

TRANSGRESSING TERMS OF GENDER IN THE
FAERIE QUEENE: BRITOMART, RADIGUND
AND ARTEGALL

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TRANSGRESSING TERMS OF GENDER IN *THE FAERIE QUEENE*:
BRITOMART, RADIGUND AND ARTEGALL

by
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Abstract

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is designed, in part, to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline . . . the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter, then for profite of the ensample."¹ To profit from the ensample, the reader learns vicariously through the adventures of each hero. The hero captivates the reader's gaze, and to stay in focus, nature's periphery harmonizes around the hero: shadows cast suspicion, light foreshadows sight, beauty unveils truth. Just as nature's ideals form around the allegorical needs of the hero, so does the ideal Woman. In my thesis, I argue that the feminine-ideal, presented in part through Britomart, Radigund and Artegall, solely reflects patriarchal order. To be "ideal," as we see through Britomart, means to cease to exist as woman. Woman's refusal to submit to this feminine-ideal, as we see through Radigund, results in obliteration. The only Woman resurrected from her diminished self is the one who began as, and is returned to, man: Artegall.

To move from the periphery to the centre of existence, the male-inscribed feminine-ideal can only be presented to the reader by writing the man into woman. Britomart needs the

¹Edmund Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, from the Hamilton edition of *The Faerie Queene*, Appendix A, 737.

guise of "masculinity" to see and be seen. When Britomart cross-dresses, she transcends her lesser, feminine nature and becomes like man in order to perfect her patriarchally-prized chastity. Once perfected as "Woman," she spins herself into oblivion. Radigund, on the other hand, refuses to be defined as man's extension. Her refusal results in her death. Finally, when Artegall submits to Radigund's world, he becomes Woman (Woman as defined by the traditions of patriarchy) by donning woman's clothing. Once dressed in this feminine garb, the feminine soul invades and usurps his masculine body. As Woman, Artegall can neither act nor react. Nor can he be seen. It is not until he is re-dressed by Britomart that he re-enters the narrative as a central figure. The only good Woman, as scripted in *The Faerie Queene*, is an absent woman.

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To write in the year 2000 is to write here and now and yet again; and for me, the only scenario for doing this will be the very one which, in the process of writing itself, leaves traces across that film of patriarchal sediment covering words, and skirts the semantic line (to date, we have known only its patriarchal slant) so as to render visible and possible the multiple uses and meaning which are there, present and available, in each word. A different perspective, different meaning, different way to read. (Brossard, 97-98)

Chapter 1

Introduction

I chanced upon *The Faerie Queene* in my first term of life as a graduate student. Besides being daunted by the length and scope of the poem and its extensive historical baggage, I was immediately impressed by the role woman played in this clearly patriarchal text. Beginning with Una's Sprite who "in all men's sight" has the power to ravish "That weaker sence" in men (I i 45.4, 5), woman, it seems, does not represent her sex at all; rather, she is there as an imaginary reflection of man's desire. Produced

and captured by the male gaze, Woman² is formed out of a paradox: her own sexuality (that is, the sexuality of woman) is denied while her physical beauty is ultimately responsible for eliciting sexual desire from men. While the woman is singularly subjected to codes of chastity, the man is unequivocally associated with power, including the power to re-define the feminine in order to suit his own ideal. For me, this text sprang to life because of its lively depictions of woman and the patriarchal feminine ideal. Though written over four hundred years ago, the text finds new energy through a reading framed by a feminist perspective coming out of the late twentieth century.

The Faerie Queene is filled with countless gems of gender-representation. When I decided to write my thesis on *The Faerie Queene*, it took me quite some time to narrow my research to the triad of Britomart, Radigund and Artegall, as the text is overflowing with its many representations of gender. To my great disappointment, when I turned to their exegesis, most critics concentrated on the higher, more "intellectual" allegorical reading(s) of these three characters. For the most part, female characters were not

²For the purposes of this thesis, I distinguish "W"oman from "w"oman: she who is defined by the principles of patriarchal ideals is Woman, proper; she who defies containment under patriarchal concepts is woman (and is therefore, quite possibly, "improper").

read as actual women but, rather, as attributes categorizing the feminine according to patriarchal standards such as singularity (Una), duality (Duessa), unchastity (Malecasta) and so on. Most critics focus almost unquestioningly on woman as one of these aspects of the representation of patriarchal order. I remained interested in the text for the patriarchal formulations of the feminine and the employment of female characters for patriarchal service. In my early months of research, nowhere did I find a critic who shared my enthusiasm for gender representation that seemed to me to appear in what I am going to call a more "literal reading" of the text, a reading freed from a history of patriarchal readings, a reading open to the powerful gender representations of the text. In this way, Britomart, examined first as Woman, is in fact a male representation of the feminine ideal; Radigund is the uncontainable feminine paradox that must be eradicated; and Artegall dips (and disappears) into the feminine sphere and, upon re-emerging, justly eliminates the feminine threat to patriarchal order.

During my months of preliminary research, I audited a course of feminist theory, taught by Dr. Noreen Golfman in the summer term of 1994. During this course, I was most profoundly affected by the Canadian feminist writer/theorist, Nicole Brossard. Her critical work, *The*

Ariel Letter, startled me into an alternative way of thinking, and encouraged a rejection of traditional ways of thought (such as linearity, universality), and a re-evaluation of my own relationship with both reading and writing. Brossard's impact, which ultimately helped me develop the feminist framework of this thesis, is probably most apparent by my decision to frame each chapter by a quote from her book. Brossard clearly had the greatest impact on me, because she unknowingly encouraged me to articulate my findings even if the traditional critics did not (or would not? could not?) support such a reading of women in *The Faerie Queene*.

As weak as it may sound, however, I still needed academic support, support that did not appear to be out there on the academic library shelves surrounding Edmund Spenser and *The Faerie Queene*. My supervisor, Dr. William Barker, encouraged my alternative reading of the text, but, oddly, I still needed reassurance in black ink. Camille Paglia, while offering a controversial (and very entertaining) reading of the poem, explores the text in terms of Dionysian and Apollonian extremes, which, despite its self-claimed feminist attempt to reclaim the chaotic aspects of feminism within mythology, is still contained by a predominantly patriarchal framework. Indeed, Paglia

closely echoes Northrop Frye who establishes his position from within the patriarchal construct where the mythical world is pulled into primarily a representation of universal (and thereby patriarchal) archetypes.

Sheila Cavanagh's recent book, *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires*, arrived in time to provide the academic companionship I needed for my alternative reading. To examine the representation of gender in *The Faerie Queene*, Cavanagh argues, we need to return to what she and I call a more literal reading of the text:

where gender is concerned, allegory in *The Faerie Queene* is most fruitfully approached initially through its literal level, an aspect often belittled or ignored. Attending to the narrative details first provide an invaluable insight into the gendered infrastructure of the poem, informed by theology, archetypal theories, typology, or other important scholarly concerns. Nevertheless, by suppressing the surface meaning of the poem and leaping immediately to its allegorical intricacies, readers often occlude the gender-bias such interpretations rest upon. (7)

Cavanagh goes on to argue that this return to a literal reading, a reading less concerned with historical symbolic interpretation, allows the reader to draw more challenging interpretations of text:

Traditionally, as readers of this text, we have done a disservice to ourselves and to the poem by relying too heavily on tacit "prior understanding" about allegory and other conventional elements of the epic -- a process which has helped "devour" both female characters and readers. (8)

While Renaissance scholars have made *The Faerie Queene* considerably more accessible to contemporary readers by locating it within a historical scene, with what can be called the "literal reading" the reader need not neglect her own immediate associations with the text.

Most critics of *The Faerie Queene* are scholars embedded in an older historical paradigm of the Renaissance.³ For example, in immediately linking Britomart with the good and powerful Queen Elizabeth, Britomart's masculine autonomy "appears less an aberration, more as the exemplar, of the potential for rule by women" (Roberts, 193). While explorations focusing on a Renaissance context are vital to the historical interpretation of the text, some might question the value of *The Faerie Queene* to a modern reader -- more specifically, to a modern feminist reader. Instead of recovering the patriarchal fiction of the past that precedes a historical text in order to uncover some "true" interpretation, we can apply our contemporary knowledge, perspectives, and political agendas to a historical text --

³While it may seem that I dismiss the contributions of critics who approach the text from a more traditional perspective, I rely largely on their work and their expertise in both Renaissance and traditional Spenserian scholarship throughout this thesis. My purpose is to point to a reading that offers an alternative view of *The Faerie Queene*, which is quite dependent on acknowledging past scholarship.

and the era around that text -- in order to achieve an alternative reading. Instead of unearthing universal truths, previously unmeditated questions can be asked. For instance, instead of celebrating Britomart's ability to rule as a woman in the Renaissance, we can ask why, once she emerges "victorious" over Radigund's rule, is she shunted into the periphery, back to the subjection of man? We can read *The Faerie Queene* as a historical text and apply the contemporary theories of feminism in order to demonstrate how historical language reflects the interests of patriarchal order at the expense of woman.

One aspect of the coded language that has for too many years worn the guise of being gender-neutral but is actually deeply implicated in patriarchal order is clothing: what a character wears, I shall repeatedly show, is central in *The Faerie Queene*. The dressing of gender also plays a crucial role in the general overall patriarchal re-construction of the feminine sex⁴ since it is by chastely defining the external garb that we can control the forbidden, naked body

⁴"Sex" and "gender" are terms earlier defined by Ann Oakley: "'sex' is a word that refers to biological differences between male and female: the visible differences in genitalia, the related differences in procreative functions. 'Gender,' however, is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification in 'masculine' and 'feminine'" (16).

underneath. Clothing, a patriarchal reflector of power and submission, serves predominantly to identify the sexuality of the wearer. In the Renaissance, dress,

as a highly regulated semiotic system, became a primary site where a struggle over the mutability of the social order was conducted. (Howard, 422)

The unforgettable and forever quotable Deuteronomy 22:5, heavily drawn upon in Renaissance teachings, reads

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abominations unto the LORD thy God.

Howard further finds that "[t]he stability of the social order depends as much on maintaining absolute distinction between male and female as between aristocrat and yeoman" (422). Violating the social ordering system of sex-recognition by wearing the symbols attributed to the other sex is cause for social distress. Because our traditional (and contemporary) inclination towards hierarchy is based on sexuality, the symbolism of dress reflects social order. We are defined by what we wear. Dress codes are so deeply etched into the established order of society that we seldom question their purposes: "[t]here is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them" (Woolf, 188). Sex, gender and order are intertwined: clothing codes strategically link gender (social norms of masculine/feminine behaviour) to sex (biological/genetical make-up). Cross-dressers are anomalous because, through

their deviation of dress, their gender refuses to match their sex.

Dress is one central theme in *The Faerie Queene*, but dress may be subsumed by the larger category of gender, the principal theme of my discussion in these pages. Gender in *The Faerie Queene* generally supports an orderly, hierarchical system which operates on a tiered, binaric model: divinity reigns over the secular, God reigns over mankind, man reigns over woman, and woman reigns over woman. This system also distinguishes the good from evil on each level. Man ascends the corporeal world and travels towards the intellectual/divine world by starting at the lowest rung (the earthly sensual) and eventually ending at the highest rung (the divinely intellectual). Each sub-relationship necessarily reflects the structure immediately superior to it: the subordinate serves, and in fact completely revolves around, its superior. Britomart's perpetually pending consummation with Artegall, for example, liberates Artegall from the base sensual desire commonly inspired by woman in man. By guaranteeing a sexual union, Artegall no longer needs to concern himself with seeking out a beautiful, good Woman; by deferring the sexual union, Artegall cannot fall victim to base desire. The pending consummation ensures that he will ascend to being a rational, reasoning man. Having

confronted and defeated "desire," Castiglione argues that man:

will come to contemplate not the particular beauty of a single woman but the universal beauty which adorns all human bodies: and then, dazzled by this greater light [of heaven], he will not concern himself with the lesser; burning with a more perfect flame, he will feel little esteem for what he formerly prized so greatly. (Castiglione, 339).

The relationship with the lesser (woman) permits man to overcome his lesser (sensual) emotions in order to aspire to the greater intellectual union, that between God and man.

Just as the male/female hierarchy reflects patriarchal assertions of order, the female/female pairing reflects an image of the patriarchal ideal Woman, the ideal mate for man. In order to attain the ideal relationship with God, man must overcome his base desires: he must be fortunate enough to recognize the truly beautiful woman and distinguish her from the deceptive, disorderly, woman. Thus, in the race for male approval, woman is pitted against woman. Through the image of disorderly women, chaos threatens the divine hierarchal order of patriarchy where man unites with God. Beauty signifies goodness: "rarely does an evil soul dwell in a beautiful body, and so outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness" (Castiglione, 330). Besides *seeming* to be beautiful, the beauty must also be real. The "graceful woman . . . paints herself so sparingly and so little that whoever

looks at her is unsure whether she is made-up or not" (Castiglione, 86). The evil women lurking in the pages of *The Faerie Queene* have an adopted image of beauty which, once unveiled, reveals themselves to be truly ugly. Consider, for example, the infamous stripping of Duessa, where her uncovered appearance reflects her truly evil spirit. While Duessa has a "More vgly shape yet neuer liuing creatures saw" (I viii 48.9), there is a "natural" harmony since her appearance is true to her soul; indeed, "Such is the face of falshood" (I viii 49.4). A mini-hierarchy of woman over woman is established by the narrator to reflect the greater hierarchies of male over female, order over disorder, Crown over subject.

Clearly, I argue, *The Faerie Queene* was written out of a patriarchal order, an order still privileged today. Its women are constructed out of that order. As long as "she" continues to be written out of the patriarchy, language used to depict woman revolves around the hierarchical, patriarchal order rather than woman herself. In seeking to move beyond patriarchal order in representing woman, we need to understand the influence that patriarchal order has had on defining the social roles of women. Judith Butler writes,

[i]t is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of "women," the subject of feminism, is

produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought. (Butler, 2)

The ideal Woman of *The Faerie Queene*, constructed within the confines of patriarchal order, is defined by a paradox: in order to exist within patriarchal order she is banished to the periphery; if she seeks existence beyond patriarchal order, she faces death. Either way, ideal female existence is prescribed by an ineffectual existence. If woman is to consider herself as a being existing both within and outside of the patriarchy, her (mis)representation within the patriarchy, penned by the male author, needs to be disclosed.

Other than Cavanagh's examination of gender in *The Faerie Queene*, I have not yet come across a critical analysis that emphasizes a re-conception of the phallogocentric language of the text and, consequently, the narrator's positioning of woman. By using an approach that couples a historical text with contemporary (French) feminist theories, I argue that the male-constructed representation of the ideal woman in *The Faerie Queene* does not revolve around woman at all; instead, this representation of Woman through a patriarchal language serves to reflect patriarchal order that has been historically inscribed, and continues to be accepted, as

"natural." Indeed, *The Faerie Queene* is so predominantly patriarchal that the narrative presumes a masculine reader. As Cixous writes,

Now it has become rather urgent to question this solidarity between logocentrism and phallogentrism -- bringing to light the fate dealt to woman, her burial -- to threaten the stability of the masculine structure that passed itself off as eternal-natural, by conjuring up from femininity the reflections and hypotheses that are necessarily ruinous for the stronghold still in possession of authority. (65)

For too long now, sexuality has long been man's domain and woman's responsibility: man presides over the insatiable sexual desires of woman; woman owes the man obedience and submission in return.

* * *

When I was younger my mother took me into the forest. We approached one tree. "All right," she said, "you go on that side of the tree and I will stay here. The tree will stand between us, and we will not see one another. Then we will each write a description about the tree we see before us." We both observed and wrote down what we saw. Later, when we arrived home, my mother and I both read our descriptions to my sister; my sister thought that we were describing two completely different trees, since one of us wrote of soft-feathery moss and dying roots while the other

recorded a robin's nest and love-etchings stretched by time. From this venture I learned that there is no universal view. I can never claim to see the "whole picture," for even if I walk around the tree, I'll see everything in passing and depend largely on memory if I want to recall one side of the tree while standing at the other.

For too many years we have examined *The Faerie Queene* from one perspective, a perspective that strongly favours a patriarchal reading of a patriarchal text. There have been many gaps in those readings, in spite of claims to universal symbolisms and allegories, because other perspectives were thought to be non-existent. The masculine was supposed to be simultaneously neutral, objective, a presumption that has been seriously challenged primarily by feminists and deconstructionists in recent times. In my reading of *The Faerie Queene* I view this rich and suggestive text somewhat differently, and I now invite you to join me in seeing it from this other side.

Where there is Man, there are no women. The moment a woman transcends what is thought to be her nature, that is to say, when she is at her best, she, it is said, becomes like a man. This is gender erasure. Woman at her best is invisible as woman. (Brossard, 140-141)

Chapter 2

Britomart: Woman Written out of Man

In spite of all her splendid armour, Britomart's character has been deeply probed and her body extensively analyzed as an allegorical figure of the only feminine virtue of *The Faerie Queene*, chastity. She is frequently referred to as the most complex character of the epic, the only one who provides "the opportunity to trace the emergence of character within figure" (Wofford, 3). Stevie Davies reflects the more traditional view that Britomart is "emotional, excited, sometimes touchingly childlike" (50). Abby Wettan Kleinbaum is one of the few who gives Britomart a negative review, stating that Britomart is "a beautiful, virtuous, reformed, and rather boring Amazon" (93) and goes

on to appropriately define her as a "tamed subordinate [wife]" (97). One of the more refreshing (and recent) analyses of Britomart, however, comes from Sheila Cavanagh, who offers an alternative reading which moves away from other readings of the allegory:

Britomart is portrayed as surprisingly dim-witted and she is plagued by repeated misapprehensions. The warrior maiden's lack of insight and intelligence, however, are essential for her destiny. . . . Britomart's intellectual dullness performs a unique function in the development and preservation of her particular virtue. In order to uphold the version of chastity lauded in *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart cannot acquire insight or understanding. (141, 142)

Cavanagh interprets Britomart as a character invented by man in order to perpetuate female subordination, subordination essential to maintaining an orderly patriarchal rule. Britomart's mission, ultimately, is to achieve marital union with Artegall, and, having acquired promise of this, she consequently disappears from the text.

Britomart-as-woman simply does not exist: she is most frequently read in relation to the male (reader and writer), as what female is meant to be (or not). We are guided by the narrator to read her through the careful manipulation of a narrative framed within the "phallogocentric" tradition. Throughout this discussion I am taking a necessarily focussed approach on certain key moments in the text that seem especially revealing for my argument. I am not trying

to account for everything in my approach, but am trying to identify the important or difficult moments, to show how the text is playing with gender relations within the patriarchal norms. At times, the reader may feel I am jumping too quickly from one point in the text to another. Yet I hope as the argument builds that my apparently partial approach will point to a more satisfying reading of *The Faerie Queene*. I begin by discussing the narrative method by which Britomart is introduced to the reader, demonstrating how her male (Guyon) and female (Florimell and Malecasta) counterparts frame Britomart primarily as a male construct, serving a patriarchal order. From this will follow a discussion of Britomart's childhood which, while paradoxically unconventional, further prepares us to accept this warrior Woman as a messenger of patriarchal conformity. Finally, I conclude by arguing that two distinct genders emerge from the patriarchally developed Britomart, forming distinct masculine and feminine versions contained in the one body. My focus will be on the development of one female into a patriarchally defined ideal of Woman.

While Britomart eventually becomes an ideal Woman (couched in a patriarchal framework), she is presented in such a way that the reader immediately perceives her as circumscribing patriarchal order. Given that gender-

ambiguity (a severe form of inconsistency) may pose the threat of duality, the narrator¹ disguises Britomart so thoroughly that neither Arthur, Guyon, nor the reader are initially aware that this strange rider, accompanied by her cross-dressed nurse, is Woman:

At last as through an open plaine they yode,
They spide a knight, that towards pricked faire,
And him beside an aged Squire there rode,
That seem'd to couch vnder his shield three-square,
As if that age had him that burden spare,
And yield it those, that stouter could it wield:
He them espying, gan himselfe prepare,
And on his arme addresse his goodly shield
That bore a Lion passant in a golden field.
(III i 4)

This knight-in-("goodly"-)shining-armour is written in the masculine pronoun, "he," and at this introductory point, only the narrator knows the rider to be Britomart.

Arthur's and Guyon's first response to this strange vision is immediately to engage in battle. Upon receiving Arthur's consent, Guyon attacks this foreign knight. The consequent dismount of Guyon is almost immediate:

Great shame and sorrow of that fall he tooke;
For neuer yet, sith warlike armes he bore,
And shiuering speare in bloudie field first shooke,
He found himselfe dishonored so sore.
(III i 7.1-4)

¹In her essay discussing gendered allegory in Book III, Wofford remarks that "in Book III Spenser explicitly characterizes his narrator as male and poses in sexual terms the question of how he can know or articulate truth" (4). She discusses this in greater detail in the section entitled, "We foolish men" (III ii 2): Male Narration in Book III" (4-7).

The rationale behind maintaining the anonymity of this strange rider's sex becomes apparent after his fall: had Britomart been presented immediately as female, her battle with Guyon would take on an entirely different meaning, since by her very "nature" is Woman subordinate to man:

women . . . could still be seen as different merely by virtue of their lack of masculine perfection (softer, weaker, less hot), and their subordination could be justified on those grounds. (Howard, 423)

Tonkin argues, and I think correctly so, that the initial interpretation is not one of gender but rather of Symbol: "Guyon falls to Britomart not because chastity is necessarily a greater virtue than temperance, but because chastity is its successor" (114). Gender, at this early point in time, remains veiled because both knights are nothing more than symbolic representations (thereby intellectual representations as opposed to physical representations) of their moral quests. By not making gender an issue, the narrator implies a "neutral" and "objective" approach to the issue of chastity.

Britomart, at this early stage, is, as Wofford noted earlier, more of a figure than a character. In other words, as an abstract figure, the yet unveiled Britomart represents Chastity in a more "intellectual" fashion. As a figure of Chastity, then, Britomart is less committed to the body than if Chastity were immediately feminized, linking this virtue

to a female's body. The force and success displayed in this initial encounter with Britomart do not "naturally" accompany Woman who is supposed to exude the softer traits of femininity. Her battle against Guyon is instead hard and fast; she unhorses him at the first blow. Guyon's fall is not, however, attributed to the mighty warrior with whom he just tried to joust but this warrior's weaponry:

For not thy fault, but secret powre vnseene,
That speare enchanted was, which layd thee on the
greene.
(III i 7.8-9)

This mystically empowered spear prepares us for the emergence of gender as an issue with the revelation that this warrior is indeed none other than Britomart:

But weenedst thou what wight thee ouerthrew,
Much greater griefe and shamefuller regret
For thy hard fortune then thou wouldst renew,
That of a single damzell thou wert met
On equall plaine, and there so hard beset;
Euen the famous Britomart it was,
Whom straunge aduenture did from Britaine fet,
To seeke her loue (loue farre sought alas,) Whose image she had seene in Venus looking glas.
(III i 8)

Gender has now become an issue, albeit it carefully framed in a phallogentric tradition by immediately linking Britomart with an association of power, Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth: "Britomart's very name shows her link with

the British line' (Tonkin, 111).² The name "Britomart" is further associated with Britaine, and the reader immediately learns she is on a quest of love as prophesied by the great goddess, Venus. The subtle twist helps to avoid the chaos traditionally associated with gender-blending. Equally significant is the narrator's decision to reveal her sexuality first to the voyeuristic reader and not to other characters. This serves partly to protect the ego of Guyon, who would no doubt feel "Much greater grieve and shamefuller regret" (III i 8.2) if Britomart's sex were revealed to him immediately following his fall. By overthrowing Guyon, Britomart begins her super-heroic accomplishments under the guise of being a man.

To enhance the impression of Britomart's great (male) virtues, and to emphasize her perfect (female) chastity, Britomart is strung between two extremes of female chastity: she who is obsessively chaste (Florimell) and she who is obsessively unchaste (Malecasta). Florimell flings herself into the scene as a damsel in distress, who, while chaste, is obsessed to distraction about protecting her chastity.

²Phillipa Berry remarks on the irony: "Britomart's maternal destiny would have reminded an Elizabethan reader that the reigning monarch had defined her chastity very differently. By refusing to subordinate her private body to the needs of the state, Elizabeth had ended a dynasty of kings, not secured its long survival" (161).

She looks beautitul and is therefore good.' But, where Britomart's beauty is impenetrable and her chastity is secured, Florimell's beauty is transparent, putting her chastity at risk:

All suddenly out of the thickest brush,
Vpon a milk-white Palfrey all alone,
A goodly Ladie did foreby them rush,
Whose face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone,
And eke through feare as white as whales bone:
Her garments all were wrought of beaten gold,
And all her steed with tinsell trappings shone,
Which fled so fast, that nothing mote him hold,
And scarce them leasure gaue, her passing to behold.
(III i 15 - my emphasis)

In contrast to Britomart, who wisely seeks out her lover in the open plains, chastely disguised in men's clothing, discoursing and travelling with men, Florimell is vulnerable to the onslaught of male sexual desires, emphasized in the transparency provided by the language used to describe her, as noted above. As Paglia puts it, "[f]eminine and unarmed, Florimell . . . [is a] flagrant [target] for attack" (1991, 186). Florimell is simple-minded and singly-focused in her pursuit. Meyer shares a similar view:

[w]hile Britomart may be perfectly controlled,
Florimell is her precise opposite, representing

³In spite of the link between beauty and goodness, a truly "good" woman will never exist: "[w]omen, especially beautiful ones, continue to provoke suspicious responses from Faeryland's heroes, no matter which virtue is the nominal focus of the legend under scrutiny and no matter how praiseworthy individual men might seem under other circumstances" (Cavanagh, 15).

chastity that is under constant assault, always at the will of others. . . . Florimell flees from dangers that are both imagined and real; Britomart pursues a love that is both imagined and real. (73)

Yet, as Cavanagh makes clear, while the traditional allegorical perspective distinguishes obsessive chastity from the ideal, a reading from what we are calling a more literal level demonstrates the narrative tactic of segregating Woman from her own kind:

Britomart's . . . refusal to help Florimell suggests a narrative presumption that the titular knight can retain her chastity only if she does not behave as a woman or implicate herself in female activities. (143)

The feminine Britomart pursues her quest with masculine sensibility and rationale, travelling with men, charading as a man, but not susceptible to sexual onslaught by men; the distinctly feminine Florimell, on the other hand, radiates her fully blossomed sexuality and perpetually flees the male gaze.

Where Britomart dresses in impenetrable armour,⁴ representing the purity of her chastity, and where Florimell is thinly clad, representing the vulnerability of her

⁴Cavanagh parallels Britomart's armour to the traditional female-confines of home: "Substituting for the confines of home commonly recommended for women, [Britomart's] armour makes genital penetration unlikely. . . . More mobile than most of the lauded women in the epic, she still symbolically carries the walls which ensconce them protectively. One of the boys, though beautiful as needed, Britomart remains safely behind her metaphoric hymen" (157). Like a snail, Britomart carries her home on her back.

obsession, Malecasta is yet another immediate counter-part to Britomart, with her "wanton eyes," draped in the "ill signes of womanhed" (III i 41.7). Malecasta poses a risk for Britomart that Florimell was unable to evoke, since she who is obsessed with chastity destroys only herself while she who is unchaste threatens those around her. Malecasta poses the threat of intimacy for Britomart-the-man, for as Staton notes,

intimacy poses the greatest threat to manly independence. In order to achieve masculine identity, the young man must not only separate himself from others but also continually ward off threats of (female) entrapment. (150-1)

Britomart needs to ward off female entrapment, not to achieve her ideal masculine-identity⁵ but to prove her claim as "ideal Woman," the Protectress of Chastity.

Malecasta usurps man's authority, controlling a kingdom without proper, intellectual (male) guidance. Instead, Malecasta conducts her business guided by untamed feminine passions. In this castle, the reader witnesses Britomart's first unveiling.⁶ While Britomart reveals only her face, we

⁵When Britomart dresses as a man, Malecasta, who admires the knight, does not make such a forward advance. It is not until Britomart dresses in her feminine apparel, her white nightgown, that she is actually attacked.

⁶This is the first of the four unveilings by Britomart (III i 42-3, III ix 20-1, IV i 13-5, and IV vi 19-20); see Stevie Davies, (50). I will only be looking at the first two unveilings, a partial unveiling which discloses the danger of penetration, and a second more complete unveiling which gives

witness the complete transformation:

. . . the braue Mayd would not disarmed bee,
But onely vented vp her vmbriere,
And so did let her goodly visage to appere.

As when faire *Cynthia*, in darkesome night,
Is in a noycus cloud enueloped,
Where she may find the substaunce thin and light,
Breakes forth her siluer beames, and her bright hed
Discouers to the world discomfited;
Of the poore traueller, that went astray,
With thousand blessings she is heried;
Such was the beautie and the shining ray,
With which faire *Britomart* gaue light vnto the day.
(III i 42-3)

The reader, who has for a while now known about *Britomart's* sex, is not blinded by this enlightenment. Our gaze is not directly on her: we see *Britomart's* face through the simile, or the veil, of *Cynthia*. Yet, the effect around the table is certainly blinding as the "darkesome night" is broken by "siluer beames, and her bright hed" resulting in a "the shining ray" as "*Britomart* gaue light vnto the day." Just as *Malecasta* fails to identify *Britomart* as female with this partial unveiling, none of the other knights seated around the table become aware of *Britomart's* sex: all are "blinded by the light." The point of this partial unveiling, however, is not so much to expose her beauty (although it does endorse the previously constructed image of her) but to demonstrate that, with any chink in her armour she is

an example of her maturation.

vulnerable to the onslaught of lust.

Her encounter with Malecasta reaches a sudden climax when the Malecasta's seduction unveils Britomart's true gender -- and her true beauty -- in Britomart's private chambers.⁷ In this state of undress, Britomart is first exposed to the other characters:

. . . they saw the warlike Mayd
All in her snow-white smocke, with locks vnbownd,
Threatning the point of her auenging blade,
That with so troublous terrour they were all dismayde.
(III i 63.6-9)

Here, Britomart exercises duality, and is simultaneously Woman and warrior. Her appearance indicates a purity but her "auenging blade" provokes dismay. And, indeed, Britomart is at this point dis-maid,⁸ in that she looks feminine but her actions are not. Yet, both the readers and the other characters can accept Britomart's otherwise unacceptable charade of gender because of her already proven extraordinary beauty, her goodness.

The introduction of Malecasta also discreetly hints at the lesbian relation between her and Britomart, another blurring of the gender-roles. Schleiner suggests such episodes of confused identities allow the author to address

⁷While chambers are presumably private, the scene is nonetheless penetrated by the public gaze, both the reader's and Malecasta's. This distinction in the treatment of gender and privacy will become more prevalent in Chapter Four.

⁸This pun was previously noted by Fletcher (271).

the "unsayable":

[A]s in scenes depicting male sexuality, we can reasonably view the entire episode as a vehicle of talking about the unsayable. By the situation of pretence the author . . . has created a free space in which taboo subject matters can be presented and discussed with a certain *piquanterie*. This is of course not to say that the author becomes an advocate of homosexual relationships. Whether by conviction or by the pressures of convention (the generic rules of prose romances), the author will not only lead everyone back to heterosexual relationships by even condemning lesbian love, with which at least seemingly some characters have struggled. (1988, 614)

Paglia argues that "Malecasta has only seen Britomart's face through her open visor - a face we know to be quite feminine; hence her attention to Britomart is subtly homoerotic" (1991, 182). While I do agree there is a hint of homoeroticism, it is more intended to be contemplated through the eyes of the reader as voyeur, and not necessarily as an intentionally-lesbian pursuit by Malecasta. The lesbian factor does more than merely titillate the reader: it stalls the threat of intimacy imposed on Britomart by making a sexual union an impossibility. Secondly, and more importantly, it properly designates the woman (Malecasta) as the perpetrator of the lust.

These two women, Florimell and Malecasta, represent potential abuses of feminine virtues to which Britomart does not submit, donning clothes as transparent as their

intentions. While Florimell is a Woman of good, virtuous intentions, her guard is as flawed as her dress is penetrable: she is self-victimized by her feminine obsession with chastity. Malecasta, on the other hand, is a man-like woman who turns Florimell's distress into her own pleasures: Malecasta's feminine body oozes with invitation. However, as Cavanagh points out, Britomart has no interaction with these two women other than being juxtaposed to them:

Britomart's overt goal consistently centers around her efforts to find and marry Artegall, an aim which requires her to retain her own chastity. Her abandonment of other sexually besieged women implies that her chastity demands a strict self-interestedness. Since she remains in disguise through much of the epic, she is not even providing lessons through example; instead, after leaving her father's house, she abstains from the female world. (147)

Britomart does not stop to help Florimell nor does she attempt to deal with Malecasta with anything other than her (phallic) sword; by her refusal to interact with these other women, Britomart is segregated from the feminine world, even more so than the male characters, who at least have the pleasure of pursuit. She is isolated from her own sex:

We have turned away from our bodies. Shamefully we have been taught to be unaware of them, to lash them with stupid modesty; we've been tricked into a fool's bargain: each one is to love the other sex . . . (Cixous, 94)

When Britomart encounters other knights, she benefits from their positive role-modelling; however, her encounters with both Florimell and Malecasta segregate woman from her own

kind.

Having established her virtues by comparing Britomart to both the strength of man and the follies of woman, the narrative then allows the reader a closer examination of Britomart's history, brought to us in a flashback. Given her privileged (or male) construction -- already a blend of genders -- Britomart is further excluded from the world of women. She, we learn, was "raised" in the text by her father and her nurse, Glauce, in an upbringing that was very untraditional for her time. Juan Luis Vives' *Instruction of a Christian Woman* first appeared in English in 1524. Among his many recommendations is that a girl should be raised in the company of women:

After that she is once weaned and beginneth to speak and go, let all her play and pastime be with maids of her own age, and within the presence rather of her mother or her nurse, or some other honest woman of sad age, that may rule and measure the plays and pastimes of her mind, and set them to honesty and virtue. Avoid all mankind away from her: nor let her not learn to delight among men. (41)

While Vives further recommends that women pursue feminine activities ("let her both learn her book, and besides that, to handle wool and flax" 43), Britomart rejects feminine activities in favour of more masculine-oriented ones:

Faire Sir, I let you weete, that from the howre
I taken was from nourses tender pap,
I haue beene trained vp in warlike stowre,
To tossen speare and shield, and to affrap
The warlike ryder to his most mishap;

Sithence I loathed haue my life to lead,
As Ladies wont, in pleasures wanton lap,
To finger the fine needle and nyce thread;
Me leuer were with point of foemans speare be dead.
(III ii 6)

On the one hand, her non-conformity could be seen as equating Britomart to the androgynous Queen Elizabeth.⁹ Montrose offers an alternative interpretation in his analysis of gender in Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*:

Conspicuously excluded . . . is the relationship between mother and daughter -- the kinship bond through which Amazonian society reproduces itself. The mother's part is wholly excluded from this account of the making of a daughter . . . The central female characters . . . are not mothers but mothers-to-be, maidens who are passing from fathers to husbands in a world made and governed by men. (70)

Britomart, too, is not privileged with a mother-daughter bond. Berry, too, supports this view, finding that Britomart "uses masculine armour to conceal her femininity

This masking or denial of her feminine attributes can be attributed to her parentage: . . . Britomart has no visible mother. She serves the interests of the father by not

⁹Shortly preceding the verse detailing Britomart's upbringing, the narrator parallels Britomart with the Queen:
Of warlike puissance in ages spent
Be thou faire Britomart, whose prayse I write,
But of all wisdom be thou precedent,
O soueraigne Queene, whose prayse I would endite,
Endite I would as dewtie doth excite.
(III ii 3.1-5)

allowing her femininity to disturb the patriarchal power balance" (161). By risking non-conformity in Britomart's upbringing (but appropriately eliminating any controversy by paralleling her to the Queen), the narrator clearly sets Britomart apart from any Amazonian tradition by severing any bond with either the mother or any female peers from the feminine community. Britomart is further segregated from other women by her upbringing: "Among all the women depicted in the poem, Britomart is best able to represent unassailable femininity, but only because she remains free from many of the impediments afflicting more traditionally sketched female figures" (Cavanagh, 151). Instead, Britomart is paired only with the "sadly aged" Glauce, who acts more as her (token and rather ineffectual) escort than her equal travelling companion.

Cavanagh quite correctly finds that "[a]s a behavioral model for women seeking to live chastely, however, Britomart leaves much to be desired" (140). She goes on to remark that actual women of that era venturing beyond the boundaries of their home, dressing as and travelling with men would more often than not be deemed unchaste. She finds that "[l]ike Elizabeth, Britomart is an improbable woman illustrating an improbable role" (140). By segregating Britomart from the feminine world, the narrator ensures she is free to travel beyond the traditional confines associated with being Woman.

This, as Cavanagh noted, made her exceptional. Equally exceptional is the narrator's ability to divide Britomart into two clearly distinct gender roles. Cavanagh, along with others, argues that Britomart's gender is ambiguous¹⁰. But in keeping with Cavanagh's earlier statement, Britomart is "anatomically female, whose 'gender' typically is determined by her apparel rather than her genitals" (1). I argue that her gender is fairly consistent: when she is impeccably (or perhaps impenetrably) dressed in her knight's armour, she becomes man; when a chink appears in her armour, be it a lifting of the visor or slipping into a night-gown, she suddenly weakens as Woman. The only possible ambiguity would come from the reader, who knows from nearly the beginning onward that she is actually female. But here we are guided by Guyon when he finds that

Faire Lady she him seemd, like Lady drest,
But fairest knight aliue, when armed was her brest.
(III ii 4.8-9)¹¹

We, as readers, are expected to suspend disbelief while we

¹⁰Cavanagh writes that "[t]he poem offers a knight of Chastity whose characterizations remain as ambiguous as her gender" (141). This echoes an earlier statement made in her introduction where "Britomart['s] . . . ambiguous gender often displaces the misfortunes associated with her sex" (10).

¹¹The reverse could be argued, especially in terms of her masculine description as "full of amiable grace, / And manly terrour mixed therewithall" (III i 46.1-2). However, "amiable grace" must not be narrowly assigned as a concept tied to the feminine, for the courtly knight was expected to perform with grace and ease.

venture with Britomart through Faerie Lond.

So far, I have argued that the removal of Britomart from the feminine community and her pairing with male counterparts, the feminine threat of sexuality normally imposed upon men by Women is removed, making the notion of Britomart as hero(ine) much more palatable to the (male) reader. Before I proceed to argue the gender-specific development of Britomart's two genders (that is, as man and as Woman) I need to establish Britomart's consistency in spite of her apparent gender-incongruities. Britomart's shift between man and Woman does not mean that she is inconsistent, nor that she merges the masculine and feminine. In fact, Britomart is as consistent when she represents man as when she represents Woman, although in this latter representation she develops into maturity while in the first, she is a perfect knight¹². Staton argues that

¹²Her male-perfection is best reflected by her chivalric defeats: a joust with Guyon (III i 5-10); a battle against six knights in order to assist Red Cross Knight (III i 20-29); a confrontation with Marinell (III iv 13-17); a fight with Paridell (III ix 12-7); the rescue of Amoret and capture of Busyrane (III xi 25 - xii 43); a battle with a knight in order to preserve Amoret's chastity (IV i 11); a victory in the Tournament on the behalf of Maidenhead (IV iv 44-8); a joust against the two brothers of the recently deceived Guizor (V vi 36-9); and, ultimately, the confrontation and successful eradication of Radigund (V v ii 29-34). The only battle from which she does not successfully emerge as male-victor is her encounter with Artegall (IV vi 2-26). In this contest, however, the narrator tactfully describes Britomart not in the usual masculine pronoun but in the feminine. This imposes a gendered reading where Britomart's armour is suddenly

the narrative strategy of this Book on Chastity does "not fit this masculine pattern" encountered in the previous two books (148). This echoes Tonkin, who writes

In Book III . . . Spenser creates a series of female figures, including the female knight Britomart, who force the chivalric and the pastoral into collision and allow him to question received ideas about relations between the sexes and the role of women in society. The female figures in the book can be regarded, in their various ways, as reflections of the personality of Britomart, and the male figures are largely obstacles or opportunities along the way towards her self-fulfilment. (110)

While I agree that there is a shift in the third book, a shift away from the male hero, Book III nevertheless continues its patriarchal narrative in that, despite Britomart's central role, the entire narrative derives from patriarchal traditions. With dress as one of the most basic gender-signifiers of the wearer's sex,¹³ Britomart's actions depend very much on which gender she is assigned to at any particular moment: her existence revolves primarily around her current state of dress, be it either as man or as Woman. And because these signifiers are central, Britomart

transparent, disclosing her sex to the reader.

¹³Elizabeth Harvey notes: "In English Renaissance culture, clothing became an external marker of class and occupation (codified in the sumptuary laws), as well as gender, and it is therefore not surprising that dress in *The Faerie Queene* becomes a crucial system of identificatory signs, which may or may not register consistency, or accurately project what it also covers" (34).

functions as a public Woman, and never a private one.¹⁴ As a public male-created feminine subject, cross-dressed as man, Britomart is then (terminally?) designated the martial maid who over-throws the subverted court of Radigund and, consequently, she promotes the reproduction of mankind through the perpetually pending marital union with Artegall.¹⁵ By being such a central, visual image, Britomart

¹⁴Teresa Krier notes that Spenser does exploit the concepts of public and private (11-12), but her distinction is primarily experienced by the male characters (the obvious exception being Radigund). Krier maintains that the stripping of Diana (III vi 17-18) is private (119-20), yet Diana is nevertheless exposed to both Venus and the reader alike. Spenser's representation marks the difference in the readers' perceptions in that with Diana's stripping, our eyes are re-directed whereas with someone like Serena, our eyes are hungrily fed; nonetheless, the readers are voyeurs in that they are invited to share the vision. Likewise, Britomart is also captured in the lens of the eye.

¹⁵This forever "pending" marriage with Artegall serves two purposes. First, by being betrothed to Britomart, Artegall is able to control her feminine (therefore sexual) nature. A parallel from ancient Greece is helpful; Carson writes, "unfailing moisture and sexual drive of woman is part of her larger pattern . . . [m]arriage is the means, in the Greek view, whereby man can control the wild eros of women and so impose civilized order on the chaos of nature" (143). Henderson and McManus also point out that the "Renaissance viewed woman as possessed of a powerful, potentially disruptive sexuality requiring control through rigid social institutions and carefully nurtured inhibitions within the woman herself" (55). Second, Artegall (once freed from the clutches of Radigund) is free from the ever-threatening female entrapment, although as Harvey points out, he is not free from women since he "still labors in the service of Gloriana" (42). On this perpetual deferral, Cavanagh quite frankly writes that woman "occupies the place of the trace, forever deferred and yet endlessly sought, even though she is neither truly obtained nor often sought directly" (22).

is also expected to reflect appropriate feminine behaviour expected of all women, for as Brossard observes in a different context, "[t]he woman in the image affects the existence of women, designates women to reproduction" (125). In straddling the divides of male and female (respectively those who conquer to reproduce and those who reproduce to conquer¹⁶), Britomart avoids appearing inconsistent¹⁷ by being male or becoming female, depending, of course, on the impenetrability of her armour.

Given Britomart's consistent male and female portrayals, the narrative also defines both genders within Britomart, emphasizing the "progress" of the feminine. The narrator goes through great lengths to properly depict

¹⁶The Renaissance man conquers natives of "newly discovered lands," colonializing them in order to reproduce his own ideology, his religion, his hierarchy, his name. Woman reproduces to conquer. Her body, her reproductive organs, the snapping teeth so feared by men, are truly her only property, her only claim to self. By continually eluding the probing male curiosity, her reproductive body defies the patriarchal boundaries of "familiar property" and consequently conquers the threat of losing herself entirely to patriarchal order.

¹⁷This inconsistency borders on duality which is often associated with the more evil characters. As Paglia observes: "[o]nly evil characters (Archimago, Duessa, Guyle, Proteus) readily change form" (1979, 53). Paglia notes two exceptions to the "Dionysian multiplicity of persona employed by Spenser (or at least under suspect): Adonis ('father of all formes' III vi 47) and Britomart" (Paglia 1979, 43). Adonis is exempted as a form-changer because of his status as both man and god; Britomart is pardoned as a symbolic figure of the feminine-ideal, a feminine-ideal contained within boundaries of patriarchy, contained within the patriarchal imagination.

Britomart's inherent goodness by dressing her in impenetrable knight's clothing and contrasting her to two other versions of impure women, Florimell and Malecasta. Yet, having displayed the potential she is destined to realize within and for the patriarchy's moral order, the narrator can now depict Britomart's less-orderly feminine-side, first and most obviously revealed when Britomart tells Red Cross and Guyon of her quest to find Artegall (III ii 6-8).¹⁸ Here, the reader catches a glimpse of her first serious feminine weakness when she accuses Artegall of rape to Guyon and Arthur:

But mote I weete of you, right curteous knight,
Tydings of one, that hath vnto me donne
Late foule dishonour and reprochfull spight,
The which I seeke to wreake, and Arthegall he hight.
(III ii 8.6-9)

She follows this by attempting to slander Artegall's reputation, an act "more overt . . . as false and as slanderous as Duessa's" (Hamilton, III ii 8.6-9n):

¹⁸Cavanagh finds that Britomart portrays feminine weakness in her encounter with Malecasta: "When she visits Malecasta's castle, for example, the narrative offers a befuddled knight who never considers that the wanton woman's lust might be deflected if the visitor revealed her sex; nor indeed does the knight even notice that her love-struck hostess thinks she is entertaining an attractive young man" (141). In keeping with my argument of a split in gender, Britomart's feminine ignorance becomes instead the compulsive blindness of the obsessive (and therefore limited) but driven (male) knight. As a (male) knight she is not aware of, nor can she respond to, Malecasta's advances. Her response comes only when she is dressed as (and therefore *is*) Woman.

It ill beseemes a knight of gentle sort,
Such as ye haue him boasted, to beguile
A simple mayd, and worke so haynous tort,
In shame of knighthood, as I largely can report.
(III ii 12.6-9)

Although she immediately repents her first charge (III ii 9.1-2), false words have been uttered and cannot be retracted. This deed seems to contradict the narrator's depiction of her previous perfection. The words are careless, the accusation slanderous. Important to note, however, is that Britomart does not speak like a man: she speaks like a Woman, a Woman in love. And, as a Woman, she is immature. Her maturation can be traced through the text, in part through Britomart's unveiling in the castle of Malbecco, where the errors of her previous unveiling in the castle of Malecasta are rectified, and in part through her identity crisis at the Temple of Isis, where her gender is finally and completely matched with her sex.

Britomart is lavishly unveiled in the castle of Malbecco and Hellenore,¹⁹ an unveiling that reveals

¹⁹This unveiling closely echoes her first (the lifting of the visor in Malecasta's castle) in that it is preceded with a joust where Britomart unmans a respected knight, Paridell, by dismounting him from his horse (III ix 15-16), and a more serious joust is narrowly averted through the intervention of Satyrane (III ix 17). This compares closely to her joust with Guyon (III i 5) who is also unmounted (III i 6); for his continued fighting is hindered by the intervention of the Palmer (III i 9-10). This second confrontational moment is followed with the entrance into a castle, but where the first instance entered into subversion as it was a woman who reigns (Malecasta), in this second incident, Britomart enters a male

Britomart's "progress" as the patriarchal maturation where she moves closer towards becoming ideal Woman:

And eke that straunger knight amongst the rest
Was for like need enforst to disaray:
Tho whenas vailed was her loftie crest,
Her golden locks, that were in tramels gay
Vnbounden, did them selues adowne display,
And raught vnto her heeles; like sunny beames,
That in a cloud their light did long time stay,
Their vapour vaded, shew their golden gleames,
And through the persant aire shoote forth their azure
 streames.

She also dofte her heauy haberieon,
Which the faire feature of her limbs did hyde,
And her well plighted frock, which she did won
To tucke about her short, when she did ryde,
She low let fall, that flowd from her lanck syde
Downe to her foot, with carelesse modestee.
Then of them all she plainly was espyde,
To be a woman wight, vnwist to bee,
The fairest woman wight, that euer eye did see.
(III ix 20-1)

Again we are struck by a similar "brightness," but the onlookers are now able to gaze upon Britomart as a virtuous Woman. This unveiling reflects Britomart's growing maturity: Britomart has since learned that if she exposes herself as female, she will not be susceptible to the attack of unbridled feminine lust. Having learned from her previous mistake, a slight yet tantalizing unveiling, female entrapment no longer threatens Britomart-as-knight. Yet, Britomart is still somewhat immature in that she drops her

dominated castle. Although perverse within its structure, it is nevertheless ordered with the appropriate gender-structure of male dominating female (Malbecco reigns over Hellenore, even though his grip on her affections is not secure).

skirt "with carelesse modestee" (III ix 20.6), an act, Krier points out, that duplicates the same carelessness that leads to the rape of Agape (IV ii 45; Krier 121).

Britomart begins to mature considerably on her way to becoming the male-ideal of Woman at the Temple of Isis. Her visit to this temple revolves around one crucial theme, that which Fletcher identifies as the "underlying concept of right" (260): Britomart abandons her masculine traits (those which give her a unique identity) in favour of more appropriately feminine traits (those which threaten to disappear once she reaches her "best").²⁰ This visit to the temple marks the beginning-of-the-end of a unique Britomart, thus far accomplished only by her ability to transcend her feminine nature and become man. Her visit to the temple is marked by a significant change of dress:

Her seem'd, as she was doing sacrifice
To Isis, deckt with Mitre on her hed,
And linnen stole after those Priestes guise,
All sodainely she saw transfigured
Her linnen stole to robe of scarlet red,
And Moone-like Mitre to a Crowne of gold,
That euen she her selfe much wondered

²⁰Interestingly enough, Fletcher simplifies Britomart's male-associated behaviour to being amazon-related, and in no way connected to man: "Britomart's dream shows her undergoing a change of mind, through which she recognizes the attitude of equity. She acquires a new mental framework. By identifying her with Isis, Spenser makes it possible for her to defeat the masculine, violent, inequitable aspect of her own Amazonian nature. She thereby defeats the inner monstrosity of her own ambivalent nature." (Fletcher, 279-80)

At such a chaunge, and ioyed to behold
Her selfe, adorn'd with gems and iewels manifold.
(V vii 13)

In this one stanza we move from seeing her cross-dressed in the "guize" of a Priest to wearing a "robe of scarlet red." The scarlet robe, Hamilton notes, is "a rich cloth associated with royalty" (V vii 13.5-6n). More relevant, however, is the color red in specific relation to women: first, the color red reflects feminine pride; second, the major milestone of the feminine maturation is the onset of her menstrual cycle, the red blood which furthers the cycle of birth, of life. Once re-dressed in this fashion reflecting her physical maturation into Womanhood, Britomart experiences inflamed passion, a sexual coming-of-age, and, with the help of Isis, is able to subdue it. Emphasized is her pending loss of maidenhood²¹ resulting in pregnancy.²² On accepting the "reality" of her dream (that is, that she will adopt the full traits of femininity, including the procreation of the English line), "She was much eased in her troublous thought" (V vii 24.2) and is able to move on to her final hurdle before she reaches the ideal state of femininity and becomes the "noble Conqueresse" (V vii 36.1) of Radigund. Britomart's visit to the temple marks the point

²¹She becomes "dis-maid" (V vii 15.3, 16.9, and 18.8).

²²"[S]he soone enwombed grew" (V vii 16.5).

where Britomart becomes "fixed" as a feminine character. The previous shifting between masculine and feminine becomes uncomfortable for the reader, who now seeks to stabilize her gender, her identity, her character. Britomart's gender begins to match her sex as she becomes more fixed as Woman, beginning her transformation into a negative position.

The peak of Britomart's development into Womanhood comes with her defeat of Radigund, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. At the point of Radigund's eradication, Britomart obediently succumbs to her patriarchally assigned role as Woman and successfully and single-handedly converts the entire group of women in Radigund's usurped village:

So there a while they afterwards remained,
Him to refresh, and her late wounds to heale;
During which space she there as Princess rained,
And changing all that forme of common weale,
The liberty of women did repeale,
Which they had long vsurpt; and them restoring
To mens subiection, did true Iustice deale:
That all they as a Goddesse her adoring,
Her wisdom did admire, and hearkned to her loring.
(V vii 42)²²

²²Britomart's actions echo the words of *Hic Mulier* who concludes her argument thus: "Cast then from you our ornaments and put on your own armour; be men in shape, men in show, men in words, men in actions, men in counsel, men in example. Then will we love and serve you; then will we hear and obey you; then will we like rich Jewels hang at your ears to take our Instructions, like true friends follow you through all dangers, and like careful leeches pour oil into your wounds. Then shall you find delight in our words, pleasure in our faces, faith in our hearts, chastity in our thoughts, and sweetness both in our inward and outward inclinations.

When Britomart completes her conquest of Radigund's court, the "masculine" and "feminine" become completely segregated. Tonkin argues that "Britomart absorbs the masculine principle into the feminine" (114). I see it more as Britomart, having successfully employed the masculine-gender to guide her safely through Faerie Lond, properly abandons the masculine (giving the gender back to the appropriate sex -- Artegall) and becomes Woman. Having abandoned the masculine attributes,²⁴ Britomart can now properly enforce the subordination of women, both within herself as well as in other women.²⁵

Britomart ultimately enforces the standards of feminine oppression and sustains the patriarchal standards of feminine purity. By crossing the gender-line vis-à-vis her state of dress, the narrator grants her force, a rank of

Comeliness shall be then our study, fear our Armour, and modesty our practice. Then shall we be all your most excellent thoughts can desire and having nothing in us less than impudence and deformity" (*Haec Vir*, 288).

²⁴Staton observes how "Britomart . . . mopes for the now-absent knight of 'true Justice'" (160). This image sharply contrasts with the previously independent and distinct warrior. She now adopts the very traditional feminine traits and begins her fade into the periphery.

²⁵As Howard notes, "[t]he good woman was closed off: silent, chaste, and immured within the home. As Edmund Tilne asserted in a piece of advice that quickly became a Renaissance commonplace, the best way for a woman to keep a good name was for her never to leave her house" (424).

superiority, and, indeed, the necessary power to reinforce the norm, which she never could otherwise have acquired while dressed as Woman. Yet, in her maturation which significantly accelerates at the Temple of Isis and peaks with her conquest of Radigund, Britomart sheds her masculine skin and becomes, for the first time in her career, a patriarchal Woman who not only accepts but also interacts with women, only to reinforce female subordination. Britomart has moved from an individualized marital maid who adopts masculine traits, to being the ideal Woman who enforces the subjection of women. Through her maturation, she loses any individuality she previously held as a cross-dressed Woman; she now blends into the masses of the male-ordered Women over whom she reigns. Consequently, she quite literally fades from view. Staton argues that Britomart's disappearance from the text, which coincides with her maturation, marks the narrative structure's return to being "monolingual" (160), framed by phallogentric language. In other words, the feminine-aspect of the text has collapsed and the masculine narrative resumes. While Britomart fades from view, what has collapsed is not the woman's narrative, but rather, the male's construction of the Woman: it is *fait accompli*. The female returns to her proper place: unheard, unseen, peripheralized to complement the needs of man-kind

when beckoned.

What better man to defend the virtue and chastity of women than the castrated male who can be entrusted as the protectress of women's chastity? Britomart successfully assumes the male role while simultaneously developing as (or disappearing into) Woman. Throughout this, she relentlessly pursues her feminine goals (love and chastity) while accepting the natural sexual hierarchy of male and female. The narrator, however, downplays the merging of the female and the male by clearly segregating the two within Britomart. What her nearly-androgynous character does emphasize is the constant perfection of man and the Woman who matures into a comfortable absence.

Ultimately, Britomart reflects a notion or construction of the Woman contained by the patriarchy. On the one hand, Britomart needs to be read in the context of the Renaissance patriarchy in which she is imagined as Woman, from which she is fashioned, and out of which she is written. Isolated in the Renaissance, at the point of her diminishment, according to Dunseath, "Britomart now has all the attributes of a perfect wife" (181). But from our contemporary perspective, Britomart is arguably the most un-feminine woman of the text because she is so carefully moulded and guided by the narrator's very patriarchal pen. Representative of many critics in discussing the "feminine" side of Britomart in

Book III (and V), Bean argues "[a]s we move in *The Faerie Queene* from Book II to Book III, it is significant that we move from a man's world to a woman's world." The shift, however, is not into the world of woman, but rather, into the world of the patriarchally created Woman: Britomart is like Pygmalion's Galatea: she is created by man designed to fulfil his desires for the perfect Woman. She is a fantasy image constructed by man. When Britomart finally becomes Woman, there remains nothing female about her.

Numerous as they may be, but fixed images in painting and photography, and animated images in cinema or in the mind, bear explicit (for the most part) or implicit witness that woman is linked, unconditionally, body and soul, to the male of the human species. And the use of woman as symbol is For Men Only: woman as nature, death, horror, sometimes victory, justice, wisdom, or even liberty. Men are impressed by muses, witches, medusas, sirens, and Gorgons. (Brossard, 125)

Chapter 3

Radigund: The Eradicated Power Surge

Patriarchal tradition pairs man and Woman into neat binaric¹ categories: man, fashioned in the image of God, has the ability of reason and consequently can transcend the base desires of his body, mastering his intellect; Woman, responsible for his fall (and secondly, hers), while able to

¹I use the term "binaries" to distinguish between the masculine and feminine form; yet, we need to recognize that they are not polar binaries, as Simone de Beauvoir writes, "[t]he terms *masculine* and *feminine* are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal paper. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity" (Introduction, xxi).

help him transcend to the truly intellectual realm, remains bound to her body, to passion, emotion and desire. The *Faerie Queene* works within this binaric tradition of man and woman, and each grouping has its own complex sub-groupings of positive and negative. From the hierarchy within the hierarchy, we have the difference between women: Britomart represents the obedient patriarchal Woman whereas Radigund represents the other, uncontrollable counterpart. The difference between Britomart and Radigund, however is more than merely the good and the evil representation of the ideal Renaissance Woman: where Britomart develops from, and is contained within, the boundaries of the patriarchy, Radigund evolves from a tradition of the Amazon who has always lived beyond patriarchal boundaries,¹ in an unknown land representing disorder², danger, power and fear. The

²Montrose writes, "Sixteenth century travel narratives often recreate the ancient Amazons of Scythia in South America or in Africa. Invariably, the Amazons are relocated just beyond the receding boundary of terra incognita" (66).

¹I am using a model proposed by Brossard where Douglas's "order" and "disorder" translates into a similar idea of "sense" and "non-sense." Brossard diagrams the fundamental motions of woman's search for self where the woman spirals out from the world of "sense" (the patriarchal ordered world) into non-sense (see "Aerial Vision" in Brossard, 116-7). The woman who does not originate from this world of "sense," or in Douglas's term, "order," is the amazon, the transvestite, the transsexual: she is everything beyond the binaric heterosexual patriarchal concept of woman.

Amazon represents an alternative order, frequently referred to as "disorder."⁴ As Douglas reminds us, disorder is necessary to define order:

Granted that disorder spoils pattern; it also provides the materials of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power. (Douglas, 94)

Through Radigund, the narrator of *The Faerie Queene* establishes the pattern of patriarchal rule, of patriarchal law and order, not only by developing the construct of orderly opposition (order and disorder strictly as it pertains to the patriarchy), but also by presenting chaos as a threat to the patterns of patriarchal law and order. This chapter will focus first on the paradoxical role of Radigund: on one hand, she lives beyond the parameters of the familiar world, a chaotic world inaccessible to men; on the other, her mis-orderly⁵ existence serves to partly

⁴I use the word "disorder" as a binaric pairing of order, as is implied with the prefix "dis-," a negation (from *The Oxford English Dictionary*). As Adalaide Morris notes, the term dis-order "merely reassert[s] the rule of the ... orderly" (210).

⁵I base the term "mis-order" on the prefix "mis-" referring to "amiss, badly, wrongly or unfavourable" (*Oxford*

establish patriarchal order. In other words, Radigund simultaneously defies and serves patriarchal law. Yet, in spite of this paradox, the narrative does not encourage multiple interpretations of Radigund; instead, the narrator controls the reader in terms of the reader's response to Radigund by carefully constructing her through patriarchal eyes. In the narrator's presentation of Radigund, her character's development rests largely on preconceived notions of the Amazon.

Radigund's character is based largely on the traditional Amazonian myth. Cavanagh holds this against Radigund, writing that

Radigund could be argued as an exception to this surprisingly common pattern [of evil women venturing near "gender anarchy" but ultimately still submitting to a gendered hierarchy] but even she fits into the familiar, containable category of "Amazon" and she resorts to "feminine wiles" when she tries to seduce Artegal. Although she supports gender inversion by cross-dressing her captive, she also displays stereotypical female behavior during her interactions

English Dictionary); mis-order depicts an order that, from within the tradition of patriarchy might be considered as "amiss" but nevertheless is another form of order, albeit uncharted. The double play on "mis(s)" is entirely intentional.

Greenblatt provides an amusing anecdote on perspectives of order and mis-order, although he doesn't frame it in those terms: "the natives' response to the first Europeans, insofar as it is recorded, provides evidence of a comparable reaction: one Amerindian, astonished at the French custom of collecting and carrying about mucus in handkerchiefs, wryly declared: 'If thou likest that filth, give my thy handkerchief and I will soon fill it'" (Greenblatt, 62).

with him. (67)

However, I argue that precisely because she *is* Amazonian -- the only true Amazon in the epic -- she *defies* containment, and is perpetually placed beyond the periphery. In keeping with the emphasis of the narrative on the pre-established reputation of the Amazon, the first half of this chapter concentrates on re-establishing a framework through which to read Radigund, providing a necessary framework for an alternative reading of the text, which will prevail in the latter half of this chapter. By breaking away from more traditional readings of Radigund we can become increasingly aware of the narrative's attempt to direct us away from such alternative interpretations.

As the only (and perhaps the token) Amazon of *The Faerie Queene*, Radigund lives "farre abrode" (V iv 29.4), well beyond the boundaries of patriarchal order. Women, as Cavanagh observes, are often associated with either dreams and/or nightmares": "[u]nlike virtuous women, who are often absent or in flight, evil females in the poem emerge from the spirit/dream world, using their physical presence to

"For an interesting examination of female representation in dreams, see Cavanagh's first chapter, entitled "'Beauties Chace': Male responses to Women in Faeryland" (14-41). She further develops female representation in nightmares in her second chapter, entitled "Nightmares of Desire" (42-74).

cloud the judgement and the virtue of the knights they encounter" (44). While Cavanagh refers more to women such as Duessa, this mystical and magical (but dangerous) aura links all untamed women with the chaotic, uncharted territories. Radigund, coming from this enchanted alternative world, defies patriarchal order in that she is not the traditional counterpart to man as is Britomart; instead, Radigund acts as a "third gender." This third gender, Garber writes, "is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis - a crisis which is symptomatized by both the overestimation and the underestimation of cross-dressing." She goes on to remark that this "'third,' a mode of articulation, [is] a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge" (11). Radigund challenges the tradition of male supremacy and female dominance by disregarding gender behavioral-codes, thus placing herself as neither man nor Woman in the traditional binaric (patriarchal) sense.

Radigund's membership with this third gender can be better understood in terms of her paradoxical beauty. The behaviour of knights in *The Faerie Queene* "is apparently based upon very literal interpretations of Neoplatonic doctrine, readily and simplistically equating physical with

spiritual beauty" (Cavanagh, 56-7).⁷ Cavanagh further points out that "the knights in *The Faerie Queene* rarely display any distrust of physical appearances" (58). They are like Castiglione's ideal courtier. As Bembo explains, "just as one cannot have a circle without a centre, so one cannot have beauty without goodness. In consequence, only rarely does an evil soul dwell in a beautiful body, and so outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness" (330). Radigund is truly beautiful"; yet, her beauty is not "true" in that it will never guide the man to his spiritual transcendence." This paradoxical construction, virginally beautiful while simultaneously sensually corrupt, reflects the paradox of

⁷In spite of equating beauty with good, Cavanagh observes that there is no such thing as a good woman since "female characters often appear to exude danger, no matter how virtuous they seem or act" (36).

"Woods points out that "[i]t is the absence of paint on her face ('voide of ornament,' 5.5.12) that lets her beauty shine through" (55).

"The validation of man's masculinity depends on the subordination of woman as mother, nurse, mistress and wife. "It is an ironic acknowledgement by an androcentric culture of the degree to which men are in fact dependent upon women: upon mothers and nurses, for their birth and nurture; upon mistresses and wives, for the validation of their manhood" (Montrose, 66). Where ever they appear, Amazons defy the "norms" of patriarchy, living in "an anti-culture which ... inverts European norms of political authority, sexual license, marriage practices, and inheritance rules" (Montrose, 66). Accordingly, "Amazons ... [are] creatures at the boundaries of difference" (duBois, 27).

the Amazon.¹⁰ While "ideal" feminine beauty reflects "internal goodness" and should encourage male transcendence, Radigund, who is indeed overwhelmingly beautiful, is not the Woman who brings upon transcendence; indeed, she returns men to the woman's womb, confining them to their (effeminized) bodies.

As a member of the third gender, Radigund exists in an inverse universe. Instead of maintaining patriarchal binaries in which one binaric extreme (man) necessarily eliminates the other (woman), an inverse universe refers to what Clément likens to the festival where, while "[s]ocial life is 'right side up' . . . [t]he festival is 'upside down.' Everything happens backward, and even bodies find a way to turn upside down" (22); but, as she goes on to note, "overturning does not mean destroying" (26). In other words, relationships between extremes are inverted, but not eliminated. Stallybrass supports this view when he states "the playing with inversion opens up the very category of the political, showing the labour through which categories of class and gender are formed and articulated in relation to each other" (217). Radigund's world inverts the political binaries of gender, defies traditional order, and celebrates

¹⁰DuBois notes: "Amazons existed outside marriage, capable of promiscuity, seducing the Scythian men away from their wives, but also paradoxically virginal, worshipping Artemis and refusing contact with men" (duBois, 34).

madness and hysteria in its own chaotic order.

Viewed from the traditional perspective (that is, a perspective circumscribing patriarchal thought), female transvestism has often been perceived as a threat:

For some polemicists, [female] transvestism signified more than loss of womanly modesty. They [such as George Gascoigne, Phillip Stubbes and Henry Fitzgeffrey] maintained that the female transvestite wished to transform herself into a man and to tyrannise men. This inversion . . . provokes alarm rather than laughter. (Lucas, 70)

Cixous provides an alternative perspective on such inversion: her Amazon lives and moves beyond the patriarchy, fighting not to conquer and destroy, but rather to preserve a space of her own:

To be an Amazon is to be faithful to the law of reversal: one must repeat the act that proves or symbolizes that she is not captive or submissive to a man. One has to have won; but this victory does not have the meaning of a masculine triumph. He dominates to destroy. She dominates to not be dominated; she dominates the dominator to destroy the space of domination. Because the one knocked down is helped to his feet. And she leads the one who is "conquered" into her world - a world he has never dared imagine. (Cixous, 116)

This could easily be transferred to Radigund and her motives. Radigund offers her captives a choice. In the first choice, "She doth subdue" (V iv 31.2) her captives, offering them life under her reign, living by her rules, her order, her justice. By forcing her captives to submit to her rule, Radigund retains control over her own world. In other words, Radigund dominates to avoid domination. The other

alternative results when the captives decline the first option, and Radigund then "causeth them be hang'd vp out of hand" (V iv 32.4). Given the western tradition of colonization which conquers unknown terrains in order to control them, Radigund, if she is to retain her Amazonian freedom, clearly has no other choice but to suppress any potential threat imposed on her own freedom.¹¹

While her actions may appear chaotic (in that they don't conform to the ideal standard of "feminine" submission), she is not without an order of her own. Radigund treats Artegall fairly before the battle, proving Talus's "nightly watch, for dread of treachery" (V iv 46.9) uneventful. The only disruption to Artegall's solitude is by Clarinda, sent by Radigund to clearly establish the rules of defeat (V iv 49) and to "bid him eat" (V iv 49.9). In the encounter that follows, we see the Amazons form a circle around the duelling pair but, in accordance with (Amazonian) chivalric codes, none interfere, even after their queen has fallen (V v 5). As Tonkin observes:

¹¹One could argue that Radigund conquers to destroy in that she forces Artegall to submit to the same fate that is imposed on Britomart (banishment to the periphery, thus only present through her absence). However, when Artegall crosses from the orderly world to the chaotic, although he is forced to submit, he is not "eliminated" from the text; whereas when Radigund crosses from her world to the "orderly" patriarchy via her defeat by Britomart, she is eradicated from the text, with no hope of resurrection.

Radigund is not a wholly negative figure. She is concerned for her wounded subjects (V iv 45) and anxious not to see 'her people spoiled quight' (47). The Amazons were in fact renowned for their abilities as rulers, and for their observance of equity and justice. (157)

We see her pragmatic consistency at its best in the recapturing of Terpine. Upon first being captured, he is given a choice of submission or death, and he chooses death. Talus, under Artegall's instruction, frees Terpine just as he is about to be hanged. His freedom, however, is short-lived and he is recaptured. Radigund's Amazons resume exactly from where they left off, neither decreasing or increasing the level of punishment, but merely continuing with the previously established order: Terpine "full shamefully was hanged by the hed" (V v 18.9). While Radigund's world reverses patriarchal gender traditions, and in that sense is "chaotic," her world is not without order.

Clearly, the reversal of which Cixous speaks is not -- cannot -- be contained within the patriarchy. Britomart best reflects the limits of a patriarchally-contained reversal by reflecting the male "ideal" of what it means to be either male or female¹⁷; Radigund, however, threatens a darker, unimaginable world. Her inverted world (the one into which Artegall is led and to which he willingly submits)

¹⁷As knight Britomart emerges victorious from all of her battles; as woman she is deferred to the periphery.

completely and totally reverses patriarchal order: woman occupies space, and man marks the periphery. Where Britomart serves as an example of the patriarchally-defined cross-dressed Woman in that she reflects man as the perfect binaric counterpart image, Radigund turns the patriarchal binaric counterpart -- "woman" -- inside out.¹³ She does not serve to bring man closer to God. Indeed, Artegall comes closer to the divine state through Britomart, not Radigund. Radigund poses threat to man in general, including the narrator as well as the other male (and some female) characters. This inverse universe, however, defies the binaric system of man/Woman, where Woman is defined as not-man and consequently controlled by patriarchal order. In terms of this inverse, opposite universe, Radigund cannot be reversed. She cannot shift from being the Amazonian woman to being the patriarchal Woman because she exists beyond the boundaries of patriarchal order and is therefore not subject to patriarchal gender codes.¹⁴ It is not enough to name (and

¹³Radigund uses her body to spiral beyond patriarchal containment, to slip between the legal clutches of traditional laws of order. In this sense, she reels beyond the periphery of patriarchy (where Britomart sadly pines until Artegall calls upon her).

¹⁴This compares to Briana, for instance, who, as a patriarchally defined woman to begin with, can be reversed/returned/restored to patriarchal order. Briana (VI i 14-47), as Hamilton finds, "functions as the Amazon figure of Book VI Briana is reformed rather than slain" (VI i 14.6n). Like Radigund, Briana subverts the gender-roles in the game of

thereby categorize and contain) her as an "Amazon"; the text will not be free of the Amazonian threat until she is killed.

So far, in establishing an alternative framework through which to read Radigund, I have argued that Radigund exists as an Amazon, a *mis-orderly* woman, beyond the boundaries of traditional patriarchy; but, because her methods are inverted from the norm of patriarchy, she is often falsely accused of being disorderly when her system is extremely pragmatic. The difference is that her kind of order is unfamiliar to those bound to patriarchal traditions, causing Radigund to be expelled from patriarchal comprehension, placing her beyond the reach of man. Having said that, Radigund, as a character of *The Faerie Queene*, written by an author entrenched within the patriarchy, is the very means by which Artegall can define patriarchal justice: it is her untraditional existence that establishes, and indeed confirms, the tradition of patriarchal law and order. In the following section where I focus more on the

love, but unlike Radigund, Briana has the convention of love on her side: she has the love of her man, Crudor. Briana, unlike Radigund, is not an Amazon.

With Radigund, on the other hand, we witness a woman born from an unnatural species able to exist in a realm separate from patriarchy. She is the queen of this land, a queen who herself preys on the men who dare attempt to penetrate her world.

text, I argue that Radigund exists as a paradox: in spite of existing beyond the patriarchal reach, she is presented to the reader through the eyes of man, either the narrator or another male character. The narrative instructs us not to see Radigund as woman but rather as -- and only as -- a threat to patriarchal order, eradicating both Radigund and woman.

Kleinbaum traces ancient tales where the Amazons were initially employed by male authors to reinforce patriarchal order. She writes how the

story of the attack on Athens [by Plutarch] is an excellent example of how the Greeks, especially the Athenians, used the idea of combat with Amazons to enhance their own image and to reinforce their perception of themselves as historically significant. It was only because they had been so daring that the Amazons had chosen to attack them To fight an Amazon was the greatest trial of male strength and courage, a challenge fit for a Heracles and a Theseus. (11-2)

By the Middle Ages, Kleinbaum suggests, the Amazon had lost whatever respect she previously held as a worthy opponent to man: "If these authors evoked the spectre of the Amazon at all, their purpose was not to measure her prowess, but to vent their moral indignation" (39). By the sixteenth century, "[t]he attitude toward the Amazons expressed . . . a mixture of fascination and horror" (Montrose, 66). So while the Amazon eludes patriarchal confinement, living beyond reach of mankind, living in worlds unknown or yet

undiscovered,¹⁵ she simultaneously circumscribes patriarchal order.

For the narrator to penetrate Radigund's world, he must appropriate her Amazonian image: he describes Radigund in terms of his own phallogocentric order. Written into the text, she becomes the spectacle, to be used "for profite of the ensample"¹⁶ educating the male readers of *The Faerie Queene*.¹⁷ Syphoned into the world of patriarchy, her world is inevitably destined to decay into the order imposed by the colonist and she, necessarily, will cease to exist. In effect, Radigund continues the literary tradition of

¹⁵In her discussion of the representation of Centaurs and Amazons in ancient Greek art, duBois writes "Amazons ... were outside the limits of humanness" (70). She goes on to write that "[t]he forces outside the city -- violence and disorder, forms of community which were asymmetrical sexually, which had no way of reproducing themselves, which were deformed alternatives to the democratic institutions -- were thus seen as equivalent and threatening" (71).

¹⁶Edmund Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, from the Hamilton edition of *The Faerie Queene*, Appendix A, 737.

¹⁷Clément, in her discussion on the hysteric and the sorceress, stresses the tradition of spectacle. She notes how men have traditionally tapped into these women for purposes of observation: "It is, above all, an audience of men: inquisitors, magistrates, doctors - the circle of doctors with their fascinated eyes, who surround the hysteric their bodies tensed to see the tensed body of the possessed woman" (10). She goes on to write that "spectacle cash[es] in on the exchange of money" (13). Like the hysteric and the sorceress, Radigund comes from a land beyond the borders of order, of sense. The narrator employs her very presence to provide the medical, or in this case, moral, example.

employing the Amazon to ratify the patriarchy, to serve their orderly laws.¹⁰ Accordingly, the narrator moulds Radigund's introduction around the interests of the book's moral, which differentiates order from both disorder and mis-order.

Britomart, whose maturation moves from mild rebellion to out-and-out conformity, is first introduced to the text through our vision as a knight. While our eyes deceive us in terms of realizing Britomart's gender, we trust our vision in perceiving her ultimate goodness. Conversely, Radigund is introduced through word of mouth from another knight, encountered by Artegall. It is as if the narrator fears that, without this previous knowledge of Radigund, the reader risks deception by the gaze: a "frequent danger to the male viewer contemplating feminine beauty in Spenser's work is the arresting power of beauty" (Krier, 116). Artegall, though warned of the danger of the misleading image, himself falls prey to Radigund's dangerous, duplicitous beauty, even in spite of Terpine's futile

¹⁰In Greek legend, the "Amazon myths are symbolic of a weakness in the Greek patriarchy" (Bullough and Bullough, 31). Tafer notes how, in the sixteenth century, "the Amazon . . . became a metaphor for the barbarian," requiring the intervention of the supreme system of Christianity (36). Kleinbaum writes how Amazons served "as ladders to transcendence and glory . . . Amazons represented most of all an affirmation of the strength and ability of Western man to conquer and master . . . newfound worlds" (98).

attempt to warn him.

Artegall's adventure into the chaotic sphere begins when he spies Terpine, surrounded by "a troupe of women warlike dight, / With weapons in their hands, as ready for to fight" (V iv 21.8-9):

And in the midst of them he [Artegall] saw a Knight,
With both his hands behinde him pinnoed hard,
And round about his necke an halter tight,
As ready for the gallow tree prepar'd:
His face was couered, and his head was bar'd,
That who he was, vneath was to descry;
And with full heauy heart with them he far'd
Grieu'd to the soule, and groning inwardly,
That he of womens hands so base a death should dy.
(V iv 22)

Immediately, both Artégall and the reader are confronted with the unnatural, eye-sore image of a flock of base women who threaten the life of a good and "inwardly" suffering knight. With this vision, the reader, along with Artégall, tumbles into an inverted world, a world that literally threatens the "natural order" of patriarchy where man reigns supreme. Without any chance of success, Artégall takes it upon himself to attempt to "convert" Radigund's Amazonian world of women to a world of (properly) governed Women, under patriarchal control.

This attempt to remould the unfamiliar (a category which most definitely includes women) reflects the traditional western need to assume control. Throughout the ages, man has attempted to re-define, re-create woman:

Beauties slept in their woods, waiting for princes to come and wake them up. In their beds, like glass coffins, in the childhood forest like dead women. Beautiful but passive; hence desirable: all mystery emanates from them. It is men who like to play with dolls. As we have known since Pygmalion. Their old dream: to be god the mother. The best mother, the second mother, the one who gives the second birth. (Cixous, 66)

Woman gives birth to woman. That is the first birth. The second birth Cixous refers to is man's need to mould woman into Woman, such as Spenser did in (re)creating, (re)defining, (re)moulding Woman. The narrator gives a second birth to Britomart which consequently leads her into oblivion. Radigund, however, is not so easily (re)created. Terpine effectively moulds her by appropriating her story. His tale shapes how both the reader and Artegall are expected to respond to Radigund. He provides a very logical, traditional, reason for her unusual feminine rule: What else could have caused this woman to go so far astray except for, of course, being spurned by a (male) lover? Terpine describes how Bellodant rejected her advances:

The cause, they say, of this her cruell hate,
Is for the sake of *Bellodant* the bold,
To whom she bore most feruent loue of late,
And wooed him by all the waies she could
But when she saw at last, that he ne would
For ought or nought be wonne vnto her will,
She turn'd her loue to hatred manifold,
And for his sake vow'd to doe all the ill
Which she could doe to Knights, which now she doth
fulfull.

(V iv 30)

Radigund's complexity as woman, as Amazon, is converted, briefly and succinctly, into a simplistic relationship between cause and effect: instead of placing Radigund in the foreign lands of the Amazons, the narrator draws her into his world, defining her as a patriarchal misfit, unable to live among men and male order. Rejected by Bellodant, thus symbolically rejected by patriarchy, Radigund's failed quest for love (and thus her failed existence) is the focus from within the patriarchy.

From Terpine we also learn that not only was Radigund spurned but that she also brought this upon herself: Radigund's fall from man's grace begins with her aggressive pursuit of Bellodant. As we know from Castiglione's expert on love, Pietro Bembo, the gender-roles of pursuit must be clearly segregated:

our courtier will be most pleasing to his lady,
and she will always be submissive, charming and
affable and as anxious to please him as she is to
be loved by him. (335)

While Radigund's quest for love indirectly calls up Britomart's pursuit of Artegall, Britomart's quest is one of (and accordingly won by) submission, patriarchal obedience. "We never hear the independent woman speak, but we hear several versions of her downfall addressed from a 'male' perspective" (Cavanagh, 7). Appropriately, we don't learn her story from Radigund herself, a privilege afforded to

Britomart; instead, Terpine appropriates her story, telling it from the patriarchal perspective. The power of the word prevails, and every story changes with a different teller: where Britomart has the opportunity to establish her previously untainted character as good, Radigund is beaten by the words of man well before we see her, before we "risk" the deception of her beauty. Radigund's reputation depends completely on Terpine's tale.

Upon our first visual encounter, we are provided with a lavish description of Radigund's dress. "Spenser's Radigund wears a fairly typical [Amazonian] costume" (Wright, 441), emphasizing both femininity and power. Unlike Britomart, Radigund clearly appears as a woman. Her warrior's attire is almost incidental, touched on only at the last line of the following stanza:

All in a Camis light of purple silke
Wouen vppon with siluer, subtly wrought,
And quilted vppon sattin white as milke,
Trayled with ribbands diuersly distraught
Like as the workeman had their courses taught;
Which was short tucked for light motion
Vp to her ham, but when she list, it raught
Downe to her lowest heele, and thereuupon
She wore for her defence a mayled habergeon.
(V v 2)

Again unlike Britomart, who trots in from the wide horizon dressed, and therefore perceived, as man, Radigund's description emphasizes her femininity. Her body, specifically her "hams" -- her thighs -- are scrutinized.

Dressed in purple silk and white satin, her flesh cannot help but ooze out from under her feminine dress. Though while defying gender-defined behaviour in her very "masculine" behaviour, Radigund is nevertheless graciously endowed with feminine sexuality.

The following stanza develops Radigund's elusive nature, presenting her as a woman who defies the regulations of the patriarchy. We see her defiance through her dress:

And on her legs she painted buskins wore,
Basted with bends of gold on every side,
And mailles betweene, and laced close afore:
Vppon her thigh her Cemitare was tide,
With an embrodered belt of mickell pride;
And on her shoulder hung her shield, bedeckt
Vppon the bosse with stones, that shined wide,
As the faire Moone in her most full aspect,
That to the Moone it mote be like in each respect.
(V v 3)

Again, the narrator dwells on her legs. But, lo, our gaze drifts to the space "betweene," where the "mailles" have been "laced close": Radigund is not available for heterosexual recreation, her sexuality is closed to the patriarchy. The scimitar, Hamilton finds, connects Radigund to injustice (V v 3.4n). While Hamilton places the scimitar of injustice as the polarized opposite of justice, a form of mis-order, simplified as injustice,¹⁴ is an alternate order un-tamed --

¹⁴The scimitar represents a system of justice that is unfamiliar to the patriarchal system because this form of justice does not operate under patriarchal systems of hierarchy and order. The scimitar, therefore, is chaotic and, as chaotic, cannot simply be placed as the negation of

or un-colonized -- by the patriarchy. In other words, Radigund's scimitar represents a feminine sense of justice that cannot be articulated from, or be defined by, patriarchy.

Radigund, while employed to establish patriarchal ideals, eludes the patriarchal hierarchy of order. This evasiveness poses a dilemma to patriarchal rule:

[T]he amazon [and] the lesbian[:] essential figures, to be sure - carriers of women's pride, initiators of women's autonomy, and above all, figures animated by the keen presence of woman. Amazons and lesbians are the only women not invented by Man. In this sense, they are figures both utopian and damned, figures to whom access is forbidden. (Brossard, 141)

Radigund, as Amazon, escapes the imagination of patriarchal order; yet, as woman beyond patriarchal perimeters of control, she can be employed to establish patriarchal Justice. How then do the reader and the narrator deal with this paradox? The only way to "contain" Radigund is to deal with her as a Woman fallen from the patriarchy; and, as the fallen patriarchal Woman, she can only be conquered by the ideal patriarchal Woman, Britomart. In attempting to establish a reason for the narrator to send in Britomart, Paglia incorrectly deduces that "Spenser presumably means to

justice. In her discussion of chaos and tropography, Assad notes "discourse of chaos [must reject] above all the dualism order/disorder, because it is based on the unitary concept of order and the exclusion of all other possibilities, bifurcations, multiplicities" (285).

imply that only so equally hermaphroditic a power as Radigund can hope to rival Britomart" (Paglia 1979, 55).²⁰ This view, in keeping with patriarchal perspectives, privileges the male-constructed image where Britomart is the centre of the feminine ideal and Radigund, in her refusal to be defined by the laws of the patriarch, seeks to destroy this centre. Yet, to be accurate, it is Britomart who enters Radigund's world and not the other way around. Indeed, Radigund is the centre of her chaotic system, placing the male-born Britomart on the periphery. Fletcher puts forth the argument that Britomart, as "Woman," must right the wrong committed against man (Artegall) by another woman (Radigund): "the crime is rape, the victim a man instead of a woman. Another woman must punish Radigund" (247).²¹ This view, too, puts Radigund in orbit around the grief she has inflicted on the man, ignoring man's attempt to impose his system of order onto her world. Instead, Britomart, as an

²⁰In order to conceive Britomart and Radigund as the binaric bright and dark side of the same person, we would need to accept that, just as Britomart is a male construction and accessible through the imagination of the narrator, Radigund would also have to be equally accessible through the male imagination. As I have previously demonstrated, though, Radigund clearly lives beyond the boundaries of the male imagination.

²¹"Radigund," O'Connell writes, also in support of this perspective, "entangles the ordinary workings of law, and only the principle of princely equity, embodied in Britomart, can cope with the injustice of subverted common law" (136).

invention/extension of man, is the only one (male or female) who can venture into Radigund's world in order to colonize this foreign, chaotic land. Created by man, Britomart endorses his ideal of justice but, as a biological female, she is not susceptible to Radigund's beauty."

This moment of crisis where the two worlds meet is chaotic: Britomart and Radigund are momentarily merged when Britomart, being the man that she can be, penetrates Radigund's world. For a moment, the marital Britomart cannot be distinguished from the martial Radigund:

The Trumpets sound, and they together run
With greedy rage, and with their faulchins smot;
Ne either sought the others strokes to shun,
But through great fury both their skill forgot,
And practicke vse in armes: ne spared not
Their dainty parts, which nature had created
So faire and tender, without staine or spot,
For other vses, then they them translated;
Which they now hackt and hewd, as if such vse they
hated.
(V vii 29)

In this Amazonian world, Britomart and Radigund become identified as one: both are incorporated into a single unit identified as "she," referred to here as "they," "their" and "them"; the centre and the periphery of woman fuse into an unidentifiable mass and Radigund and Britomart cease to exist as separate individuals. Harvey remarks on this amalgamation of identities:

⁴⁰The possibility of a lesbian encounter was long before ruled out when Britomart rejected the advances of Malecasta.

Radigund recalls Belpheobe in her attire, and, when Britomart engages in battle with Radigund, not only are they described in similes that suggest equality, but at certain moments, they become virtually indistinguishable. At one point their names drop out, and each is referred to by the pronoun "she," effecting a syntactic confusion that mirrors the conflation of their identities. (43)

The forgotten skill is not a skill of combat, which they both clearly possess; instead, the forgotten skill is the complete abandonment of femininity. And, in abandoning their feminine abilities, there is an abuse of their "dainty parts" which "they now hackt and hewd" as if "they hated" the designated intention of reproduction for which their bodies, as female, were created.

The two are quickly segregated when, in the following stanza, "[i]nstead of displaying feminine camaraderie, woman turns on woman as though they are of different species" (Krier, 215):

As when a Tygre and a Lionesse
Are met at spoyling of some hungry pray,
Both challenge it with equall greediness:
But first the Tygre clawes thereon did lay;
And therefore loth to loose her right away,
Doth in defence thereof full stoutly stond;
To which the Lion strongly doth gainesay,
That she to hunt the beast first tooke in hond;
And therefore ought it haue, where euer she it fond.
(V vii 30)

They are indeed of different species, for one is born of woman (Radigund), and the other is Woman born first by the (absent) mother and born again by man (Britomart). In spite of the previous merging, nothing has changed. Britomart

continues her defence of the world of justice that created her, and Radigund maintains her defiance of the patriarchally ordered world, a world of structured boundaries that necessarily excludes her. In existing beyond the limiting sphere of the male-defined feminine-ideal, Radigund remains beyond man's control. In doing so, Radigund defies, to her death, being defined as an extension of man. Submission to patriarchy quite clearly means abandoning her own "chaotically ordered" world to enter an order which will push her away from her centre and into man's periphery. Her refusal to submit to the patriarchal order results in her death.

Britomart is the colonialist who enters Radigund's foreign world only to impose her system of law and order. Backed by the patriarchal system of law and order, and propelled by her own pursuit for love and submission, Britomart is able to perform the feat that man has been unable to accomplish:

[Britomart] her so rudely on the helmet smit,
That it empierced to the very braine,
And her proud person low prostrated on the plaine.
(V vii 33.7-9)

Radigund is conquered by a Woman who services the patriarchy, not because Britomart-as-Woman has the power to match Radigund's "evil" force, not because Radigund has sinned against man and the sin must be rectified by a woman,

but because, as Cixous argues, women have through countless centuries been employed by the patriarchy to exert control over other women:

Women haven't had eyes for themselves. They haven't gone exploring in their house. Their sex still frightens them. Their bodies, which they haven't dared enjoy, have been colonized. Woman is disgusted by woman and fears her.

They have committed the greatest crime against women: insidiously and violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense power against themselves, to do the male's dirty work. (68)

From within the patriarchy, the only possible way to deal with a woman who seeks existence beyond its boundaries is to condemn her by the very laws she lives without:

You can't write *women among themselves* without having to consider the magnitude of this little expression: "do without a man," without hurtling against the writing on the patriarchal wall where all laws that keep us separate from ourselves, that isolate us from are women, are inscribed. (Brossard, 54)

Radigund, having successfully eluded patriarchal control as an Amazon, meets her inevitable demise by her counter-part, the well intentioned, male-constructed hero(ine), Britomart.

So far, traditional interpretations of Radigund have the Amazon aping man.¹⁴ Woods, in an attempt to approach

¹⁴Aptekar, for instance, writes that "the whole Radigund episode is illuminated by the fact that one of Radigund's namesakes, Saint Radegund, was remarkable for her insistence on remaining a virgin after her marriage: from an anti-Catholic viewpoint, a notable example of wifely disobedience" (97). Fletcher notes that "the triangle of Britomart, Radigund, and Artegall presents the political flaw of

Radigund from a different perspective, offers a "sympathetic portrayal of Radigund" (55). However, Woods unwittingly continues to confine Radigund to a patriarchal interpretation when she argues that Radigund is a victim as much as she is a villain:

Our late twentieth-century perspective allows us to see something about Radigund's badness that Spenser's readers may have perceived but not found easy to state directly, given their cultural assumptions about gender roles: Spenser presents Radigund as a victim, and as someone who must use indirection and the power of her sexuality to find authority in a cruel world of male power. (Woods, 54)

In order to sympathize with her, Woods confines Radigund to the boundaries of the patriarchy as a woman who seeks authority within the "cruel world of male power." By placing her as the victim, Woods makes Radigund become yet another Woman in a patriarchal system which has failed her. Woman who lives isolated within and by the patriarchal system of laws knows no other except the ideal:

If you are woman, you will resemble ideal woman; and you will obey the imperatives that mark your line. You will channel your desires, you will address them where, how, and to whom it is proper. You will honor the laws. (Cixous, 113)

Radigund, however, does not honour these laws. She refuses

chivalry, showing the human [sic] element, especially a sexual component, at the centre of that ideal system" (109). He later refers to Radigund as the "tyranness" who perverts "the ideal of loyal service and devotion, and [gives] chivalry over to the forces of chaos" (247). In both cases, the "human viewpoint" circumscribes male-defined institutions such as marriage, religion, sexuality, and chivalry.

to be defined as the patriarchal Woman, a mere commodity passed from her father's care to her husband's. She is not idle chattel for patriarchal mobility. In fact, she is quite the opposite. Closed off to patriarchal laws of exchange, her existence threatens the laws of patriarchy: "No longer to exchange, that is, no longer to exchange women, to live without women, is outside history: *without history*"

(Clément, 29).

Radigund-as-Amazon will be read within a phallogocentric framework as long as "Amazons exist only as vehicles for male transcendence" (Kleinbaum, 94). Yet, if we expand the horizon to stretch out beyond a patriarchal representation through our reading of Radigund, we can see her as one who lives in an inverted world, an upside down state, who eludes historical depiction. Radigund's upside down world challenges the patriarchal tradition of order in that she is not a patriarchal binary of man, as is, say, Britomart. Yet, while Spenser's narrator attempts to create and employ Radigund's character to reflect the necessity of a orderly patriarchal system, Radigund cannot be drawn into the patriarchal world. And because she cannot be tamed or fit into a categorical, orderly slot, because she comes from an order beyond traditional patterns of order, her very existence becomes a paradox: ultimately, her existence

necessitates her death.

In the days when I thought like a man, I had simple ideas. (Brossard, 37)

Chapter 4

Artegall: Man Unarmed by Dis-dress

Thus far I have shown how two female characters in *The Faerie Queene* have been employed to confirm patriarchal definitions of femininity. Britomart and Radigund provide two different depictions of women: Britomart strives to become the patriarchal "ideal" Woman and, in so doing, obediently fades from view; Radigund defies patriarchal notions of order, existing as a woman beyond the grasp of man, and is consequently eradicated. That these are only two of many women who venture beyond the traditional patriarchal confines of "feminine," either by dress or by attitude,¹ speaks to the complexities behind the cross-dressed woman: the feminine can be bound to the patriarchy or can extend

¹Other such women include the dream-image of Una, the spirited False (or Snowy) Florimell, the fiendish Duessa, and the aggressive Malecasta, Clorinda and Briana; more positive, albeit masculine, women include Venus and Belphebe.

beyond the traditions of patriarchy. Artegall, confined to patriarchy, is the one male character of this great epic who crosses the gender line, plunging into the watery world of Woman.⁷ His descent, however, does not bring about a greater understanding of the feminine and masculine traits buried within man, but, rather, emphasizes the difference between men and Women, allowing him to purge himself of the chaotic mis-order of feminine sexuality.⁸ In "casting off his false female costume, [man] has begun to dis-cover and re-cover his true male potency, his masterful male self" (Gilbert, 396). The female experience (identified through the female costume) has little or no connection with the feminine; instead the female experience is employed primarily to establish the identity of the male self.

Clearly, male gender-transgression cannot be interpreted in the same way as female gender-transgression because the movement is not lateral but hierarchical: for a woman to become "mannish" is for her to adopt an active presence; for a man to become "womanish" means to surrender to passivity, sexuality and silence:

⁷In this new world, as Clarinda accurately states, Artegall's "better dayes are drowned / in sad despaire, and all thy senses swowned / In stupid sorrow" (V v 36.4-6).

⁸In her discussion on early modern carnival gender-reversals, Natalie Zemon Davis writes, "The female's position was used to symbolize not only hierarchical subordination but also violence and chaos" (128-9).

[d]isruptions of the semiotics of dress by men and by women were not . . . read in the same way. For a man, wearing women's dress undermined the authority inherently belonging to the superior sex and placed him in a position of shame. At the simplest level, wearing effeminately ornate clothes would, in Stubbes's words, make men "weake, tender and infirme, not able to abide such sharp conflicts and blustering stormes" as their forefathers had endured. At a more serious level, men actually wearing women's clothes, and not just ornate apparel, are so thoroughly "out of place" that they become monstrous. (Howard, 424)

Bullough makes a similar remark: "The most remarkable aspect of medieval transvestism . . . is the difference in treatment of male and female transvestite. A female who secretly wore men's clothes was not considered abnormal" (1974, 1392),¹ whereas a man who cross-dressed was not tolerated because "the feminine qualities were the lower ones" (Bullough 1974, 1393). Nor are the two gender-transgressions comparable since female gender-transgression can either construct the woman within the tradition of patriarchy or place the woman beyond familiar territories. Artegall, as the male perpetrator of patriarchal Justice, remains confined to patriarchy in spite of his descent into Radigund's chaotic realm. Because the transgression from being man to becoming Woman is not a permissible metamorphosis in traditional patriarchy, this transformation

¹Bullough later qualifies this statement, saying that only "when women threatened the male establishment by taking too overt a masculine role have they been ostracized in the past" (1974, 1393).

must occur in a world beyond patriarchy, in Radigund's chaotic world of the Amazon. His experience in this foreign world allows him to confirm the patriarchal notion of male supremacy and female subservience, and, upon his release, allows him to reinforce the binaric difference by promoting this order through the guise of Justice -- Justice being bound to patriarchal rules of gendered order.

Shame is the pivotal distinction between Artegall's cross-dressing experience and the gender-inversions experienced by Radigund and Britomart since both women gain visibility when cross-dressed, whereas Artegall shrinks from view. Indeed, Artegall's descent can be seen as a return to the dark watery walls of woman's womb,⁵ where he ultimately experiences the most significant consequence to man: he loses access to his male sensibility, the drier ability to reason.⁶ In order for Artegall to transcend base physical desire and re-assume his greater male ability to reason, he needs to venture beyond his gendered definition of man and

⁵"[B]ath'd in blood and sweat" (V v 12.5), the nearly defeated Radigund recalls the image of a woman giving birth.

⁶Carson, drawing on classical sources such as Aristotle, Aristophanes and Heraklitos, notes that "[p]hysiologically and psychologically, women are wet," adding that "[w]etness of mind is an intellectually deficient condition" (130). This theory reflects the Renaissance view that "the man who wore women's clothes, who tried to take on gender attributes of the female, would be losing status, becoming less rational" (Bullough 1974, 1383).

become Woman. Since no proper (patriarchal) Woman would condemn Artegall to such a fate, he necessarily stumbles into Radigund's chaotic "queendom."

This chapter will first focus on the process leading to Artegall's descent in order to establish both the necessity and the intensity of shame attached to Artegall's journey. I argue that in spite of his gender-transgression and his physical placement beyond familiar terrains, Artegall never ventures beyond patriarchal boundaries. This will be followed by a return to the narrative strategy employed to deal with this shame inflicted upon Artegall. By diverting the reader's gaze, the narrative protects both the reader and Artegall from the shame of scrutiny. This protection draws the reader's attentions away from reading Artegall as Woman, largely preventing the reader from contemplating Artegall's shift into the traditional patriarchal-feminine position and his inability to make the shift into the mis-orderly.

Hamilton has made the remark that "Book V has been judged the simplest and remains the least liked."⁷ This may well account for the absence of critical readings of Artegall's captivity. More likely, however, is that the

⁷This quote is taken from Hamilton's introduction to the fifth book in *The Faerie Queene* (525).

narrator has been largely successful in diverting the reader from witnessing Artegall's shame. While there is some debate around the conditions leading to his humiliation, most critics draw on one or two specific events, primarily emphasizing the battle between Artegall and Radigund as the moment of defeat.⁸ However, a series of accumulating events lead Artegall to his fate well before the battle with Radigund commences.

Dunseath was probably most accurate in linking Artegall's overwhelming confidence to his defeat: "Artegall is not conscious of his personal failings and grows more and more confident with each successful decision" (88). Dunseath elaborates somewhat on Artegall's "personal failings" when he compares them to the "inner discords" of Amidas and Philtera:

⁸Tonkin, for example, largely exonerates Artegall, explaining how "Artegall's willingness to submit himself to Radigund's terms involves . . . an abandonment of the principles of justice that he has learned from Astraea. By relinquishing the sword that Astraea entrusted to him, Artegall is powerless to resist Radigund's domination" (157). Similarly, Dunseath argues that Artegall's descent comes from the fact that he "consents to meet on [Radigund's] terms, conditions under which he could not possibly win" (133). Carroll, too, places Artegall's defeat on his acceptance of the conditions, writing that because "he assents to Radigund's terms in battle, he is responsible for his own defeat" (182). Montrose completely de-emphasizes Artegall's defeat by writing only that "[d]efeated by Radigund in personal combat, Artegall must undergo degradation and effeminization" (66). The closest critical examination of Artegall's descent comes from Harvey, which I will discuss momentarily.

[e]ven though he has established peace when he ceases "their sharpe contention" (V iv 20.7), the inner discords that remain in Amidas and Philtera (20.2) are symptomatic of Artegall's own problems. With a subtle shift in emphasis, Spenser has presented his hero with a situation that mirrors his own character. Artegall passes on unmindful of the discord that remains in them and in himself (125).

Dunseath, however, fails to articulate Artegall's "personal failings" beyond this quote. As I see it, Artegall's most prominent failing is his inability to fully understand the necessity of (patriarchal) hierarchy. In the beginning of his ventures, he relies primarily on the traditional methods of implementing and/or enforcing Justice instead of pursuing a principle of Justice rooted in an understanding of the essential necessity of hierarchy, order and submission. In other words, Artegall needs to recognize the boundaries of difference within the patriarchy (primarily a pattern of hierarchal order presented to Artegall through the guise of gender), and firmly re-enforce the segregation of gender within his orderly world. Anything beyond the boundaries of his own order, essentially anything that threatens his patriarchal centre, must be eradicated. In Artegall's adventures preceding his encounter with Radigund, Artegall does not have this advanced appreciation of the difference within the patriarchal hierarchy. Though Artegall takes the gender-hierarchy for granted, the reason for the absolute necessity of this order is yet undeveloped in his immature

understanding of Justice.

In the beginning, Artegall is entrenched in traditional, methods of administering Justice, literally following the conviction that "power is the right hand of Iustice truely hight" (V iv 1.9). Power is available primarily through the employment of Talus, and Artegall becomes increasingly dependant on the application of force to administer Justice. In the first encounter, it is Talus who captures Sangliere (V i 20) after which Artegall can administer Justice. In the second adventure, while Artegall beheads Pollante with Astraea's sword, Chrysaor (another source of Force), it is Talus who "Chopt off [Pollante's daughters hands and feet], and nayld on high, that all might them behold" (V ii 26), and eventually drowns and burns her. The third adventure foreshadows Artegall's encounter with Radigund in that Artegall meets with a giant whose self-determined system of justice represents a mis-order (an alternative order from the traditional patriarchy) developed by reshuffling patriarchal order and "weigh[ing] the world anew" (V ii 34.1). Artegall tries unsuccessfully to reason with the giant, arguing for the old order where "All change is perillous, and all chaunce vnsound" (V ii 36.7). However, Justice is served when Talus throws the giant down a cliff and "in the sea him dround" (V ii 49.9). For the fourth adventure, after False Florimell is unveiled and melted,

Artegall restores Guyon's horse and shield only after Talus captures the false Braggadocio; Artégall depends on the force of Talus before he can unveil and shame Braggadocio (V iv 37). The fifth adventure, which details the struggle of two brothers over property and Women, is the first adventure where Talus is not directly employed. "Force," however, continues to play a role through "the mighty Sea" (V iv 19.2), empowered to "dispose by his imperial might / As thing at random left, to whom he list" (19.6-7). Dunseath is quite correct to remark that it is Artégall's sense of invincibility that forewarns the reader of Artégall's inevitable collapse before Radigund, although Dunseath neglects to comment that Artégall's almost completely helpless dependency on Force establishes his sense of invincibility.

In his sixth adventure, Artégall's encounter with Radigund, Talus -- or brute force -- is of no value to him since Radigund's rule extends beyond the traditional jurisdiction of Justice. Artégall, unable to conquer, is forced to contemplate a world of Chaos, a world of mis-order. In his examination of rites of passage, Greenblatt finds that

[f]orce plays a role in the imposition of [behavioral] codes, but a far greater role is played by the arousal of disgust, embarrassment, "delicacy of feeling," contempt, distaste, modesty -- in short, the complex shaping of a sense of social decency and social horror.

(61)

Dunseath, too, finds that "the use of force to change men's minds is not sufficient" (139). This becomes clear in *The Faerie Queene* when we see that force, portrayed as Artegall's travel companion, Talus, does not have enough influence to shape the young Artegall, to bring him to mature understanding of patriarchal Justice. To develop this "advanced" understanding, Artegall needs to experience the intense shame and degradation inflicted upon him when he enters Radigund's chaotic world.

Artegall's destiny becomes more evident when he encounters the captured Terpine. Already at this point he is comfortably passive, allowing Talus to apply the force necessary to administer Justice. This pattern continues in their initial encounter with Terpine, for Artegall once again relies on Talus:

Who with few sowces of his yron flale,
Dispersed all their troupe incontinent,
And sent them home to tell a piteous tale,
Of their vaine prowessse, turned to their proper bale.
(V iv 24.6-9)

Force, however, is not enough to secure Terpine's freedom, and shortly after his initial rescue, Terpine is "shamefully . . . hanged by the hed" (V v 18.9). Artegall's destination is further implied when he is forewarned by Terpine, during Terpine's brief respite, of the policies of the land that he

was about to enter (V iv 28-34), and, in spite of knowing the consequences, the standards of dress⁹ and Radigund's record of success, he is not deterred from confrontation. The conditions of submission are repeated the evening before the fight by Radigund's messengers: "they had told their message word by word: / Which he accepting well" (V iv 51.3-4).

The battle stages the descent towards which Artegall has been moving since his journeys began. The battle -- "a magnificently staged affair" (Dunseath, 129) -- begins with Radigund raging and hewing and lunging and lashing "on euery side" (V v 6.9) while Artegall patiently "her blowes he bore, and her forebore" (V v 7.1). Instead of interpreting Artegall's patience as a remarkable strategy to tire his opponent, Harvey argues that "Artegall's enslavement to Radigund is characterized by waiting -- waiting for her to tire in battle, for her to decide his fate when he is in prison, for Britomart to rescue him -- a position that humiliates and effeminizes him" (43). While Artegall gets in the first memorable blow when "Halfe of her shield he shared quite away" (V v 9.2),¹⁰ Radigund delivers a more damaging

⁹In V iv 31.3-4, Terpine warns Artegall that "First she doth them of warlike armes despoile, / And cloth in womens weedes."

¹⁰This motion serves more to nudge the reader to recall that Radigund is incomplete ("halfe like a man", V iv 36.8),

blow when she invaginates him: "With her sharpe Cemitare at him she flew / That glauncing down his thigh, the purple blood forth drew" (V v 9.8-9).¹¹ Despite this gaping wound, Artegall administers one final thrust:

 Hauing her thus disarmed of her shield,
 Vpon her helmet he againe her strooke,
 That downe she fell vpon the grassie field,
 In sencelesse swoune, as if her life forsooke,
 And pangs of death her spirit ouertook.
 Whom when he saw before his foote prostrated,
 He to her lept with deadly dreadfull looke,
 And her sunshynie helmet soone vnaced,
 Thinking at once both head and helmet to have raced.
 (V v 11)

In spite of having knocked her into a "sencelesse swoune," -- and this is where his invagination becomes significant -- Artegall, like Woman, is now subject to unbridled sexual desire.¹² Hence, once his gaze brushes her undeniably beautiful face, he becomes enthralled. As Harvey observes, "[t]he moment of acquiescence is ostensibly when Artegall removes her helmet and 'dis-covers' her face, since it is in that glance that her feminine beauty overpowers . . . his masculine bellicosity" (36-7). She further argues that

 [i]t is Radigund's martial fury that inspires
 Artegall's strategy of waiting, and it is, presumably,

and may not necessarily reflect Artegall's skills as warrior.

¹¹Hamilton notes that this is a sexual wound, similar to the wound of lust incurred by Timias in III v 20.7 (V v 9.9n).

¹²Carson writes, "Women feel no physical need to control desire since, by virtue of innate wetness, female capacity is virtually inexhaustible" (142).

the action of waiting, a position induced by her activity that begins the effeminizing transformation. In other words, Radigund's (heated) masculine behavior forces Artegall to occupy the position of the other (woman), and, even when he seems most to be opposing her, he is powerless to choose a masculine site of resistance. (37).

So enraptured is he by her "beautiful" face that he abandons the remaining tokens of his masculinity: he "his sharpe sword he threw from him apart" (V v 13.3), leaving himself "Standing with emptie hands all weaponlesse" (V v 14.2). He retains only his "single shield" (V v 16.3), a shield that renders him passive, leaving him once again with nothing to do but wait for the next onslaught, unable to strike back. Essentially, Artegall surrenders to Radigund long before she physically overcomes him:

So was he ouercome, not ouercome,
But to her yeilded of *his owne* accord;
Yet was he iustly damned by the doome
Of his owne mouth, that spake so warelesse word,
To be her thrall, and service her afford.
For though that he first victorie obtayned,
Yet after by *abandoning his sword*,
He wilfull lost, that he before attayned.
No fayrer conquest, then that with goodwill is gayned.
(V v 17, emphasis added)

One interpretation of Artegall's submission is that Artegall remains masculine, honouring the codes of surrender which he earlier accepted. An alternative interpretation is that once invaginated, Artegall becomes the patriarchal Woman, obediently surrendering, becoming passive and subservient to Radigund.

Having surrendered the symbols of his sex, Artegall physically undergoes the transformation where he becomes the patriarchal Woman. While the narrator emphasizes the process of Artegall's submission, very little attention goes toward the physical metamorphosis.¹⁴ Radigund dis-dresses¹⁴ him immediately after he loses the battle, in the battlefield, in front of Radigund's Amazons. There are, interestingly enough, no male witness to this transformation: Terpine is hung two stanzas previously (18) and Talus escapes in the stanza just prior to Artegall's gender-transition (19). In the transformation stanza, the narrator emphasizes Radigund's active role and Artegall's passive role in the transformation:

Then tooke the Amazon this noble knight,
Left to her will by his owne wilfull blame,
And caused him to be disarmed quight,
Of all the ornaments of knightly name,
With which whylome he gotten had great fame:

¹⁴Dunseath compares Artegall to Hercules in great detail (46-59). But, what he neglects to note is the physical differences between the transition from male to female of both characters. Bullough notes that in "[d]ressing himself in the clothing of Queen Omphale, [Hercules] was clearly a burlesque character since her girdle was much too small for his waist, his shoulders split the sleeves of her gown, and the ties of her sandals were too short to cross his instep" (1993, 30). Artegall, on the other hand, appears to shrink once he is re-dressed as a Woman since his physical body, after the initial description of the transition, seems to disappear from our view altogether.

¹⁴I am employing "dis-" as a negation in that Artegall, by being re-dressed by Radigund, becomes the negative of man: he becomes Woman.

In stead whereof she made him to be dight
In womans weedes, that is to manhood shame,
And put before his lap a napron white
In stead of Curiets and bases fit for fight.
(V v 20)

"So being clad," the narrator continues, "she brought him from the field" (V v 21.1). Artegall is portrayed as the victim of circumstances beyond his control. Before the narrator releases Artegall from the reader's view, one final shameful glance is cast upon Artegall's lap where a *napron white* (V v 20.8) has been placed. The function of the apron is two-fold: first, it captures the eye of the reader, drawing attention to Artegall's shame, casting the reader's eye onto his effeminized body; second, the apron covers his shame, providing him with a shield¹⁵ through which the observers can not see what is, by implication, no longer there. Artegall's fate, then, is not to emerge as victor, but rather, to enter Radigund's sub-world, to experience the shame imposed by cross-dressing, and indeed, to become "the weaker sex" as deemed by traditional patriarchy.

The point of dis-dress marks Artegall's shift between genders. Artegall's shift between his world and Radigund's world is an interesting one, because he straddles two distinct definitions of gender: one set of gender-

¹⁵The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "apron" (1a) as a garment to protect clothes "from dirt or injury, or simply as a covering."

definitions is embedded in his traditional patriarchal world of Justice where man is dominant and Woman, as ordained by nature, is submissive; the other grouping comes from Radigund's chaotic Amazonian world where woman dominates her Amazonian field as warrior and man is subservient. When Artegall dons feminine apparel he becomes both the patriarchal ideal Woman and Radigund's Amazonian ideal man. Harvey, too, remarks on the importance of distinguishing the two definitions of gender: "it is crucial to recognize that occupying the metaphorical position accorded to Woman (the one who waits) is not the same as becoming woman" (Harvey, 40). In other words, while he crosses the lines of gender in his own world, he does not become woman in Radigund's sense of the word, since that would then allow him Amazonian warrior status. Instead, Artegall, like the other Womanish-men held in captivity, serves "proud Radigund with true subjection" (V v 26).

Because the nature of the humiliation is so shameful, and, indeed, because he has become a monstrosity, Artegall is largely hidden from the reader's scrutiny.¹⁶ He reappears

¹⁶The diverted gaze toward shamed men is a common strategy in *The Faerie Queene*. For instance, the shame experienced by Red Cross, his capture and imprisonment by Duessa, is not witnessed by the reader. We are only permitted a quick glance of the resulting aftermath in I viii 40 lines 7-9, and I viii 41. Similarly, when Guyon is stripped by Pyrochles and Cymochles (II viii 15-17), the focus is not on the immediate

briefly when Clarinda, in pursuit of Artegall, attempts to manipulate him into falling in love with her (V v 37-42), but, instead of focusing on the physical details, the narrator recalls the intellectual banter between Artegall and Clarinda. While the narrator does include several puns that remind us of his degrading duties¹⁷ we are not reminded of his physical state of dis-dress. The second time he appears in the text while still a captive, the narrator relays the conversations between Clarinda and Artegall to the reader, removing us even further from seeing Artegall directly (V v 54-57). Dressed as a Woman and drained of his masculine traits (such as dominance, voice and strength),

shaming of Guyon but rather the actions of the two criminals and Palmer's defense. A more obvious example of sight-diversion appears in the shameful sexual arousal witnessed at the end of book II when Guyon encounters the two naked beauties (affectionately coined "Cissie" and Flossie" by C.S. Lewis) in the bath (II xii 60-69). Although this section is presented in great detail, the reader's gaze is diverted to the frolicking ladies, away from the sexual arousal of Guyon. Only one line is dedicated to Guyon's state of excitement: "His stubborne brest gan secret pleasance to embrace" (II xii 65.9). The same diversion of the gaze does not occur with feminine shame, best witness by the intense scrutiny Serena when she is captured and nearly raped (VI viii 42).

¹⁷One pun on Artegall's situation is made when he begins to doubt Clarinda's intentions "least she him sought t'appreach / Of treason, or some guilefull traine did weave" (V v 37.3-4 - *my italics*); another occurs when Artegall, in defending his choice to remain loyal to his original quest, states that he will find "That she is a Queene, and come of Princely kynd, / Both worthie is for to be sewd vnto" (V v 41.5-6 - *my italics*).

Artegall portrays the patriarchal ideal of Woman, neatly tucked into the periphery.

The diverted gaze in this particular situation is an interesting mechanism applied by the narrator, and as paradoxical as it may seem, the silence holds great significance. Though publicly defeated, Artegall endures the rest of his captivity in private. Private and public are applied differently to men and Women. Indeed, "private" female moments are often more scrutinized than "public" ones since public female events impose no threat to order. Private events for females, on the other hand, if not properly controlled by strict moral codes and the male gaze, can upset the traditional balance of order.¹⁹ One might argue that the narrator avoids staring at Artegall because Artegall, as male, can rely on his superior ability to reason and therefore doesn't require the same intense scrutiny. This interpretation is what gives ammunition to Dunseath's view that

[a]lthough his resigned acceptance of woman's rule has been read as another symbol of his weakness, the logic of the narrative will not support such an interpretation. Rather, Artegall's willing acceptance of his state is an extreme form of intellectual humility; . . . he has made destiny his choice. (136)

Dunseath, here, echoes the narrator's attempt to direct the

¹⁹Consider Malecasta's attack on Britomart, an outrage closely monitored (and thus controlled) by the pen of the narrator and the gaze of the reader.

reader's compassion for Artegal's situation:

Some men, I wote, will deeme in Artegal
Great weaknesse, and report of him much ill,
For yeelding so himselfe a wretched thrall,
To th'insolent commaund of women's will;
That all his former praise doth fowly spill.
But he the man, that say or doe so dare,
Be well adviz'd, that he stand stedfast still:
For neuer yet was wight so well aware,
But he at first or last was trapt in womens snare.
(V vi 1)

There is, however, another possibility for allowing Artegal such privacy in his shame: besides linking cross-dressing with shame and humiliation, forced male cross-dressing also implies erotic associations, giving the narrator all the more reason to divert the reader's gaze.

Schleiner, specifically in reference to Stoller's work on cross-dressing,¹⁹ asks the question: "In what sense is this gender disguise pleasurable and fetishistic?" (Schleiner 1988, 609). Schleiner believes that for the character "(as well as possibly for the author) female dress may assume some fetishistic qualities as the catalyst of excitement" (Schleiner 1988, 609).²⁰ In terms of deriving

¹⁹Schleiner refers to Robert Stoller's *Sex and Gender* (New York: Science House, 1968), specifically to chapters 16 and 17.

²⁰Bullough, too, notices the link between cross-dressing and eroticism: "There are no male transvestite saints, not only because the male who cross-dressed lost status but because he was also associated with eroticism, or with witchcraft" (1383).

fetishistic, erotic pleasure from this forced cross-dressing, Schleiner writes that

by [the cross-dresser's] silent acquiescence to the elaborate procedure we sense that this dressing is for him eminently pleasurable, too. One might say that the female clothes he receives represent her, that the entire episode is a substitute for sexual union. (Schleiner 1988, 616)

While *The Faerie Queene* certainly does not directly support the notion that Artegall derives any type of sexual pleasure from being forced to cross-dress, fetishism is closely associated with forced cross-dressing, an implication many modern readers will bring into their interpretation of the text. The text, however, does associate Artegall's effeminized body with sexuality, albeit by focusing on the sexual drives of those attracted to him. Once (patriarchally) effeminized, Artegall becomes the target of the lustful pursuit of not so much Radigund, who just as promptly ends her pursuit as she began it, but Clarinda, who almost relentlessly pursues the affections of Artegall. Artegall becomes the patriarchally feminized man: soft, submissive and sensual, he crosses the patriarchal gender-line and becomes like the patriarchal ideal Woman, but does not quite surrender over to the chaotic realm.

In view of the erotic implications, the diverted gaze continues through Britomart's rescue of Artegall. When she approaches him, she casts a glance only long enough to

recognize him:

At sight therefor abasht with secrete shame,
She turnd her head aside, as nothing glad,
To haue beheld a spectacle so bad (V vii 38.3-5).

Indeed, Artegall has been so entirely consumed by his cross-dressing role that even the narrator seems to play with the Penelope analogy, allowing Penelope to sometimes reflect Artegall, and other times, Britomart:

Not so great wonder and astonishment,
Did the most chast Penelope possesse,
To see 'her Lord, that was reported drent,
And dead long since in dolorous distresse,
Come home to her in piteous wretchednesse,
After long trauell of full twenty yeares,
That she knew not his fauours liklynesse,
For many scarres and many hoary heares,
But stood long staring on him, mongst vncertaine
feares.
(V vii 39)

Previously we learned that Britomart barely glances at him because of the shame she felt for him; yet, here we have the image of a Penelope [Artegall] who has been warding off pursuers [Clarinda] while awaiting the return of the beloved Odysseus [Britomart]. Artegall is further paralleled with Penelope in that both spin their time away while awaiting the "return" of the beloved. But, like Penelope, Britomart barely recognizes her lover. With her eyes carefully cast aside, Britomart proceeds to lecture Artegall on man's proper place:

Ah my deare Lord, what sight is this (quoth she)
What May-game hath misfortune made of you?
Where is that dreadfull manly looke? where be

Those mighty palmes, the which ye wont t'embrew
In bloud of Kings, and great hoastes to subdew?
Could ought on earth so wondrous change haue wrought,
As to haue robde you of that manly hew?
Could so great courage stouped haue to ought?
Then farewell fleshy force; I see thy pride is nought.
(V vii 40)

The impact of her words are not, however, enough to restore his masculinity. Significantly, the resurrection of his masculine gender depends largely on his state of dress:

Thenceforth she streight into a bowre him brought,
And causd him those vncomely weedes vndight;
And in their steede for other rayment sought,
Whereof there was great store, and armors bright,
Which had been reft from many a noble Knight;
Whom that proud Amazon subdewd had,
Whilest Fortune fauourd her successe in fight,
In which when as she him anew had clad,
She was reuiu'd, and ioyed much in his semblance glad.
(V vii 41)

This re-dressing compares significantly to his previous dis-dressing. In the dis-dressing process inflicted upon him by Radigund, he was caught in the gaze of "uncivilized" onlookers, the Amazonian women. His re-dressing, however, is performed by a patriarchal Woman who, along with the narrator and the "proper" reader, respects Artegall's privacy. Notably, it is not until he is dressed as a man by Britomart that he resumes his masculine authority, whereupon the narrator can permit the reader to resume witness of Artegall.

Artegall has to travel to the extremes on the continuum of Justice, moving from an orderly patriarchal world to a

chaotic matriarchal world back to an orderly world. It is by experiencing disorder (accessible to Artegall in a world of mis-order) that Artegall is able to reinforce the order of his own patriarchal society:

First there is a venture into the disordered regions of the mind. Second there is the venture beyond the confines of society. The man who comes back from these inaccessible regions bring with him a power not available to those who have stayed in the control of themselves and society. (Douglas, 95)

Losing control means losing the ability to reason; and, losing the ability to reason opens up the body to physical desire. Radigund's Amazonian world offers Artegall such a society: here, the "natural" hierarchy of masculine rule and feminine submission are inverted and, indeed, re-defined. From the traditional standpoint, a society ruled by women is a society without reason,²¹ and hence (obviously) without patriarchal Justice and control. To ultimately transcend this chaotic world, Artegall, like the orderly world, must be born from Chaos, which in Artegall's experience, is the

²¹Educating women, instead of sharpening their wits, would enhance the already negative aspects of the female race, such as vanity, desire, and idle chatter: "Since the feminine sex is vain by nature it will become more proud and desire to be master in the house, against St. Paul's precept"; "Conformity of minds and studies softens minds and nourishes hidden flames"; and finally, "with learning they are sure to become more talkative, hence less careful of honor, which is better preserved by silence than by words" (Kelso 60).

feminine world of the Amazons.²²

As we see through Artegall's inner revelation of enforcing a gendered hierarchy to maintain Justice and patriarchal order, cross-dressing provides him an opportunity to transcendence. Stoller writes:

with a little practice they [transvestites] can get to be a better woman than any woman is, since they possess the best of both man and women. (Stoller, 215)

This, too, supports Bullough's claim that for medievals, "[c]ross dressing for men, in turn, could also be interpreted as a way to lessen this [feminine] threat by asserting that they were not afraid of things feminine" (1993, 33). The fearsome feminine, however, is not the chaotic Amazonian: she is the invented Woman, or as Cixous notes, the Woman reborn (66) by man. The Woman that Artegall becomes in order to transcend is clearly the passive, submissive, patriarchally-ideal Woman, and not the woman beyond patriarchal boundaries, she who lives beyond the male imagination. Clearly, Artegall retains his phallic identity, although the traditional power associated with the phallus becomes maimed, or crippled (but not castrated), by Radigund

²²Carson remarks on order developing from Chaos in Greek mythology where "the cosmos was first assembled out of chaos when Zeus threw a veil over the head of the goddess of the underworld and married her" (161). Order emerges by taming or containing of chaos; that which cannot be fit within the structure remains clearly segregated.

when she breaks and mockingly displays her captives' broken swords, "hang[ing] them on high" (V v 21.7). Artegall possesses the best of both in that he becomes Woman while still retaining his (albeit maimed) phallic identity. And because he retains this phallic identity, his definitions of gender remain confined to patriarchal terms.

Artegall's transformation, which begins with his passivity as "one who waits," becomes concrete when Radigund successfully conquers him, and ends only when Artegall is quite literally plucked from the depths of chaos by his knight in shining armour. Having been in the depths of the feminine, chaotic world, and moved far enough within this extreme to become Woman, Artegall can now transcend feminine irrationality and enforce hierarchal rule because he has a better understanding of the physical, sensual world. His "better understanding," however, is not due to the acceptance of the androgyny within man, but rather, a deeper knowledge of Woman:

For since women were traditionally defined as "the lustier sex" - the sex made for sex - it was only natural, if paradoxical, that a man could achieve sexual strength by temporarily impersonating a woman. Through grotesque submission, he would learn dominance; through misrule, he might learn rule; through a brief ironic concession to "petticoat government," he would learn not androgynous wholeness but male mastery (Gilbert, 397).²³

²³In patriarchal rule, gender and respective codes of behaviour are clearly outlined: man dominates and the woman

According to Berry, "Spenser's epic narrative began by giving pre-eminence to the male courtier, as a questing subject motivated but not physically caged by love, he seems to have become increasingly uneasy about the limitations imposed upon this figure's historical effectiveness by his dependence upon the idea of woman" (154). Artegall is clearly released from this dependence. Now, he can take on the larger tasks and return societal order to the court of Mercilla, overthrow Malengin, an underlying source of societal evil, and free Irene from the grips of Grantorto. As Artegall is the enforcer of patriarchal Justice, Women are now fully dependent on him.

submits. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, travelling beyond the patriarchy (thus, travelling beyond gender) one encounters alternative gender constructs. As Gilbert appropriately maintains, "For the male modernist . . . gender is most often an ultimate reality, while for the female modernist and ultimately reality exists only if one journeys beyond gender" (394).

I hold that this exciting experience of text which turns about itself, bearing and being born by its own weight, simultaneously suggests excess, the circle, and the void. I say the circle, for it seems to me that in wanting to break the linearity, it is as if we have been forced into its opposite, to turn full circle, as if the text in this had come to its own end in itself, even were this to explode. (Brossard, 71)

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In that she represents the patriarchal idea of Woman, Britomart reflects one image of the feminine. She is granted a presence when she appears impeccably dressed as man; she dons the appropriate foolish and immature (feminine) behaviour when unveiled as a Woman; and, ultimately (and obediently), upon restoring women "To mens subiection" (V vii 42.7), she quietly fades from view. Radigund reflects yet another image of woman in her defiance of patriarchy. However, instead of quietly fading away, Radigund is eradicated point blank, killed by the goodly Britomart herself. Yet, in spite of the inclusion of these two women,

the patriarchal necessity to define, and thereby suppress, woman is not fully realized until we examine Artegall's predicament. What really drives home the threat of W/woman (especially for the male reader) in all manifestations is the threatened dissolution of the patriarchal grip, barely averted in Artegall's descent.

This, of course, brings us around to the irony of feminine representation in *The Faerie Queene*. Clearly, woman cannot be extracted from the text because she does not fully appear there. While Radigund's character suggests "otherness," she is weighted more by the traditional, historical implications of the Amazon. Though one patriarchally defined aspect is designed by Britomart and another by Radigund, the "proper" Woman can best be experienced as she is reflected through the eyes of man, through the experience of Artegall. In order to be alerted to the threat imposed by the untamed woman on patriarchal order, the (presumably male) reader looks only as far as the image that best reflects himself: there, in the midst of the text, capturing the danger of woman by being captured by her, lies Artegall. Lost to the periphery of patriarchy, slipping beyond the edge of order and venturing into the void still unpenetrated by the male imagination, stands woman.

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