship between two letter writers (118). Altman explains that, to engage in reciprocity of letter exchange, one must define the self in a relationship with a “you” in an attempt to draw that “you” to becoming the “I” in the next exchange (121). Examination of the use of first-person pronouns in secretarial epistles shows how the writer identifies himself to his addressee. Altman explains that epistolary discourse presents itself in epistolary documents in language that acknowledges the spatial and temporal separation. Spatially, there is distance between the writer (“I”) and addressee (“you”), and there is a lag of time from the moment the word is enunciated on page to the time the letter reaches the addressee (118). And, to complicate the “I”, we must be mindful that in a secretarial letter there are two I’s - both the master and the secretary. In sum, the shorter the distance between the “I” to “you” in the epistolary exchange, the greater the level of familiarity between the writer and his addressee (117). Comparing the distance in these *I-you* exchanges in Grey’s letters will help show how Spenser chooses to relate to the addressee in a similar or unsimilar way.

Altman explains that “*A Present Tense*” is also a key feature of epistolary discourse. The tenses are appear in the spatial and temporal relationships between the absent (writer) and present (reader) is key in modern epistolary theory and in the “I” to “you.” Altman explains that the letter is a “pivot point” between the past and the present (121). These pivot points in the epistolary discourse can show a “present time from which (the author) looks at both future and past events” can help determine the ways in which either the master or secretary is *presenced* (118). In other words, these pivot points located

in the past-present-and future verb tenses in the *I-you* exchanges. Altman writes, “Given the letter’s function as a connector between two distant points, as a bridge between the sender and receiver, the epistolary author can either choose to emphasize the distance or the bridge” (13). The choice to “emphasise the distance or the bridge” can be calculated, and the frequencies of these present-tenses that convey the familiarity and establish closeness between the “I” and the “you,” the sender and the recipient of the letter.

*Temporal Polyvalence* is also one of Altman’s defined features of analyzing a letter’s epistolary discourse. Altman explains that the “temporal aspect of any given epistolary statement is relative to innumerable moments: the actual time that an act is described or performed” (118). Temporal polyvalence is spatial, temporal, and often metaphysical language that is written in the letter’s text (7). In other words, temporal polyvalence is located in moments where the letter speaks of itself as a letter or when the writer inserts traces of his authority for the reader to recognize. In these written moments, the letter writer sends his presence through the text as well as affirms his closeness with the recipient.

### **Presencing Authority: Analysis**

Analyzing early-modern letters for their epistolary discourse lies outside the traditional approaches to early-modern letters which typically focus on the epistolary form in relation to its material constructs such as signatures, addresses, subscriptions, salutations, postscripts, folds, seals, and dispatches. These methods can help determine authority in a text through an examination of the fragments a writer leaves in the extant material evidence. For example, paleographic evidence shows that the letters written by both Grey and Spenser can be distinguished from the other, at least in terms of the hands

who scripted each letter. Christopher Burlinson and Andrew Zurcher, editors of Spenser's *Selected Letters and Other Papers* (2009) and an extended collection on *HapHazard Online* (2002), explain the letters of Grey and his two primary correspondents can be divided into two categories: first, the letters written by Arthur Grey in his own hand; and second, those which were scripted by Spenser (or any other of Grey's secretaries). These important editions of Spenser's epistolary work help inform Spenser's biography and allow readers and researchers to understand more about a working early modern secretary. Burlinson and Zurcher's edition of *Spenser's Letters* also allows for researchers to pillage the text of the letters to understand more about the text itself. Modern epistolary theory can help reveal the epistolary discourse in the text with an aim to presence the way Arthur Grey and Edmund Spenser presence authority in the text. Epistolary theorist Liz Stanley, who follows the traditions of Janet Altman, explains that modern epistolarity "redirects attention away from presumptions of facility and toward issues of textuality" (Stanley 202). In other words, analysis of the text helps us better understand the ways in which Spenser and Grey presence authority in the language of their compositions.

Investigating the first-person pronouns allows for us to see the ways in which the letter-writer identifies himself. By comparing Grey's *I-you* character to that of Spenser, we can see that both have variance and similarity in the frequency of pronoun use. The most frequently used words in the Grey letters are (number of times used are in parentheses): I (440); mee (185); yow (168); yowr (93); wyll (87). The word frequency for the Grey corpus is represented in figure 5. In figure 6, we see the most frequently used words in Spenser's letters are: I (343); yowr (205); yow (88); highnes (73); good (59). In this set, three of the top five are pronouns. The frequency for the term "mee" (40) is also for comparison with Grey.

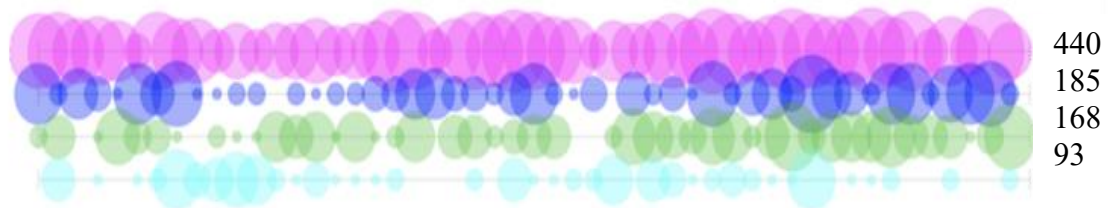


Figure 5. Grey's Letters: Bubble lines showing the word frequency of the pronouns "I" (440), "me" (185), "yow" (168), and "yowr" (93). Made with *Voyant Tools*.

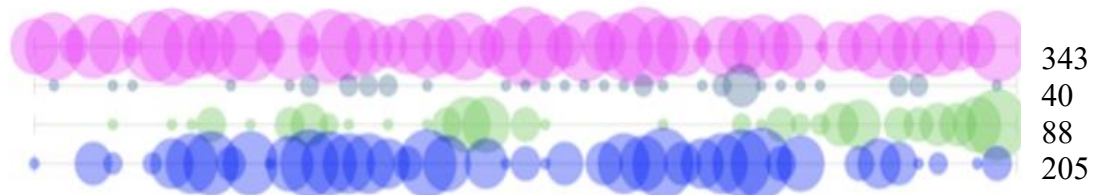


Figure 6. Spenser's Letters: Bubble lines showing the word frequency of the pronouns "I" (343), "me" (40), "yow" (88), and "yowr" (205). Made with *Voyant Tools*.



The percentage of usage in Grey's pronouns as follows: "I" is 3.2%, "mee" is 1.3%, "yow" is 1.2%, and "yowr" is .6%. Figure 7 shows the percentage of use for Spenser's top used pronouns are as follows: "I" is 2.5%, "yowr" is 2.5%, "yow" is .65%, and "mee" is .2%. As shown, Grey constructs the "I" character (represented by "I" and "me" more often than Spenser ("I" at .7%, and "mee" at 1.1%, greater frequency). "Yow" is also used .55% more frequently by Grey which shows that Grey's self-referential tone was potentially more apparent when writing as himself than when Spenser wrote letters in Grey's name. Interestingly, Spenser's use of 'yowr' constitutes 1.3% of his discourse, whereas the same word only composes .6% of Grey's total words: less than half of Spenser's total. This may show that Spenser refers the places and people that surround or belong to the "you" character, more often than he writes with personal knowledge of the addressee. My initial assumption is that Grey uses the "I-you" character more frequently because he has greater familiarity with himself and the addressee he writes.

Spenser and Grey

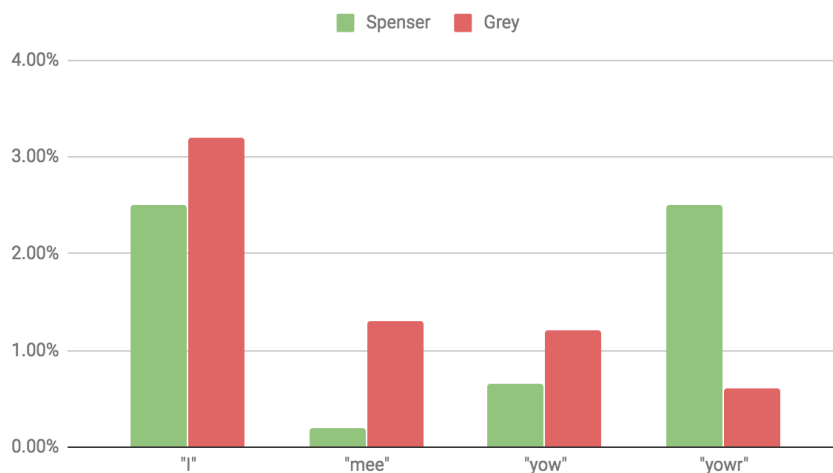
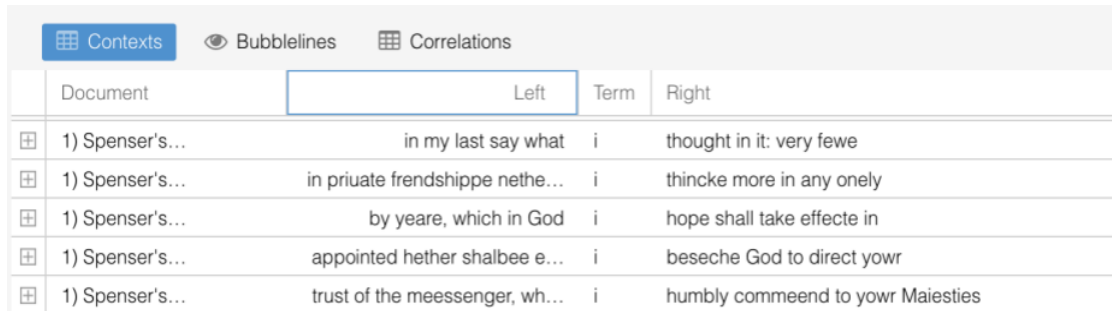


Figure 7. Graph showing the use of pronouns in Spenser and Grey's letters. Made with *Google Sheets*.

I also considered that Spenser may not presence Grey's familiarity with the addressee, and when he does it is far less frequently. To be certain about this data, I isolated the contexts of the term "I" for both Spenser and Grey using Voyant, which is shown in figure 8.



Document	Left	Term	Right
1) Spenser's...	in my last say what	i	thought in it: very fewe
1) Spenser's...	in priuate frendshippe nethe...	i	thincke more in any onely
1) Spenser's...	by yeare, which in God	i	hope shall take effecte in
1) Spenser's...	appointed hether shalbee e...	i	beseche God to direct yowr
1) Spenser's...	trust of the meessenger, wh...	i	humbly commeend to yowr Maiesties

Figure 8. Context of term "I" in Spenser's letters showing text to both left and right of the term. Made with the Context Application in Voyant Tools.

I was able to export the tab delimited data and copy into a Google Sheets file for all first and second-person pronouns. This allowed me to sort the context to the left and right of the terms pulled to get a better sense of how the pronouns paired with "yow" and "yowr" in the letters by both Spenser and Grey. As Altman explains, a short distance between "I" and "you" indicates a greater familiarity between the writer and his addressee. In charting these distances, shown in figure 9, I counted the word distance from the term "I" in relation to the term "yow" and "yowr." For instance, in the line written by Spenser to Walsingham on 15 July 1581, he writes "***I*** am earnestly to desire ***yow*** in my said servauntes behalf" (TNA SP 63/84/28, bold and italics my own). Here we would count a distance of five between "I" and "yow." I calculated each of these distances in all uses of "I" to "yow" or "yowr." These calculations ranged from 1 to 15. After calculating these frequencies, I found the standard and normal distributions of these

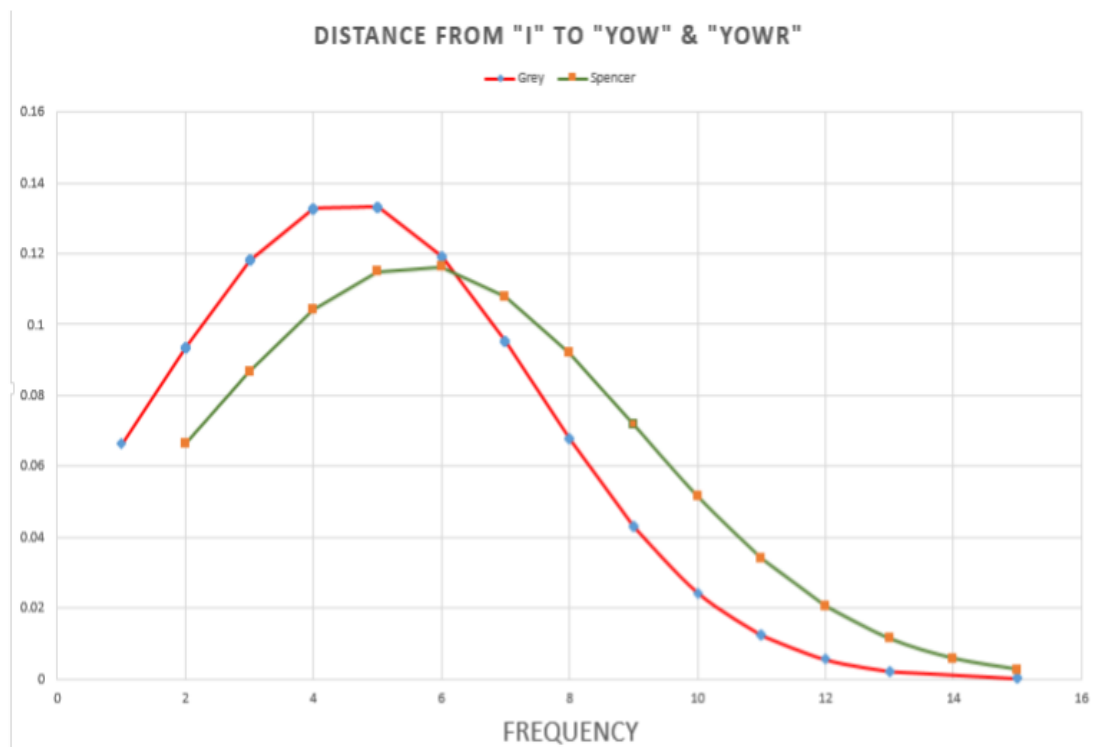


Figure 9. Graph of distance from “I” to “yow” and “yowr” in Spenser and Grey’s Letters. Made with *Microsoft Excel*.

terms which are represented by the lines on the graph.

Based on this data, we can see that Spenser’s use of the *I to you* is skewed to the left meaning that Spenser is more likely to use 6 or more words between “I” and “yow” or “yowr.” On the other hand, Grey is more likely to use between 1 and 6 words between “I” and “yow” or “yowr.” The likelihood that Spenser would use less than six words is smaller. This means that it is more probable that Grey wrote with a closer distance to his addressee. From this we can determine that Grey and Spenser wrote – at least in the data that shows the “*particularity of the “I-you”*” relationship – in a manner that is stylistically different. Grey wrote more concisely in his “I” to “yow/yowr” character which may suggest that he was on more familiar terms with his addressee than did Spenser.

While Grey may have written with more familiarity more frequently, we must still consider the similarities in those samples where there are similar distances between the “I” and “yow” or “yowr.” Although the graph shows a rate of frequency between the two writers meets at the level of six, meaning it was most common that Grey and Spenser write most similarly when the distance between “I” and “you” and “yowr” is six, there are still samples from the data set that show that both Spenser and Grey write in Grey’s style when the I to you a frequency lesser than six. Examples in table 1 show only comparison between Spenser and Grey up to a frequency of six because, as indicated, there is established familiarity between the writer and his addressee within that range. In the frequencies between two and four, there are marked similarities, even in the word choice. Spenser and Grey both write “I beseeche/beeseetche yow” with a distance of two between the “I” and “yow.”

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Table 1  
Similarities in style based on distance between “I” and “yow” or “yowr”

---

Distance	Spenser	Grey
2	<i>“I beseeche yow lykewise with all earnestnes make knowen vnto them.”</i> (TNA SP 63/87/64)	<i>“I beeseetche yow too lett her Maiestie &amp; bee enformed of it.”</i> (TNA SP 63/84/26)
3	<i>“I can assure yow to have bene both full of good indeavour &amp; valewe.”</i> (TNA SP 63/91/53)	<i>“I wyll refer yow too that letter.”</i> (TNA SP 63/84/3)
4	<i>“I will according to yowr Lordships direccion proceede to his examination”</i> (TNA SP 63/92/9)	<i>“I will wryte to yowr Lordship when I shall arrive at Dublin.”</i> (TNA SP 63/83/43)

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Table 1, continued  
Similarities in style based on distance between “I” and “yow” or “yowr”

Distance	Spenser	Grey
5	“I feare I shall doe <i>yowr</i> Highnes litle service emongst them.” (TNA SP 64/78/29)	“I receaued a packett from <i>yow</i> .” (TNA SP 63/83/43)
6	“I thought good to signifie vnto <i>yowr</i> Lordship.” (BL MS 33924, ff. 6-7)	“I therefore leave now to trouble <i>yowr</i> Honour therewith.” (TNA SP 63/83/43)

The variance in spelling is likely attributed to editorial choice of Burlinson and Zurcher in their editorial transcriptions and may not indicate a difference in spelling between Spenser and Grey. Comparatively, the style and register of the language is similar between Grey and Spenser within the distance lesser than six. Based on this close analysis, the “*particularity of the ‘I to you’*” shows great similarity in comparing Spenser and Grey’s familiarity to the addressee but only up to the distance of five. After that distance, Spenser shows that he is not as familiar with the addressee. Therefore, while Spenser does often presence Grey’s level of familiarity with the addressee, especially at a distance of less than six, Grey is more often on familiar terms with those whom he writes.

It should be noted that in the entire data set, Spenser no longer uses the word “yow” and uses only the word “yowr” after the distance of five, even in samples excluded from table 1. After the distance of five, Spenser only refers to the addressee as “yowr Lordship” or “yowr Highnes.” It should also be noted that Spenser writes to the Queen in his own hand in four of the samples within the data and Grey does not write any letters to the Queen. The level of formality to the Queen is much more distinct, whereas the letters to the other recipients are more familiar, which may have an effect on this data. This is an

interesting stylistic difference, one that can be explained in the level of formality and distance in familiarity to the addressee.

Although it does appear that Spenser frequently presences Grey's authority in the "*particularity of the 'I-you,'*" it still serves to question the ways in which Spenser may presence Grey in the "*present tense.*" The context of verb usage between the "I" to "you" that both Spenser and Grey use expresses their association to past, present, or future events. The expressions of these verbs show how the writer looks at both the past and future of the letter, but also how the author relates to themselves in that given moment. The temporal constructions of a letter are held in its verb tenses of epistolary discourse: speaking to a future addressee, which, once the letter is received is already in the past. This "present time from which (the author) looks at both future and past events" can help determine the ways in which both Spenser and Grey presence authority (Altman 118).

In the letters written in Grey's hand the use of the "I" pronoun is often paired with verbs that reveal Grey's inner thoughts and desires: "I have"; "I pray you"; "I trust"; "I wyll"; "I vrge"; "I protest"; "I will euer cheerisshe"; "I was willed by yowr Lordships"; and "I dezyre to bee directed" (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 12, 14, 17, 38, 51; 61; TNA SP 63/88/9). After running the Context Application in Voyant Tools I was able to sift through the context and verb tenses to the left and right of the terms pulled to get a better sense of how the pronouns paired with the verbs used by Spenser and Grey. The verb usage helps visualize how the writer places himself in the context of the action in the sentence, which can lead to our understanding how the author presences authority.

The verbs following the term “I” in Grey’s letters show the most frequent verbs that follow are “have/haue” (9.0%), “praye” (4.0%), “had”/ “can”/ “see” (all at 3%), and “would/woold” (2.6%). Grey’s verbs are represented in figure 10. Spenser’s letters show

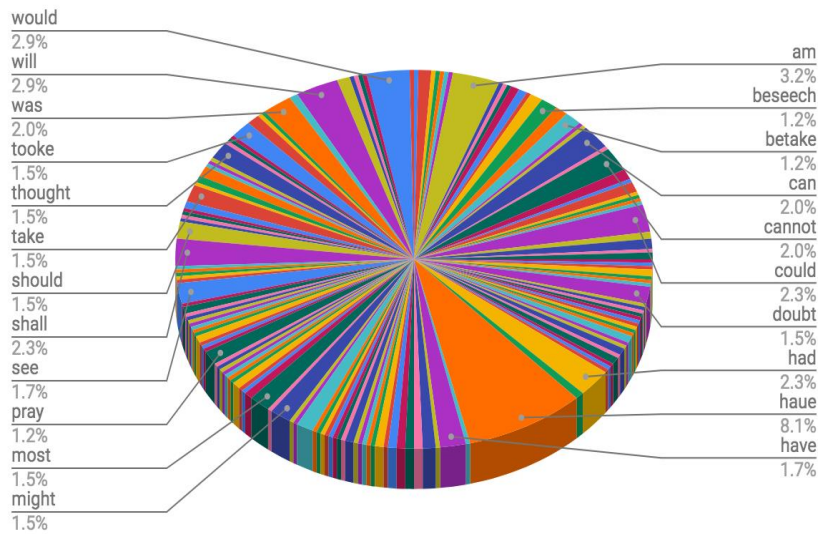


Figure 10. Verbs following “I” in Grey’s Letters. Made with *Google Sheets*.

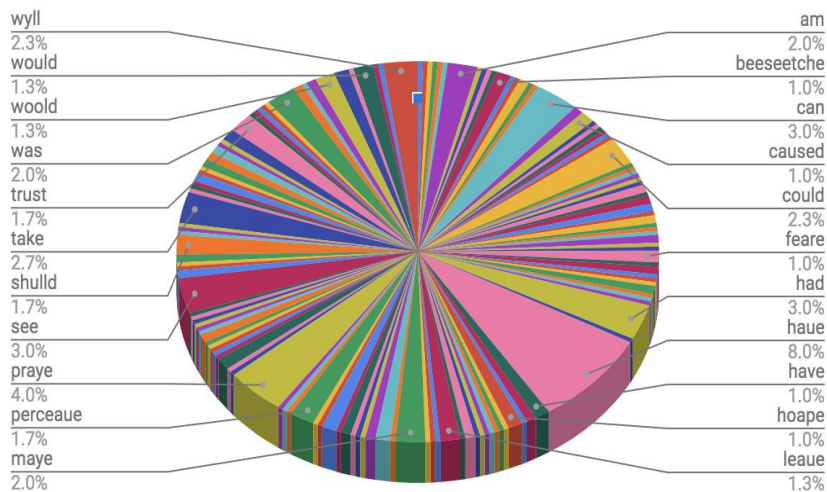


Figure 11. Verbs following “I” in Spenser’s Letters. Made with *Google Sheets*.

the most frequent verbs to follow “I” are “have” (9.8%), “am” (3.2%), and “will”/“would” (both at 2.9%), “will” (2.9%). The context of the verbs that follow “I” in Grey’s letters bear significant similarities to the terms in verb type that directly follows.

Spenser’s verbs are represented in figure 11.

Regarding the types of verbs that are presented in figures 10 and 11, that follow there are action verbs (which place the “I” in direct action of what follows), modal verbs (which express necessity or possibility), and helping verbs (which express time or tense of an action verb which may follow). The types of verbs following the pronoun “I” are shown in figure 12.



Figure 12. Types of verbs following the first pronoun “I” in Spenser and Grey’s letters. Made with *Google Sheets*.

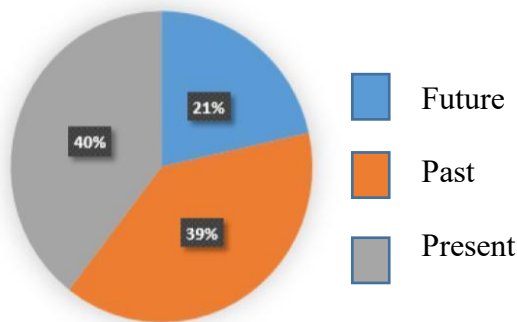
What is important to consider here is that Grey uses an action verb 11% more often than Spenser, making Grey the primary actor in these instances. Even with this remarkable disparity in the way Grey places himself as the primary actor in his letters it is important



to remember that these are only frequencies. In both Spenser and Grey's letters, each discuss taking similar actions, even in the examples not here demonstrated.

Altman explains that "The 'I' of epistolary discourse is always ... relative to that of his addressee. To write a letter is to map one's coordinates ... in order to tell some-one else where one is located at a particular time and how far one has traveled since the last writing" (Altman 119). These coordinates of time situate the "I" in relationship to the addressee and functions to express not only physical location, but the events and the feelings of those events. As figure 13 shows, Grey and Spenser both employ past, present, and future verb tenses in their epistolary writing but do so at varying frequencies. For example, Grey uses the present tense 14% more often than does Spenser, and Spenser uses the past tense 15% more often than does Grey.

Verb Tenses used by Spenser



Verb Tenses used by Grey

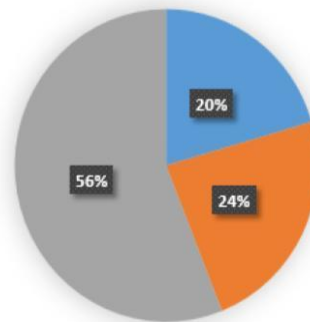


Figure 13. Comparison of verb tenses between "I" and "yow" & "yowr." Spenser's use, on left, and Grey usage, on right. letters. Made with *Microsoft Excel*.

From this data, we can see that Spenser's letters are more focused on events that have occurred as he relays them to the addressee. In contrast, Grey's letters are more focused on the "I" of the present tense. Therefore, Grey expresses authority in his relationship to the addressee more often than Spenser. Spenser's authority is focused on

events that have occurred in the past rather than events that are happening presently. The verbs that follow these “I” statements, then, show the orientation of the action of these coordinates and within that action. In the verbs that follow the “I” statements, whether they are in the past, present, or future, show the ways in which the writer asserts their authority. To compare the precise instances where Spenser and Grey use first-person action verbs are listed in table 2 for comparison.

Table 2 Comparison of present tense action verbs used by Spenser and Grey	
Spenser	Grey
“I beseeche yow lykewise with all earnestnes.” (TNA SP 63/87/64)	“I beeseetche yow bee fauorable too owre suten.” (TNA SP 63/84/3)
“I fynd the People to carry, did embolden mee to yt.” (TNA SP 64/78/29)	“I fynde, if that serue not any thyng of new too tootche hym.” (TNA SP 63/88/40)
“I take my leaue.” (TNA SP 63/93/64)	“I take leaue for this tyme...”(Cecil Papers 11/91)
“I perceaue, doe what I can, wilbee the dayly encrease of my hell & continuall stay.” (TNA SP 63/85/5).	“I perceaue yowr Lordships there haue allreadie guyuen direction for it.” (Cecil Papers 11/91)
“I gaue lyfe vnto yow” (TNA SP 64/78/29)	“I guyue yow a watchewoord (TNA SP 63/88/9)
“I pray yowr honour to Cause to be answered.” (BL MS 33924, ff. 6-7)	“I praye yow affourde hym access...” (TNA SP 63/93/34)
“I know, in this sort that now yt goeth; but in myne opinion the way might.” (TNA SP 64/78/29)	“I knowe not what too saye too it.” (TNA SP 63/83/6)
“I thought good too commeend to yowr Highnes.” (TNA SP63/82/54)	“I thought good to signifie vnto yowr Lordship.” (TNA SP 63/83/43)

The manner in which the “I” is deployed in these verb actions is almost nearly identical in the verb tenses and word choice. As we can see, in the cases where Spenser does use action first person verbs in his statements, he employs a similar epistolary discourse that Grey uses in his letters.

Altman explains that the time gap in epistolary discourse is “relative to innumerable moments: the actual time that an act is described or performed” (118). The time gap between writer and addressee, and in the time we read the letter in our own present, makes any epistolary verb a potentially polyvalent one. Letter writers continually write statements which describe “what they have already done, where they are now, and what they fear, hope, or plan for the future” (122). Altman explains that these moments are characteristic to “*Temporal Polyvalence*” because in “no other form of dialogue does the speaker await a reply so breathlessly; in no other type of verbal exchange does the mere fact of receiving or not receiving a response carry such meaning” (Altman 121). In other words, epistolary discourse relative to temporal polyvalence is located in moments where the letter speaks of itself as a letter or when the writer inserts traces of his authority for the reader to recognize. Locating the moments where the letter speaks of itself as a letter, as well as the moments where the writer presences his authority through tone or language which is characteristic to the writer, can help us better understand how both Spenser and Grey evokes their authority for their addressee, and whether Spenser took on the same or similar ways of expression as Grey.

Nearly all of the letters written either by Grey or Spenser show evidence where the text of the letter acknowledges its purpose as a letter or shows evidence of the speaker waiting “breathlessly” for a reply. Most commonly, the letters composed by Spenser

discuss the most recent packets that had been received, or letters to be dispatched. For example, on 1 March 1580: “since the enclosing of my other letters it seemid good to the rest of the Counsaill that two examinacions shold be sent to you;” or 24 April 1581: “I haue recaued from yow twoo packets ... whow in deede seemed to make but slow haste, the oother by the poste made greate speede” (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 33, 57). Table 3 shows a comparison of Spenser’s temporal polyvalent statements in comparison to Grey’s statements.

Table 3 Temporal polyvalent statements in Spenser in Grey’s Letters	
Spenser	Grey
“Lighted vpon these lettres here inclosed, Coming out of England, I haue thought good to impart them vnto you, to thend yt may appeare, what ill Humoures the already euill disposed state of this country.” (TNA SP 63/93/64)	“I praye yow sir haue vs mynde in deedes there how sieldoomee e so euer wee bee thought of by letters.” (TNA SP 63/82/6)
“which thought to the better sort may minister occasion of good desert, yett in the ill affected yt nourisheth cancred stomaches with secrete dislikes.” (TNA SP 63/93/64)	“Sir, stryke hard the iron whyllst I perceaue it is hott now, for my callyng hoamee , the lyttle hoape wherof that these yowr letters browght mee, made mee eate my supper with a better appetite then at any mee ale these twoo moonethes past I had,” (TNA SP 63/88/40)
“Sir, this gentleman the bearer hereof having served lately vnder Captein Cecill, and being presently to repaire into England hath requested my lettres of favour in his behalf; which I could not but reasonably doe.” (TNA SP 63/83/47)	“Good my Lord beare with mee if not so often as myself woold & yowr Lordship maye expect, I doo visitt yow with letters of myne owane, that infinitenes of my toyle passethe my ableness too perfourmee e my dezyre therin; dutie acknowleged.” (Cecil Papers 11/91)

Table 3, continued  
Temporal polyvalent statements in Spenser in Grey's Letters

Spenser	Grey
"As also partly fownd true in this tymee of myne owne experience, so farre forth as I haue had occasion to vse his service; I could no lesse doe but deliuer vnto yow the true report." (TNA SP 63/94/46)	"This dispatche was so sudden as I could not for my lyeff make any more letters." (63/91/11)

Spenser's statements most commonly relay utterances of postal delivery which was common for early modern epistolary exchanges. His letters most commonly discuss the receipt or delivery of new postal exchanges, mainly to indicate the letter to which they may be responding. However, Grey's authority emerges as one dependent on epistolary exchange, at times showing his exhausted position as Lord Deputy of Ireland, his pleading for quick responses often a matter of life and well-being for him and his men, the lines of postal urgency demanding the addressee engage in reciprocal epistolary exchange. For further example, in Grey's letter to Lord Burghley, 6 April 1581, written in Grey's own characteristic italic script, he writes: "Good my Lord beare with mee if not so often as myself woold & yowr Lordship maye expect, *I doo visit yow with my letters of myne owane*" (Spenser, *Selected Letters* 4, italics my own). And in the letter dated 6 April 1581, Grey writes to Walsingham, again in his own hand: "I pray yow sir haue vs mynde... *how sieldoome so euer we bee thowght of by letters*" (55, italics my own). In these lines, Grey uses the letter in place of his own presence, passing his essence as a messenger and metonym of his being, the letter visiting the addressee in his absence. In Grey's letters' we can see a vast contrast to Spenser's, especially in Grey's attempt to bridge the gap between past events and the present moment, bringing forth his presence

in each moment of enunciation. In each of these temporal polyvalent statements, Grey's authority is rarely detected in the letters attributed to the hands of Spenser.

While these temporal polyvalent statements that speak about the letter as a letter do not particularly presence Grey's authority, there are several epistles that do include evidence of Spenser inserting traces of Grey's authority which the reader may recognize. For example, the letter from Grey to Walsingham 29 June 1582, which is written in Spenser's characteristic secretary hand, conveys a similar tone to qualities of Grey. Burlinson and Zurcher even make comment about the tone, that it "illustrates the careful anxiety with which Grey and his administration scrutinized the passage of letters in and out of Ireland" (186). This letter is short, but it bears the mark of Grey's epistolary discourse: the self-referential "I - you" character, the way the letter speaks of itself as a letter, and its epistolary mediation. Below, the italics are used to emphasize the instances of epistolary discourse in the passage:

Sir, having by Chaunce *lighted vpon these lettres here inclosed*, Coming out of England, *I haue thought good* to impart them vnto you, to thend yt may appeare, *what ill Humoures the already euill disposed state of this country* draweth from some of those which are there remaying: the one of them being sent from one who is there now kept as close Prisonere, I meane Thomas Meagh, the which for that *yt is partly written in some what darke termes and hardly to be construed to the better part*, I wish should be examined of him, what is thereby intended: the other Coming from one, who notwithstanding that he walketh there at libertie, yet is very nerely to be touched with treason; by the which you may perceiue what great incoragement & hartening these countreyemen gather of the smallest fauour

or countenance which is shewed them there, *which though to the better sort may minister occasion of good desert, yett in the ill affected yt nourisheth cancred stomaches with secrete dislikes*, and stirreth them vp to disobedience and Contempt of this gouernement. The deeper Consideracion whereof leaving to their Lordships wisdomes, and your self to Al- mighty god, for the present *I hartely take my leave* Dublin the xxixth of Iune. 1582./

Youres euer most assured

Arthur Grey.

(TNA SP 63/93/64)

Here we see some of the same epistolary discourse which share characteristics of Grey in the earlier epistles. For example, the self-referential tone in the “I” pronouns—“I have,” “I mean,” “I wish”—are qualities of Grey’s voice, but here in Spenser’s hand. The letter also speaks of itself as a letter in the same manner of the temporal polyvalent statements typically written by Grey: “having by Chaunce lighted vpon these lettres here inclosed, Coming out of England, I haue thought good to impart them vnto you.” In this line, there is the same sense of urgency of postal exchange that is part of Grey’s persona; this line is not only a matter of sending and receiving postal deliveries but gives personal insight to his character, the language “thought good to impart” shows personal relationship to the addressee. Spenser also uses a temporal polyvalent phrase that evokes Grey’s presence in the letter in two lines: “yt is partly written in some what darke termes,” and “which though to the better sort may minister occasion of good desert, yett in the ill affected yt nourisheth cancred stomaches with secrete dislikes.” These lines are rich with figurative diction which is common in letters composed by Grey. In this example, we can

see an example where Spenser does, in fact, present Grey's authority by employing a similar writing style.

A final note of the ways that Spenser may have presented Grey's authority by imitating his writing style, is in the letter's call for a response. Altman explains: "It is the hallmark of epistolary language in general to make statements in order to elicit a response from a specific addressee. To write a letter is not only to define oneself in relationship to a particular *you*; it is also an attempt to draw that you into becoming the /of a new statement" (Altman 122). The way in which a letter-writer "define(s) oneself" is specific to the addressee and would be recognizable to the reader.

The "eliciting" of a response from the reader would be commonly called a "farewell" in early-modern letter writing traditions. Angel Day describes the farewell in *The English Secretorie*:

And beeing in familiarities is adopted to no place, but beginning, middle, or ending of the Letter, all is one, as seemeth most consonant to the vaine, and disposition of the partie, and these also at all times not deliuered in the selfe worde of greeting or commendations, but by diuers *Epithetts* and fine conueyances, as falleth out to the mat|ter of the Epistle, and the condition of the partye to bee handled. This beeing at the ende of the Letter, there shall imediately follow the order of farewell, which tynying so hard therevpon as it doth, we will put them both in one example of wordes and *Epithetts*, together with the subscriptions, for the easier instruction of the learner and his better remembrance, referring the notes of euery of them to their places, where afterwarde they are vsed in their seuerall Letters. (Day 24)



The farewell follows the letter and creates an “Epithette” to the reader, a way to commend the reader or to request leave from the letter. Day also gives examples of these farewells, one being “UUeighing how much you are already busied, and not willing to keepe you further occupied, I ende my long and tedious discourse, beeing in nothing exempted from wonted salutations and accustomed kinde of greetinges” (30). In the examples shown in table 4, we see similarities in the way Spenser and Grey call for a response in their farewells.

Table 4 Comparison of tone in Spenser and Grey’s farewells	
Spenser	Grey
“ prayeng the Allmyghtie God too keepe & bless yow euer.” (TNA SP 63/92/52)	“So I end for this tyme prayeng the Almyghtie God too keepe & gooerne yow euer.” (TNA SP 63/81/4)
So for this tyme wyll take leaue prayeng the Allmyghtie God too keepe & bless yow euer.” (TNA SP 63/92/52)	“So I end for this tyme prayeng the Almyghtie God too keepe & gooerne yow euer.” (TNA SP 63/81/4)
“So having not more at this present, I betake yow to Almighty god.” (63/92/46)	“I maye assured too yowr Lordships deuotion, I take leaue for this tyme , prayeng the Allmyghtie God euer too keepe direct & prosper yowr Lordship.” (Cecil Papers 11/9)

Table 4, continued  
Comparison of tone in Spenser and Grey's farewells

Spenser	Grey
And so for the present committing yowr Lordship to the goodnes of th'Almighty, I hartely take leave (63/88/12)	"So crauyng yowr earnest furtherance for the good & speedie dispatche of this bringer & lykewyze that yow wyll affourde hym* yowr good fauoure in his owane priuate rezonable buzyness, I take leaue & beeseetche the Allmyghtie euer too keepe direct & prosper yow." (TNA SP 63/82/16)

In these examples, the most common similarity is the request by the writer to be committed to "th'Almighty/Allmyghtie" God. It appears that Spenser presences Grey's authority by imitating Grey's characteristic farewell.

As a point of comparison, Grey did employ several other secretaries in his service: Lodowick Bryskett, Edward Waterhouse, and Thomas Meagh. As stated earlier, the letters written by secretaries other than Spenser were removed from my data that I ran through Voyant Tools. However, in reviewing these letters for their epistolary discourse, I found that the other secretaries did not use the same type of farewell as Grey. In table 5 we can see that each of these statements are markedly different than in the typical address used by Spenser and Grey.

Table 5  
Comparison of farewells used by other secretaries

Writer	Farewell
Unattributed secretary of Arthur Grey, not Spenser	"I comytt you to god." (TNA SP 63/85/13)

Table 5, continued  
Comparison of farewells used by other secretaries

Writer	Farewell
Unattributed secretary of Arthur Grey, not Spenser	“I comytt you to the Lord” (TNA SP 63/83/45)
Arthur Grey’s secretary, Edward Waterhouse	“I committ you to god” (TNA SP 63/81/1)
Arthur Grey’s secretary, Lodowick Bryskett	“And therefore humbly recommending him and his causes as gentelmen deserving very well for his service vnto his Lordships, I take my leave” (TNA SP 63/85/34)
Thomas Norreys to Walsingham	“I beseech god to confirm to his good will and pleasure (TNA SP 63/135/66)
Unattributed secretary of Arthur Grey, not Spenser	“And so committ you to the Lorde” (TNA SP 63/94/15)
Mac William Eigher to Sir Nicholas Malby	“And during his life shall contynue her Maiesties faithfull Subiect & servaunt And will daylie pray for your Worship” (TNA SP 63/81/39)
Written by Spenser for Thomas Meagh	“I take this leave with my wives loving Commendation & myne” (TNA SP 63/93/64/1)

What is particularly striking is that Grey’s unattributed secretaries use a commitment to God, but do not use the expression “Almighty.” This, in particular, seems defining of Grey’s letters and appears in 100% of the letters brought forth in the Burlinson and Zurcher study. This certainly carries, what we would consider, a defining characteristic of Grey’s authority in his farewells. It would be possible that Spenser used similar epistolary discourse to Grey’s address to keep aligned with early-modern letter writing trends. Yet, in the example shown his Spenser’s letter, written for Thomas Maygh, he uses the farewell ““I take this leave with my wives loving Commendation &

myne” (TNA SP 63/93/64/1). This is remarkably different than the farewell he uses when writing for Grey. It could be said, therefore, that through the analysis of close and distant readings, it appears that Grey’s authority is often presented in letters written by Spenser’s hands. In secretarial documents, like these we have seen from Spenser and Grey, the multiple, iterable “I’s” leave trace of the authority through epistolary discourse. As letters travel through time and land into the hands of modern scholars, distance between original “I-you” is replaced with the distance between the original “I” and “us” in the present. The network of epistolary exchanges includes not only a system of destinations, but an inbox of arrivals that predate any one reply.

#### IV. “THIS REPRODUCTION HERE IS SOLD”: A CONCLUSION OF ITERABLE FUTURES IN SPENSER’S PRINTED POEMS

For Derrida, “reproduction” is the future of trace, in which all moments can be reproduced and reinterpreted in the future, in a “beyond” (Derrida, *The Post Card* 7). Reproduction, in the Derridian sense of the term, has many distinct features which range from biology to the transmission of text. The notion of sending post deals directly with the concept of the future, one sending from a present moment into a beyond. Derrida writes: “I have not yet recovered from this revelatory catastrophe: Plato behind Socrates ... Socrates turns his back to Plato who has made him write whatever he wanted while pretending to receive it from him. This reproduction is sold here as a post card” (Derrida, *The Post Card* 17). His fascination with the multiple iterations in the reversal of Plato and Socrates in the Mathew Paris image again surfaces; yet what strikes him most here is that the image was copied, copied multiple times, which have been sold and distributed for others to send as postcards. Compounding this object in future orientation is that the Paris image comes from the book *Texts on Prognostication*, or a “fortune-telling book” (12). In the case of Spenser, we must consider his career as a secretary and how the trends, traditions, and practices iterate from the past, how they presence, and then finally reproduced through his writing as a poet then printed for future generations to follow. Spenser’s life as a secretary is the “*envoi*,” the French word Derrida uses to indicate a *sending-off*, into a life of writing poetry. Simply put, Spenser’s use of imitation as a literary device in his works are the iterations of his training as a secretary, the future-oriented versions of his life as trained imitator and secret keeper. Spenser learned through classical rhetoric that the greatest skill of a rhetorician or writer is to imitate. As a

secretary, Spenser imitated Arthur Grey. His charge as a secretary was to be the keeper of the master's secrets, often the most important secret being that he often took the identity of his master. As Angel Day explains, this secret must be locked inside a "closet" and be kept with "Honestie, Care, and Fidclitie" (Day 103). Although, even in this fidelity, the very nature of secret keeping lends itself to dual identity and disguise. And as a poet, Spenser writes characters who often carry dual, even multiple, identities. The notion of duality and multiplicity in character invites a negotiation between true and false, endlessly switching between future and past versions of the form.

Spenser played with the imitation of character in his first printed literary works. Prior to becoming a secretary to Lord Grey, Spenser had already written two key works which iterated his secretarial training trends into print: the first, *The Shepheardes Calendar* in 1579 and *Two Wittie, Proper, and Familiar Letters* (1580). In the preface of *The Shepheardes Calendar* is a letter written by "E.K.," a character whose identity points to many possible authorities with speculations ranging from Spenser himself, Edward Kirk, Edward Knight, and Seventeenth Earl of Oxford. Hadfield and Rambuss both suggest that E.K. could be Gabriel Harvey (Hadfield, 149; Rambuss, 324). Rambuss also points that "E.K. makes it no secret that Hobbinol secretly names Harvey" in the January gloss, just as it is clear that Colin is Immerito whom we know to be Spenser (Rambuss, 324). No matter who is E.K.'s truest identity, the fact remains that this letter serves as a veil for to show that the poet of *The Shepheardes Calendar* can impeccably imitate the identity of past poets and these identities iterate in his work. While establishing E.K.'s writing ability, the epistle persuades the reader to be aware of Spenser's ability to reproduce the early English poetry for the eclogues that follow. As a person trained to

imitate, Spenser was able to presence traces of stylistic trends of poets that came before him and iterate those trends in his own work as a poet and secretary. And, as we have seen, rhetorical practice is essential for the practice of the early modern secretary because it enables the ability to imitate.

*Two Wittie, Proper, and Familiar Letters* (1580) brings forward a series of fictive letter exchanges between Spenser, who writes as *Immerito*, and Harvey. The letter exchanges “advertise learned wit” between the two writers (Van Es 256). It is commonly believed that these exchanges were written with the intent to help Spenser advance his career as a secretary and poet. The letter exchanges provide example letters, much like the letter-writing manuals *The English Secreterie* and *Enemie of Idlness*. The discussion held between Immerito and Harvey iterate the traditions of the great Latin and Greek poets that had come before yet to bring forth the merits of the new English language. In *Two Letters*, Harvey and Spenser discuss the urgency and importance of iterating English verse in print as a way to codify the language. Spenser’s ability to imitate and iterate the past forms of style and character in letter writing is extended to the iterations of the English language from its Latin past. In *Two Letters* Harvey and Immerito (Spenser) urge for codification of the English language through conventional spelling (“orthography”) vs. incorrect spelling (“pseudography”) (95). Harvey discusses the common misspellings that were common in English, noting that they are mostly phonetic and show signs of the merging of languages of Latin, Greek, and French (95). Harvey writes that he is “more in loue wyth (Spenser’s) Englishe Uersifying, than with Ryming (101). Since the English language was still in its infancy, there was not a single way to spell words, and often there were two variant spellings. Harvey explains that because there is not any one way to

spell terms in English, often even the “very same” person using two variats of the terms, that there must be “some such kinde of conformitie” of the language (95). He recommends that the language be codified through “prosodye: taken vp by an vniuersall consent of all, and continued by a generall vse, and Custome of all” (95). Further, he recommends that poets, like Immerito (Spenser), who fully understand of the should iterate what has been good about the previous languages. The poets are equipped with the rhetorical skill and ability to create a new language. Spenser, therefore, is called to create English into a new form, suitable for writing in poetry. The duality within the English orthography, as it relates to the codification of the English language invites the notion of creating a true language from the traces of its past and iterating into a future, or a beyond, to create a new form.

With Spenser’s ability to understand duality in language and in character it seems to be of consequence that the first book of his first work after his secretarial career is focused on becoming whole. The theme of “Wholeness” or *Holiness* unfolds throughout Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser creates a world where Redcrosse Knight must decipher a world, split in two by false and true, and decipher a true and holy path. *Holiness* grapples with the seemingly divided identity of Spenser’s own life as a secretary who was trained to take on the identity of Lord Grey and a poet who was charged to create a standard form of English which was, at the time, divided but emerging from its root languages.

In Book I, Archimago, a hermit and magician skilled in deception and disguise, transforms single characters into false doubles. For example, he magically concocts two sprites, False Una and Una True: “the falsest twoo/ And fittest for to forge true-seeming



lies” (*The Faerie Queene* 1.1.38). Una False takes on the characteristics of Hecate and conjures dreams for Redcrosse while Una True is a true double Una whom Archimago teaches “to imitate that Lady trew” [...] “most like to seeme for Una” (1.1.38,46, 45). Archimago also creates Duessa, a witch, and the “Most False Duessa,” Fidessa (32.4). As a master of disguise, Archimago “could take/ as many forms and shapes in seeming wise/ As euer Proteus to himself could make” (1.2.10, 2-4). Each time he appears in Book I, he has taken on a new identity: first as a monk in Canto 1, second as Redcrosse in Canto 3, third as a pilgrim in Canto 6, and finally as a “messenger with letters” in Canto 12 (1.12.24, 7). Archimago creates these divisions of his character for Redcrosse to be misguided in his path to Holiness.

Considering Spenser’s life as a secretary, and one who was skilled at imitation of character and language, it is particularly important that Archimago, the master of disguise, would transform as a messenger with a letter signed by Fidessa, the most false Duessa, and that the contents of this letter are a lie masked as a truth. This letter is the only epistolary poem in *The Faerie Queene*, and the only letter contained in the poetic form in all of Spenser’s works. In Book I, Canto 12, a disguised Archimago enters King Eden’s court as a messenger with an impending judgment about why Redcrosse and Una cannot wed (1.12.24.9). The hall of spectators at court stand amazed as they stare at this unshapely messenger who, breathless, kisses the ground, unfolds the parchment, and reads the contents of the letter. Silence falls on the court as they draw attention to the strange, uninvited guest who heralds an important truth: Redcrosse has already “plighted his right hand to another love, in another land” (1.12.26.7-8). Fidessa’s signature, pressed in the printed editions of *The Faerie Queene*, adds to this curious matter as the name

*Fidessa* hangs in a tenth line from the final Alexandrine. The letter ends: “So bids the well to fare, thy neither friend, nor foe, *Fidessa*.” (1.12.28, 9-10). As Figure 14 shows, the printing of *Fidessa*’s subscription and signature letter brings further interest because Spenser deviates from the standard stanza form as the signature *Fidessa* hangs as a tenth line added after the alexandrine of the stanza that concludes the letter.

In keeping with the advice from Fulwood’s *Enemie of Idelness* and Day’s *The English Secreterie*, *Fidessa*’s signature appears at the right of the stanza, showing that she is writing to a superior. As figure 15 shows, the placement of *Fidessa*’s signature, which iterates the trends of early-modern letter writing and secretarial practice, are similar to the placement of Spenser’s signature in his manuscript and printed versions of his letters to Queen Elizabeth.

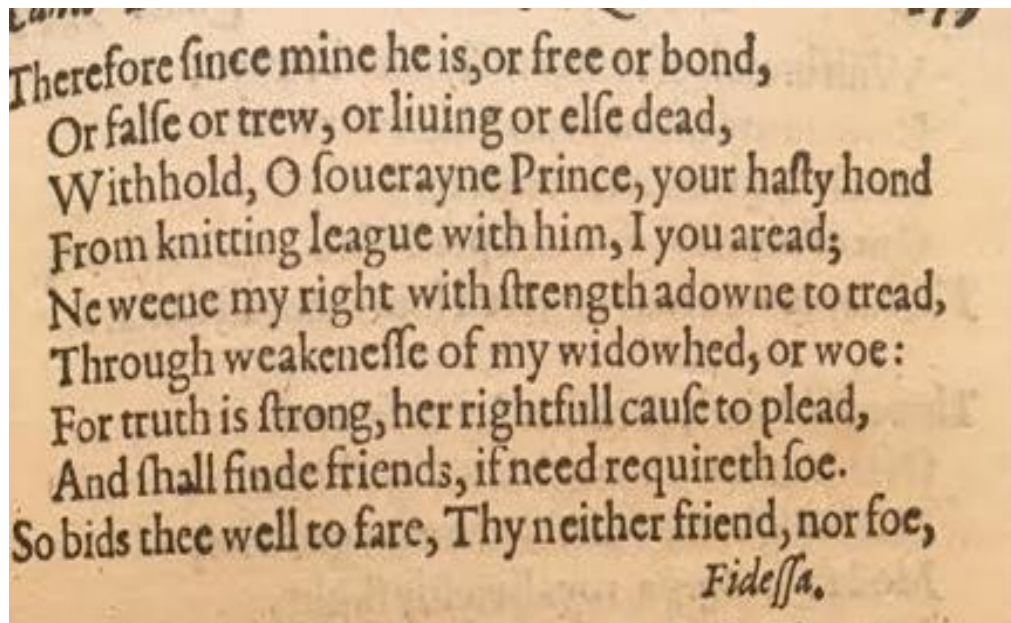


Figure 14. Photograph of *Fidessa*’s Signature. From: THE FAERIE QVEENE. Disposed into twelue books, Fashioning XII Morall vertues. London. Printed for William Ponsonbie. 1590. Photographed at the Harry Ransom Center, Austin Texas. October 2016.

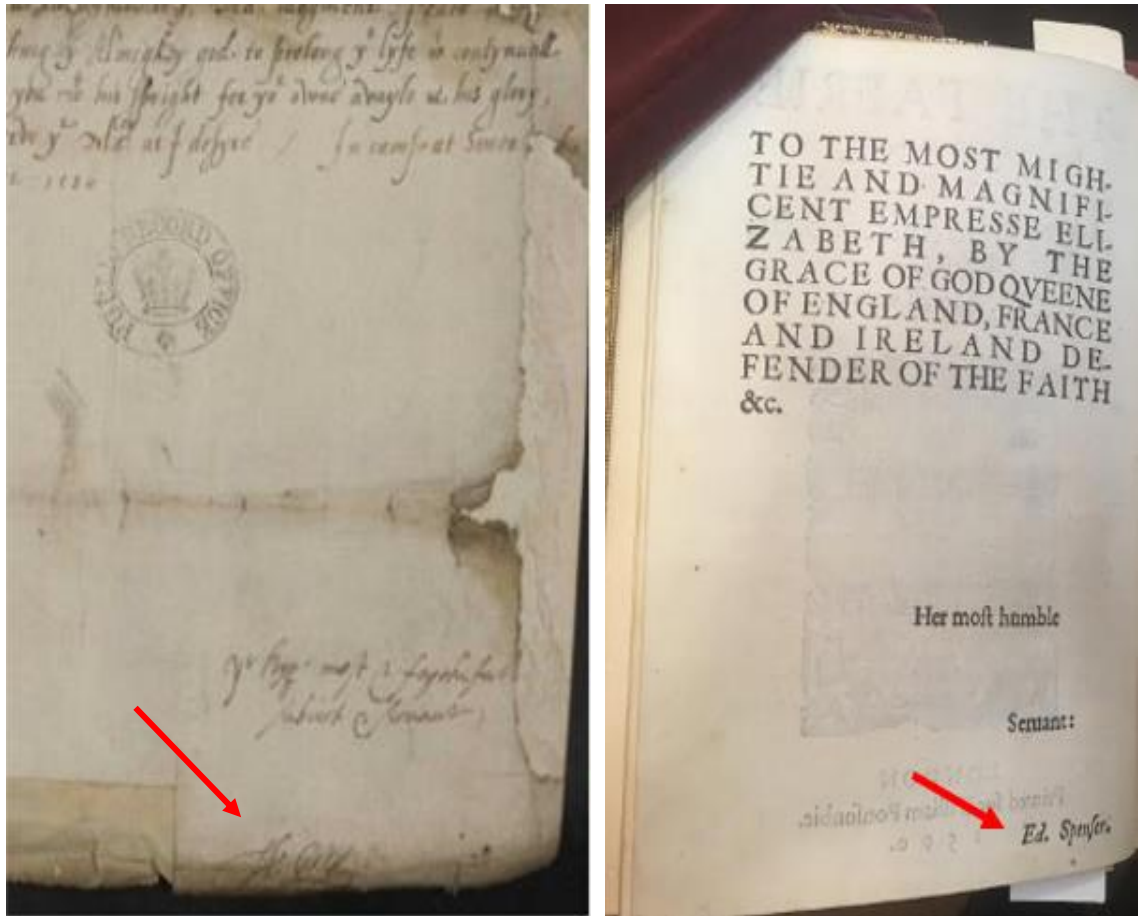


Figure 15: Example of placement of Spenser's signatures to the Queen. Left: Letter from Grey to Queen Elizabeth 12 Nov 1580 (acquired from *The National Archives* SP 63/78/29). Right: Edmund Spenser's printed signature in dedication to the Queen (Spenser, Edmund. *Faerie Queene* (1590). Pforzheimer Collection. *Photographed at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, October 2106.*

The placement of Fidessa's signature is highly important to the context of the letter. Just as Spenser intentionally places his signature in the lowest margin of the letter to show his own status and position in relation to the Queen, Spenser wrote Fidessa's signature outside of the metrical sestet to show her respect for the King's court. The placement of the signature shows that she is demonstrating her nature of fidelity. However, knowing that Fidessa is actually the evil Duessa, a reader (like Red Cross) knows that she is not truly writing to show her affection to the King or court, but rather is attempting to deceive the court. Her signature is further demonstration that she is

presenting a lie through truth. Although Redcrosse did give and consummate his oath to Fidessa earlier in Book I, he dismisses the betrothal because he was wooed by her “wicked arts” and warns that this dual character is not to be trusted: “Of this false woman, that *Fidessa* hight,/ *Fidessa* hight the falsest Dame on ground,/ Most false *Duessa*” (1.12.32). Duessa’s iteration of Fidessa tests Redcrosse and King Eden in their ability to judge authenticity when presented with multiple authorities.

As an allegory, *The Faerie Queene* presents multiple traces to a vast number of possible authorities which iterate in Fidessa’s signature. The textual notes in Hamilton’s 2007 of *The Faerie Queene* are full of comments that direct the reader to analyze Duessa and Fidessa as a representation of the French born, Catholic Queen of Scotland, Mary. Spenser’s first description of Duessa rings a particular significance to Catholicism and Mary: “a goodly lady clad in scarlot red” relates to the color that signifies the Catholic church (Spenser 1.2.13). The English Catholics that remained under Queen Elizabeth’s protestant rule, as well as Pope Gregory and the Spanish government, all considered Mary to be the rightful heir to the English throne. To dislocate Mary and protect herself from a Catholic uprising, Elizabeth kept Mary imprisoned until her death in 1587. Fidessa’s letter evokes the image of the Catholic icon, Virgin Mary, who is the “mayd” and “widow” of Christ. Fidessa expresses that Redcrosse has “already plighted his right Hand/ Unto another Love, and to another Land” which brings attention that in Mary’s thoughts, England belongs to Catholicism. Fidessa warns that no matter whether he is free from his betrothal to her, whether his marriage to her is “false or trew,” that Redcrosse is not to be trusted. Fidessa’s words bring to light that England is not to be trusted and can easily be tempted and possibly fickle which would allow restoration of

the Catholic faith, just as it easily turned on the Catholics before. In other words, England was married to Catholicism, and in the death of the Catholic faith in England Mary is a widow. Duessa disguises herself as the True Faith, Fidessa; but because Catholicism is the false faith, Duessa and Fidessa are both counterfeit representations of the truth. The “false erraunt knight” evokes the image of Henry VIII who dissolved Catholicism and favored Protestantism because of his desire to marry those who could produce a male heir. The “burning alters” may refer to the dissolution of Catholic monasteries in England where Catholic churches were destroyed, sold for profit, and often burned to the ground. Fidessa refers to the “judgment” that will be “conjure to avenge” perhaps referring to those who plotted against Henry, and also Elizabeth, in order to restore the Catholic faith and prosecute those who destroyed the Catholic faith. One such conjuring could be the formation of the Babington plot. Fidessa denies that she is powerless “ne weene my right hand with strength adowne to tread.” Although she is mourning the loss of Redcrosse, the truth keeps her strong and there is strength in her friends who believe in the truth. The truth, of course, referring to the truth of the Catholic faith, which is renounced in Redcrosse’s rebuttal to this letter “Fidessa high the falsest dame on the grownd,/ Most false Duessa.” Fidessa may appear as truth, but really is false. Catholicism may appear to be the true faith but the letter denounces this truth. While it is important to understand the way in which Spenser created these multiple identities, showcasing his talent in imitation and iterations of history, we must be reminded that this allegory is delivered in the form of a letter. The letter form itself iterates the historical circulation of letters leads to the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

Readers of this poem, just like Redcrosse, are also challenged to decipher “false” from “trew,” “friend” from “foe,” and must authenticate a host of authorities that iterate through Fidessa’s signature (1.12.28). By signing “thy neither friend, nor foe” Fidessa admits she “is several” and the court must authenticate a signature that leaves trace of her dual identity, Duessa. Book I, Canto XII of *The Faerie Queene* includes the only epistle found in all of Spenser’s poetry. The epistolary language that surrounds the letter reveals an author who is familiar with the material conditions of letter writing, here showing an example of the iterations of multiple identities inscribed into a single signature in the printed page of his poem.

The future of this investigation lies in the iterated lines of Fidessa’s signature in the subsequent editions of *The Faerie Queene*. Where we can see, here, in the 1590 version of the text, Fidessa’s signature hangs below the traditional metrical and printed pattern as a way to pull trace from the secretarial traditions as well as show point to a possible counterfeited signature. Yet, the remaining question in this study is to follow that signature through its iterations in the printed form from 1590 to the present. This study would rely on methods of critical bibliography, where the term “signature” takes on another meaning.

Critical bibliographers are focused on reproductions of printed texts and examine all iterations of printed texts. It is their intent to “follow the threads of transmission back from an existing document and try to restore its text as closely as possible to the form it originally took in the author’s manuscript” (Gaskell 336). They can recognize “*recension*,” which is the relationship of the surviving manuscripts in relation to each other so that the evidence can be reconstructed to the original, and “*emendation*,” which

is the “knowledge of the process” of scribes and printers that inform textual “transmission” (336). A “signature” in an early printed book is defined as the identification of a gathering (or “groups of leaves”) in an early-printed book (7, 51). These signatures helped in assembling and ordering the sheets of the book and commonly consisted of the 23 letters of the medieval Latin alphabet and were printed in the lowest right margin of the text, usually before the catchword (51). The catchword is the next word on the next page, a method for early printers to match pages correctly (7). Critical bibliographers use these signatures to help identify editions of texts and printing varieties. It is the critical bibliographer’s task to produce a text that is at its utmost original for literary critics to understand, more closely, the original intent of an author. Signatures are used in critical bibliography to see how the words align immediately above and below them which help identify type setting (333). This recording helps to analyze the “press-work of an impression and to differentiate between impressions” (333).

The study could focus on the signature of Fidessa, and analyze its placement using critical bibliography. The intent would be to examine the ways in which Spenser’s past as a secretary traces and iterates into the 1590 printing of *The Faerie Queene* and all subsequent editions. The future of this study would continue the notion outlined by Derrida about iteration. As he expresses in *Limited, Inc*:

Through the possibility of repeating every mark as the same it makes way for an idealization that seems to deliver the full presence of ideal objects (not present in the mode of sense perception and beyond all immediate deictic), but this repeatability itself ensures that the full presence of a singularity thus repeated comports in itself the reference to something else, thus rending the full presence

that it nevertheless announces. This is why iteration is not simply repetition.  
(Derrida, *Limited, Inc.* 8)

Essentially, the creation of a text's context only holds meaning in its first utterance, from the first sender to its original destination. In an iteration, the message may be uttered again, transcribed in a second language, written down, printed, reproduced, edited, and then printed again. At each iteration, the text holds meaning from its past forms, its present, and the future iterable versions.

This is where, for Derrida in *The Post Card*, meaning is lost in the transmission of text. That, in some sense that we begin to grow so far away from the original text that there is no way to decipher the code, the original code that encrypts the original text. In other words, a sign (or signature, in the case of a letter) can be reproduced through infinity but with the consequence of being misinterpreted, counterfeited, or lost. His theory leads questions of the text into territory where there is no meaning to the text, because no one can decipher the code unless they are in the same room as the author in its first utterance. In other words, the signature not only bears the identity of the person signing the letter but also their past influences and future readings and reprintings of the signature. There is an implicit notion that when we read a signature that it presences a singular authority, or that authority is verified through the sign. Yet, Derrida invites us to think that authority and presence are comprised of the traces of the signatory's past, as well as the future of the signature's reproduction and its reiteration into the future.



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