***The Castle of Multessa***

.

A Falsework did Multessa build, and strange

It was, of shimmering hue, a lithe illusion

Whose form and semblance oftentimes did change,

And mingled false with true, to much confusion.

Sir Plato and his knights, in white profusion,

By its weird-woven implications all

Enrag’d, and by its sinuous convolution

Baffl’d, laid siege against its willowy wall

With tactics dialectical, to make it fall.

With ideal siegecraft did they storm the ramparts,

But cannon’ argument, and ram-rod’s batter

Pass’d harmless through: so many parts were sham parts.

They lifted to the battlements a ladder,

Call’d Hierarchy, but with noisy clatter

It fell, and into myriad splinters flew.

They rais’d the siege. ‘Twas neither Mind nor Matter;

Or both, perchance. What could those pale knights do

With such a solid dream, unreal, but not untrue?



***The Queene of Labyrinthia***

1.

My brain’s a mirror cracked and crazy,

 Monad with windows, and all broken.

 How many years since I have spoken?

As in a blueprint Piranesi

Drew up after some elegant

 Nightmare-patterned hallucination,

 In the maze of incarceration

Perplexed indeed I stand, and want

The clew to lead me out again.

 It is a sack of cul-de-sacs.

 What thread to help retrace my tracks?

The dead, as well, can be insane.

For everywhere is anywhere,

 Hence nowhere. Madness organised.

 Nightmare minutely realised.

The architecture of despair.

2.

Complexities, in the end, defeat

 Us all. The maze grows only denser.

 Think of those episodes in Spenser

Where plain knights weave in dark conceit

‘Mongst nymphs and wizards and what-not,

 Until the allegory spins

 So many myths of origins

That Virgil’s oak is overwrought

With Ovid’s ivy. ‘Hard begin’, The Faerie Queene, *III, iii, 21.*

 What is your end? You have too many

 Of these to be said to have any,

And fewer the ways out than in.

So highly charged with gorgeous Eros,

 Infected will unwilling serves

 Erected wit, and sensory nerves

Are insolent squires to his knight-heroes.

A knight may ‘gainst his interest act,

 His better judgment; what he fears he

 Is overtaken by: his Circe

Turns hoggish mind to bodily fact.

The thread tatters to threads, to broken

 Endings leading. But these are new

 Beginnings, each a chance to do

It all again, Spouse and Bespoken

In a tempestuous marriage of

 The pagan and the mediaeval,

 Protestant God and Catholic Devil.

It is the straying that we love.

4.

Spenser, you hated us, it’s true. *Hated the Irish, that is.*

 Hysteria mars your fantasy.

 But though you fear to set him free,

Eros exuberates from you.

You wrestle to the ground but can’t

 Pin down the demon. He will rise

 Again. What spell can exorcise

The protean from the Protestant?

